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THE WORKS

OF THE

REV. ROBERT HAWKER, D.D.

LATE VICAR OF CHARLES, PLYMOUTH.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE AND WRITINGS,

BY THE REV. JOHN WILLIAMS, D. D.

MINISTER OF STROUD, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

IN TEN VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

PRINTED FOR EBENEZER PALMER,

18, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

MDCCCXXXI.

PRINTED BY E. JUSTINS & SON,
BRICK LANE, SPITALFIELDS.



CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

	<i>Page</i>
I. SERMONS ON IMPORTANT SUBJECTS AND PARTICULAR OCCASIONS.	
1. All Blessings traced to their Source	3
2. Jesus in his Priestly Office	19
3. Religion, a Personal Concern	32
4. The Shiloh come, and the Gathering of the People unto him proved.....	54
5. The sure Progress of Grace	78
6. The blessed Effects of the Love of God in the Soul	98
7. The Believer's Warfare	123
8. The Coming of Jesus as the Saviour of his People	147
9. Ministers of God to approve themselves in all things	169
10. Sunday Schools recommended.....	188
11. The Invaluable Blessings of our Religious and Civil Government	210
12. The Work of the Holy Ghost essential to Missions	227
13. Corpus Christi.....	260
II. UNION WITH CHRIST THE ONLY POSSIBLE MEANS OF ENJOYING COMMUNION WITH GOD	
	285
III. THREE TRACTS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.	
1. The Lord's Family the only invited Guests at the Lord's Table	331
2. The King coming in to see the Guests at his Table	342
3. The King sitting with his Guests at his Table	352

CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

Page

IV. A GUIDE TO THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, AND THE WELCOME GUEST AT THE LORD'S TABLE ..	361
V. SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS.	
1. Melchisedec, Priest of the Most High God, bringing forth Bread and Wine,.....	403
2. The Jewish Passover typical of Christ.....	417
3. The Savour of Christ's Person and Offering the sole cause of the Church's Acceptance before God	433
4. Christ, the Bread of Life	450
5. The Bread and Wine received by the Lord's People in the Lord's Supper symbolical of Communion with the Body and Blood of Christ	468
6. Christ calling to the Spirit to breathe on his Garden the Church his Sweet Influences, and the Church in consequence thereof Inviting Christ to come into his Garden and Eat his Pleasant Fruits	483
7. The Spiritual Participation in the Emblems at the Lord's Table a decisive Testimony of a Personal Interest in the Sacrifice itself.....	500
8. Jesus in his Priestly Office	514
VI. MISERICORDIA, OR COMPASSION TO THE SORROWS OF THE HEART.....	533

SERMONS
ON
IMPORTANT SUBJECTS
AND
PARTICULAR OCCASIONS.

PREFACE.

THE Reader of discernment cannot but discover, in the perusal of the following Sermons, (what, indeed, above all things should be thoroughly understood,) that while insisting upon the great and leading points of the gospel, of the Father's love, and the Saviour's redemption, agreeably to their vast importance; the principal aim with him in every discourse hath been, at the same time, to keep in view the necessity of the Spirit's work in the heart, as the sole efficient cause to render the whole effectual.

He is free to confess his fears, that even among *faithful* Preachers of the word, who delight to hold forth the love of God the Father in the gift of redemption, and the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ in his mediatorial character; there is not, at the same time, so much attention shown, as the infinite importance of the thing itself demands, in inculcating the necessity of the operations of the Holy Ghost. And yet, surely a moment's consideration is enough to convince any man, who is himself a living evidence of his power, that too much can never be said concerning his person and work, under whose Almighty Ministry the church is governed; and from whose divine agency alone, all the eventual success of it, in every individual instance, must result. And he hopes, that the very interesting nature of the subject, will plead his apology, when he adds, that, according to his conception of things, the most excellent discourses in setting forth the mercies of redemption, are no better than the display of some sweet and inviting fruit growing on a high wall, and out of all reach, unless also they direct to God the Holy Ghost as the medium of attaining it.

If one humble soul among the Redeemer's exercised family, should, from the perusal of these Sermons, be led to see, in a tried hour, from whose gracious operations alone relief is to be found; and to seek his aids whose peculiar work it is, "to take of the things of Jesus, and to shew unto his people;" and more especially if one among the *faithful* dispensers of "the word of life," should be prompted to speak more frequently of the Spirit's work in the heart as the truest evidence of salvation; the Author's design in the composition of these Sermons will be abundantly answered, and may God have all the praise!



SERMON I.

ALL BLESSINGS TRACED TO THEIR SOURCE.

JOHN XV. 16.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain : that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

THERE is nothing more gratifying to the mind, than when, in the enjoyment of any one given blessing, we are able to trace it to its source, and can discover both the author of it, and his kind intentions in giving it.

If I am made happy in the possession of even one of the common mercies of life, that mercy, be it what it may, is made doubly sweet, when the hand of God is seen in the appointment. It is a mercy then twice blessed. First, in respect to its own nature, and secondly, as coming to me with a peculiar and personal direction from God. The traveller, who on some sultry mountain, discovers unexpectedly a cooling stream to assuage his thirst, will drink of it with a tenfold pleasure, if in the moment of enjoyment he considers it as flowing from the immediate gift of heaven. Nay, will it not be allowed, that in the pleasing intercourse of social life, our felicities are all heightened, from the consciousness of the good-will with which the kindnesses of our friends are accompanied? If, then, in

natural things, our enjoyments receive an increase from such causes, what an accession of happiness must it be in *spirituals*, when we are enabled to trace them up to Him, and to his special appointment, who is the predisposing cause of all!

If I enjoy the gracious operations of the Holy Ghost in my soul; if the person, and gifts, and righteousness, of the Redeemer be dear to my heart; if I know what it is "to have fellowship with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ;" will not these distinguishing mercies be yet abundantly increased, both in sweetness and in value, when they are discovered to be the result of that everlasting love wherewith God, in his Trinity of persons, hath loved his people, "before the foundation of the world?" Such views serve to confirm, and no less at the same time to explain, the meaning of that saying of the apostle, when, speaking of a divine appointment in all our mercies, he refers the whole unto God's sovereign will; "who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.)

And, moreover, besides the enjoyment of the blessing itself, in those distinguishing properties of it, there are several other very interesting qualities folded within its bosom. What method can be so effectual under God, to induce all the practical fruits of the gospel, as when, by pointing to the source whence all grace issues, we shew whence, necessarily, all must be looked for? And is it not of all possible arguments the strongest and the best, both to saint and sinner, to manifest that He, who is the author and finisher of salvation, is the only being, from whom "every good and every perfect gift must come?"

Tell me, you who, from a clear conviction of your own unworthiness, are ever ready to ascribe your re-

covery from sin to salvation, wholly “to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made you accepted in the beloved;” tell me, what motive do you find equally powerful in prompting you “to shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light,” as the consciousness that “God hath chosen you in Christ before the foundation of the world, that you should be holy and without blame before him in love.” (Ephes. i. 4.) Doth not this conviction operate beyond any other, to induce you “to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things?” And if, by divine grace, you find yourself preserved in the path of duty, is it not truly refreshing to the soul to discover the cause; that “you are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Ephes. ii. 10.)

And no less, let the sinner say, if it be God’s choice, and not man’s desert; if all the difference between one man and another originates in Him “who giveth to every one severally as he will,” why should you question more than others, but that *you* may be the happy partaker of the same grace also? Surely there would be abundantly more reason to doubt receiving the divine favour, if that favour were dependent upon your desert of it, than if it were the sole result of unmerited bounty and goodness!

I have been led into this train of observation from the perusal of the precious words of the Lord Jesus in the text. “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you; and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name he may give it you.” Abstracted from any personal relation, which those words may be supposed to have, as more particularly addressed to the disciples of Christ, at that period and age of the church in which

they were first spoken; they contain this plain and important truth, which is not confined to any period, but in all ages must have the same obvious and determined meaning: namely, that the personal salvation of every true believer in Jesus is founded, not in human merit, but in divine favour; not in our choice of Christ, but in his choice of us; for, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth; but of God that sheweth mercy:" or, to sum it up in the full, comprehensive words of the apostle, "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever." (Rom. xi. 36.)

If you will analyze the several parts of the text you will find that they all bear a corresponding testimony to this one and the same leading truth, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." No one, I venture to think after this declaration of Christ, can be such an advocate for the free will and merit of man, as to invert the order of these words, and fancy the reverse of what the Lord Jesus hath said to be true. Depend upon it, what John the apostle observes is a positive fact, and of universal extent; if "we love him, it is because he first loved us." (1 John iv. 19.)

And the *ordination* which in the text follows this choice of the Redeemer, as plainly manifests that the grace which hath appointed to the *end*, hath also appointed suitable and sufficient *means* for its accomplishment. "I have ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." It is *all* in the divine appointment. "Thou O Lord, (saith the church) hast wrought all our works in us," (Isaiah xxvi. 12.) or, as the Lord expresses it himself, in another scripture, "From me is thy fruit found." (Hosea xiv. 8.)

Neither is this all. It would not, indeed, answer the purposes of salvation, if, like abortions in the natural world, the setting fruit of the fairest blossoms were liable to fall off: Jesus, therefore, adds one cir-

cumstance more, and that a very material one: I have not only ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, but “that your fruit shall remain.” It is an object of the highest moment to the peace and comfort of the believer, to be well assured that the grace which begins the work, will carry it on and complete it. And therefore, nothing can be more satisfactory than to know, that being *chosen* and *ordained*, by a will that is not his own, he shall be preserved by a grace which is more than mortal, and “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.”

And, lastly, as a comprehensive expression, which conveys to the believer the assurance of every blessing he may stand in need of, in passing on through a life of grace to glory; Jesus hedges in the whole of the many precious things in this text, with that delightful promise in the close of it, and founded in the security of his own all-prevailing intercession, “that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

I question whether, in the whole compass of scripture, a verse can be found more copious in its contents, respecting those momentous doctrines of our most holy faith, than this now before us. What I propose from it, as God the Spirit shall be pleased to enable me, is simply this; to shew you that **THE WHOLE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF OUR REDEMPTION, FROM BEGINNING TO END, IS INCLUDED IN THIS FREE, SOVEREIGN, AND UNMERITED CHOICE OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.** This is the leading doctrine insisted upon in the text, and all the other parts naturally arise out of it. To this, therefore, alone I shall limit your present attention.

In the accomplishment of this purpose, the arrangement of my discourse will be, in the first place, to establish the certainty of the doctrine: and then, secondly, to point to the practical effects which flow from it. And if God the Holy Ghost shall be

graciously pleased (which I most humbly implore) to be our teacher in confirming the truth of the doctrine, by a personal application of it to our hearts, we shall be enabled to assume the language of the apostle, which he used to the church of the Thessalonians upon the same occasion, and say as he did, "we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord; because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." (2 Thes. ii. 13.)

In pursuit of the first object I proposed, which is to prove the truth of our blessed Lord's declaration in the text, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," the best method, I humbly conceive, will be, by tracing *effects* to their *cause*, which will fully demonstrate that the first advance in the way of grace, evidently begins in God, and not in man. For if it can be shewn, that such things as accompany salvation are altogether disproportionate to the powers of man, the inference will undeniably follow, that the appointment must be in a higher ordination, and that *that* ordination is of God. And I venture to believe, that in no one circumstance of life can this be more fully shewn, nor perhaps equally, as in the subject now under consideration.

The scripture, in a tone of decision which admits of no appeal, awfully declares, that we are by nature, not only in a fallen sinful state, but so totally ruined in all our faculties, that even the knowledge of divine things, much less a predilection for them, nature, untaught and unenlightened by an higher power, never could attain. And the apostle Paul, under the teachings of God the Holy Ghost, considers this point as a matter so certain and incontrovertible, that he sets it down as a fixed thing: "the natural man (says he) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them,

because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) And elsewhere he assigns the reason; "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." (Ephes. iv. 18.) To suppose, therefore, that characters of this description should make the *first* advances in the renewed life towards God, would be as absurd as to imagine a dead body to arise by its own powers to all the exercises of animal functions.

Equally inconsistent is it with the divine glory, and altogether destructive of all the just conceptions we can form of the freedom and sovereignty of God's grace, to suppose that, though it be admitted God's choice is the *first* cause, yet that choice originated in the foreknowledge of God, that such as become the objects of his favour would, by their subsequent conduct, be found more deserving than others, and therefore God, foreseeing this, was directed in this predilection. This idea is perfectly suited to gratify man's pride, but becomes highly injurious to God's glory. And, by the way, my brother, let me beg of you to mark this down in the memorandums of your diary, as a never failing maxim, that whatever tends to inflate the mind with the least exalted notions of any thing good in itself, by so much robs God of his honour, and man of his happiness. Very sweet, indeed, I confess, is the reflection to the soul of the truly regenerate, when he can look back and consider the change wrought upon him, that "he who was once in darkness, is now light in the Lord." And still more pleasing will be the view, when he can trace the blessed effects of this change in his life, in the progressive path of that light "which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But in every review of this kind, there is a voice which accompanies it, and which the truly gracious soul delights to hear, "Who maketh thee to differ

from another, and what hast thou which thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) That God's choice will be followed with the gift of God's grace in the heart, is unquestionable; for he that saith, "I have chosen you," saith also, "I have ordained you, that ye shall go and bring forth fruit." But to fancy that this choice is the result of some supposed latent worthiness in the object, and not of God's free and unmerited love, is to invert the very order of things, and to make the effect precede its cause.

Let us advance one step higher in the argument, in confirmation of this doctrine, and observe, that the term *grace* becomes at once the most decided proof of the whole. For, in fact, it loses its very name, if there be an atom of supposed merit in the receiver. It ceases then to be a gratuitous act; but, on the contrary, it partakes of the nature of a reward. "If it be of works (saith an apostle) then is it no more of grace, for otherwise grace is no more grace." (Rom. xi. 6.) Nay, so far are the highly favoured objects of this bounty from being considered as contributing, in the smallest degree, to the reception of it, that they are beheld, not barely as undeserving, but ill-deserving; not simply as unworthy of mercy, but worthy of punishment. Grace, therefore, signifies an act of unmerited clemency, bestowed upon a set of creatures who in the very moment of receiving it are justly deserving God's displeasure.

You will immediately perceive, from this statement, how impossible it is, consistently with God's glory, for man to assume any merit to himself respecting his salvation, either in the original appointment, or in the after stages of grace. For, if I fancy myself, even in the smallest possible degree, to have merited divine favour, the very character of grace loses its name. But if (as is really the case) I see myself in the very moment of becoming the object of

this distinguishing mercy, both in the first manifestations of it, and in all the after periods of life, as singled out from the throng of my fellow creatures, all alike unworthy, and all equally undeserving; such views of grace will then afford proper ideas of what it really is, and compel the heart of every one, who is conscious of being the happy partaker of it, to cry out with the astonished disciple, "Lord, how is it that thou hast manifested thyself to me, and not unto the world?"

But it would be to leave the subject unfinished were we to rest here, without connecting with it some other delightful properties which belong thereto. The fact once admitted, that all our mercies originate in this predilection of grace, it must immediately follow, that as nothing new or undetermined could at any period arise in the divine mind, which had not existed there before, every appointment concerning salvation must have been formed in the eternal and unchangeable purposes "of God in Christ Jesus, before the world began." Hence, therefore, a door of the most important nature is at once thrown open by the discovery of this leading truth; and all those sweet and precious doctrines of the Father's mercy, the Redeemer's love, and the Spirit's grace, are unfolded to view, and brought forward with a strength of testimony that may indeed, astonish the mind, but which nothing can refute.

Sceptics may question, and impiously arraign both God's wisdom and his goodness. But my province is not to answer the angry accusations of the ungodly, but to satisfy the humble enquiries of the just. The apostle hath drawn a beautiful model for imitation in this particular, which may serve as a guide for every one who supposes himself called upon to make reply to the presumptuous reasoning of the unhumbled mind. He borrows a figure from common life, of the potter exercising power over "the same lump of clay, to

make one vessel unto honour, and another to dishonour," (Rom. ix. 21.) and takes occasion therefrom to shew that He who hath made all things, and "for whose pleasure they are and were created," hath an unquestionable authority to do what he will with his own; and to strike dumb, in everlasting silence, the profane tongue, which might be prompted to go further, and demand a reason; every thing is referred to his will who hath appointed all, and terminates in this: "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

If I have said enough to answer the first point which I proposed from this subject, I come now to the second. Having, I hope, fully ascertained the certainty of the doctrine, to this will very properly succeed the effects arising out of it.

Some have thought that the doctrine is in itself so ill calculated to induce any holy effects, that it throws to the ground the whole system of religion and morality. And *others* have gone so far as to insist upon it, that an attention to the means of grace is superseded thereby, and becomes unnecessary. You will hear men of this complexion, not unfrequently, demanding of what use can be the practice of any religious or moral duty? For if a man be chosen in Christ, he is eternally safe, let him do what he may; if he be not, he is sure to be lost, let him do what he can. But these are rather the sayings of light and inconsiderate persons, than the sober and godly reflections of the wise and serious. I venture to assert, that of all subjects tending, under God's grace, to induce the greatest attainments in godliness and virtue, the doctrine of being chosen in Christ to salvation and happiness is the highest and the best. And, moreover, I hope that before the subject is finished, I shall be able to prove to the clearest demonstration, that no possible argument is of equal force with this, to form the mind to the exercise of all those christian graces, which nu-

questionably are among the truest evidences of the renewed life.

A few observations on this branch of our subject will set the matter in a clear point of view.

The apostle Paul, after directing an animated discourse to the church at Philippi, in which he had been insisting, with great earnestness, on some of the leading doctrines of the gospel, makes this as the immediate and unavoidable inference of the whole. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Philip. iv. 8.) Hence, nothing can be more evident than that the apostle considered a clear apprehension of the great blessings of redemption, and a conscious sense of being personally interested in them, as the most powerful of all arguments to an holy life and conversation. And, indeed, if it can be supposed that such motives should fail, every inferior consideration must prove ineffectual.

Let us examine this claim, under each of the great branches of duty which constitute the devout and social obligations, either as it concerns our deportment towards God, our neighbour, or ourselves.

As it concerns our duty towards God. No appeal to the heart, surely, can be equal to this. For if a conscious sense of having become the distinguished object of divine favour, when every thing on our part justly made us the object of divine vengeance; if amidst the shipwreck of human nature, you, my brother, behold yourself as one brought to shore by an omnipotent arm, while the dead bodies of thousands are floating before you; if, in direct opposition to all your rebellion, ingratitude, and disobedience, God hath saved you, and called you with an holy calling: *what*

shall I say?—if, while God says, “I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb;” (Isaiah xlvi. 8.) and yet, notwithstanding all this, for “his great love wherewith he hath loved you, even when you were dead in sin, he hath quickened you together with Christ;” (Ephes. ii. 5.) can the imagination form to itself any one argument like this, to stimulate to godliness and virtue? And will any one venture to suppose that the mind which is dead and insensible to such a claim as this would be alive to any other?

Consider the subject also in another relation, as it concerns the duty we owe our neighbour. That the apostle Paul thought the distinguishing mercy of God to be the strongest persuasive in the mind, to lead to the practice of all the obligations between man and man, is evident; for, upon a remarkable occasion, (while exhorting the Colossians to such duties) he enforces their observance from this very cause: “Put on (says he) as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.” As if the consciousness of being so chosen, and so distinguished by divine mercy, impelled the heart to the observance of all tenderness and compassion. And the apostle urges yet further, that in the unavoidable offences of life, which from the frailty of our poor fallen nature, after all endeavours to the contrary, will come; believers, of all men, are called upon “to forbear one another, and to forgive one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven them.” (Coloss. iii. 12, 13.) And who is there that can arise from before the mercy-seat, under a deep sense of being remitted ten thousand talents, and can go forth, and take a fellow sinner by the throat, for the payment of an hundred pence? Surely the unanswerable appeal of the apostle can never cease to vibrate in the ear of every one who hath heard and

known the joyful sound: "beloved, if God so loved us, how ought we also to love one another!" (1 John iv. 11.)

And in respect to the blessed effects which a just sense of being chosen in Christ is calculated to produce in the heart, as to the duty we owe ourselves; it is a well known character, and, in fact, the truest evidence that the work of grace is begun in the soul, that "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts. For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

I challenge the whole world, therefore, to bring forward such motives as these, and which naturally, (or rather I should have said graciously) spring out of this doctrine, for reforming the heart, and regulating the morals of mankind.

But though I contend that these considerations are superior to every other, to induce such a train of conduct in the heart of man, yet I am free to confess, that neither these considerations, nor any other, are in themselves of sufficient influence to give a new tide and current to the affections. It must be God "who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." All our sufficiency is from him. But, herein lieth the excellency of our present doctrine. For it is a circumstance intimately connected with our subject, and which I particularly beg none will overlook, that the exercise of those christian graces doth not depend upon the fickle purpose of man, but on the unchangeable love of God. Remember the text. He that *chooseth* his people *ordaineth* them also to bring forth fruit: and the same grace which appoints, affords power to perform. The charter of grace runs in these words: "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever. I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in

their heart, that they shall not depart from me." (Jeremiah xxxii. 39, 40.) Here, then, lies the security, and which no other source beside can give. God undertakes for the accomplishment of the whole, in answering both for himself and for his people. *I will not, saith God, and they shall not.*

And what is the real matter of fact, as it is found in the experience of mankind? Look, I beg of you, abroad into the world, and see, whether among those who profess their conviction in this doctrine, they are at the same time less devout towards God, less just, or friendly to their neighbours; or whether they are immoral in themselves. You know the reverse to be the case. For, if they are true to their principles, they are, on the contrary, "examples to believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." They know, and their lives bear testimony to that knowledge, that "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, teaching them that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." And this is, and must be, the one uniform desire of their hearts, that "He who gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, might purify them unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus ii. 12, 13, 14.)

I have only, in conclusion, to beg of God the Spirit to make our subject profitable, both to *saint* and *sinner*, under his blessed influence.

To the *former*, I would say, do not forget, my brother, to seek grace from God, upon every occasion in life, to accustom yourself to trace all your mercies up to this fountain head. Depend upon it, that you will find a double sweetness therefrom in every one of them. Even the most common providences will then

appear to you not without some special commission from Him, whose wisdom is everlastingly employed for you, and whose faithfulness assures you, that "all things," how trifling soever they may seem, or how unpromising soever they may appear, "work together for good to them that love God, and who are the called according to his purpose." And tell me, if you can, what life can be so pleasant, as that life of faith, which is for ever living on the unchangeable purposes of God in Christ, issuing, as they are, from an everlasting love, and manifesting themselves in all the multiform methods of his grace? And to the *latter* I would very affectionately observe, that how unconcerned soever you may at present fancy yourself to be, in all the grand interests of this doctrine, do not depart, my brother, without taking with you a short observation to correct those ideas.

As it is the divine favour, and not our merit, which directs God in the choice of his people, so is it, from the same free and sovereign cause all mercies flow. It is his grace, and not your worth, which hath fixed the bounds of your habitation. It is from the same grace that your lot is cast in this blessed land, where God is truly known. It is equally from the same predisposing grace that you are this day brought under a preached gospel. Is it not, then, reasonable to infer, that if so much grace hath been displayed in providing the *means*, the whole will be displayed in the accomplishment of the *end*? Ask your own heart a few questions. Do you bless God that you were born in those highly-favoured climes where the pure gospel is preached? Is it a matter of thankfulness with you that you are brought under the sound of it this day? And would it be the joy of your heart "to know the truth, that the truth may make you free?" If your heart can truly say, "Yes," to these enquiries, depend upon it, though you know it not, you are not far from

the kingdom of God. You see this day around you many who were once as you are, and who are now the happy partakers of God's unspeakable gift. You may behold them in the enjoyment of this rich mercy, reading their pardons on their knees in transports of rejoicing. Beg of God, then, to be made receivers of the same grace. Say to the Father of mercies, in that sweet scripture, "The companions hearken to thy voice, cause me to hear it." (Cant. viii. 13.) In a word, let a man of this description make the same experiment in spiritual things, which is done in natural concerns. Suppose a company of beggars at the gate of a prince, waiting for a supply, without which they must perish for ever; and suppose, that he hath not only bestowed the mercy to thousands and tens of thousands, yet his bounty is not at all diminished, but remains the same, in an endless profusion; and suppose, moreover, that he hath caused it to be proclaimed, that "all that come he will in no wise cast out!" would any poor perishing creature depart while such a proclamation of mercy is sounding? would he despair under such encouraging circumstances?

I add no more, but an earnest prayer, that God the Holy Ghost may awaken many a heart, and send home many an humble mind, under the pleasing assurance of being personally interested in the words of the apostle: "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." (1 Peter ii. 9, 10.)

SERMON II.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON, NEVER BEFORE PRINTED, PREACHED
LORD'S DAY MORNING, JULY 9, 1826, AT THE BROADWAY
CHURCH, WESTMINSTER.*

JUDGES XIII. 19, 20.

And the angel did wonderously ; and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground.

THE want of the true spiritual knowledge, and apprehension of the glorious Person of our most glorious Christ, is the great cause of all the variety in the systems of faith, which, in the present day of the church, divide and subdivide the Lord's people. I say, *the Lord's people*, for such they all are proved to be, when by regeneration they are made spiritually alive to the exercise of their spiritual faculties, however on certain points they do not see alike, into the great things of God. Hence it is remarkable, that the Holy Ghost by Paul, when writing to the church of Ephesus, after blessing God the Father in the opening of his subject, for having chosen the church in Christ, and adopted the church in Christ, and accepted the church in Christ, from before the foundation of the world, directed the apostle to pray for this "spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ," to be given to the church in Christ. He saith, at the sixteenth verse of the first Chapter,

* In the original edition of these works, a Sermon on this text of scripture was inserted in one of the volumes ; but as that was in a great measure *sacramental*, it hath been thought proper by the author to give the present, and take away the former. The Sacramental Discourses are gathered into one view, in a separate volume, in these works.

that “after he had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love unto all the saints, he ceased not to give thanks for them, making mention of them in his prayers.” You observe, therefore, from these expressions, that the apostle considered them as regenerated and that they had faith in Christ; and yet they were but little apprehensive, in the manner he desired, of the Person of Christ. And Paul prayed for them, that there might be given unto them the “Spirit of wisdom,” to know him, and the “Spirit of revelation,” to enjoy him; so as in the knowledge of him, and the enjoyment of him, in such manifestations from him as to live upon him, and to live to him, and daily to walk with him, they might know “what was the hope of his calling.”

The misapprehension of the Person of Christ cannot but induce a misapprehension of the complete and finished salvation by Christ. The church of Christ, even in some, of whom might have been hoped better things, is apt to confound regeneration, or the new birth, with the conversion of the heart to Christ; whereas they are distinct things. No man, until by regeneration he is made a new creature, is rendered capable of discerning things spiritually. But when, by this sovereign act of God, he is made spiritually alive “to know the things which are freely given to him of God,” he then is prepared for the divine instruction, in “all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” God the Holy Ghost, who hath quickened him, that was before dead in trespasses and sins, into a new and spiritual life in Christ; then leads him on to a state of conversion before God, and in the knowledge of Christ’s person, in the apprehension of the eternal, underived, and self-existence of his nature; shews him the infinite greatness and completeness of his salvation; and that “the church is complete in Him,

which is the head of all principality and power." (Coloss. ii. 10.)

Hence where this spiritual apprehension of the *Person* of our most glorious Christ, and the *incommunicable work* of our most glorious Christ in redemption, is known, and felt, and lived upon, and enjoyed, there will be nothing variable in the principle of faith, but that promise will be in the daily privilege of the child of God: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." (Isaiah xxvi. 3.) But where there is an ignorance of Christ's person, there will be an ignorance no less of the infinite merit and efficacy of his salvation. And hence ariseth all that variety in the systems of faith, with which the church is divided and subdivided, even among the Lord's people.

It is very blessed to observe how many and how various the gracious ways which the Lord Jesus took, to make manifest his love to the church, by vision and by revelation, by type and similitude, in the early ages of the church, until the time came to make himself known to Israel, by openly tabernacling among us. The prophets and inspired writers of the holy scripture, with one voice concurred in preparing the church for his reception. "His goings forth (said the prophet Micah, v. 2) have been from of old, from everlasting." And another prophet, even Habakkuk, much to the same amount, said, "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed." (Habak. iii. 13.) And the Lord Jesus himself, in his well-known name of Wisdom, thus spake: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting." (Prov. viii. 22.) And agreeably to these declarations, we find, upon many occasions, in the Old Testament; the Lord

making manifestations of himself, sometimes in an human form, as that of a man, and sometimes in the form of an angel, as might best suit the purpose of his sovereign will and pleasure. And hence also those several institutions in ordinances and sacrifices, that by outward signs the church might learn things of an inward and spiritual tendency. With this view was the appointment of the *Paschal Lamb*, the *Rock* that followed Israel through the wilderness, and the *Manna* which victualled the camp. And as these, and every other shadow, had their substance in Christ, so the Holy Ghost, in the after-ages of the gospel church, explained all of them. "They did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink of the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." (1 Cor. x. 3, 4.)

A very beautiful illustration of this leading truth is given us in the words of my text, and the subject connected with it. In the days of the Judges, comprising a period of about *three hundred years*, it should seem that there had been no open vision: not that the Lord had left himself without witness, for in all ages "the Lord knoweth them that are his," and manifests himself to them, "otherwise than he doeth to the world." The revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which he was graciously pleased to make to Manoah and his wife, is here very circumstantially recorded. He first appeared in the form of an angel unto the woman when alone, and gave her some very blessed and gracious promises; afterwards to Manoah and his wife when together, and gave a further confirmation of these promises. Upon which Manoah said unto him, "I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord." My

text records the effect which followed: "And the angel did wonderously; and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground." Every word is important. Manoah had desired to know the angel's name, that when the event came to pass of the birth of the child promised, they might do him honour. This was not granted, for his name was secret. The Lord had said much to the same purpose, in a former age, to Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 29. But in process of time the mystery was revealed; for the prophet Isaiah, speaking of him, said, "his name shall be called Wonderful:" and then added, "Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah ix. 6.) And when the period arrived for the Lord's becoming flesh, and tabernacling among us, then the further name was revealed, which said, "thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.) It appears from the history of this transaction, that the angel did all; and Manoah and his wife did nothing; they only looked on. Here was beautifully represented, that redemption is the sole work of Christ: as he said himself by the prophet; "I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me." (Isaiah lxiii. 3.) And hence Manoah and his wife were the representatives of the whole church: for it is said, "they looked on." Yea, they could do nothing more than look on; neither in any age of the church can there be any that can do more than look on: for we are all simply *receivers*, and not part *doers*, in the vast work of salvation. But the

relation is not ended: "for it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame." Thus very blessedly showing, that Christ not only became a sacrifice for his people, but that he carried up with him his blood, as the full propitiation. The Holy Ghost, in after ages of the church, set this forth. John, in vision, saw this mighty angel standing at the altar, having a golden censer; and he tells the church, that "there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." (Rev. viii. 3, 4.) And yet, if possible, in plainer words, the Holy Ghost by Paul explained the blissful doctrine, when he said: "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. 11, 12.) Manoah and his wife, yea, the whole church of God, can only look on. All acceptation of the church is in Christ; all offerings can only be in Christ. Here in grace and hereafter in glory, all communion, fellowship, access, everlasting blessedness, holiness, happiness; all in Christ, and for Christ. And, lastly, the effects on Manoah and his wife, as then, so now, on every redeemed regenerated child of God, must always be the same; "they looked on, and fell on their faces to the ground." Never will the redeemed of the Lord lay lower in themselves, and the views they have of their nothingness and depravity, than when they are lifted up in the acceptation of Christ. The whole election of grace

then "cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive all honour and glory and power; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood!"

What I propose, in the further prosecution of this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to enable me, will be, in the first place, to take a short scriptural view of the Almighty Person spoken of in the text. Under the similitude of an angel he is said to have done *wonderously*. Secondly, here is the description of the church, under all her bearings, in the characters of Manoah and his wife; for they were the representatives of the whole body, and are said to have looked on, doing nothing, until overwhelmed by the conviction of what they beheld, "they fell on their faces to the ground."

And before I enter upon it, I would desire you to pause with me at the threshold, and with me look up for grace, that both preacher and hearer may be brought under the anointings of the Holy One, by whose divine teaching alone, it is said, we can "know all things." (1 John ii. 20.) And it is a very blessed consideration for our encouragement herein, that it is promised, "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." (Isaiah liv. 13.) When by regeneration the Lord's people are rendered capable of receiving *spiritual* instruction, they find that all *human* attainments are nothing helpful in the divine life. "The world by wisdom know not God." (1 Cor. i. 21.) And what tends to endear this yet more, is the assurance of scripture, that as *human* learning cannot give the least help to the *spiritual* understanding, so all that are taught of God are all alike taught of God, "in all things which pertain to life and godliness." The babe in Christ, and the fathers in God, are all in one and the same school, and all learn under the same

Master. And lastly, to mention no more, little ones or great ones, the man of strong faith, or the believer of weak confidence, all are equally justified, when by regeneration they are brought into spiritual life; for it is not the degree of faith, but the principle of faith itself: not what they feel, but what Christ is. All, like Manoah and his wife, fall on their faces to the ground, and do nothing; when they have the spiritual apprehension but to look on, while beholding the Angel of the Covenant becoming the whole of salvation, and *doing wonderously*. The Lord refresh our souls at this time with his anointings in the spiritual contemplation!

I begin as I proposed, namely, to take a short scriptural view of the Almighty Person, spoken of in the text, under the similitude of an "angel doing wonderously." And without running over a large tract of holy ground in the scripture, which, however profitable, could not be brought within the limits of a Sermon, it will be sufficient for my present purpose to observe, that all the manifestations the Lord was pleased to make of himself, during the Old Testament dispensation, were designed to prepare the minds of his people, for his more open display of his love to them under the New. He it was, as One of the Holy Three, that in the fulness of time would become the visible Jehovah. Hence, under whatever form he appeared, the personality of his character was preserved. And that He, who diversified his appearance, whether in the shape of an angel or man, was the same, who in his divine nature was "in the form of God, and who thought it no robbery to be equal with God," is plain from many scriptures. But one will be enough in confirmation. In that memorable prophecy, the Holy Ghost gave the church by Malachi when looking into the day of the gospel, and giving proclamation of John the Baptist becoming the herald

of Christ, the Lord thus spake : " Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me : and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger (or angel, as the word means) of the covenant, whom ye delight in : behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Malachi iii. 1.) Here observe, that the same which is called " the messenger of the covenant," is no less called " the Lord of his temple." A decided testimony of his own eternal power and Godhead. And indeed, without this almightiness of person there would have been no competency for those mighty works he wrought. It is said, that " he did wonderfully." And there were those distinctions of character in him which never could, or did, mark any other. All the divine attributes centered in him ; " for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Coloss. ii. 9.) And of Him it is no less said, that " the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah liii. 6.) Well might it be said, " the angel did wonderfully."

But we must not stop here. All the divine transactions, that followed in this solemn scene, in the presence of Manoah and his wife, carried a beautiful correspondence to the whole ; and all shadowed forth, as was intended by our God, the outlines of his Almighty work of redemption. For he not only performed every act that was done of the sacrifice in the offering ; and who in after ages, by " one offering of himself once offered would perfect for ever them that are sanctified ;" - but He himself would present it. He must priest it in heaven (if I may so speak) as well as upon earth : not only " finish transgression and make an end of sin : " but he must plead the everlasting efficacy of it, for the acceptation of his people. Hence when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar ; " he himself ascended in the

name." And hence, in confirmation that redemption work is finished ; he hath sent down all those ascension gifts, for which " he is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts v. 31.) Thus blessedly complete in his own Almighty Person, and in his own incommunicable work, is our most glorious gracious Lord Jesus. And well might Manoah and his wife look on ; and well may all like them, who belong to Christ, look only, and wholly to Him, for nothing can be added to, or taken from, his finished redemption. (Isaiah xlv. 22.) " Neither (as Peter in after days stated it, when God the Holy Ghost had blessedly taught him the mighty truth, and written it in the living tablets of his heart) is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.)

Thus much may be sufficient to answer, upon the present occasion, the first branch of the discourse, what I proposed in taking a short view of the Almighty Person spoken of in the text. I now proceed to the second part, namely, the description of the Church, under all her bearings, in the characters of Manoah and his wife, who were here the representatives of the whole body, when they looked on, did nothing, but " fell on their faces to the ground."

That a total inability on the part of man to contribute an atom towards his own salvation, as marking the whole of the Adam fall transgressors, is so plain and palpable a truth, shining through every page of the Bible, as if written with a sun beam. And yet not one of the apostate race ever did, or ever can, believe it until by regeneration they are made spiritually alive, to behold the leprosy of sin, and cry out for cleansing in the blood of Christ. Hence the laboured attempts of reform, by all whose consciences are alarmed by sin, to set up a somewhat of righte-

ousness of their own to obtain the favour of God.⁴ And never, until by an act of sovereign grace they are born again, can any man learn that divine scripture: "the heritage of the servants of the Lord," is the Lord himself: "and their righteousness is of me saith the Lord." (Isaiah liv. 17.) Hence, there is not a shade of difference between the professor and profane: both while unregenerate, are alike dead in trespasses and sins, and alike incapable of offering any sacrifice to God.

Secondly. In all those instances, where a work of grace hath passed upon the heart; there begins a corresponding life of grace, in which the regenerated soul loseth all self confidence. "For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Cor. v. 17.) And then it is discovered, through divine teaching, that neither tears nor prayers; neither alms-deeds, nor offerings, have any thing to recommend the sinner before God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the whole of salvation, and the sinner's only hope. Like Manoah, and his wife, when his Almighty Person and sacrifice is held up to our view, like them, we look on and do nothing. All is complete in Him; and the sensible sinner views himself in himself, helpless and hopeless, and stays himself on the Lord. This was beautifully represented to the Church in the wilderness, when the Israelites stung by the fiery flying serpents found no remedy but in looking on, as commanded of the Lord by Moses, to the figure of the serpent on the pole; in which look they were healed. Hence, our most glorious Lord made application of this to himself. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John iii. 14, 15.) Our most glorious Lord is still doing *wonderously*; while he gives grace to his people to look on by faith;

and behold Him the full sacrifice, offering, and oblation for sin; and himself ascending in the flame from off the altar of his own divine nature, having obtained eternal redemption for his church and people.

Once more let us look at this marvellous transaction, and enquire whether the same blessed effects have followed our review of it, as did Manoah and his wife, who, when looking on it, "fell on their faces to the ground." Yes! every child of God, who hath been spiritually taught to behold Christ in his Almightyness of character, will instantly fall down in the dust before God, in self loathing, and self abhorrence. Not to say with Manoah, through the weakness of his faith; "We shall surely die because we have seen God:" but in the fuller assurance of divine mercy, in words similar to those of his wife, "if the Lord were pleased to kill us he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things." Let every regenerated child of God that hears me, take confidence in the same. Never, never, would the Lord in his Trinity of Persons, have made such a revelation of grace, in the everlasting love of God the Father; the full, complete, and finished salvation, in the Person, and incommunicable work of the Lord Jesus Christ; the quickening, regenerating, anointing, and sealing, of God the Holy Ghost; had it not been, to magnify the sovereignty of his mercy, and to demonstrate that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. v. 20, 21.)

And now what is the result of the whole? Suffer me to ask who among you hath such exalted views of our most glorious Christ, as to know him, as Paul speaks, in the almighty of his person; and "the

exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe?" There will be nothing unsettled and fluctuating in our faith while our souls are established in the knowledge of Him. "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee." (Psalm. ix. 10.) And while we know his name, we cannot but know the completeness of our salvation in Him. Lord Jesus! do thou do wonderously this day, as thou didst before Manoah and his wife. And as by the one offering of thyself once offered, thou hast perfected for ever them that are sanctified, give us such a clear eye of faith as to behold thee entered into heaven in the full merits of thy blood; that "having such an High Priest passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, we may hold fast our profession," and fall on our faces to the ground, in token of our acceptation in thee, the Lord our righteousness! Amen.

SERMON III.

RELIGION A PERSONAL CONCERN.

JOHN XI. 23.

The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

I HAVE been often led to admire, and in that admiration to adore, the divine goodness, when contemplating the wonderful display of grace, which God the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to adopt, in order to convey a proper sense of his distinguishing mercies to the soul. His attention to them in this respect is certainly no small testimony of the blessed Spirit's love and condescension to his people. Not satisfied with making a general proclamation of the precious things of the gospel, according as their several necessities require, he carries on his divine operations in the heart, in a yet more intimate and endearing manner, and makes them personal, appropriate, and particular. They come by his appointment to the soul, like letters expressly directed, and speak to the person to whom they are addressed in a language similar to that of Paul at Antioch; "to *you* is the word of this salvation sent." (Acts xiii. 26.) And certainly there is a sweetness in the conscious possession of this divine favour, as being special and distinguishing, which, like the "white stone and the new name, no man knows, saving he that receives it." (Rev. ii. 17.)

Even in the common blessings of God's providence, those which are eminently marked, are as eminently valued. Have you never found occasion, in your walk through life, to observe how God hath distinguished *some* in this respect beyond *others*? And hath your heart never been warmed and drawn out in praises to him, when from a comparative view of your superior accommodations, you could not but be struck with the difference? If not, how exceedingly are you to be pitied! Not only that you should be so deficient both in observation and in thankfulness, but also, in that you must have lost the sweetest part of every special blessing, in not discerning the kind hand that hath given it. I tell you, my brother, and I tell you nothing more than what daily experience proves to be true, that even carnal men, as much disposed as they are to call in question the doctrine of distinguishing *grace*, not only allow a distinguishing *providence*, but even value themselves upon it. The rich man would never idolize his riches as he doth, if he were not sensible of the difference between him and his poorer neighbour; neither would the proud man plume himself upon his title, if the whole world were called by the same name. If then, in temporal concerns, men of no religion know how to appreciate their good things, as they call them, merely because they are not common; shall not the soul, that is conscious of possessing the distinguishing mercies of grace, be led to prize them the more because they are distinguishing?

This doctrine of a personal interest in the great concerns of religion, opens a sweet subject for discourse, and (if I mistake not) is strikingly illustrated in the instance to which the text refers.

The disconsolate sisters of Lazarus were indulging grief over their brother's death, when the Lord Jesus drew nigh the village of Bethany, where they resided.

It appears from the history, that Mary, (the one of whom the text speaks) at the first information of the Redeemer's arrival, felt no inclination to go to him. Probably her mind was so absorbed in grief, that she paid but little or no attention to the account; or probably her sorrows had so overwhelmed her, that forgetting the greatness of Jesus' character, she concluded that his visit had been postponed too long to afford any relief. "Hope deferred (the wise man saith) maketh the heart sick" (Prov. xiii. 12); and unbelief will be for ever suggesting the impossibility in particular cases. "Thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master." (Luke viii. 49.) But as soon as her sister, who had hastened to Jesus on the first rumour of his arrival, returned with the account in the text, "The Master is come, and calleth for *thee*;" this personal enquiry and demand roused her attention, and she arose quickly and came to him.

In those features of character, in the instance of this woman, we may, I think, without violence to the text, discover strong leading particularities to distinguish the *special* from the more *general* calls of the Gospel. This is the use which I propose to make, as far as God shall be pleased to enable me, of the words of the text, abstracted from every other part of the history with which they are connected.

In the prosecution of this subject, I shall in the *first* place attempt to explain what is meant by the Master's being come, and in what way he may be said to call. *Secondly*, I shall endeavour to illustrate that doctrine, which is manifested every day in life, that the outward calls of the Gospel, unaccompanied with the special and inward power, always lose their effect: like Mary in the text, until the call is personal and particular, there is an insensibility and indifference to all its demands. *Lastly*, I shall proceed to shew, that when the Gospel is preached "with the Holy

Ghost sent down from heaven," and is directed to the heart, with his special application, this gives it an efficacy, as in the case of Mary in the text, and demonstrates, that the Master is not only come and calleth, but that he calleth personally for *thee*.

Each of these points will require separate and distinct considerations: and it will be a very happy illustration of the subject, if God the Holy Ghost shall be pleased, from a general relation, to make it personal and particular, in giving some poor unawakened sinner present, who hath hitherto disregarded all the *outward* calls of God's word, an *inward* conviction of his grace; and that precious Scripture be fulfilled in his experience, which saith; "the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." (John v. 25.)

Our *first* proposal is to explain what is meant by the Master's being come, and in what way he may be said to call.

In answer to this enquiry, I consider myself perfectly authorized, from the analogy of Scripture, to interpret the phrase, as a comprehensive expression to denote the manifestation of "the Son of God in the flesh." That the Lord Jesus is the glorious person spoken of under the appellation of *Master*, is so very obvious, that I conceive it would be altogether superfluous in me to prove. I take it for granted, no one can require information, that by whatever name the Redeemer is distinguished, in either Testament of Scripture, his person and character are too plainly characterized to occasion any misapprehension in this particular. The phrase itself, of the Master being come, is only another method of expression to say, that He who is "the desire of all nations;" the Shiloh to whom "the gathering of the people should be;" the "Messenger of the Covenant, whom they delight

in ;” is now come to his temple. The day hath at length dawned upon the world, which “ Abraham saw afar off ;” which many “ prophets and righteous men ” desired to see ; and to which all the faithful among the Old Testament saints had been looking forward, from age to age, with the most anxious expectation ; and for the approach of which every enlightened eye had so long been directed towards Zion. The Sun of righteousness had now arisen with healing in his wings.

And hence among those who were waiting for this consolation of Israel, what holy joy burst forth from every heart in the moment of his appearing ! Hence good old Simeon, to whom it had been revealed by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, until he had seen the Lord’s Christ : no sooner was Jesus brought into the temple, than under the same divine teaching, he took him up in his arms, blessed God, and said ; “ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” Hence Philip, from the same impressions, on the first view of Christ, communicated the transporting intelligence to Nathaniel, saying, “ We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth.” And hence the beloved apostle, John, under the same conviction, writes to the church ; “ We know (says he) that the Son of God is come, for he hath given us an understanding to know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.” And in like manner, in every individual instance, where the Spirit of the Lord Jesus hath pointed to the person of Christ, and revealed him to the heart, as the Holy One of Israel, the Saviour, there will be, more or less, the same blessed assurance. For the apostle expressly saith, and the heart of every true believer bears a corresponding testimony to the same, that “ every spirit that con-

fesseth Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." (1 John iv. 2.)

And if the Master be come, the purpose of his mission will be immediately understood, and the manner in which he may be said to call, not very difficult to shew. For in every place, where his Gospel is faithfully preached, as a full, free, and finished salvation, we have as complete and satisfying a testimony of his being come, as they who saw him in the day of his own personal ministry, and heard the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. Every renewed call of his word, every repeated administration of his ordinances, the many public means of grace established in his church, and handed down in perpetual succession, and the numberless private opportunities of hearing his voice in the ministry of his holy Scriptures; all these are so many plain and decided testimonies that the "Master is come," and that "The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof: out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." (Psalm l. 1, 2.) Nay, what are all those precious manifestations in the sacred ordinances of worship, which true believers in Christ so value, and in which at times, they feel so much real joy and consolation, but evidences of the same great truth.

Speak, ye truly regenerated believers, whether you do not know, by heart-felt experience, what it is to have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ? Doth not Jesus sometimes draw nigh unto you in the sacred visits of worship, and reveal himself with a loving kindness and favour, which you esteem better than life itself? Have you never found it good, as the disciples did in the Mount, when at certain seasons you have sat under the shadow of his ordinances with great delight, and his fruit hath been

sweet to your taste? And hath not your heart very frequently burned within you, like those in their journey to Emmaus, when, in the hearing or reading of his word, Jesus himself hath drawn nigh, by the sweet teachings of his blessed Spirit, hath "talked to you by the way, and opened to you his Scriptures?" Let who will dispute the testimony of spiritual influences on the soul, you know the reality of them, by a personal experience, too decidedly to question. And therefore you know that the Son of God is come, as much now, in those secret visits of his grace, as when in the days of his flesh he more openly "manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him."

And you no less, who are unconscious of any operations of this kind in your own soul, and perhaps are tempted therefrom to dispute their existence in the mind of others; yet explain to me if you can, upon any other principle than the one I am contending for, that astonishing effect which you sometimes see, and therefore cannot but acknowledge to have taken place in the lives of many around you. From what cause is it, that the world beholds them changed from sin to righteousness, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God? If the Scriptures declare that it was "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the Devil," and you discover that such consequences are really induced in the conduct of *some* whom you know; that they, who were once darkness, are now light in the Lord, and walk as children of the light: why should you question the *cause*, when the *effect* so loudly proclaims the correspondence to it? Say, if you can, and let reason be the arbiter in the decision, if the coming of the Son of God were to accomplish such purposes, and such purposes are really accomplished in the lives and conversation of the faithful in all ages; what better

proof can be desired in confirmation of the fact? The sun's warmth, which the blind man feels, ought to convince him from what source that warmth is produced, though he never saw a ray of his brightness, to teach him that he gives light also.

How unavailable soever this argument may be, to induce in you a similar change of heart, (and unavailable it must for ever prove, unless commissioned by a divine power,) yet the fact cannot but be allowed, in many instances, to be indisputable. For, bad as the world is, and ready as it always will be, to ascribe such effects to enthusiasm, and sometimes even to worse causes; yet make itself cannot, in numberless examples, dare to deny, but that there have been men in all ages of the church, and, blessed be God, many living testimonies may be still found, of irreproachable conduct, who have professed to be under the guidance of divine influences, and who, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shine as lights in the world."

Such evidences of the blessed effects of grace in the heart, carry with them the most decisive conviction, that the God of all grace is come; and while they stamp, with an indelible seal, the assurance in the minds of the faithful themselves, they serve to illustrate and confirm that solemn scripture, which God hath left upon record, as an evidence to the ungodly; "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, yet they shall know that there hath been a prophet among them." (Ezek. ii. 5.)

Before I dismiss the consideration of this first branch of my subject, I beg it may be understood, that while I am contending for the truth of this doctrine, that the Master is come, and is calling by the various methods of his word and ordinances, I do not mean to intimate as if there had been no manifestation of the Lord Jesus in the earlier ages of his church,

previous to his incarnation. This would be totally foreign to my meaning. So far, I confess, is this from being my idea, that I venture to believe, and I think it would be no difficult matter to prove, the Lord Jesus, who was set up for the purposes of redemption, as the Covenant God-man from everlasting, hath been manifesting himself, upon a great variety of occasions, in that character, in all periods of his church. And if I were called upon for any single evidence in confirmation of it, I should, without hesitation, refer to that very striking testimony of the apostle John, in the opening of his gospel, where, when speaking of the Lord Jesus, he saith; "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." (John i. 10.)

Hence, therefore, if Jesus was in the world, and had a church in the world from the beginning, though the world knew him not, yet to his church he was always known; and no doubt, to his people he was continually manifesting himself, otherwise than he doth to the world. What, indeed, are all those wonderful relations we meet with in the Old Testament Scripture, of the appearance of the Shechinah, but proofs of this kind? Believers knew him in his adorable character, and saw him with the eye of faith long before his incarnation. Multitudes of the heirs of promise lived and died in the faith of the coming Saviour, as multitudes have since lived and died in the faith of his finished salvation. They beheld by the eye of faith the dawn of that glorious day in which we live, as under the full meridian.

The sun of the spiritual world, like the sun of the natural, though not risen above the horizon, in the full orb of his glory, had yet shed his beams sufficiently around, to indicate his approach, and to illumine the darkness. Hence, as an apostle bears them record, "these all died in faith, not having received the pro-

mises, but having seen them afar off, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Heb. xi. 13.)

If I have said enough in proof of my first proposition, that "the Master is come, and calleth," in the various methods of his word and ordinances; I shall now proceed as was promised, to the *second* consideration, namely, to shew that the outward calls of the gospel, unaccompanied with a special and inward power, must always lose their effect: as in the case of Mary in the text, until that call is personal and particular, there will remain a total insensibility and indifference to all its demands.

When we consider the infinite importance of salvation, in the everlasting welfare of the soul, one might be led to suppose, that this alone would occupy the great concern of man. That while the Redeemer is calling from his throne of glory in heaven, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," every eye would be directed towards the place whence came the joyful sound. And while his servants are following up the same blessed proclamation, in delivering his message on earth, that Christ Jesus is come to save sinners, every heart would be warmed, to receive with rapture and thanksgiving that faithful saying, which is, indeed, worthy of all acceptance.

In natural things, such is universally the case; you never find many arguments necessary, in order to prevail upon a poor naked creature to accept a garment to cover him. Neither will the hungry, nor the thirsty, need much persuasion to induce them to receive a supply to their wants. But in spiritual concerns, the sinner, who is totally void of all covering in himself to appear before God, cannot be prevailed upon, by all the reasoning of men, to accept the robe of Jesus' righteousness to clothe him; nor, though perishing, will he take of the bread of life, or

the water of life, notwithstanding they are offered to him freely, without money, and without price.

That these things are so, will hardly, I should suppose, be questioned, for the matter is certainly too obvious to admit dispute. But it will very naturally arise in the minds of the truly serious to inquire into the cause. Do such characters, it may be asked, really believe, what all the ordinances of the Christian religion are supposed to teach, that they are sinners before God, and have broken his righteous laws? Yes! Few men are hardy enough to suppose, but that "in many things they have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But hath it been properly represented to them also, what is the sure consequence of these things? Yes; it is perfectly understood; and no man in the present day of knowledge is supposed to be uninformed in this particular, that "the wages of sin is death;" and that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

But it may yet be questioned further, Hath the gospel's gracious proclamation of pardon and peace in the blood of the cross, been held forth to them at the same time, as a full, free, and finished salvation? Yes! *Faithful* preachers of the word are extremely cautious that they keep back nothing which is profitable to the people, but "daily, both in the temple, and in every house, cease not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ."

To what cause, then, can be ascribed that total indifference, and that strange insensibility, which men manifest to divine things, and by which they live in the very midst of light and knowledge, as without God in the world.

That there must be some latent source of evil wrapt up in the very heart of man, to induce such

effects, in an endless succession from age to age, can hardly be a doubt. But mankind would for ever have remained both ignorant of the cause, and of the means of recovery, if God himself had not graciously interposed, and condescended to give the information. He hath mercifully taught us in his holy word, that man, since the fall, is by nature in a state of blindness, and darkness, and ignorance with respect to divine things, and as unconscious of the spiritual apprehension of any one object of a spiritual nature, as if it had never been proposed to him.

From this unquestionable authority we learn, that our first father, when he lost his integrity, together with it lost his knowledge of his Maker; and that this was the death which, in dying he died—a spiritual, not a natural death: for as to animal faculties and functions, he lived many years after, in the full enjoyment of them. But by this awful apostacy from God, he lost all *spiritual* knowledge of God: and begetting a son, it is said, in his own likeness; that is, not in the likeness of his Maker, in which he was himself created, but in a fallen, faded, sinful, dark, and ignorant likeness; all his posterity are by nature partakers of the same.

Hence, though men possess the exercise of rational powers, and by the help of these can reason even upon divine subjects with a degree of accuracy which is sometimes astonishing; yet all the while, in respect to a real spiritual apprehension of those things, untaught by the Spirit of God, they will for ever remain unconscious of them. For their apprehension of these things is derived from the information of others, not from any knowledge in themselves: like one who relates a narrative of what he hath heard, not of what he himself hath known or seen; like the Pharisees who beheld the miracles of Jesus, and therefore could not deny the facts: and though com-

pelled to exclaim, "From whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?" yet felt no conviction to believe in him.

The apostle Paul, in a single verse of his inspired writings, hath both established the certainty of this doctrine and explained the cause of it. "The natural man (he says) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) And as if to draw a line of discrimination between persons of this description, and those of a contrary character, whose spiritual senses are brought into life and exercise to discern both good and evil, by the quickening operations of the Holy Ghost; he immediately adds, in the same verse, "but he that is spiritual judgeth all things."

And hence all those Scriptures which define the essential distinctions between a state of unawakened, unregenerated nature, and that of grace; while the one is said to have "the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; being past feeling, and given over to work all uncleanness with greediness:" nay, "even dead in trespasses and sins:" the other is declared to be "renewed in the spirit of the mind, and to be begotten again from dead works to serve the living and true God."

It is to this one source, therefore, of our fallen nature, while remaining in an unawakened, unregenerated state, as to the fountain head of all our misery, we trace up the whole of that indifference and insensibility which mark the character of the world in the rejection of the gospel. The "carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so then they

that are in the flesh cannot please God." Hence those very awful sights with which human life abounds. *Some*, like Mary, sunk in sorrow. *Others* lost in care. *Multitudes* swallowed up in the vortex of the world's pursuit: ambition, pleasure, wealth, and honour. With many a strong but ill-founded confidence, that all shall terminate happily, though they know not how. And with as *many more*, a total disregard whether it will or not.

Hence, though the Son of God is *come*, and *calleth* by his word, and by his ordinances; though "Wisdom standeth without, and lifteth up her voice in the street;" neither invitations, nor intreaties; neither the sweet melodious sounds of the gospel, nor the dreadful denunciations of the law; no, nor all the dispensations of providence in the world, either in a way of mercy or of judgment, will avail, until the same almighty grace which *calls*, graciously gives with that *call* a disposition to obey, and makes the sinner "willing in the day of his power." God hath drawn this distinction between the *outward* means of his grace, and the *inward* operation of his Holy Spirit; and most decidedly taught, that the same hand which formed the world, must be stretched forth to frame the sinner's heart anew, or he will be dead in trespasses and sins to all eternity.

It is not enough, as is evident, in the instance of Mary in the text, that the "Master is come," and that he *calleth*, by the *outward* ministry of his word, or in any of the various methods of his providence or grace: there must be an *inward* accompanying power, by a personal application of the Spirit's work on the heart, to render it effectual. But when this glorious act of sovereignty is wrought in the soul, and the sinner is led to see that Jesus not only speaks, but speaks personally to him; then are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and like the man

spoken of by the apostle, "he falleth down upon his knees, and will worship God, and report that God was in that word of a truth." (1 Cor. xiv. 25.)

I hope I have fully prepared your mind by these observations on the *former* branches of my subject, for what remains yet to be considered under the *last* particular; namely, that when the gospel is preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and is directed to the heart with a special and personal application, this manifests, that the Master is not only come, and calleth, but that he "calleth for *thee*." And this part of our discourse, considered as connected with the happiness of the individual, becomes the most interesting of the whole.

If such effects as I have described, under the preceding head of the subject, be induced by the fall, and man really is, by nature, blind and unconscious of any one act of spiritual apprehension; nay, even dead in trespasses and sins; nothing can be more evident, than that a recovery from such a state, if effected, must be altogether supernatural, and, consequently, the sole result of a divine power. None but He who created the soul can form the faculties of the soul anew. The same who at first commanded light to shine out of darkness, "must shine in the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

In the accomplishment of this act of mercy, God hath been pleased to appoint various means of grace, by way of conveying his energy to the soul; causing them to act as mediums and instruments to this purpose; yet still reserving to himself the sole efficient operation, to render them in every instance effectual. And this distinction is, of all other points, the most essential to be preserved in the mind, in order to form a just criterion between the *common* means of grace, simply considered as means, and the *special* applica-

cation of them, when they are at any time rendered effectual, under the operation of the Holy Ghost. Gospel ordinances, how excellent soever they are in themselves, are but ordinances ; and, like the pool of Bethesda, or the pool of Siloam, possess no medicinal quality in themselves. They only become so when commissioned by Him.

When the apostle Paul preached the word to many that came to him unto his own lodgings, the result was, that *some believed* the things which were spoken, and *some believed not*. Whereas, had the efficacy depended either upon the word or the preacher, certainly in all instances the success would have been the same. And still, to mark this great point with stronger precision, and to manifest from what source the whole blessing must be derived ; when the same apostle was made instrumental to the conversion of a certain woman of Thyatira, the reason is immediately added ; “ whose heart the Lord opened, so that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul.”

But what I am chiefly desirous at this time to impress upon your mind is this ; that in every instance where this divine work is formed in the heart, it must be *individually* exercised.

In religion, as in all matters of a secular nature, it is the right of property which a man hath in it which constitutes the value. General, unapplied mercies, never reach the heart. They must become special, personal, and particular. They must come, directed immediately to you, or to me, before that they will interest the affections of either. So that it is not enough, that the proclamation of mercy in the gospel runs in those sweet words of invitation : “ Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and drink !” The soul, however thirsty, will still be asking, Is that call addressed to *me* ? May *I* venture to come ? Hence, therefore, a conscious sense of a personal

interest in all the privileges of the gospel, certainly forms the sweetest part of it. Job felt all this, when he said, "I know that *my* Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in *my flesh* shall I see God; whom *I* shall see for *myself*, and *mine eyes* shall behold, and not another for me."

And Paul had the same personal consciousness, when he declared, that the life he then lived in the flesh, he lived by the faith of the Son of God, who loved *me* (said the apostle) and gave himself for *me*. The most precious part of the manifestation, which God made of himself to Moses at the bush, without all question was that in which the Lord called him by his name. Before *that* took place, what Moses saw, however it excited his wonder and arrested his attention, yet it did not become personally interesting. And I cannot but think, that when the Jubilee trumpet sounded in the camp of Israel, however generally pleasing it might be to every one, who knew how to appreciate the blessings of freedom; yet the sweetest note vibrated on the captive's ear. He knew, though he had never heard it before, the joyful sound.

If your ideas correspond with mine, that this consciousness of a personal interest in the Master's call is, of all others, the most important point to be attended to by every individual; the question will immediately arise out of it, by what means shall it be known? And the answer is as direct. The secret, still, small voice, in which the Lord speaks personally to the heart, like the unknown source of the air, which bloweth where it listeth, is discoverable only by its effects. "We hear the sound thereof," and we see its operation, "but we cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

It is from the sacred impressions left upon the mind,

we infer the call of God. And when those impressions are clearly traced, which the Scriptures teach us to expect from the awakening voice of the Master, there can be no more reason to question the reality of the voice having been heard, than when, in the case of Samuel, the Lord called him: "Eli perceived, (though he heard it not) that the Lord had called the child." (1 Sam. iii. 8.)

Respecting the marks and characters by which this is to be known, the Lord Jesus himself hath given some very striking outlines, to form a general judgment by, which, if closely attended to, will keep from every error. Under the office of a Shepherd, and in which Christ considers his people as sheep, he saith, "The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name; and leadeth them forth, and they follow him." (John x. 3, 4.) Here are certain particularities in these few words, which at once serve to explain the matter.

"They hear his voice." That is, they distinguish the voice of Jesus in the word. "Never man spake like this man." It comes home, directed with energy to the heart. It is "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." And the effects of it prove from what direction it comes. For it awakens, it animates, it influences the whole man, and is accompanied with a life-giving, a soul-renewing power. So that every one who hears it is constrained to say with David, "I shall never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me." (Psalm cxix. 93.)

"He calleth his own sheep by name." That is, the word is so applied personally to the heart by the Holy Ghost, and with an emphasis so very striking; it speaks so exactly to his own case and circumstances, as if he, and he alone, was concerned in it, and called to by name.

"He leadeth them forth, and they follow him."

That is, from the very evident change wrought in the life and conversation, the most incontestible evidences are afforded, that they are under the leadings and teachings of his Holy Spirit : and being called with an *holy calling*, they are enabled to walk worthy of their vocation, and to “ follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

Hence, therefore, wherever these effects are found, we have as full an assurance that true believers in the present hour hear the voice of the Master, arise at that call, and follow him in the regeneration ; as when in the days of his flesh, he called Zaccheus from the tree, or Matthew from the receipt of custom.

May I not venture to add, that there are *some* who hear me this day, concerning whom I am fully persuaded it may be said, that these truths are living principles in their experience ; and to whom the words of the Lord Jesus may be strictly applied—“ Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear?”

Nothing can be more gratifying to those who minister in holy things, than the consciousness that “ our Gospel cometh not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance of faith.”

And how very sweet a testimony that is in reply, which I am well convinced many of you can, and do give, when, like the Samaritans to the woman who had reported to them concerning Jesus, you say, “ Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know, that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

I will detain you no longer, than only to beg, that you will not forget the very earnest and pressing claims our subject hath upon the different characters which, more or less, make up every religious congregation.

My poor unawakened brother! *You* who are not only unconscious of any personal interest in the Master's call, but are altogether unconcerned about it; forgive me when I say, my fears are greatly exercised on your account, and especially for such among you as have long sat under a preached Gospel; lest, after all, you should have received the grace of God (in the means of it) in vain. Indeed, indeed, there is but too much reason to fear. And what the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh told the Jews, may be equally said to many nominal Christians: "Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you."

Hath it never struck you, how very awful a situation that man stands in, who, though the Master be come, and is for ever calling in his word, and in his ordinances, yet remains through life insensible to the call; and at length departs out of it, as unconscious and unconcerned, as though it had never been made?

It will be a distinguishing mercy if the renewed call of this day should be accompanied with a divine power. Gracious God! commission, if it be thy blessed will, the *outward* means with an *inward* effect, to the heart of some poor unawakened sinner present, and give him an experimental evidence of the truth of the doctrine, that he may know that the Master is indeed come, and calleth personally for *him*.

Our subject, in its application, is peculiarly consolatory and encouraging also to every humble soul, who fears that he hath never heard, but most ardently desires to know, "the joyful sound." It is more than probable I may be speaking before *some* of this description, and I would, therefore, beg leave to drop a word by way of inference to them.

You fear that your unworthiness is a disqualification, and that some previous merit is necessary towards the attainment of it. But do, my brother, learn to correct such unbecoming notions of God's mercy. If human merit were made the standard of divine favour, what flesh could then be saved? It is a precious consideration, which the Scriptures teach, and I beg of you to cherish it with all possible warmth in your affection, that He, who gives the grace, gives also the disposition to accept the grace. He both prepares the blessing, and prepares the heart to receive the blessing. "I am sought of them that asked not for me, (is the language of mercy;) I am found of them that sought me not. I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name."

Had any *preparation* been needful, who less prepared than Matthew, or Zaccheus, or the woman of Samaria? Had any *merit* been required, who so unlikely to find acceptance as the apostle Paul? Doth not, indeed, every example of the kind we meet with in Scripture tend to prove, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy?"

Happy will it be, if while you are thus waiting on God in the appointed ways of his grace, that very sweet Scripture be fulfilled in your experience: "Therefore doth the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him."

And for you, brethren, "partakers of the heavenly calling," as you cannot but be truly sensible that your *first* call to God was not the result of your own merit; so I trust you are equally convinced that neither is your present continuance in grace the

effect of your own goodness. Had the Lord laid "judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet;" or been extreme to mark what is done amiss, either before or since he hath manifested himself towards you, where would have been your portion?

You know full well, I am persuaded, the meaning of that blessed scripture, and can enter into a heart-felt enjoyment of it: "who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." To *you* I would only beg to make this one observation. While you are ever ready to ascribe all to "the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made you accepted in the beloved;" never lose sight of that comfortable assurance, that "whom the Lord hath called, them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified." Yet but a little while, and he that hath called you by his grace, will call you to everlasting glory. "I will come again (is his own gracious promise) to receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

SERMON IV.

THE SHILOH COME, AND THE GATHERING OF THE
PEOPLE UNTO HIM, PROVED.

GENESIS XLIX. 10.

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come ; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

AMONG the many evidences which God the Holy Ghost hath caused to be left on record, of his gracious superintendance over his church and people, from the earliest ages, that is by no means the least considerable, which ariseth out of the spirit of prophecy. An apostle tells us, and with a plainness of language not to be mistaken, that “prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter i. 21.) And from the same unquestionable authority we learn, that what those saints of God delivered, in reference either to the person or work of the Lord Jesus, it was the “Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” (1 Peter i. 11.)

It would form, indeed, a very interesting subject, to trace the marks of the Spirit’s impressions on the minds of his servants the prophets, in the multiform instances of it, with which the Scriptures abound, in the early ages, and which might very easily be done, in only taking comparative views of the predictions

they delivered, with their accomplishment. But such a service, however gratifying, would not come within the limits of a single sermon. Elsewhere, I have more largely prosecuted the pleasing study, and shewn, that during the whole period of the church's history, before the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Ghost was neither an inattentive nor inactive spectator of its best interests.* The same great object of glorifying the Lord Jesus, occupied the divine mind. Hence the ministry of the Holy Ghost was as much called forth from the earliest period, in awakening the faith and expectation of the saints of God to the coming of the Redeemer, as it is now exercised, since redemption work hath been finished, in "taking of the things of Jesus to shew unto them."

The text is an instance of the exercise of his divine power upon the mind of the patriarch Jacob, in one of the most illustrious and glorious prophecies the Scriptures of the Old Testament affords.

The patriarch, well knowing that the promised blessing of redemption, in the covenant engagements of Jehovah, was deposited with him and his seed; finding the hour of nature's dissolution approaching, convened his household, that he might communicate to them the great events connected with this covenant promise of God, made to Abraham his father, which would "befal them in the latter days."

No doubt, the patriarch felt the divine influence on his mind at this interesting interview with his children; and though the natural feelings of the parent frequently mingled the affectionate expressions of a dying father with those of an higher nature, yet he was conscious the principal points he

* See Sermon II. on the Godhead and Operations of the Holy Ghost.

had to deliver to them were in the spirit of prophecy.

Amidst many other precious promises connected with redemption, which God the Holy Ghost influenced the mind of Jacob to speak of, and which were addressed to each tribe of his family, as their respective households hereafter to be formed, became more or less interested in them; this of the text to his son Judah appears eminently conspicuous. Standing as it were on the very brink of the invisible world, and beholding the great objects now about to be fully realized to his view, which by faith he had so long walked in the personal enjoyment of, the dying patriarch breaks out into an holy fervour of joy in the contemplation, and exclaims, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

What Jacob himself understood of the glorious events comprised in this prophecy, is not difficult to discover. The almighty Shiloh, of whom he spake, had been clearly revealed to him as the covenant God-man, *his* Redeemer, long before. This the prophet Hosea, who lived a thousand years after Jacob, confirms by the most positive assurance. "He found him (saith the prophet) in Bethel, and there he spake with us, even the Lord God of Hosts, Jehovah (that is, in a covenant-way) is his memorial:" (Hosea xii. 4, 5.) evidently alluding to that memorable period in the patriarch's life, when God revealed himself to him at Bethel, as the God which had entered into covenant with his father Abraham, and now appeared to confirm it personally to Jacob, that "in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed."

And that the patriarch himself considered this vision of God to him at that time, in this sense, is as evident, from the dying testimony he gave of it to

his son Joseph. "God Almighty appeared unto me (said Jacob) at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me;" (Genesis xlviii. 3.) that is, blessed him with covenant mercy, covenant assurance of redemption, hereafter to be completed in the person of the promised seed. So that it was not God blessing him, simply in the abstract of his *providence*, but in a way of *grace*; in that very way, indeed, of the covenant engagement of *redemption*, into which Jehovah had entered.

And hence the patriarch, connecting in his mind his *first* knowledge of redemption manifested to him at Bethel, with the *last* intimations of it, under the Spirit's influence, now dying as he was in Egypt; and gathering up into one mass of particulars the whole of those precious discoveries, which God had made of himself in a covenant way, through all the intermediate stages of life, added this testimony more to all that he had before received, and pointed to this leading character, by which it should be known when the Redeemer would be manifested.

Speaking under the immediate inspiration of God the Holy Ghost, he comforts his children in the moment of his departure, and through them the church at large, with this delightful assurance, that the *sceptre* which God would establish in the family of his son Judah, "should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet," until this long-promised, long-expected Shiloh, in whose almighty hands all the concerns of salvation were placed, "should come, and unto whom should be the gathering of the people."

Suffer me to pause one moment over this view of the patriarch's life, just to remark, that *early* and *later* manifestations of the Lord Jesus to his people in a covenant way, are not confined to Jacob's history. Blessed be God! thousands since his day have known,

by heartfelt experience, the sweetness of *both* seasons, and have been enabled thereby, if not with equal strength, at least with equal satisfaction, “to set to their seal that God is true.”

First intimations of grace are very precious things to the soul, and so are the last tokens of divine love: it is difficult to say which are the sweetest. Perhaps, from the nature and unexpected manifestation of the blessing to the heart, the *former* will be most prized: yet the *latter* certainly make up, in fulness and in value, what is wanting in beauty. It should seem, that when, through a life of some considerable extent, the man of grace can sit down with Jacob, and recount the manifestations of God’s love, in a covenant way, marking his path in a multitude of instances as he hath gone along, that such views must afford the highest comfort to the soul.

But do you, my brother, determine the point for yourself; *you* who know much of the Lord’s dealings with your soul. I trust there are not a few here present, who, if called upon, can bear large testimony to the faithfulness of a covenant God, as a tried and approved God, all the way through life.

And shall I venture to say to all such, that I hope you do not write those mercies, which are certainly the most precious of all mercies, on water, but that their remembrance lives in the warmest place of your heart. Treasuring up such records will enable you, under the Spirit’s influence when dying, to comfort those around you, as Jacob did, with the assurance of God’s unchanging love. And certainly this effect you will find from it, to your own consolation: for the believer, who hath all along through life accustomed himself to mark down the mercies of God to his soul, will not want a mercy to praise him for in his death. And I believe I may venture to add, that many followers of Jesus have begun the life of glory in the

very moment when grace hath been consummating ; and ere the praises of a faithful covenant God have ceased to move upon the trembling lips of their dying body, the soul hath caught the note of the saints above, and joined in the everlasting song of “salvation to God and the Lamb.”

But to return from this digression. What I am chiefly interested in at this time is, to consider the accomplishment of this illustrious prophecy of Jacob in the text, as referring to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in him having its completion.

In the prosecution of this service, the arrangement I mean to be guided by, so far as God the Holy Ghost shall be pleased to enable me, will be, in the first place, to prove, that the period in this memorable prophecy, so many ages predicted before its proposed accomplishment, hath arrived, and long since expired ; and in the advent and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ hath been fulfilled, and is now fulfilling in the earth ; that “the sceptre did not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until the Shiloh came :” and by departing in that very season when Christ was manifested, this prophecy was then so accomplished as never can be accomplished in any other.

When I have performed this service, I shall then, secondly, endeavour to explain what is meant by the gathering of the people unto him, whence, I trust, will arise also additional evidences to the confirmation of this ancient prophecy.

And I very earnestly pray God, that our attention to this subject may be so graciously accompanied by the teachings of the Holy Ghost, that the hearts of many who hear me may be led to *see* in Jesus the Shiloh of his people ; and still more to *feel* their personal interest of being “gathered unto him.” And may the Lord at the same time mercifully grant, that

all his household present, who are already brought nigh unto him in a way of grace, may be the more *stablished, strengthened, and settled* in this hope of the gospel, and built up firmly in their most holy faith!

According to my first proposal, I am to prove that the period so long predicted for the manifestation of the Shiloh hath expired, and, in the person and ministry of the Lord Jesus, this memorable Scripture hath had its accomplishment.

In the opening of this branch of our subject, it may not be improper to explain the meaning of the word Shiloh, as one among the many significant names of the Messiah; and which, as the name of a person, is no where to be found but in this text, in all the sacred writings.

The Jews themselves, though by a strange fatality, denying the advent of the Shiloh, readily allow, that in this prophecy of their father Jacob, the Messiah is clearly meant; and that the dignity which was to mark his character when he came, was very properly distinguished by this appellation.

The word Shiloh may, without violence to the original, be considered as implying *the Son*; and if accepted in this sense it will mean, that the Son of the Lord shall come. Perhaps Shiloh may also be equally rendered, the *peaceable one*. And in this idea it will, of course, refer to the object he came to accomplish; "peace on earth, good-will among men." But I rather think the word itself is taken from a root in the original, signifying *to deliver*; and hence the Shiloh will mean the *deliverer*. And what could be more descriptive or significant of his person and work, who, when he came on earth, came on purpose to "deliver his people from the wrath to come!" (1 Thess. i. 10.)

The prophet Isaiah, ages after this prediction of the patriarch Jacob, looking forward unto Gospel

times, declared, that "the Redeemer should come unto Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob," (Isaiah lix. 20.) which passage of the prophet, the apostle Paul, without hesitation, applies to the person of the Lord Jesus, and in doing it confirms at once the pleasing assurance, that this Redeemer is the "deliverer" which should turn away "ungodliness from Jacob." (Rom. xi. 26.) And without all question, the advent of the Messiah as the Redeemer, or deliverer of his people, is the sum and substance of all the promises and predictions of Scripture; and which all the believing Jews, at the time of Christ's appearing, it is said, "looked for, namely, redemption in Israel." (Luke ii. 38.)

Concerning this almighty Deliverer, this Shiloh; Jacob, under the influence of prophecy, declared, that "the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until he came."

We cannot be at a loss to apprehend what is meant by the *sceptre* and the *lawgiver*. Both terms are clearly expressive of one and the same thing; and indicate that the administration of justice, with the ensign of regal power, in a way of government and protection, should exist in the family of Judah, and there continue, until the whole was accomplished by the appearance of him, in whom all the prophecies had their completion.

And in confirmation of this part of the prophecy, it is worthy of observation, that the sceptre of regal authority began in the tribe of Judah, in the person of David; and in a long series of years continued uninterruptedly, until the Shiloh actually came. For though, during the Babylonish captivity, the ensigns of government seemed to have been tarnished, yet the vestige of authority still remained. There were

governors among the heads of the families, which were carried away captive, as appears from their history, who exercised their prerogative in the peculiarities of the Jewish law. Neither did they cease, even when Judea became a Roman province. For though subject to the government of the Romans, the Sanhedrim exercised their peculiar privileges still; and upon that memorable occasion, when the Lord Jesus was arraigned at the bar of Pilate, and he, from a conscious assurance of Christ's innocence, was disposed to let him go, the Jews used this remarkable expression: "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." (John xix. 7.)

Hence, therefore, it plainly appears, that the sceptre did not depart until the Shiloh came. But that it did then totally cease, is as fully proved, from the records of sacred and profane history: for, added to the particular relation we have of the overthrow of Judea by Titus Vespasian's army, that unconscious testimony which the Jews themselves gave to their situation, stamps the whole. For upon the same occasion as the former, when Pilate tauntingly said unto the Jews, "Shall I crucify your King?" the chief priests answered, "We have no king but Cæsar." (John xix. 15.)

How blind, how short-sighted the policy of man! In the very moment that the Jews, by this declaration, intended to deny Jesus as the Messiah, by the confirmation of this illustrious prophecy concerning him, they most effectually acknowledged him: and the very circumstance by which they meant to overthrow the authority of the Redeemer, tended more effectually to establish and confirm it.

And hence that prophecy of Hosea, how remarkably fulfilled! "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and

without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim." (Hosea, iii. 4.) And thus you see them at this hour, dispersed, as they are, in every quarter of the earth. Every Jew you meet carries an evidence in himself of the confirmation of the whole. And in whatever part of the habitable earth they are found, they have lost the sceptre of Judah; they are "without a king." For they have no civil government of their own; neither have they *a prince*, to go in and out before them. They have *no sacrifice*; that is, no altar, on which to offer sacrifice; none of the *five* signs of the temple; *no image*, or pillar of commemoration; *no ephod*, or *teraphim*; neither *Urim* nor *Thummim* remaining. For though in many countries they are tolerated with synagogues, yet the real temple service is over. They have neither prophets to instruct, nor altars to approach God with sacrifice; neither *ephod* nor *teraphim*, as mediums to receive communications from him. Nothing, indeed, remaining, but the fullest indications that God had accomplished his purposes concerning them, and scattered them, as he had said, amidst all the nations of the earth.

Who can read those Scriptures, and behold their denunciations so awfully fulfilled, unmoved? Who but must feel for God's ancient people, when we call to mind, that "to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises: whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." (Romans ix. 4, 5.)

You, that have received "the spirit of adoption, whereby you cry Abba Father;" that can look back, and recollect when you were "enemies to God by wicked works, aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, having no hope, and without God in the world:" is

it possible for you to reflect on the happy state into which you are now brought, in being gathered to your Almighty Shiloh, without admiring the wonders of redeeming grace, and without feeling rising thankfulness in the heart towards the great Author of them? Can any man, indeed, stand convinced of the truth of what the apostle hath said; that “the fall of them is the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles;” and remain insensible to a mercy so distinguishing?

Blessed be the divine benignity! There is a promise yet remaining to be accomplished concerning this people, and a glorious one it is.—“Afterward (saith the same prophet, who predicted their deprivation of all government, civil and religious) afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.” (Hosea iii. 5.)

And will not the believer in the expectation of the accomplishment of this blessed promise, implore the mercy-seat for them, and say, Lord hasten the time for the latter-day glory, when thou wilt call home thy banished ones from afar; when “the Deliverer shall arise out of Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob!” when “the fulness of the Gentiles shall be completed, and all Israel be saved!” and when both “Jew and Gentile shall be brought into one fold, under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

I proceed now to the second object proposed, namely, to explain what is meant by the gathering of the people unto him, in the certainty of the effect, and the persons who are expressly said to be gathered.

In this branch of my discourse, I desire you to remark with me the particular form of expression made use of, “unto him shall the gathering of the

people be:" from whence you perceive that the event is not left to hazard or uncertainty, but it is spoken of as a fixed and determined thing; it *shall* be. And when you consider in what infinite resources the assurance is founded; that it is the result of an eternal counsel, formed in the divine mind, in which each of the persons of the GODHEAD concur to bring forward its establishment; the Father's sovereign grace, the Redeemer's inestimable purchase, and the Holy Ghost's effectual application; what shall possibly arise to frustrate those united operations? If Jehovah saith, 'To Him shall the gathering of the people be, who shall say nay? "His counsel must stand, and he will do all his pleasure."

Of all subjects which can employ the mind of man, and call into exercise his intellectual faculties, the contemplation of this fundamental truth, in the certainty of his salvation, is without all doubt the highest and the best.

That it must be the sole work of God, to gather his people to himself, is a doctrine to which the humble soul, when once brought under divine teachings, will easily be led to acknowledge. But to trace the distinct and peculiar acts of each person in the GODHEAD, in order to form a clear conception of the personal operations of each, to confirm and make it sure; to teach us also how much we stand in need of the peculiar aids of each, so as to call up suitable waitings, and to awake suitable acknowledgments to all; these points form, not only a subject to give firmness to the soul, but serve to open at the same time a source of the greatest consolation and holy joy the mind is capable of feeling in the present state of things.

The distinct acts of *choosing*, and *laying the foundation* for the salvation of sinners, and *appointing* the means for the accomplishment; of giving the Son to be the Saviour of the world, and his people to the

Son; these acts are peculiarly ascribed in Scripture to God the Father. "Blessed (says the apostle) be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world." (Ephes. i. 3, 4.)

The actual work of *redemption* is as expressly declared to be the part of God the Son; and the purchase of his righteousness and blood. And hence all the privileges of the covenant are said to be the *sure mercies* of David. "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Ephes. i. 7.)

But the effectual application in every individual instance of it, to the soul, is the Spirit's operation from beginning to end; and hence called "a renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." (Titus iii. 5, 6.)

Thus all the persons of the GODHEAD have their distinct and peculiar operations in the great work of redemption; and each graciously contributes to the accomplishment of the blessed purpose. So that a channel of communication is opened for the apprehension and enjoyment of each, personally and individually; and yet at the same time, the soul never loseth sight of that fundamental doctrine, *that these three are one.*

But while contemplating the security the faithful possess in this delightful assurance, what I would more immediately desire you to observe in the promise of the text is, the character of those to whom it is to extend.

They are said to be *the people*; that is, not *a* people; but a specific character is given them, *the people*. Not a people first gathered, and then formed; but antecedent to any thing on their part, they are already formed, and now gathered.

And to define this still more, the term is elsewhere varied, and they are called *thy* people. God the Father is introduced, by the Spirit of prophecy, as addressing the Son in that memorable Scripture, and promising the certainty of their being gathered to Christ by the operation of the divine will. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." (Psalm cx. 3.)

And as if all this were not enough, in order to ascertain the fact in another Scripture, which was directed to announce both the name and the character of the Lord Jesus before his incarnation, he is introduced under this express mention of him: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save *his* people from their sins." Here they are particularly marked as belonging to the Redeemer, even before his incarnation; and though expressly said to be *in their sins*, yet this became no hindrance to his right in them. *His* people they were, though a sinful; rebellious people. Children of God by the right of covenant redemption in grace, though by nature children of wrath, and meriting wrath as much as others. This destroyed not their relationship to their covenant-head, how unworthy soever they were in themselves. Concerning them he had said, "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie, so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." And the same blessed Scripture sweetly adds, that though they rebelled against him, and vexed his Holy Spirit, and he turned for a time to be their enemy, and fought against them; yet "he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people." And therefore the prophet introduceth him as calling upon himself, and all the perfections of the Godhead, to arise for their deliver-

ance ; because he was engaged to them in this relationship, “ as their Father, their Redeemer, from everlasting.” (Isaiah lxiii. 8, 9, 11, 16.)

From the authority of those united testimonies of Scripture, and confirmed to us as it is, by the general analogy of the divine word throughout ; I do not hesitate to conclude, that the people promised to be gathered unto the Shiloh at his appearing, are a specific people, in express distinction from the world, out of which they are said to be taken. Hence they are called *his children*, whom the Father hath given him ; *his sheep*, for whom he laid down his life ; *his seed*, to whom all the promises are made. And what a precious scripture is that of the prophet, in confirmation of the whole of this doctrine, where he takes up the same character of God’s people as his sheep, and represents the Redeemer as the great Shepherd coming into the world to seek and save his wanderers ; and thus he speaks : “ Thus saith the Lord God ; Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock, in the day that he is among his sheep, that are scattered ; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered, in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.” And after many more sweet promises to the same effect, he adds : “ Thus shall they know, that I the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God.” (Ezek. xxxiv. 12, 13, 20.) And hence, in conformity to this, when the Lord Jesus sent forth his servants, to act under his commission, the direction was ; “ Go ye to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

And this view of our subject will receive yet a further confirmation from that memorable passage of Scripture, the prophecy of Caiaphas the high priest. Indeed, in its scope and design it corresponds to that of the patriarch Jacob in our text; and when compared together will be found mutually to illustrate and explain each other. “And one of them (saith the Evangelist) named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider, that it is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he (the Evangelist adds as an observation particularly to be noticed) not of himself; but, (acting in his public character) as the high priest, he prophesied, that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only; but that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” (John xi. 49, 52.)

Here is at once the plainest and fullest confirmation of the whole doctrine. To give the words all the importance they were intended to answer, the Evangelist tells us, that this time-serving priest was not conscious at the time he spake, of the meaning of his own words. What he said was not of himself, but the Holy Ghost speaking in him and by him, to the church. And the blessed doctrine this man, as a channel of communication, was made to convey, was the most momentous of all doctrines; namely, that by the death of the Lord Jesus, his people were all redeemed, both Jew and Gentile, and became “fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of God’s promise in Christ by the gospel.” And moreover, that as both Jew and Gentile were heirs together of this redemption, at a time when they were all alike unconscious of it, and neither knew their misery, nor the gracious provision for their recovery, their gathering would not be the result of their own

wisdom, but the sole effect of his power. He, this almighty Shiloh, would gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad. For children they were, though scattered. He doth not say, that they shall be first gathered to him, and then become his children: first made worthy of his favour, and then receive it. But *as* children, gathered to him from all places whither they have been scattered. It is because ye are sons, (saith the apostle) that "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." It is because they are *his* people that Jesus saveth them from their sins. Because they are "thine (saith God himself concerning them) they shall be willing in the day of thy power." And hence, when the Redeemer is represented, by one of the prophets, as returning from redemption-work to the bosom of his Father, and presenting himself, and the souls he hath redeemed, as a Conqueror, returning with the spoil before him, he is introduced as saying, "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me." (Isaiah viii. 18.)

Here let us pause, and as one ascending an high hill of observation, look back and survey the ground over which we have trodden, before we look around to the delightful view which is opening before us on every side, in the pleasing prospect of contemplation it affords.

How infinitely important must have been that glorious purpose of redemption, which for so many ages occupied the divine mind; and for the keeping alive the expectation of it in the church of God, such a multitude of years before its proposed accomplishment, so wonderful an apparatus was made use of!

What a world of preparation do we find ministering to this one event, from the very dawn of revelation, in the various representations by which it was shadowed.

In the instance of our text we behold a prophecy, delivered by the Spirit near two thousand years before the Shiloh came, as expressly pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ, as if written on the spot, in the very moment of his appearing. And now near two thousand more have run out, since the Shiloh actually came, and we find in this hour the other part of the prophecy in the gathering his people unto him, (which of course was to have a gradual accomplishment) still fulfilling with as much faithfulness and precision, as if the prediction had been but of yesterday. Well might *He* of whom these things were all spoken, and to whom they all ministered, be called “Wonderful Counsellor!” And well may every beholder, in correspondence with the same language, exclaim with the apostle, “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

The result of all that hath been said will be to recommend my several hearers, from the *outward* testimony of the doctrine itself, to search diligently for the *inward* evidence in their own hearts, by way of ascertaining the personal interest every one hath in it.

Upon the presumption the Shiloh be come, (which I hope I have fully proved,) and the great object of his mission be the gathering of his people unto him, (which is his well-known character,) there cannot be a question of equal importance in the breast of every individual, as whether that blessed effect be accomplished in his own instance?

I know that while, with the multitude of thoughtless and inconsiderate persons, an inquiry of this nature is lightly made, and as lightly answered by their vain minds; with many precious souls it becomes an anxious question indeed. They are exer-

cised with continual fears and apprehensions upon it, and like the disciples at the sepulchre of Jesus, they are doubting the reality of their own senses, in the very moment of receiving the most absolute proof.

In the province of my duty, there is nothing in which I hold myself so much a debtor, as to endeavour the relieving, under God's grace, the apprehensions of the timid believer, and especially upon a point of so much consequence; for this is what scripture calls, "lifting up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and saying to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong."

Perhaps I may be speaking before one of this description; and if so, I cannot more profitably follow up the subject itself, than by offering an observation or two, which, through the blessed Spirit's teaching, may enable such a mourner in Zion to discover his interest more clearly, and lead him home in a happier frame of mind than when he came here. And in accomplishing this purpose, I shall not be going out of the way, in furnishing the outlines of examination also for any others present, who feel a rising inclination to ascertain a point of so much consequence, as a personal knowledge of their being gathered unto our almighty Shiloh.

Now there is a sweet promise of God on this subject, which I could wish every humble soul always, if possible, to keep in view. "Therefore (saith God) my people shall know my name; therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold it is I." (Isaiah lii. 6.) Here, then, the Lord himself engages, that his people *shall* know his name; that they shall distinguish his voice, and discern his speaking from all others.

And in allusion to the express doctrine of the Covenant, one of the principal features of it was to be thus distinguished. "I will be their God, and

they shall be my people. Neither shall they teach any more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them."

Hence, therefore, from such positive assurances we may very safely conclude, that the same God that thus freely promiseth, will adopt suitable means for the certain accomplishment of his promise, and not suffer his gracious intentions to be frustrated by any intervening causes. And if you, my brother, are among the number of God's people, and will only open the word of God, and carefully examine the marks and characters by which his people are to be known, and then take a comparative view of them with your own heart; you will find such an happy correspondence between both, as will tend to confirm the assurance of God's promises, and bring the fullest satisfaction to the heart, that you are interested in them.

In the words of our text, they are only distinguished by the general expression of *the people*; but in other parts of scripture, their names, and the features of their character, are marked with a more striking particularity. They are said (as hath been before noticed) to be the *sheep* of Christ; the *children* of God; *his people*, which he hath formed for himself, and which he hath chosen to be a *special people*, above all people that are upon the face of the earth; the *seed* also of the Redeemer, with whom the covenant blessings are deposited. But though sheep, yet *strayed* sheep: "All we like sheep (saith the prophet) have gone astray." Though children, yet *rebellious* children: "Ye have been rebellious (saith Moses) against the Lord unto this day." Though the *people* of God and the *seed* of Christ, yet a *sinful* people, "laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children

that are corrupters, that have forsaken the Lord, provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, and are gone away backward.”

Now this is the uniform character, and these are the universal features of the Lord’s family, in their natural, unawakened, and unregenerated state. And hence the apostle says, “God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered unto you.”

To this, I am very confident, you whose hearts are bowed down with the sense of sin, will bear ample testimony, that this corresponds to the state you were born in. And do not forget this one precious consideration, while subscribing to this doctrine, that as by virtue of this, you prove your relationship to the *first* Adam, it was to his fallen race the promises of redemption, through the *second* Adam, were made. And as you manifest by nature the stock from whence you sprung in *generation*, so by grace you are equally enabled to prove your relationship by grace in *regeneration*.

Let us now examine the evidences under this feature of character also.

That you were once afar off, and enemies to God by wicked works, is a truth you will not be disposed to question; but that you are now brought nigh by the blood of Christ, is the point you fear to assume the confidence of believing. But only attend to those marks and characters by which the work of grace in the heart is known, and you will discover that there are as plain traces to infer the *one*, as there were to be convinced of the *other*. The Lord himself, indeed, gives the confirmation of it by his servant the prophet, and refers the gracious change both to its source and to its security. “When I passed by and looked upon thee, behold thy time was the time of love: yea I swear unto thee, and entered into a

covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." And what that covenant was, another prophet was commissioned to shew: that "God would not turn from his people to do them good, but he would put his fear in their heart that they should not depart from him."

These covenant impressions, therefore, which you carry about with you, do as fully prove "the spots of God's children," as the former transgressions of your unregeneracy manifest that you were once "the servants of sin." Do, my brother, examine them one by one, and you will find a coincidence in them to your own experience.

"The Lord thy God (saith Moses) hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people; and thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God."

See, then, whether you do not accept of God in this covenant way of redemption, and expect mercy and peace in no other. Is not God's salvation your desire; his covenant pardon your most earnest pursuit to attain; the blood, merits, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus your security, and the sweet influence of the Holy Ghost your daily support? Are you not continually coming as a poor polluted creature to be cleansed, as a hungry thirsty creature to be filled, and as a naked creature to be clothed with the robe of Jesus's righteousness? Is not David's language yours, that although according to your wish it doth not grow, yet this everlasting covenant is all your salvation, and all your desire; you renounce every other, and cleave wholly to this? The very method God hath appointed for redemption, is the way you desire to be found in: God's choice is your choice, and his method yours.

These are precious evidences, my brother, if you find them in your life: for "by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of the Spirit."

And however small and inconsiderable they may appear to *you*, yet depend upon it, there is enough in the life of the humblest believer, in the review of grace in the heart, to make him cry out with the astonishment of one of old, "What hath God wrought!"

Learn to live upon God's faithfulness and his covenant promises. Consider what hath been already done for you, in the everlasting love of the Father, the Redeemer's purchase, and the blessed Spirit's quickening operations! Nay, the very evidence you possess this day, in preserving, influencing, reviving grace, is enough to make a man blush, in the consciousness of unbelief.

Yet a little while, and that blessed promise will be fulfilled. "The rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth, for the Lord hath spoken it." Both the rebuke of sin and sorrow; of temptation from without, and unbelief from within. God hath taken away the burthen of sin from his people when he laid it on the Lord Jesus; and he will take away all the effects of it, when the process which it is intended to answer shall be fully accomplished. But you will enter, in the mean time, into a sweet and gracious explanation of a thousand trials, commissioned by infinite wisdom for your good; if you thus look and thus learn, what the unbelieving and unawakened world know nothing of. And the very fears with which you now cloud your own evidences of divine favour, the Lord will graciously over-rule, so as to make them minister to the accomplishment of that comprehensive promise; that "all things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are the called according to his purpose."

I pray the Lord graciously dispose every heart present to profit by our review of this subject: and

while you and I are receiving such unanswerable evidences that the "Shiloh is come," may God add the only remaining testimony to crown the whole, by making it personal to every one's experience, in bringing assurance to the mind, that we are truly gathered unto him as his people. That when he shall come again, "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," we may hail his return, in the animated language of the prophet, and say in that day, "Lo! this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

SERMON V.

THE SURE PROGRESS OF GRACE.

PSALM XCII. 13, 14.

Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.

I KNOW not whether it hath ever struck you, with the importance the subject merits, the beautiful order which is observed in the great plan and economy of human redemption. It is difficult, indeed, to know which to admire most, the astonishing mercy displayed in the act itself, or the perpetual grace and goodness manifested in the carrying of it on, from day to day, in the heart of him who is made the happy partaker of it.

God hath no less consulted the comfort than he hath the interest of his people, in that the same grace which was displayed in forming the redemption, is unremittingly exercised to establish and confirm it. And certainly one of the highest felicities of the mind is, to watch the leadings of grace, and trace its progress in the various operations of it continually.

It should seem as if the gracious Author of so much mercy, thought it not enough to make the renewed soul truly happy, in teaching him that the eternal interests of the Lord's people are lodged securely in his own hands; and that all the covenant engagements of Jehovah are with the person of our

almighty Mediator, as Trustee of this covenant. But God opens, besides this, another source of the sweetest enjoyment, in leading him to the view of the operations of the Holy Ghost in the heart, and ripening the seeds of grace planted by his own almighty hand, by the daily fostering care of his own almighty power, and carrying the whole on, in various evidences of his love, through the course of time to eternity. This sums up the contents of the holy volume, which he puts into our hands to peruse, and which, when fully read and understood in the heart, gives that joy which is very properly termed “unspeakable, and full of glory.”

A train of observation like this may be well supposed to arise in the mind from the words of the text, as well as the many precious things belonging to this golden psalm from whence they are taken.

It is entitled a *Psalm*, or Song for the *Sabbath-day*. And what more sweet, or more suited for the service of the Lord’s day, than the celebration of the Lord’s praises? What more likely to awaken every becoming frame towards him, than recounting the faithfulness of God? We certainly take the most effectual method to excite, under the blessed Spirit’s influence, a trust in a covenant God for *future* blessings, when we look back, and take a review of his *past* favours. And while grace is in exercise, how are we more likely to promote *prayer*, than by approaching a mercy-seat with *praise*?

But without entering into an examination of all the beauties of this sweet Psalm, the text alone will be found to contain so many in itself, that I fear we shall hardly find time, within the limits I must observe, to unfold to your present view all that it contains.

The Holy Ghost, in order to convey his divine truths to the mind, hath been pleased to make use

of a great variety of metaphors to answer this purpose. As the great Teacher in the school of Jesus, he is for ever sending his people to some image or figure in the wide field, both of nature and art, the better to illustrate and explain his doctrines of grace ; and seems, indeed, if one may presume to say so, to have ransacked both the kingdoms of vegetable and animal life, in order to arrest every faculty of man, that nothing might be wanting to convey right apprehensions of the important truths of salvation.

Among the many methods of this kind which he hath been pleased to adopt in borrowing illustrations from art or nature, to explain divine things by, the idea of *planting* mentioned in the text is more than once made use of in the holy scriptures ; and as it is a very common and well-understood process, and not more common than beautiful, the Holy Ghost seems to have more frequently adopted it.

He compares the people of God to “trees of righteousness,” planted, not in the usual place of fields or gardens remote from constant observation, but brought into “the house of the Lord,” where they are sure to be always in view, and to be both sheltered, and to flourish in so highly-favoured a soil. And, contrary to nature, (for the whole work is grace,) they are said to increase with increasing years, and to be most luxuriant, when, from age, they might be expected to decay. “They that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing.”

There is a vast degree of beauty in this figure when analyzed, and highly descriptive of what it is designed to convey of the blessed operations of grace in the heart.

Those trees are said to be *planted* ; not grow spontaneously, but planted : for nature, in its loveliest

production, and before *grace* hath formed it a new stock, is in itself a degenerate plant, and grows only in the world's wide wilderness; where, like "the heath in the desert, it knoweth not when good cometh;" and which, if it bear fruit, it is only the fruit of "the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah, whose grapes are gall, and their clusters bitter." (Deut. xxxii. 32.)

Moreover, those trees are not only trees of God's own planting, taken out of nature's common, but they are brought into the sacred inclosure of God's house; that is, they are brought nigh the divine presence, and live under his continual favour. It is sweetly said by the Lord himself, concerning his vineyard of old, in allusion to this happy state, that he had "fenced it round, and gathered out the stones of it;" intimating, that he had so surrounded his people with his constant protection, that nothing from *without* should hurt them, and by taking away their stony hearts, that nothing from *within* should obstruct their fruitfulness.

And thus all true believers, like trees taken from the wild wilderness of nature, and planted in God's own house, are brought into a state of high cultivation, and may be said, from the plentiful supply of ordinances; and continual manifestations of the divine presence, to have the summer's warmth and the autumn shade, the clouds, and the dew, and the rain of heaven, dropping their fulness and fatness upon them.

But what is most striking, and particularly meriting our notice, in this sweet figure of the text, because it is altogether descriptive of the work of grace, and perfectly foreign to nature, is the flourishing state of those trees in advanced age. For this is wholly supernatural. In the common operations of nature, every thing is progressive. After the season of

maturity is completed, barrenness and corruption must follow. But in grace, the trees of God's right-hand planting are said to be most fat and flourishing, when nature is decaying. With God's people the sweetest fruit is in old age. Their last days are their best days. And, to use another similitude, like the setting sun in some fair evening, whose orb of glory appears to be magnified to the view, and his beams more abundantly shining with gold, when sinking beneath the horizon; so the dying saint sometimes shews forth greater accessions of grace, manifests stronger and sweeter evidences of the life of God in the soul, and, from long experience of God's faithfulness, affords, in his latest moments, more precious testimonies of the liveliness of his faith, than in any other former period of his existence.

Think of this, my aged fathers, in the house of God! And when health, and strength, and friends, and life, and all are decaying, beg of God that a growing acquaintance in the covenant love and faithfulness of the Lord, may give you increasing confidence to bear stronger and fuller testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus. This will be indeed to bring forth fruit in old age, when from the refreshments of grace in your *own* heart you are enabled to refresh all around you. And surely the most desirable of all deaths must be the dying as you have lived; hanging upon the promises, and by faith realizing heaven, even before entering upon it. Oh! what a glorious testimony is it in those latter years, when we see a dear aged saint of the Lord manifesting, like the attraction of the magnet, that the nearer he is approaching to the object of his desires, the Lord Jesus, the stronger the soul is drawn towards him; and thus increasing longings and increasing dependence on his faithfulness, hourly emptying the soul of all that is its own, and filling it with all that is from above! And at

length, when the moment comes, he dies, as it is said that Moses did, upon the very *mount* of the Lord, and sweetly falls asleep in the bosom of Jesus.

The subject proposed to our meditation from the words of our text, will be found, I hope, under the divine teachings, generally profitable. Nothing can convey instruction more to God's own people, who are already brought by grace into the sacred plantation of God's house, than to see the security which they possess therefrom, and the assurance of flourishing which they are promised in advancing years.

And while this view may serve to shew them from whence all their fruitfulness must be derived, our subject, if commissioned by the Lord, will no less be useful to convince some uncultivated minds present, that unless they are gathered out from the original stock of a corrupt nature, and become planted in the house of the Lord by grace, "their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up as the dust." (Isaiah v. 24.)

In the prosecution of this subject, I shall have only to follow up the beautiful order which the sacred writer hath observed, in first speaking of that state described by *planting* in the Lord's house; and then, secondly, the sure effect of fruitfulness springing out of it. The text, therefore, forms its own arrangement.

I only stay to beg of God, at our entrance upon the subject, that *both* classes of hearers, before whom I speak, may be benefited by our review of it. That while *some* come under the transplanting hand of God, and are gathered this day from nature's wilderness into his courts, *many more* may find evidences, as we prosecute the path of enquiry, to manifest that they are personally interested in the doctrine, and that precious scripture is proved to be their portion: "They shall be called trees of

righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." (Isaiah lxi. 3.)

First, then, let us attend to the important doctrine conveyed to the church under this figure of *planting*.

The scriptures are full of the most beautiful imagery, and afford a great variety of figures, by way of illustration on this point.

An union with the person of the Lord Jesus as the great Head of his church, being the sole mean of a participation in all the gifts and graces which flow from his person to his people, it became necessary that the truth should be clearly explained, in order to afford the more lively conviction of it. Hence it is said, that true believers in Christ Jesus, by the operation of the Eternal Spirit, are incorporated with him as branches are in a vine. They are united to him as living members in his mystical body; they are ingrafted into him as the graft into a stock; they are built upon him, as into a foundation-stone; and they, as lively stones, are growing up "to an holy temple in the Lord, for an habitation of God through the Spirit:" they are married to his person by his assumption of our nature, generally considered; and by the Spirit's work in the heart, personally applied to every individual, they are consequently entitled to all the benefits of the union.

I make use of all these figures, (and they are all taken from scripture,) in order to illustrate the whole extent of the doctrine which they are intended to convey. And you may observe, in the variety adopted, how the sacred writers have endeavoured to make up for the deficiency of one image or figure by the substitution of another. For as the idea of *planting* doth not carry with it that change of nature in the plant which is wrought by grace in the heart, under the image of *engrafting* is included the doctrine of conversion also. And hence true believers

in Christ are thus represented, as not only brought out of nature's wilderness, and planted in the courts of the Lord, but in the accomplishment of this great work their nature is regenerated, and they are formed anew in Christ Jesus: so that being engrafted into him, they derive all their life, and moisture, and fruitfulness from him. They enter into a full enjoyment of all that soul-enriching communion, which such a nearness and unity may be supposed to induce. From him (as an apostle speaks) it is, as from the Head, "all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." (Coloss. ii. 19.)

And as these wonderful effects wrought upon the human mind are all necessary, in order to form it for God's plantation, so they individually carry with them the marks, by whose sovereign power alone it is that such supernatural deeds are wrought. Indeed the very idea of being planted conveys, at once, a full testimony that the thing acted upon must be altogether passive in the act. For if true believers in Jesus, like plants, grow not in their first and natural soil, it can be no other than God who brings them out of it, and plants them in his own house.

The apostle Paul hath illustrated this act of sovereign grace, with his usual elegance, under the metaphor of a tree, wild by nature, and grafted contrary to nature, into the true stock. "Thou (says the apostle, speaking to the Gentile church, whom God hath brought into his garden) wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree." (Romans xi. 17.)

No image could have been more happily chosen, to represent the state of our fallen nature, than that

of an olive-tree, left to run wild and uncultivated, and exposed to be the prey of every beast of the wilderness; and nothing could at the same time more strikingly demonstrate, that the recovery of such a degenerate plant must be the result of the sovereign power and goodness of God, than the strong figure of cutting out from this corrupt tree, and engrafting into the good tree. For the act not only exceeds the ability, but the desire, and even the consciousness of its necessity in man. It is all in opposition to nature's bent, and contrary to all nature's inclination.

To drop the figure: Every man, both from original and actual corruption, sadly indicates that his state is not simply ill, in this or in that particular feature of the mind, but the mind itself, in the very *stamina*, is altogether so. It is a rottenness at the core. The heart is corruption.

Perhaps, my brother, you have never considered the subject in this point of view, and therefore may not so readily enter into the clear apprehension of it. But if God the Holy Ghost shall graciously condescend to be your teacher, you will then discover that there are no images or figures, strong enough to represent the real state of the case of man in his unrecovered, unrenewed nature, before an act of grace hath passed upon the soul.

His *understanding* is all darkness; his *mind*, enmity against God; his *will*, uniformly rebellious; all the *affections* disorderly. In short, the *whole heart*, with every passion originating from it, "deceitful and desperately wicked." And as these are the *etchings* of character in man, so are they of every man, and of all men. They form, indeed, the family feature. It is but to draw the picture of a human being, in his present fallen state, and these must form the outlines of his person.

And hence the wonderful change, when accomplished by almighty grace in the heart, is expressed by corresponding characters. The *understanding* that was once darkness, is now said “to be light in the Lord:” the *mind* that was once enmity against God, feels a constraining love to him: the rebellious *will* is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ: the *affections*, which were all engaged on the side of sin and corruption, are now influenced by the Spirit, to the fruits of all “goodness, and righteousness, and truth.” In a word, God gives a *new heart*, and with it the whole man is changed. “Old things are passed away: all things are become new.”

These are the sweet effects of being gathered from the original state of nature, and being brought into a state of grace; or, to use the similitude of our text, being taken from the waste and barren wilderness, and “planted as trees of righteousness in the house of the Lord.”

And what a blessed testimony to the truth of this doctrine is it, when the heart of any believer finds a precious correspondence to it in his own experience: when you can look back and see what you once were, and as thankfully look up and contemplate what you now are: when the soul is conscious of being gathered and planted into the courts of God, from the perpetual supplies you receive from the Lord, as the communicating head of all influences.

Blessed be God, there are *some*, and those, I trust, not a few, who are conscious of drawing all their fresh springs from Jesus, as the streams depend upon the fountain, or the rays of light upon the sun. They are not more sensible that the animal life is supported, day by day, by the sustenance derived from the bread that perisheth, than that the spiritual life of their soul, by the sweet supplies of grace which they derive from their living Head.

But if there be no union with Christ's person, there can be no communication in his gifts. Planted the soul must be in the Lord's house, and ingrafted in the true Vine, Christ Jesus, or no fruit can be brought forth unto God. The text limits the blessings it promiseth, and common sense limits them also to this precious implantation. They, and they only, which are planted in the house of the Lord, are said to flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age, and shall be fat and flourishing.

Shall I beg of you to pause one moment over this part of our discourse, before we go on to what was proposed under the second branch of it, that every one may make it a subject of diligent enquiry, whether this blessed operation hath passed upon his mind?

Are you anxious, my brother, to know your state in this matter? The point is easily ascertained. A change of soil to the plants of nature is not more visible than a change of heart, when accomplished, is manifested from the work of grace. They that are planted in the house of the Lord, soon indicate where they have taken root. They long for the manifestations of God; they are conscious of his presence or absence, as the tender productions of the garden are sensible of heavenly influences.

The sweet communications which pass and repass between a gracious soul and a more gracious God, do as decidedly testify when grace is in exercise, and when it is not, as the varied seasons of day and night, in the natural world, manifest the change. And the sensible growth which is promised in the text, though not found in equal degrees in all, will yet, in some certain proportion, according to the measure of grace imparted, demonstrate those which are within the sacred inclosure from those which are not.

Are you sensible, my brother, of any of these things? Do you know any evidence in your experience, of the transplantation from death to life? Are you acquainted with those vehement desires of the soul after God, which David speaks of, as “the thirsting of a dry land where no water is?” Can you describe the different states of divine communications, from experience in your own instance; and do you know what it is to enjoy the light of God’s countenance, and what to mourn after it, when at any time suspended, as a soul that waiteth for the Lord, “more than they that watch for the morning?”

These and the like enquiries, if closely applied in a serious hour of examination, will soon enable any man to discover what, above all things, he is most highly interested to know, whether he be truly interested in the promised blessing of our text, by having experienced the work of it previously exercised on his heart. Let me once more repeat, before this branch of our subject be dismissed, that an *union* with Christ’s person is indispensable to a *communion* with his graces. And when this is accomplished, all the sweetness and fulness of that blessed scripture follows: “Because I live, ye shall live also.” (John xiv. 19.)

I shall proceed now to the *second* point which I proposed from this subject, namely, to shew the sure effects of fruitfulness, springing out of the former.

Indeed, nothing can more decidedly manifest that believers are in a state of vital union with their Almighty Head, than when they are growing up to him in all things. For this denotes that they live under his immediate influence.

There is a beautiful order in the Spirit’s work upon the heart, and which, if truly gracious souls would keep more in view, their comforts would be greater, and their confidence more unbroken. When once

the Holy Ghost hath brought the soul into this sweet union with the Lord Jesus, there is a constant life of receiving out of his fulness. The very life, indeed, of the soul is in Jesus. It is no longer kept up, than it is preserved in him. The stream doth not depend more upon the fountain, neither the tree on the root, than the regenerated soul doth upon the life-giving Head. Consequently, therefore, the effects of that life, in whatever way it may be manifested, is in him. And hence all supplies, essential to preservation, must be constant, unremitting, perpetual. As the branch never ceases to receive sap and moisture from the vine to which it is united, and by which it is kept alive ; so the believer never remits one moment deriving resources from *Him*, who is the life of the soul, and who, by way of explaining this precious affinity, saith, "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

And what makes this life of dependence so very sweet and interesting is, that God the Holy Ghost, whose gracious work it is from first to last to carry it on, is continually exercising the soul by its wants to seek resources. It is he which reveals to the believer his own necessities, and the Redeemer's fulness ; and then brings him to Jesus, for suitable supplies. So that by thus constantly living upon him, the believer is daily increasing in grace, in knowledge, in obedience, in love, and in affection, to the person and character of the Lord Jesus. Nothing can tend more to keep the soul humble than a daily sense of its own wants and insufficiency. And nothing will endear the Redeemer more to the heart than his daily, hourly supplies to the soul of all its necessities. And thus, when God the Spirit hath accomplished this blessed purpose by his divine teachings, and induced this spiritual frame of waiting on the Lord, in a constant dependence upon him, the believer experimentally feels somewhat of the spirit of the apostle, "to glory in

his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him." He literally rejoiceth in his own emptiness, that it may afford occasion to taste the sweetness of being filled from Jesus. And however paradoxical it may seem to the world, when he is most weak in himself, then he is most "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

This is, then, in the language of the text, to flourish in the courts of our God. This is to bring forth fruit in old age, when nature's root is more and more decaying. This is "to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." For grace is an humbling principle; and the soul that grows in grace is growing downwards; that is, lays lower and lower in the dust before God, in token of profound humiliation, in the discovery of greater insights of his own corrupt and sinful nature. And as he advances in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour, he sees more of his beauty, more of his fulness and suitability as a rich Saviour, exactly formed for a poor sinner. By growing in grace, therefore, he grows more out of love with himself; and by increasing in the knowledge of his Saviour, he becomes more enamoured of his person and character. And thus the blessed Spirit teaches him to know both himself and what Jesus is, that he may be filled "with all the fulness of God."

My brother, have you been thus taught of God? Are your advances in grace of this kind? Be assured, that there is no other to be depended upon. Men may fancy what they please, of inherent holiness in the creature; but these things result, not from divine teachings, but are the puffings up of human pride.

Do not forget this one thing. The distinguishing work of God the Holy Ghost is, *to glorify Jesus*. Now it can never tend to glorify Jesus, when we exalt the creature. And what can tend to exalt the

creature more, than when we tempt him to fancy, that he hath in himself somewhat of holiness to look to; when we send him to duties, and ordinances, and the exercise of his gifts and graces, by way of recommending himself to God?

The Spirit's teachings are all the reverse to this. He shews the sinner, that the same almighty hand which first stripped him of every thing he fancied holy, and then led him, naked as he was, to Christ to be clothed, now leads him daily, as naked as ever, to Jesus, to be covered with his robe of righteousness. The same grace which convinced him that he was empty, and brought him to Jesus to be filled, teaches him, like the Israelites in the desert, that the living bread, of which their manna was a figure, must be again supplied, pure and new every morning. And the same blessed Instructor that made him come empty handed, and bringing nothing but his misery to recommend him, still tells him that he hath nothing, literally nothing else to bring, but the same recommendation.

Oh! these are sweet and precious lessons, in God's school. I pray God, that you and I may learn them more and more from our great Master. Depend upon it, he that stands highest in the upper form of his *heavenly* teaching, is he that hath made the greatest proficiency in this *humbling* science. And were I in possession of all the learning in the universe, and the knowledge of every art and science centered in my person, gladly would I relinquish the whole, were it possible by the sacrifice, to acquire a greater depth in those *two* grand rules of the divine life. To know my own total emptiness and Jesus's all-sufficiency; and by the Spirit's operation, to be unceasingly living upon his fulness.

But while I am speaking of the blessedness of those in whose experience the promise of the text

is daily fulfilling, and who, from living more upon Christ, flourish as they advance in old age ; I must not forget that very probably there may be some mourning souls present who, from not finding this progress in their instance, are tempted to call in question every principle of their faith, and to doubt whether they have ever been brought in as plants into the Lord's house.

My brother, do not, in your anxiety, overlook those evidences, however small you may think them, which carry in their bosom the truest marks of a work of grace in the soul. Your very fears and anxieties prove the reverse of what you fear : else why those distressing apprehensions of coming short of grace ? Wherefore those longing desires after grace ? Why is it, that you sometimes rejoice, upon the smallest gleam of hope arising in the soul, and again fall back into your former despondency when that hope is clouded ? Must there not be grace in the heart to desire, even though those desires be not according to your wishes gratified ?

Moreover, say, is not the Redeemer very dear to you, as a Redeemer to his church and people, even though you cannot see *your* interest clearly in him ? Is not his person altogether lovely, and are not his gifts and his graces desirable ; however short you come in evidences, that you are united to the one, or have communion with the other ? And faint and indistinct as the impressions of hope are upon your mind, of a personal interest in Jesus and his salvation ; tell me, would you, or could you, give them up with indifference, as one that hath no right in them ? Do, my brother, examine yourself by these standards of character, and I venture to believe that you will find precious testimonies where you least expected them.

Besides, it should be remembered also, that believers in the church of Christ, like plants, do not, nei-

ther are they expected to flourish with equal strength and fruitfulness. The distribution of spiritual gifts, we are taught, is diverse, though all coming from one and the self-same Spirit, "who divideth to every man severally as he will." The church at *Thessalonica* flourished so abundantly, as to call forth a particular thanksgiving to God from the apostle Paul upon the occasion. "We are bound (says he) to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because your faith groweth exceedingly." On the contrary, the church among the *Hebrews* made so little progress, that the same apostle told them they had need to learn the first principles. But as true churches, we may be very certain, there was a progressive improvement in both, though not in an equal degree.

I will be very ready to confess with you, that nothing can be equally desirable to the soul, as increasing with all "the increase of God." But while grace prompts the soul to desire this more and more, the same grace doth as earnestly teach the believer to be thankful for what he hath.

Satisfied by the evidences given, that you are truly brought into the courts of the Lord's house, and united to Christ Jesus as a branch in the vine, bless God for such distinguishing mercy. And while in humble waitings, in the appointed way of ordinances, you are seeking an increase from the Lord, do not overlook nor "despise (for we know the Lord doth not) the day of small things."

Recollect also, that it is in grace, as in nature. Though the branches of the tree are not all equally lofty, nor equally luxuriant, yet the humblest and the lowest bough, if really a part of it, is as much nourished and sustained from the root, as the strongest and the highest. And is not that a sweet reflection to the soul, that Jesus's care is peculiarly

exercised over the low, and the weak, and such as from their situation are more immediately exposed to danger? To use another beautiful image of Scripture; while he feeds his flock like a Shepherd "in the day that he is among his sheep, to seek that which was lost, and to bind up that which was broken, and to strengthen that which was sick;" he is said, "to gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."

I have been so very diffuse in the illustration of the doctrine of the text, in the opening of my discourse, and have so generally incorporated the practical inferences arising out of it as we have gone along, that there will be the less reason for detaining you with any length of application in conclusion.

I dare not, indeed, consistent with the duty of my office of supplying some portion for every one in the congregation, I dare not shut up the subject altogether, without dropping a word to such of my audience as at present feel themselves uninterested in the blessed promises of the text, because they are uninfluenced in the doctrine of it.

Very obvious it must be, without my remarking it, that if the great mercies of a state of flourishing and fruitfulness spoken of, as belonging to God's house, are wholly depending upon the event of being planted there; unless this act takes place, neither can be found. It were a folly to look for the effect without the cause. And the alternative is awful indeed. That solemn declaration of the Lord Jesus upon the point is a volume; "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." (Matthew xv. 13.)

Shall I beg of you, therefore, my brother, from a conscious sense of the vast importance of the thing itself, to look diligently "lest you fail of the grace

of God." Never forget, that the most plentiful ordinances, void of this life-giving power, are all nothing. The rain, and the dew, and the clouds' fatness, drop in vain on rocks and sands.

Gracious God! accomplish thy great work of conversion (if it be thy blessed will) in the hearts of some who hear me this day! And now, before "the axe is laid at the root of the tree;" before that awful sentence is gone forth, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground!" let that precious promise to Israel of old be their portion: "Bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." (Exod. xv. 17.) Then shall they be called "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that thou mayest be glorified." (Isaiah lxi. 3.)

Suffer me to add, for the encouragement of the faithful, that I trust in God, no faint or thirsty soul will depart, without knowing his personal interest in the sweet promises of the text, and having as feelingly received their accomplishment in his own experience.

Your very wants carry with them this life of dependence; and on whom shall the faint rest but upon the strong, or where shall the thirsty be filled, but at the Fountain Head? Every exercise of grace leads the soul to Jesus, and the more necessitous your circumstances are, the stronger should be the motives to live upon his fulness. Go, then, my brother, go unto Jesus; and take with you this one observation, as a never-failing truth, answerable to all exigencies:—whatever brings you closer to him, must be a blessing, however disguised it may be in a covering of sorrow.

There is more space in the heart, to be filled with

the infinite Creator, when the creature is most emptied; and the preciousness of Jesus will be best known, when the soul hath literally nothing else left that is precious. A believer may, and I hope doth, sometimes feel the grace which is in Christ Jesus, when his blessings are multiplied upon him. But depend upon it, the sweetest season for the soul to say as the prophet did, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," is when "the fig-tree doth not blossom, and the fields yield no meat." (Hab. iii. 18.)

May that sweet promise be fulfilled, as it may be required in your experience; "I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul." (Jerem. xxxi. 25.)

SERMON VI.

THE BLESSED EFFECTS OF THE LOVE OF GOD IN THE SOUL.

ROMANS V. 5.

And hope maketh not ashamed ; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

NOTHING can be more evident, from the general scope and tendency of those “exceeding great and precious promises,” which are given to believers in the gospel of Christ, than that it is the intention of our heavenly Father, his people should enjoy every possible consolation in their passage through this world to a better. It should seem, indeed, as if a gracious God, not satisfied with giving the positive assurance, that “there is a rest which remaineth for the people of God,” determined to afford them many refreshing springs of comfort by the way, which might beguile the tediousness of the path, and sometimes make the desert through which they are passing, “to blossom as the rose.”

Laying this for a foundation, that the great work of the regeneration of the heart to God hath been wrought by the Holy Ghost on the believer, (and this you know is the pre-requisite of all happiness,) and then all the sweet properties, resulting from such an act of grace, must eventually follow. And depend upon it, in proportion as the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by his divine power, so exactly corresponding to this will be the influence suited to every occasion : and for this plain reason. As the love of God *flows in*, creature dependencies and the

comforts or conflicts arising from all creature dependencies, *go out*. When this grand principle of divine love is *shed abroad* in the heart; that is, is diffused in every part of it; enters into every recess, and fills up the whole space, there will be little or no room for other tenants to occupy. And while the soul thus derives all its resources from this one principle alone, which is a fixed and settled principle, and liable to no fluctuation, there will be “a hope that maketh not ashamed,” as *Paul* calls it, in the worst of times; and let what will vary *without*, a peace is secured *within*, which “keeps the heart and mind through Christ Jesus.”

But let the apostle speak his own words. He tells us, in the opening of this chapter, some of the many precious effects which flow from a state of justification before God. He considers (as I have done, in what I have already said,) the soul to be taken out of that state of enmity with God in which every man is born, and brought into favour with God, through the merits and death of the Lord Jesus: and then enumerates various blessed consequences immediately which arise out of it. “Therefore, (says he,) being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.”

How very beautiful and unanswerably conclusive is this reasoning of the apostle. He takes up the subject from the beginning, and having presupposed that breach which sin hath made in the sinner's heart to-

wards God to have been made up, and peace restored, he therefrom proves, that not only the distance and enmity between the parties are removed, but the greatest favour and affection follows : and thus rises, by a sweet climax, step by step, until he beholds the sinner, leaping into the very bosom of God, with an holy familiarity and affection.

And what I would principally desire you to observe in this passage of Scripture, which introduceth the words of my text, is the delightful view it affords of the gracious concern which all the persons of the GODHEAD, in their several operations, are represented as taking for the accomplishment of this happy purpose. It is with *God* that we are said to have peace ; and this is wrought through the sole merits of that almighty Peace-maker, our *Lord Jesus Christ*. But that the part which *God the Holy Ghost* bears in this great work may not be overlooked or forgotten, the access of this grace, wherein we are said to stand, manifests his gracious leadings by whom it is accomplished : for while we have this access, the same apostle elsewhere tells us, that it is “by one Spirit unto the Father.” (Ephes. ii. 18.)

And the charming consequences which arise out of those gracious acts of the GODHEAD on the minds of the Lord’s people, are no less deserving your regard. They which are thus admitted into reconciliation and favour, are admitted at the same time into all the privileges of it. The faith of justification, in which they stand, qualifies them no less to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” He that gives grace will also give glory. The whole, indeed, is the sole result of divine favour ; and therefore the gift of grace now, is the sure pledge of glory hereafter.

And lest any one should be led to suspect, from the well-known trials which the godly in Christ Jesus are sure to encounter in life, that these points are

become questionable, the apostle goes on to point out an accession of happiness, even from what the world would think evil. "Not only so (says he) but we glory in tribulations also." As if he had said, by this precious property of grace, which, like a chemical process, possesseth the happy art of converting bitter things into sweet, we glory in tribulations also. Not that God's people are insensible to afflictions more than others: and certain it is, that all afflictions are, for the present, "not joyous but grievous:" but, by their operations, they ultimately prove blessings in disguise. Like medicated waters, which in themselves are nauseous to the taste, yet by their passing over some mineral property, imbibe a virtue, which proves salutary in their application; so afflictions, however painful in their operation, become sanctified to the soul from the grace accompanying them.

Hence, "tribulation worketh patience" among the people of God, which, in the world at large produceth the reverse: and *patience*, long exercised, begetteth *experience*; because the longer it is used, the greater evidence it brings with it of God's faithfulness to his promises. And as repeated proofs of God's faithfulness, in a covenant way, give strength to his promises: the more we try God, the more our hope in him must be enlarged. And thus in a truly justified soul there will be an "hope that maketh not ashamed," because it leaveth nothing to a peradventure to be ashamed of.

The believer goeth not to a mercy seat, and a throne of grace, with a presumption his God *may* hear, or *may* answer, for he knoweth that he *will* answer. There is one there whom the Father heareth always, and through whom he is accepted and justified. Such an hope maketh not ashamed, therefore, because "the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto us."

What I propose from this sweet portion of Scripture, as God the Spirit shall be pleased to enable, is, to demonstrate the invaluable properties of the mercy itself, "in the love of God shed abroad in the heart;" and the blessed effects resulting from it, in the "hope which maketh not ashamed."

It is possible a gracious God may commission a subject of this nature, to the refreshment of some souls of his people present, and lead them to see, that a communion with their Covenant God in Christ Jesus, by the Spirit's shedding abroad this love in the heart, is not a privilege to be called into exercise only now and then; but becomes one uniform, steady, and unceasing principle of action, by which, like saints of old, they walk with God through all their pilgrimage.

And I will no less hope also, that a gracious God, while peculiarly refreshing the awakened soul by a meditation of this kind, may make it useful to those who are as yet unconscious of his love. We certainly take the most effectual method, under his grace, to excite the careless sinner to a greater concern for his salvation, when we bring before him a view of the privileges of the faithful.

In the pleasing prospect of ministering to this important purpose, I shall invert the order of the text, and *first*, endeavour to shew you in what way this love of God shed abroad in the heart, manifests itself to the believer's experience, so as to lead the soul into this constant frame of enjoyment. And then, *secondly*, describe the blessed effect arising out of such a cause, in that "hope which (the apostle saith) maketh not ashamed." And my prayers are, that He, to whose gracious operations in the soul we owe such unspeakable mercies, may, at this time, give you convincing evidence of the whole in your experience, by "directing your hearts into

this love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”

First, I am to shew in what way this love of God manifests itself to the believer’s experience, so as to lead the soul into this constant frame of enjoyment.

And this may be exemplified by a train of evidences, taken from the very frame of mind of a truly regenerated soul, in the daily acts of faith, which, according to the measure of grace imparted, he is enabled, more or less, to exercise on each of the persons of the GODHEAD. For there certainly is, and must be, these distinct acts of communion, both with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; agreeably to the respective acts, which in Scripture they are described, as having taken in the redemption of the Lord’s people.

Perhaps I cannot adopt a more effectual method of explaining this very sweet and interesting doctrine, than by an illustration of it, under each of these particulars. May the Lord the Spirit graciously grant you experimental testimonies of the truth itself, by his divine teachings, as we go along!

And first, in respect to the personal interest which God the Father hath taken in the salvation of his people, and which the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, enables the believer to discover.

Tracing up from slender beginnings effects to their causes, in the covenant love of God the Father, the believer in Jesus is able to discern the grand source of all his happiness. And as he is led to see, that this gracious act did not originate in the merit of man, so he as plainly discovers, that the continuance of it can need no better security than the unchangeable purpose of God in Christ.

Hence, therefore, he contemplates the Father’s covenant as a fixed and *settled* plan of mercy; and

such a mercy as is not intended to operate at some particular times or seasons only, according to the state and temperature of the human mind, but is in itself one uniform principle of action.

And therefore, in proportion as the love of God occupies the heart, or, to use the more expressive language of the apostle, is shed abroad in the heart; as pure milk dropped upon water, soon diffuses itself over the surface, and gives a tinge to the whole; so from the diffusion of this principle, the believer will be enabled to find comfort in the view of the covenant engagements of God, in the worst of times, whatever his own frame or feelings may be.

To exemplify this by a particular illustration: let it be supposed, for argument's sake, that a true believer in Christ, who stands in the justified state the apostle describes in this chapter, through the merits of the Lord Jesus, hath felt the influence of this love of God, shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. Let it be further supposed, that such an one is brought under the influence of some pressing temptation: perhaps, added to the conflicts arising from the powers of darkness, he hath other trials to contend with. There *may be* much distress of soul, and there certainly *will be* a deep sense of much indwelling corruption to afflict him. In such seasons, (and they are not unfrequent in the life of real believers,) as all creature resources are cut off, where shall the soul find relief?

God the Holy Ghost, who only can illumine the darkness of the mind, may have remitted his shining. He hath not withdrawn from the soul his presence, for that, according to gospel promises, is impossible. Jesus declared concerning him that "He should abide for ever." But, though the glorious inhabitant be at home, he doth not appear. And unless he gives grace to act faith upon the person of the Lord Jesus,

certain it is, that no communications can flow. For it is his peculiar work, to “take of Christ and shew unto his people.” From whence then, shall the believer look for comfort?

Here comes in to our aid, the sweetness and importance of God the Father’s covenant love, in which that blessed promise hath its full accomplishment: “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” In contemplating this provision of God’s covenant engagements, the soul finds at all times relief; for it is an “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” It no longer, then, becomes a question with the soul, under any trial of sin or temptation, whether God *may* help, but he is enabled to assume the well-grounded confidence, that God *will* surely help. Here are no *peradventures*. All is fixed, and certain, and absolute. The view of God, as a covenant God in Christ, removes all fear: and like the prophet of old, when comforts run low, and temptations are high, when “the best of men are like briars, and the most upright sharper than a thorn hedge:” nay, when the greatest bosom friend proves deceitful, the soul looks at God, in his covenant relation, and says, *My God will hear me*. Oh! it is very sweet, and an unspeakable mercy, to have a covenant God to look *to*, and a covenant God to rely *upon*, in all seasons, and upon all occasions.

And next to the blessedness of the covenant itself, the method which God the Father hath graciously condescended to adopt, by way of recommending it to our warmest embraces, is a very pleasing addition to its enjoyment.

A bare promise from God, when it is considered who, and what God is, in the unchangeableness of his nature and perfections, ought to have satisfied every mind, that what he promised he would most certainly perform. God, therefore, when he entered into co-

venant engagements, pledged himself to faithfulness, by the most solemn promises. And we know his ability is competent to the performance of all that he hath promised.

But the condescension of God rested not here. "God willing (saith an apostle) more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Heb. vi. 17, 18.)

Still, moreover, advancing in wonderful grace and condescension, God confirmed his covenant engagements, in a way which surpasseth all calculation of mercy, and in the blood of his dear Son stamped its validity, with an impression of tenderness unequalled.

And as a perpetual seal to this covenant, marked in blood, and in no less blood than the blood of Christ, in that standing memorial of Jesus's death, which we call the ordinance of the holy supper, he hath designed to keep up a never-ceasing remembrance of it among the faithful, at every renewed commemoration. The Lord Jesus himself gave it this importance, when he called it, "the cup of the New Testament (or covenant) in his blood."

Now put all these together, and see, what a gracious design God the Father had, that his people should be refreshed, upon all occasions, with a view of his covenant mercies. Not content with expressing in the covenant itself every evidence of mercy, (for it is, in fact, nothing but grace and mercy from beginning to end,) our compassionate Father, well knowing the weakness and unbelief of the human heart, adopted all these methods to gain our affections to the reception of it; that when the other waters of the sanctuary ran low, the soul might find

sufficient to assuage his thirst in this. "And (as the apostle says) though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth or addeth thereto." (Gal. iii. 15.) Hence, therefore, God's covenant established on such immutable pillars, must be like himself, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And the believer finds it so in the darkest hours, who stands justified in Christ's righteousness, and in whose heart the love of God hath been shed abroad, by the Holy Ghost given unto him.

Let us next view the same blessed property of the Spirit's influence in this particular, as it is called forth in exercise towards the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this, if I mistake not, will as effectually tend to exemplify the preciousness of the principle as the former.

From the well-known union which the real believer hath with the person of the Lord Jesus, he possesseth an interest of property in whatever belongs to the Redeemer. As the covenant Head and Mediator of his people, he is a member of his mystical body, and therefore part of himself. So that not only "all his springs are in him;" but, consequently, his graces can never totally languish, while issuing from this almighty Fountain-head. "Because I live (says Christ) ye shall live also." It is impossible that the smallest or most inconsiderable of Christ's people should perish, without by so much involving the Redeemer in the same destruction. For "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

But as in the present and unripe state of existence every thing is imperfect, there will be no less an imperfection in the operation of these blessed properties.

Though truly and properly united to the Lord Jesus, by virtue of the renewed life in the soul, the communication from his fulness will be more or less

manifest, according as this principle of divine love, from the Spirit's work, is shed abroad in the heart. Where there is the greatest emptiness of all creature enjoyments, there, in proportion, will be larger space afforded, for the filling in of the Creator's love. And, on the contrary, when the heart is swarming with vain thoughts, like a cage of unclean birds, until these fly away, or, more properly speaking, are put to flight, what room can be found for the love of God ?

It becomes very sweet to observe, and indeed it is among the principal operations by which the Holy Ghost sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, the method he is pleased to adopt for the accomplishment of so much mercy. In order to empty the soul, for the reception of divine things, he permits his people, not unfrequently, the gratification of their wayward desires, in the pursuit of one creature comfort after another, on purpose, that from continual disappointment they may be brought back to seek happiness where alone it can be found. For this end, he tinges all their comforts with vanity ; converts their very pleasures into sources of pain ; causes a bitter fruit to grow out of the very plant they had proposed to themselves much sweetness in ; and by throwing down, one after another, all their false props of creature confidences, he brings them low in the dust before God, by way of preparing them for the greater manifestations of his love.

We have a beautiful instance of this, exemplified in the case of the church of old. "She said (saith the prophet) I will go after my lovers, that gave me my bread, and my water, my wool, and my flax, mine oil, and my drink." Strong expressions these, to describe the many wanderings of the heart after its various idols. But what saith God to all this ? "I will hedge up thy way (saith the Lord) with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her

paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them: and she shall seek them, but she shall not find them. Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now." (Hosea ii. 5, 6, 7.)

Here you see at once an illustration of that process of grace, by which the Holy Ghost brings back the soul, and prepares it for the full enjoyment of divine love. When he hath mercifully induced sorrow, and disappointment, and vexation, and sickened the heart in the pursuit of all creature comforts; having thus driven "all buyers and sellers out of the temple," a fit habitation is then formed for Jesus himself to enter in. The heart melts under a deep sense of its own folly and ingratitude towards God, and God's goodness towards him; and full of these impressions, the believer is driven to his knees, in prayer, to confess his vileness and God's mercy. His language then is, "I have seen an end of all perfection." "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

These are precious testimonies of the Spirit's influence, in confirmation of the doctrine of the text. The love of God is indeed shed abroad by his power, when all creature affections are lessened or removed, to make space for the full reception of the Redeemer: and in proportion as this blessed principle prevails, so all others die away.

You may therefore estimate your own exact situation of character, in this particular, by this unerring standard. And depend upon it, according to the degree of estimation in which the Lord Jesus is held by you, such, more or less, is the Spirit's operation of this blessed gift in the heart; for your affection can proceed from no other source. In those happy

souls, where this influence is largely extended, there will be no apprehension, no distrust, no deadness to divine things, no anxious solicitude for earthly pursuits, no spirit of bondage, no guilty frames, "for perfect love casteth out fear." The Holy Ghost sheds abroad the love of God, with such fulness and sovereignty, that it sweeps away, as an overpowering torrent, all other considerations.

And hence it is that true believers in Christ, in whose hearts this love of God prevails, as in their experience creature comforts have lost their sweetness, so afflictions lose their bitterness. While this love is uppermost, they can and do enjoy Christ in every thing, and without any thing. For in all circumstances which concern them, they see somewhat of Jesus. Are they blessed with children, friends, health? eyeing the hand of Jesus in the gifts, gives a relish to the whole. Are they deprived of them, and stand defenceless and alone? having the Lord for their portion, in him they have all. Reproaches, unjustly thrown upon them by the world, will hardly be felt, while the peace of God rules within. And the strife of tongues will be as the clamour of a distant multitude to the soul which is wholly occupied with the love of God. Sweet and precious was his experience to those truths, who, in the full confidence of them cried out, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And it will be a happy testimony to the same in *your* instance, if from the same cause you can say as he did: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans viii. 35, 38, 39.)

I have but one evidence more to bring, by way of illustrating this doctrine of the Spirit's work in the

heart, and that is, when he reveals himself to the soul, in his gracious operations, so as to open another source of enjoyment to the believer, in a consciousness from whom all these mercies flow.

It might be well supposed, indeed, without my insisting much upon it, that if God the Holy Ghost be, (as scripture teacheth he is,) the sole Author of all that delightful fellowship and communion, which true believers have with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; the same grace would be exercised, to lead the mind into a proper apprehension of his person and operations also, who is the cause of these enjoyments.

This view of the subject becomes very interesting. The multiform methods by which God the Holy Ghost carries on his grace in the soul, in quickening, reviving, comforting, and strengthening influences, are all so many illustrations of the doctrine. And though our inattentive and careless minds lose a thousand proofs which he is continually affording to this amount, yet there are sufficient evidences in every believer's experience to the fact itself; which demonstrate, that while he is shedding abroad the love of God in the heart, to open communion between each of the persons of the Godhead and the soul, he is no less calling up every devout affection of the heart towards himself.

Every grace, indeed, which is brought forth into exercise, for faith to act upon the person of the Father, or of the Son, as well as all the sweet influences which manifest themselves in the life, are the immediate result of his divine power, and therefore called in scripture "the fruit of the Spirit." (Gal. v. 22.) And it would form a pleasure of the purest kind upon every renewed instance of the sort, if the believer were to accustom himself to watch and mark his footsteps, in the ten thousand proofs

which he is daily testifying of his attention to him in those particulars.

Shall I beg of you, my brother, even of you who have personally known "the love of God, shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost," to mark the evidences of the Spirit's work in the way I am now insisting upon, in your own experience.

When, for example, at any time, you have been deeply exercised with soul distresses, arising from any misconstruction or perversion of the sacred word; and "in danger of being led away with the error of the wicked;" have you never found the Holy Ghost personally revealing himself to your apprehension, under that well-known character, as "the Spirit of truth, to guide you into all truth?" And hath not his sweet instructions flowed into the mind, in such a manner, as if a voice from behind was heard by you saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left?" (Isaiah xxx. 21.)

Is there one present, who is at all conscious what preventing and restraining grace means; and who in the hour of temptation hath felt its merciful influence, in keeping back the foot from evil; but what finds the blessing doubly sweet, when the same hand that restrains, displays itself in the act of mercy, and fully proves that it is "through the Spirit he is enabled to mortify the deeds of the body?"

And is not that "joy and peace" of the soul, which the christian finds "in believing," either when resting upon the covenant love of the Father, or in receiving a renewed application and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus to the soul, rendered yet more completely happy, when the whole is discovered to be brought home, and poured into the heart, by the power of the Holy Ghost?

Oh, Sir! depend upon it, the sweetness of all

spiritual gifts becomes, more or less, according as the blessed Spirit himself, who is the Fountain of them, is kept in view, while the soul is enjoying itself at the stream.

And what are all the sweet intercourses between God and his people, which pass at a mercy seat, but the immediate effect of his love shed abroad in the heart, who comes as a "Spirit of grace and supplication," to help "the infirmities of the saints, according to the will of God," and who maketh "intercession for them," in the *groanings* which their full hearts cannot utter?

My poor unawakened brother! how totally destitute of all gracious influences must you be, if ignorant of this peculiar work of God the Holy Ghost upon the soul! Alas! without him we can never form right conceptions of the great object of prayer; we can neither know what prayer is, or how to perform it acceptably; we can never be sensible of our wants, or know through what channel those wants are to be supplied. He, and he alone, who sheds abroad the love of God in the believer's heart, opens the heart, at the same time, to express suitable acknowledgments of that love. And as He knoweth what the mind of God is, so is it his peculiar act to reveal to us this knowledge also, that our application for spiritual mercies may be according "to the will of God."

But I shall have said enough, I hope, in accomplishing the *first* object I proposed from this subject, in the illustration of the doctrine: I proceed, therefore, now to the *second* point intended, to describe the blessed effects arising out of such a cause, in that "hope which maketh not ashamed."

Were I to enumerate, by a particular detail, the whole of those eventual happy consequences, which arise out of this love of God in the heart, a volume would not be competent to the subject. But I am

limited by the text to one only, and that, indeed, is so comprehensive, that it folds within it a multitude of others; "Hope maketh not ashamed:" that is, the confidence which the believer finds in the love of God, when grace is in exercise, through the justifying righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit's seal to this truth in the heart, cannot deceive or make ashamed, to induce fear, for it is liable to no disappointment. And this perfect conviction of God's unalterable covenant-love to the soul, draws out the soul in love to God, and carries the believer through every situation and state with which the mind can be exercised in passing through the present life.

Pause, my brother, over this one view of the sweet effects of the love of God shed abroad in the heart, and contemplate the vast and extensive privileges belonging to it. To have access to a gracious God, at all times, and upon all occasions, as one in a justified state before him, through the blood and righteousness of Jesus; to live upon the fulness and all-sufficiency of the Redeemer; to feel the Spirit's influence in the heart, under all his quickening and refreshing consolations; what term will you give this better than what the apostle hath given, "a hope that maketh not ashamed?"

Oh! that I could enter into the very heart of a true believer, and by unfolding to your view the various workings of divine grace, where this principle of the love of God is shed abroad, point out those sweet exercises which arise out of this soul-enriching communion.

The real believer, from the personal relation in which he considers himself as standing to God, looks up to him as to a Father, and beholds every act, and every manifestation of God towards him, as coming to him in a fatherly dispensation. And hence all those reciprocal communications from God to the soul, and

from the soul to God, carry with them evidences of this sweet and endearing tie of affinity.

And in what a very high degree of tenderness God intended this affectionate appellation of Father to be used, in reference to himself, is beautifully set forth in a passage of the prophecy of Jeremias. Israel had revolted from the Lord, and was gone away backward. And God, with his usual grace and mercy, is represented as inviting Israel to return. But when a difficulty seemed to have arisen in the divine mind, (speaking after the manner of men,) how God should take again into his bosom such rebellious creatures; "How shall I put thee (saith God) among the children?" The Lord himself suggests this, as the only method: "Thou shalt call me (saith God) my Father!" as if in the very name of *Father*, in a covenant way, through Christ, every thing of tenderness was included. (Jeremias iii. 19.)

And let the heart of any father say, what kind of tenderness that is. Is there a single request which can possibly be denied, where there is ability to answer it, when the application is made in those endearing terms, Behold I come to thee as to my Father; thou wilt not surely cast off thy child!

Let it be remembered also in this representation, that all the heightenings of affection in an earthly parent, must fall infinitely short of what are the bowels of love in our Almighty Parent. In this perfection, as indeed in every other, it may be said, "as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts."

And why is it, then, that the souls of justified believers feel no more of those sweet endearments towards God? The reason is obvious. There is a deficiency in the principle itself. We regard God more as our Judge than we do as our Father: we

entertain hard thoughts of him from the misinterpretation of his providences, and the like. And hence our confidence and dependence upon him is lessened. "Thou thinkest (saith God) that I was altogether such an one as thyself."

And, might I venture to send some of you home to your own hearts, I would not scruple to aver, that this will be found among the causes, why many, and otherwise gracious souls too, go so lean from day to day. You mingle up duties and ordinances with the love of God, as a partly recommending motive to obtain his kindness. You estimate the degree of favour you stand in with God by this standard. And hence, in proportion as those duties are observed, or those ordinances followed, such will be the frame of your mind. Sometimes darkness, at others light, and thus perpetually changing like the moon. And I fear, if the truth were known, that this is, for the greater part, the state of most believers.

But only suppose now, that God the Holy Ghost were to shed abroad this love of God in the heart, with a fulness and sovereignty, so as to fill every corner of it; in this case, the whole soul being occupied with divine love, affords no room either for carnal fears, or carnal confidences, to creep in. Every other consideration is absorbed in this one. He, whom my soul loveth, the believer will say, is my Father, my Redeemer, my Sanctifier. And do I not remember that precious word of his, "Ask me of things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me?" (Isaiah xlv. 11.) And shall I not be confident in my approaches towards him, and perfectly convinced that all I require will be granted, when coming in such a relation, and encouraged by such a promise?

My brother! if God the Holy Ghost hath happily shed abroad this love in your heart, you need no com-

ment from me, to say to what extent it may be carried. Depend upon it, there are *some*, who from the Spirit's influence, and the freedom induced in the soul by the Saviour's justifying righteousness, can go to a mercy seat at all times, with an holy boldness, to ask any thing; and, like Jacob, wrestle with God in prayer, with unceasing importunity, till it be obtained. It is a child's privilege this: and the sweet and near affinity of the Father, and that a Covenant Father too, in Christ, at once justifies and confirms it.

But perhaps it may be questioned, What if the believer fall into transgression, will not the soul feel restraints in the exercise of those privileges? Yes, unquestionably. A sense of guilt upon the mind will ever form a sad cloud of darkness, to intercept our view of the divine countenance.

Believers well know what it is to groan under a body of sin and death, which they carry about with them, and for the burden of which they go heavily. And, indeed, the true believer, in whose heart the love of God hath been most fully manifested, will be most abundant in his sorrow. Like David, he feels the chain of sin to be most galling, because his iniquities are peculiarly aggravated: "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Such will be his language: That I who owe so much to God, who am in covenant engagements with him, his sworn servant, his adopted son, his child; that I, of all men, should have broken his commandments, and sinned against him! Hence, from the very bottom of his soul, he sends forth that mournful complaint, like Ezra, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God!" (Ezra ix. 6.)

But do observe in all this how very distinguished and expressive those soul-rending cries are, of the state of the heart before God. The love of God is

still at the bottom, notwithstanding all appearances ; and there is a child-like spirit, a true filial affection, yet remaining. God was Ezra's God, though Ezra dared not look up with his usual confidence.

Oh ! it forms a blessed frame, and plainly manifests grace in the heart, and in full exercise, when the believer lays low in the dust before God, in a conscious sense of sin and unworthiness. Shame and confusion of face are sweet testimonies of what passeth within.

Similar to this state of mind, but yet in a less degree, are what have been considered as interruptions to the love of God ; I mean that darkness of soul, when distressing sighs go up, and a dead silence at the mercy-seat prevails, so that no answers come down to assuage grief. "I said (saith the prophet, upon one of those mournful occasions,) I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes, yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." (Jonah ii. 4.) But is it not abundantly evident, though the prophet himself saw nothing but terror, and thought that he was now totally abandoned, yet divine strength was in the very moment upholding him with his everlasting arms, or how could he look towards God's holy Temple ?

So far are such cases from becoming proofs that God hath suspended the operation of shedding his love abroad in the heart, or shut up his loving kindness in displeasure, that they afford some of the truest evidences of his mercy. Those views which are opened hereby to the believer's experience, of his own nothingness before a throne of grace, the emptying him of all righteousness, in order to endear the Redeemer and his righteousness to the heart ; the hanging on the mercy-seat, and the resolute wrestlings with God which it occasions : these are among the sweetest fruits of the Spirit's work, and

proclaim that the love of God lies deep in the heart, and is largely shed abroad there by his divine power. Had the poor woman of Canaan been spared this exercise, she would not have received that glorious testimony which the Lord Jesus gave her, of the excellence of her faith; neither would her monument have formed so conspicuous a figure in the christian road as it now doth, for the instruction and comfort of exercised believers travelling by.

Some of the strongest testimonies of divine love are among those where the soul is called out to great difficulties and discouragements, on purpose to manifest divine strength in creature weakness. And do, my brother, mark this down, among the useful observations for your conduct; whenever the Lord Jesus is pleased to try *your faith*, depend upon it the issue will manifest to you *his faithfulness*. God the Holy Ghost hath caused it to be left on record, with peculiar emphasis, "that it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." (Lament. iii. 26.)

Our subject is capable of being extended to many other cases, in proof of the doctrine itself, that the hope of the true believer is a hope that maketh not ashamed, when the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost given unto us. But your time is exhausted.

One or two improvements, which the subject suggests, shall close the whole, and relieve your attention.

From what hath been said, we may learn the sole cause of all those unsteady and changeable frames of mind which distinguish the state of believers in their christian path. We feel but too little of this glorious work of God the Holy Ghost upon our hearts. We are content with sipping now and then of "the streams which make glad the city of God," when we

might for ever drink “of the river.” (Psalm xlv. 4.) We are looking for somewhat to recommend in the *creature*, when we might live upon the *Creator’s* fulness. And hence the soul is frequently in bondage frames, and under heart-straitenings in prayer, and the poor believer “walketh in darkness, and hath no light;” not considering, that it is the gracious design of the Holy Ghost to empty the soul of every thing that he would wish to call his own, on purpose to fill him with every thing precious in Christ Jesus: and for this purpose that he is leading him, amidst all the poverty, and weakness, and fears, and guilt, and tremblings with which he is encompassed, to *Him*, in whom “it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, that he may receive out of his fulness grace for grace.” And when the Holy Ghost hath graciously performed this blessed work, of shedding abroad the love of God in the heart, with a fulness proportioned to our wants, then the believer finds “a hope that maketh not ashamed.”

The language of his heart is then changed. He doth no longer say, How shall I, a poor hell-deserving sinner, venture to draw nigh to God, or “wherewith shall I come before him?” But, taught by the Holy Ghost, he cries out, Shall I fear to act faith upon God’s covenant promises, and my Redeemer’s righteousness? Shall I go to my Father in a spirit of bondage, when he hath owned me for his own son by a spirit of adoption? Shall I exercise nothing but *fear*, when his very name, as revealed to me in Christ Jesus, is nothing but *love*?

Beg of God, I pray you, for larger, fuller, deeper manifestations of this precious part of the Spirit’s work. Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, desire to live wholly upon him. What the apostle so earnestly prayed for, do you covet to know, “the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may

be filled with all the fulness of God?" And make this the standard of character, to which you are continually aspiring; "to forget the things which are behind, and to press forward to those that are before." Tell the Lord, you cannot rest satisfied in present attainments, nor live upon past enjoyments. You have known a little of his love, and therefore that little makes you long for more. In a word, sit down contented with nothing short of this, that "Christ is *fully* formed in your heart, the hope of glory." And this is *the hope* the text means, "which maketh not ashamed;" because it is the sure consequence of the blessed operation of "the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us."

But what consolation doth our subject afford to that class of hearers, who, so far from having an interest in the hope that maketh not ashamed, are described in Scripture, as "having no hope, and without God in the world?"

Forgive me when I say, that I cannot but exceedingly fear, lest what Paul said of the church at Ephesus, may with equal truth be applied, more or less, to many professing churches in our day: they are not only unconscious of this work of the Holy Ghost, in shedding abroad the love of God in the heart; but, as to any real purpose of vital godliness, "have never so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." (Acts xix. 2.)

Shall I intreat you, my unawakened brothers, to look into the state in which you now stand before God? Have you received the Holy Ghost since you *professed* to believe? And do not forget this one thing, that any supposed merit in the receiver of grace, is not only unnecessary, but impossible. None were ever made "partakers of the Holy Ghost" for any worthiness in themselves. He whose blessed act it is to shed abroad the love of God in the heart,

is no less engaged to "create the heart anew" to receive it. Both the mercy and the qualification for the mercy are of him. The outpourings of the Spirit are like "the dew from the Lord, which tarrieth not for man, neither waiteth for the sons of men." (Micah v. 8.)

Do you know any thing, my brother, of this precious work, of which the text' speaks, the love of God shed abroad in your heart by his divine power? I could very earnestly wish that these questions were made by you the subject of diligent enquiry.

For though divine grace is not suspended upon the event of human seeking, yet when sinners are brought within the calls of grace, God hath said, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.)

"Ask," then, "and ye shall receive; (for so the promise runs,) seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "For as a father knoweth how to give good gifts unto his children, so shall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask him."

May God graciously shed abroad his love in every heart, and fill us all "with joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xv. 13.)

SERMON VII.

THE BELIEVER'S WARFARE.

JUDGES, VIII. 4.

Faint, yet pursuing.

THE life of the true believer in Jesus is a series of paradoxes. Paul, the apostle, hath sketched the strongest outlines of it in one of his chapters to the Corinthians, when speaking of himself, and his few faithful companions in tribulation, he thus describes it: "As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

And how unaccountable soever this may appear to the carnal mind, the fact is literally exemplified, more or less, in the history of the faithful in all ages. They are *unknown*, and unnoticed; despised, and frequently oppressed by the world, yet *well known*, and highly esteemed in the sight of God. In themselves, and in all their interests, they seem to be dying to the eyes of men; yet in the midst of all, they not only live, but live everlastingly secure from all real danger, and are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." And though *chastened* by the tender affection of a Father, too wise to mistake their interests, and too gracious to be unkind in his appointments concerning them; yet they know nothing of those rebukes of his displeasure, by which he condemns "the unbelieving world."

Men of corrupt minds suppose them to be always

gloomy and sorrowful ; whereas, in reality, they are always “rejoicing in the hope of God.” And though confessedly poor, as the *most part* of them are, in this world's goods, and *all* of them literally so, in that poverty of spirit which is the badge of their christian character, yet are they enabled to impart to others of “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

So that though considered in themselves as nothing, and in reality being so indeed, as to any personal possessions of their own, yet having Jesus for their portion, in him they may be truly said to “possess all things.”

Such is the family feature of the disciple of Christ ; and his walk of faith carries with it an uniform correspondence of conduct.

And I have often thought, that among the felicities of heaven, a portion of the enjoyments will be, to look back over the everlasting hills, and trace the wonderful path of grace in which the Lord hath brought his people on, amidst all the difficulties and discouragements of the way. To observe the kind preventions of love, in the days of our unregeneracy ; the display of an Omnipotent Arm, unremittingly stretched forth to keep back from death, and the grave, before the work of grace was formed in the heart ; to mark down the instances of pardoning mercy *since*, in the numberless transgressions and departures from God, by which the walk of the most upright may be traced.

Gracious God ! what a huge volume doth every believer's history form, of the Lord's forbearance and man's undeservings. And what a subject will be unfolded to our view, when the whole is finished and bound up together in a mass of particulars ; to manifest that our merit was never made the standard of divine favour, but the sole result of his distinguishing mercy “who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works,

but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

And if it be reasonable to suppose that the happiness of our future state will gather some of its sweetness from our being more intimately acquainted than we now are, with the Lord's gracious superintendence and watchings over us, in our progress through life, it should seem to follow, that nothing can be more conducive, under God's teachings, to this happiness, than the carefully attending to his approaches towards us now, in the various methods by which he manifests his love to his people, “otherwise than he doth to the world.”

My brother, depend upon it, though God the Spirit hath caused to be recorded a book of sweet experiences in his holy word, in the lives of the faithful, who have gone before you in the christian path; from whence, under his teachings, you may gather perpetual instruction and consolation, to guide and comfort you on your way: yet doth he afford also another book of closer experiences still, in your own life, by the perusal of which you may trace (if your forgetful heart doth not lose the memorandums of it,) a multitude of instances, to testify his unremitting care and watchfulness over you. And I do venture to believe, that if you were to accustom yourself to this study, the view of past evidences of God's faithfulness would furnish some of the best means to strengthen your future dependence upon him, and to prepare you, under his blessed influence, against any of the remaining trials, with which his providence may see it fit to exercise you in the unfinished period of your present life.

A train of thought like this hath crossed my mind in the contemplation of the subject which the short sentence of the text carries with it: “faint, yet pursuing.”

The characters of whom this was said were Gideon and his little army, who were engaged in fighting the battles of the Lord. God had assured them of conquest; but in the moment when they were promising themselves the victory, new difficulties and discouragements arose.

The text represents them in the heat of action. *Faint* under the many heavy assaults which they had sustained, yet *pursuing*, as if nothing hurt, the sure destruction of the foe. Such is the spiritual warfare of the believer. From the first moment he buckles on the holy armour, in the conflicts of grace, there is no remission, until he is undressed for the grave. There can be no truce in this war. Whatever sharp skirmishes you may have already gone through, depend upon it, more yet remains for you to encounter. And you cannot have a better testimony that you are a true soldier of Jesus Christ, than the carrying this motto on your banner, *Faint, yet pursuing*.

It will form a very pleasing subject, and I hope, no less profitable than pleasing, if, under the divine teachings, we trace this state of warfare in the believer's experience, through the variety of methods by which grace is brought into exercise.

Perhaps there may be *some* present, who, from being unacquainted with the depth of the enemy's devices, or the extent of the heart-workings through corruption, may be, in the very moment I am speaking, fainting under the assaults of sin and Satan, and exclaiming with one of old, "I shall certainly perish by the hand of the enemy!"

And it is more than possible, there may be *others* here also, much bowed down with soul distresses, from the various impediments which obstruct their path; that their hearts may be discouraged, like Israel in the wilderness, "because of the way."

Our subject, if it be graciously directed by the

Holy Ghost, will minister relief to such cases as these, or at least answer one general purpose, in teaching every true believer where to look for aid, and from what source alone it is to be expected. Every faithful follower of Jesus may adopt the language of the apostle in this particular, and say as he did : though I can do nothing by myself, yet " I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

And for those characters, if any of that description be present, who are totally unacquainted with the conflicts which arise between grace and corruption, and induce faintness in the heart, all that can be said concerning them is this ; they know nothing of religion who know nothing of those workings. And the most deplorable state of all states is to be at peace and rest, while " the strong man armed keepeth the palace."

What I propose from our present subject is, in the first place, to illustrate that faintness of soul which ariseth from the contentions of grace and corruption, amidst the various exercises of it.

And, secondly, I shall go on to shew, that however *faint* the true believer is in this spiritual warfare, he is yet *pursuing* the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and is enabled to hold on, and hold out, through the grace of Christ, which is sufficient for him, and whose strength is made perfect in his weakness. And my prayers to God are, that our attention to this subject may be so accompanied with divine influence, that the Lord may refresh the weary and comfort the faint.

First, I am, according to my proposal, to illustrate the doctrine of that faintness of soul which ariseth out of the contentions between grace and corruption, in the believer's experience.

And this view of the renewed nature of man, if traced from its beginning, and carefully followed up

through all its progress, until it be consummated in glory, opens one of the most interesting subjects possible; though I confess, at the same time, it becomes very humbling to the pride of the human mind to contemplate.

From the very commencement of the renewed life, when God, "who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in the heart," the eye of the soul, like the eye of the body, suddenly emerging from blindness to behold the wonderful objects around, is dazzled with the overpowering brightness, and from the weakness of vision will see things, but as it were "through a glass darkly."

The new-born babe of Christ (as one of the apostles calls the newly regenerated believer,) like the natural infant, comes into life in a state of helplessness. And when that state be considered as opposed to all the powers of the *old man*, who, though crucified, is not dead: and though gradually perishing, yet as creatures in their dying pangs are known sometimes to send forth the strongest efforts for the recovery of life, so his oppositions to grace will not unfrequently burst forth with redoubled violence. When this state of irreconcilable opposition between the old and new nature be considered, nothing can more fully demonstrate with what languor the believer is introduced into his spiritual life.

And hence those expressive figures by which the Holy Scriptures represent it. It is called a "day of small things:" and indeed it is so small as to be scarcely perceivable, and so inconsiderable when seen, that it seems to promise nothing. "A grain of mustard seed" is the comparison also by which it is described. And this not only from its being "the smallest of all seeds," but from its being cast into the heart of man, where it is apparently buried, and lost, amidst an heap of corruption. In respect of strength,

“ the bruised reed ” is its truest emblem, which cannot even stand of itself, and is broken with the least touch. And in reference to a warmth of godliness, nothing can better represent it than “ the smoking flax,” which hath no flame, and but little heat. Such are the characters which the word of God gives of the renewed nature, and in such a state of weakness is the believer's introduction into the renewed life.

And as in entrance, so in progress. It is in creature weakness that divine strength is perfected. What from corruptions of the heart within, and oppositions of the world from without, he may well be said to be but *faint* in his strongest moments.

Some of you who best know the various exercises of the soul in the struggles of grace with corruption, like the Shulamite of old of the two armies, in the uninterrupted skirmishes, can best describe the faintness induced therefrom.

If, my brother, God the Holy Ghost hath given you to see and feel the plague of your own heart, (and that he must have done, if you are the happy partaker of grace,) and you are led to behold the effects of it, marking all the way as you have come along: when from heart sins you have experienced heart sorrows; and when from great heaviness, induced by great trials, you have feared grace was withering in the soul and ready to die; speak, for you can best say, what fainting of the heart that is, when, like the church of old, you have been prompted to cry out, “ My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord ! ”

Neither is this all. The soul doth not droop, and hang the head, through sorrow of heart only, from corruption within, or opposition from without; but Hell itself is up in arms, to oppose the child of grace in his warfare, and to dispute, inch by inch with him, every step he takes through all the way.

What the apostle Paul declared of himself and the faithful in his day, all the faithful find in their experience every day. "We wrestle not (says he) against flesh and blood only, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

And what a conflict must he have to maintain, and what fainting of the soul will such a state induce, who hath an enemy so subtle, so powerful, and so full of malignity, to contend with, and whose approaches are, for the most part, all secret and unperceived!

These general outlines of the subject, are in themselves sufficient to explain the cause of the faintness of the life of grace in the soul, and why it is that the believer hath so much reason to go softly all his days. And, indeed, the most superficial view of the case is in itself enough to demonstrate, that unless suitable and seasonable supplies of grace were continually granted him from above, totally impossible would it be for him to resist such a legion of foes a single hour.

But, perhaps, it will be taking a more effectual method to illustrate and explain the doctrine, if from a *general* observation of the subject, we were to examine some more *particular* instances of it.

Suffer me, therefore, to enter into your experiences concerning these things, and in one or two of the more striking testimonies of them, which may serve as examples for the rest, shew you what I know must be the exercise of every truly regenerated heart, in the "faintness" of which the text speaks, induced in the struggles of grace with corruption.

As sin is the most frequent cause of the soul fainting, and this, more or less, becomes the complaint of all exercised believers, let us begin with our view of this; in which, if I mistake not, every child of God may find cause enough to explain to himself the reason of his "fainting."

All sin is in its very nature a source of sorrow, and for which, we are told, that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together." But in the believer it is attended with peculiar aggravations. Hence David, reeking under the galling effects in the mind of fresh contracted guilt, dwelt upon this, as the most painful circumstance of it: "Against thee, thee only (says he, repeating the word) have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." As if conscious that sin, in all its multiform appearances, became, as it really is, directly levelled against God. And what were the workings and faintings of David's heart upon those occasions, we learn from his many penitential expressions. "Innumerable evils (says he) have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me." And elsewhere, he speaks of his transgressions as having "gone over his head, and having become a sore burden, too heavy, (indeed,) for him to bear."

These are very strong terms to denote the depression of soul. When sins, and the grossest of all sins, even sins against covenant mercies, and against a covenant God, surround the believer, and they encompass him as a band of armed men on every side; when they take hold of a man, as the arm of justice seizes the self-condemned criminal by the shoulder; when a sense of their number adds to his terror, being "more than the hairs of the head," and a sense of their magnitude swells the sad account, being "greater than the heaviest burdens, and too heavy to be borne;" when the whole force is accumulated together, and the soul can neither look within, but with apprehension, nor look up with any hope; who but must faint and drag on heavily in the path of grace, and mourning as he goeth, as one did

of old, crying out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

But this is but *one* cause of sorrow, though indeed, in its nature and consequences, it is the parent of every other. There are multitudes beside which beset the christian traveller in his path, and make him go sorrowing and faint all the way.

Those withdrawals of the Holy Ghost, or the hidings of God's countenance, as they are called in the strengthening and refreshing influences of his grace upon the heart: that deadness which the soul sometimes feels, and hath too much reason to be frequently complaining of, in its desires of approaching a throne of grace, or when engaged in acts of devotion: that awful silence at the mercy seat, which deeply exercised believers groan under, when, like the prophet, they say, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear; even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save?" (Habakkuk i. 2.) In these, and similar situations, well known to the faithful, who but must faint and tire along the heavenly road, when causes so many and distressing to the soul, conspire to induce it?

And have you not found, my brother, (for I speak to the man that is no stranger to those heart exercises,) have you not found that Satan hath availed himself of those dark seasons, to harass the soul with his temptations?

What the Psalmist hath said of the *natural* world, may, with equal truth, be applied to the *spiritual*. "Thou makest darkness (says he) and it is night, wherein all the beasts of the forest creep forth." For when God withdraws his shining on the soul, and darkness is brought upon the mind, the enemy creeps forth from his den, and adds to the gloom tenfold darkness by his suggestions.

Hath the temptation never arisen in your mind,

during such seasons, and while you have been deeply wounded by reason of some fresh-contracted guilt, or the supposed absence of the God of your hope; have you not been prompted to fear that all your former prospects were a delusion? That the voice of Jesus you never had known, neither the manifestations of his love ever experienced? That what you fancied to be grace, was only some refinements of nature? And while thoughts of this distressing tendency have been drinking up your spirits, have you never experienced that master-piece of the enemy's stratagem, which he sometimes injects into the mind, by way of hiding from what quarter it comes, when the soul is prompted to say, Surely the Lord would not look on all this while and be silent, while Satan thus triumphs over me, if I really were in grace!

These are very common exercises, I believe, in the experience of the faithful. And what their feelings and faintings must be upon those occasions, are better conceived than described: "The heart knoweth its own bitterness."

One state more, by way of proving that the life of the faithful is a life of faintness, shall close my present illustration of this point of doctrine: and this I shall take from the unhappy infirmity the believer possesseth, but too much in common with the carnal world, to misinterpret the providences of God.

How many and how various the avenues are by which distress creeps into the life of the believer, from the dark and mysterious dealings of God with his people, would be difficult to ascertain. But the mere outlines are enough.

Bereaving providences; straitened and difficult circumstances; the thwarting those desires which seemed to promise much glory to God, and great improvement to ourselves; alarming and unexpected sickness in our persons, or in our families; the being

deeply drenched in want and poverty, while beholding the riotous excesses of the sensual: these, and the like exercises, for the trial of faith in a gracious soul, sometimes produce great sorrow of heart; and especially, if in either of these cases the mind be directed to connect some past transgression with the present affliction, as the cause. Both together bear hard upon the soul, and cause a faintness and trembling, which, I presume, many too well know to need my explaining.

The Psalmist, whose history serves as an illustration on most occasions of the lives of the faithful, and whose whole history, indeed, is but as a book of experiences to this purpose, furnisheth a proof of the kind I am now speaking of; and thousands beside him, I believe, have been likewise brought, by similar events, almost to the brink of apostacy. He tells us, that his own personal sorrows, while viewing at the same time the prosperity of the ungodly, made him cherish hard thoughts of God.

He begins his relation of it with setting this down as a never-failing maxim, that "God is good to Israel." Yet, in his dispensations, he could not, at the first view of things, reconcile it to himself. "As for me, (says he), my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipt. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw their prosperity. There are no bands in their death: their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men: they prosper in the world: they increase in riches. But as for me, all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." (Psalm lxxiii. 1, 17.)

And it was not until the prophet went into the *Sanctuary of God*, that these seeming contradictions were at all explained to him. Neither shall you or I be able to account satisfactorily for various occurrences which we meet with in our own experience, or behold in the lives of others, but from entering under

the guidance of the Holy Ghost, into the same sweet asylum. There we learn, what no human teaching can inform us, that all God's judgments are right; and all our hasty conclusions arise, as Asaph's did, from our own infirmity. Unbelief makes all objects appear through inverted mediums, by which we are prompted to put false constructions on God's providences, and lose sight of the blessed covenant, which "is ordered in all things and sure."

These few instances will, I hope, be enough, (for your time will not favour the adding more,) by way of explaining the doctrine contained in the former part of our text; that the life of the faithful is accompanied with much *fainting*. No wonder, then, that the believer grows faint and languid, from his various exercises by the way.

I pause one moment over what hath been said, before I enter upon the *second* part of our subject, just to request every deeply-exercised soul who hears me, and whose heart, perhaps, in the very moment I am speaking, is faint by reason of discouragements, no longer to wonder at his faintings, when he sees so much cause for it in his sins. If grace be so weak, and corruption so strong, let it rather excite your wonder, and, at the same time, become the strongest of all motives to call up your praise, that a soul sifted like yours, in the sieve of so many and mighty adversaries, and shaken and tossed about so violently as you are, should not long since have fallen to the ground. If a spark of grace lives in a sea of such corruption; if a taper, so feeble, and of such small glimmering, still burns, and is kept in, notwithstanding the rudest winds are blowing upon it from every quarter; doth it not lead you to see, and should it not induce you as thankfully to acknowledge, that divine strength is manifested in creature weakness?

And if this important lesson be taught you by the Holy Ghost, in the experimental teachings of your own heart, which is the best of all schools, your sharpest exercises will ultimately prove your sweetest comforts. For what furnisheth subject of prayer now, will hereafter produce cause of praise. Faint you may be, but lost you never can. How shall he sink, under whom are "the everlasting arms?" And in the mean time, let that sweet promise be your comfort; "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing." (Psalm cxxvi. 6.)

I proceed now to the *second* object which I proposed to accomplish, namely, to shew, that however faint the believer is, yet he is still *pursuing*, and through grace is enabled to hold on, and to hold out, against all opposition, to the attainment "of the prize of the high calling of God, which is Christ Jesus."

It is the very distinguishing character of the life of grace, that God the Holy Ghost carrieth it on in the heart of the truly regenerated believer, amidst a thousand difficulties. It appears to the man himself, upon numberless occasions, as if his hopes were all over, and his expectations perished. But this is the very process by which divine strength is made perfect in human weakness. However low the life of God in the soul may seem, it is not lost; though apparently dying, it is never dead.

Neither, indeed, is it possible: and for this plain reason: grace is an *immortal* spark; and what is immortal, nothing *mortal* can extinguish. "Many waters cannot quench it; neither can the floods drown it." It is an "incorruptible seed," which liveth and abideth for ever. And how shall any corruptible principle destroy its everlasting property? It may, seemingly, be long buried in the earth, and no traces

of it appear: but (as the prophet beautifully speaks) "it shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine." And how doth corn revive, and the vine grow? Jesus himself explains the *one*, and common experience manifests the *other*. "Except (says Christ) a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." And as the vine groweth out of a dry ground, and in its appearance is but a dry stick which seems to promise nothing; so the believer, whose life is hid with Christ in God, is in himself always dry and unpromising, and in Christ alone is his fruit found.

Such, in reality, is the state of every true believer. It is always in creature weakness divine strength is made perfect. And the more feeble the Lord's people are, the more occasion it affords for the display of his power in supporting them. The more the wall seems to be tottering, the more doth it manifest the strength of the prop which bears it up. Hence the *church* is described, as "coming up out of the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved."

Perhaps I shall more happily succeed in explaining the truth of this doctrine, if I pursue the same method as in the former part of my sermon, in descending from general to particular observations on it: for this will be to come home to men's bosoms, by illustrating the truth from their own experiences.

I will suppose, then, for argument sake, that some precious soul, before whom I am now speaking, may be, in the present moment, in such a degree of faintness, by reason of fresh-contracted guilt, and transgressions, and sin, as to be ready to give up all for lost; and is "writing bitter things against himself."

Perhaps your offences have been attended with peculiar aggravations. You not only groan over sins of infirmity, into which, in an unguarded hour, you have fallen, but such as you have run into, in cooler

seasons, through the impulse of unrestrained affections, and the power of temptation. Your transgressions, you will tell me, are against better knowledge, against covenant engagements, strong convictions, and great grace, and what David calls *presumptuous* sins, from the commission of which he so earnestly begged of God to be kept.

I will be very ready to agree with you, that such instances arising from the frequent assaults of sin and Satan, are enough to bow down the soul, and induce great heaviness of spirit: but yet, under this aggravated state of the case, still I contend, that when the believer is effectually called to the christian warfare, (and you will remember that I am now considering the subject on this presumption,) however *faint* he drags on the way, he is *yet pursuing*. And in confirmation of it, a more precious evidence cannot be desired than what your own experience furnisheth.

You groan being burthened. Sin is not rooted out. You see, you feel, you faint under its baleful effects daily. In the contest, by which the enemy harasseth you, your spirits are enfeebled; and from his strength, and your weakness, you find yourself too often led captive by him at his will.

But tell me, my brother, (for I appeal to the testimony of your own breast for the truth of what I say,) are not these things furnishing continual sorrow and heaviness of heart? Do you not find your very soul humbled to the dust before God, by reason of this state? And would you not purchase, were it possible, an exemption from those indwelling sins with the price of every thing you possess? If such be your experience, certainly there must be grace yet living in the soul to induce such desires, though, like corn buried in the earth, it seems for a while lost amidst the rubbish of corruption.

Moreover, there is another sweet distinguishing

character, by which we trace evidences that the reed, though bruised, is not broken, neither the smoking flax quenched : and that is, from the sighs which the soul sends forth under this state of mind for deliverance. The apostle Paul felt exactly what you feel, and spoke both your and my experience, when he said ; " O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? "

Language like this cannot proceed from that " sorrow of the world which worketh death : " but these are the breathings of a soul awakened by the Holy Ghost, which feels its own corruption, which loaths itself in its own sight, and under the deepest self-abasement, and holy indignation against sin and his own heart, is secretly desiring to be led by the Spirit to Jesus, to be delivered both from the power and guilt of it.

I defy nature, in her highest attainments, to imitate this. Nothing but grace can lead to such things. And therefore, my brother, do let me charge you to write down these testimonies among the memorandums of your life. For if such sweet properties are still with you, then is that blessed promise evidently accomplished in your experience : " I will pour out (saith God) the Spirit of grace and supplication ; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." (Zech. xii. 12.)

While, therefore, you fear that grace is totally withered, and every gift of the Holy Spirit is dried up, as the grape appeareth on the vine ; He that looketh on, and who seeth not as man seeth, saith No ! " there is wine in the cluster, destroy it not, for a blessing is in it ! " (Isaiah lxxv. 8.) Grace is still bound up in the heart, and its repentings are nearly kindling, when under the weight and burden of sin, the soul is sending forth vehement breathings after a deliverance from it.

And do, my brother, take with you this further consideration. He who sought you in your first estate, when you sought not him, will not leave you now to perish in your present circumstances of evil, when your desires are towards him. Though you have made him "to serve with your sins, and wearied him with your iniquities," yet remember what he saith: "I, even I, am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." (Isaiah xliii. 25.)

In the very hour that you have been running from his arms by rebellion, he hath been sending after you renewed instances of his grace; else, whence those awakenings of his Holy Spirit in your heart? whence those faintings under sin, and longings after his favour?

Oh! it is truly refreshing, under all our lifeless frames, and doubts, and unbelief, to consider that amidst the unceasing praises of the redeemed in heaven, Jesus doth not for a moment remit his attention to the wanderings and weaknesses of his exercised family upon earth. He sees *your* situation. He knows under what *you* groan. He beholds the power and malice of the enemy, and therefore *his* grace, and not *your* strength, becomes the cause of security. Hence David reasons; "the wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. But the Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged." He may fall, but he shall not finally fall away: he may be cast down, but God will not cast him off: for however unacceptable in themselves, they are accepted in Christ. For so the charter of redemption runs. "Mercy shall be built up for ever. I have made a covenant with my chosen. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven."

But I must restrain these considerations, that I may not exceed the usual limits.

The illustration of the unextinguishable nature of grace, under this one point of view in which I have been considering it, and that in the most general of all instances, inasmuch as it must, more or less, suit all cases of the Lord's exercised family, may, by a parity of reasoning, be applied to every other. For, from hence true believers may learn to form proper conclusions relative to their own state and circumstances, whatever these may be, to convince them, that however faintly they are going on in the christian path, and sorrowing as they go, yet they are still pursuing, and though "sowing in tears, they will reap in joy." "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

Make application of this to any of the various situations by which the true believer in Jesus is frequently discouraged in his journey, and his heart brought down through heaviness, and you will find under every one of them, how effectually the Lord hath provided for the security of the faithful.

Are they faint from the withdrawals of the Holy Ghost, in his refreshing and strengthening influences? Are they under a distressed state of mind, by reason of bondage frames? Do they feel heart-straitenings in their seasons of holy ordinances? Do they find but little disposition to go to a mercy seat, and sometimes even less comfort when there? Are they tempted to entertain hard thoughts of God, respecting his providences towards them, and hastily led to draw conclusions therefrom, as if the Lord had forgotten them?

In these, and other situations of a like nature, by which unbelief tears and harrows up the soul, the complaints do altogether refute themselves, and carry with them, in their very bosom, an incontestible evidence that grace is not only unextinguished, but even in full exercise on the heart.

For if the Holy Ghost had totally withdrawn his influences, whence those earnest desires for the enjoyment of his presence, which are the effects of his own power? If the mind were actually shut up under bondage-frames and heart-straitenings, in seasons of worship, from whence should issue those longings of the soul, by which you mourn after God, when you do not fully enjoy him? Must there not evidently be grace in the heart, when, like the *church* of old, you send forth that sweet breathing; "With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."

In a word, conflicts of grace with corruption evidently testify that the warfare still continues. Though *faint, you are yet pursuing*. If the "burning bush" be not consumed, it is because God is in it. If the "worm Jacob" thresh the mountains, it is because the "God of Jacob" is his refuge, and "underneath are the everlasting arms."

Your God, your Jesus, is leading you by this very process, through the most precious exercises of the soul. The furnace may be hot, but the Refiner himself sits by to keep the fire duly under. There shall not a particle of the pure gold be lost; it is only the scum which must be taken away.

The trials of the faithful are great; but their triumphs are not less sure. "I will bring them (saith the same Almighty Promiser) through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." But observe what follows. "They shall call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zech. xiii. 9.)

Hence, therefore, though all the powers of hell and corruption unite, the Lord Jesus must bring his people off victorious. His name, his honour, his glory, are all concerned in the everlasting safety of

his church and people. And let the heart of man imagine, if it be possible, what can afford subject of praise to the Redeemer, equal to that of bringing home all his tried ones safe, at last, through all their difficulties! The undeviating rectitude of an angel cannot bring glory to Jesus equal to that of a saved sinner. And to see a poor, sinful, dying worm of the earth, still preserved amidst an host of mighty foes, and at length made a conqueror over all by the blood of the Lamb; this is what opens a new source of joy in heaven, and calls up that song of praise which John heard, in anticipation, by the ear of faith, and will be sung in the full assembly of the first-born, when the Lord hath finished the trials of his people. "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." (Rev. xii. 10.)

And what is the result of all that I have been saying, but this: If true believers in Christ are thus necessarily faint, yet pursuing, let it be proclaimed this day in every church throughout the earth, that Jesus is the strength of his people. He is "the hiding-place from every wind, and a covert from every tempest. He is as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

And hear in what a gracious strain of tenderness he speaks to every exercised soul. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee: yea I will help thee: yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isaiah xli. 10.)

And while Jesus thus graciously speaks to the weaklings of his household, to support them in their drooping seasons, I would desire them always to

keep in remembrance, that they will need these cordials of the Redeemer, more or less, *all* the way. A total exemption from sin and sorrow belongs only to that blessed climate, where "none of the inhabitants shall any longer say, I am sick." But in the present mixed region of things, through which the believer is travelling towards the possession of it, the atmosphere will be frequently cloudy; and while "without are fightings, within will be fears."

But how sweet the thought! "There is a rest which remaineth for the people of God." Every step we take is one the nearer to the attainment. Every difficulty in the way is one the less to encounter. Like boys at school, waiting the vacation, we ought to cut off the daily notch which marks the number unto the breaking-up; and when the last comes, the carriage will be at the door, to take us home to our Father's house, to return no more for ever.

My brother! are you faint by reason of sin? Beg of God the Spirit to make application of that precious blood of Jesus Christ, "which cleanseth from all sin." Are you cast down, by means of the buffetings of the enemy? Live upon that blessed promise, which saith, "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Are you mourning under the hidings of God's countenance? Pray for grace to act faith upon that soul-reviving scripture, which assures you that the hour is at hand, when Jesus, "the morning star," shall appear, and "the Lord will be your everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." In a word; whatever peculiar exercises you sustain, you will find some promises suited to your situation: and never forget that they are all your own, and "in Christ Jesus are all, yea and amen."

But what shall I say to *you*, who from being unacquainted with soul distresses, with which the faithful are so deeply exercised, can know nothing of their

faintness, and, consequently, desire none of their comforts. I have often thought what a melancholy state that man is in, who is a stranger to covenant mercies! "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep."

Alas! if all your consolation, all your fulness, all your laughter, be derived from creature comforts, and confined to the narrow limits of this life, what will you do when the brook is dried up? Surely, I have frequently said, carnal men must grudge the rapid waste of time: and the reflection of every day, when past, if they reflect at all, ought to be, 'There is another day gone, by which so much of all our happiness is over.'

But I turn from a subject so abundantly distressing, just to add, that I hope no faint soul will depart, while Jesus is present on purpose that "the hungry may not go empty away." Let it be proclaimed once more through the congregation, and may God the Spirit give it a saving power in every heart: **THE LORD JESUS IS THE STRENGTH OF HIS PEOPLE.** "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

SERMON VIII.

 THE COMING OF JESUS AS THE SAVIOUR OF HIS PEOPLE.

PHILIPPIANS III. 20.

From whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

THERE is an infinite degree of sweetness in those words of the apostle, as they concern the true believer in Jesus. "We look for the Saviour:" that is, not in his *general* character as *Judge* of the world, but in his *peculiar* relation as the *Saviour* of his people. Not coming to judge *them*, as if the event of that great day of God became a matter of doubt and uncertainty to the faithful, and they knew not whether it would terminate to their everlasting happiness or misery: but looking for him as their Saviour carries with it the conviction, that having known and experienced the certainty of his salvation in this life, they are perfectly secure of all the blessings connected with it in another. Jesus having already "saved them, and called them with an holy calling," they are now waiting, "in full assurance of faith," that when he shall come "to judge the world in righteousness, and minister true judgment to the people," they shall have confidence, and "not be ashamed before him at his coming." They have acknowledged *him* for their Saviour before men upon earth; and he will acknowledge *them* for his redeemed ones before his Father and the holy angels in heaven.

Fancy but a moment that either one of you were so much under the sweet influence of the blessed Spirit as to have this conscious assurance of a saving interest in the merits of the Lord Jesus; and that in

the expectation of his return to judgment, you could fully assume the language of the apostle ; what a resource of the most permanent happiness would always be opening therefrom to the soul ! What an accession of joy would it give to all your comforts ! What an alleviation to all your sorrows ! What, indeed, but one continued unvarying state of peace and tranquillity of mind must that man enjoy, amidst the mutability of all things around him, who, in expectation of the great day of God, could hail the Judge returning as his Saviour !

? Our text is but short, yet in its bosom it contains a volume of the most precious subjects for discourse.

When the apostle thus expressed himself, as looking for the Saviour, it is as if he had said : In our expectation of Christ's return to judgment, we, that are the truly regenerated followers of the Lamb, look for him under this peculiar character, as the Saviour of his people. For by the blessed Spirit's work on our heart, having been awakened from our mortal slumbers, and "convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," we have learnt with full conviction, under his divine teaching, that in all the Lord Jesus did and suffered upon earth, when he came to redeem our nature, he acted as the representative and sponsor of his people. And from the same heavenly teacher we are perfectly assured that the righteousness he then wrought out and brought in, was an "everlasting righteousness," which is "unto all, and upon all them that believe." And by that precious oblation of his body upon the cross, when "he offered himself without spot to God, he hath fully put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." For by that "one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified." So that, "we have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

Hence, therefore, "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And if there be no possibility of condemnation, there can be no possibility of trial. For what leaves nothing doubtful as to the issue of the event, can never subject the event to uncertainty. Both the condemnation for sin, and the punishment due to the breach of it in our nature, the Lord Jesus himself sustained in his own sacred person, when, as the representative of his people, "he witnessed before Pontius Pilate a good confession;" and when, in consequence thereof, he died, "the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God." Hence, therefore, as both law and justice have exacted and obtained all the demands which they had upon his people, from Him, their Almighty Surety, when he bore their guilt, and sustained their punishment; most evident it is, that the *bondsman* having paid the debt, the *principal debtor* must be free. And therefore there is now "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

So that when the Lord Jesus shall come in the clouds to judgment, his people shall not be arraigned for sins, both the guilt and punishment of which he himself hath borne; but the process of that solemn day, as far as it concerns them, will be to hear him proclaim, before a congregated world, that they are the gift of the Father's love, and the purchase of his own most precious merits and blood. And having, by the blessed Spirit's work upon their hearts, formed them anew, for himself and his glory, in his own lovely image; united them to himself by an everlasting union; clothed them in his own spotless righteousness; made them altogether comely in his own graces; and in every way made them "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;" he is now come, according to his own assured promise,

“to take them to himself, that where he is, there they may be also.”

With the impression of these things we may reasonably suppose the mind of the apostle was filled, when he expressed himself in the words of the text. In the expectation of the great day of God, “we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

That this is the sum and substance of the apostle’s meaning, is evident, both from what he had said, in some few verses preceding the text, as well as from the general analogy of Scripture on this interesting doctrine.

Paul had been speaking just before of the hopeless condition of those whose lives bore a melancholy witness, that, while professing the *form* of godliness, they were destitute of the *power* of it. “Many walk, (says the apostle,) of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping: that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Whose end is destruction: whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame: who mind earthly things.” And then to shew the striking contrast of such an awful state, to that of the real possessors of vital godliness, who are justified in the blood and righteousness of Jesus, and, in consequence, live in the enjoyment of union with his person, and communion in his graces; the apostle adds, “for our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Our conversation is above, even while living here below. We are sending forth our affections and our desires after him, in whom our lives are hid. And “when he who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory. Hence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

And we derive the same assurance on this grand point, from the general analogy of Scripture. The word of God, which represents the coming of the

Lord to judgment, as full of terrors to the wicked, and awfully declares concerning them, that "they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from his presence," doth as plainly express, that "he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." And while the expectation of this day of God is said to be to the *one*, a certain "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation," to the *other*, it is called "a looking for of that blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

The very different prospects, therefore, which this day is declared to open to the different characters of "him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not," can only be explained upon the principle of what the apostle saith in the text, that true believers in Christ look for the Lord Jesus in the sweet character of their *Saviour*.

And hence it is that we find the sacred writers speaking of the expectation of it, with so much rapture and delight. Jude, the apostle, calls it "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." And Peter the apostle, if possible, in yet stronger expressions of holy faith and joy, declares that it is a "looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of God." As if it were a day devoutly desired and longed for by the faithful: a thing impossible, upon the presumption, that the smallest possible uncertainty remained, concerning the event of it to the faithful. And lest any should be tempted to suppose that these are privileges peculiar only to the apostles, Paul at once removes all such ideas, by declaring, that the same crown of glory, which he knew was laid up for himself, the "righteous Judge at that day would give, not only to him, but to all them that loved his appearing."

Do you love his appearing? If you say, "How

am I to know?" the answer is direct. You have already "loved his appearing," if so, in the work of his Holy Spirit upon your heart, in converting you from sin to salvation. You *have* loved, and "do love, his appearing" in every renewed visit of his grace. You "love his appearing" in every instance where he converts others from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. You "love his appearing" in every manifestation which he makes of himself in the deliverance or comfort of any of his exercised family upon earth. And as all these are but so many dawnings of that glorious day when he will arise with full brightness upon every awakened soul, certainly you must desire to see grace consummated in glory; and therefore you are among that happy number, of whom Paul spake when he said, "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Accepting the words of the text in this point of view, they open to our meditation a very sweet and refreshing subject to comfort the heart of every true believer, in his passage from grace to glory.

What I propose from the review of it, as God the Holy Ghost shall be pleased to enable, is, in the *first* place, to consider the ground of assurance, by which the faithful are authorized to look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus, in this engaging point of view,—to expect him as their Saviour. And when I have accomplished this purpose in the confirmation of the doctrine, I shall go on to a *second* branch of the subject, to bring before you *some* of the many peculiar privileges of the believer, who is taught of the Holy Ghost to be living in the daily exercise of this "blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

And while I very earnestly beg the closest attention of all that hear me, to the investigation of a subject so truly interesting as it is in itself, and highly

calculated, under divine grace, to comfort every true believer in all his exercises, during his eventful pilgrimage; I do more earnestly yet bespeak the prayers of the faithful, that both speaker and hearer may be so brought under his gracious influences, "who teacheth not as man teacheth," that the *awakened* may be refreshed, and the *unawakened* concerned, and *both* retire from the ordinances of worship with more earnest desire than when they came here, "to know the truth, that the truth may make them free." Come, Holy Ghost! Eternal God! Spirit of Truth! complete every one of thy precious offices in our hearts. Lead us into all truth; build us up in our most holy faith; keep our souls in the love of God, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Amen.

According to my proposal, I am, in the *first* place, to consider the ground of assurance, by which the faithful are authorized to look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus in this engaging point of view, and expect him as their Saviour.

It is a very happy circumstance in the investigation of divine truths, (and I desire you to take particular notice of it, upon all occasions,) when in the confirmation of any one point of the doctrines of the gospel, we are enabled to appeal to the direct testimony of each of the persons of the GODHEAD.

As the raising up our lost nature from the ruins of the fall, occupied their joint attention, and is the result of their joint work; so is it very delightful to behold how each concurs and co-operates, to assure the hearts of the faithful of all the grand and important mysteries of our holy religion.

Believers are introduced into all the privileges of the gospel, when, according to the command of the Redeemer, they are baptized into the joint name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. So again they are

equally blessed in their joint name, as appears by the apostle's prayer of benediction, when he desires that "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost," may be with the church. And hence, therefore, it is from the concurring operation of all the persons in the GODHEAD, that the work of grace is carried on, until it be consummated in glory, when the believer is brought home and comes to receive "the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul."

The unfolding these glorious truths in all their fulness and majesty, is reserved for that ripened state of existence, when our faculties will be competent to their perfect apprehension, and "we shall know, even as we are known." But in the mean time, God doth not leave himself without witness in the hearts of his people respecting them, as far as *his* praise and *their* welfare is concerned.

And perhaps, in no one point of assurance of divine truth, where each of the persons of the GODHEAD graciously concurs in their testimony, is this more discoverable, than in that one which, in treating this text, I am called to prove. I mean the authority given to the true believer in Jesus, to be always looking forward for his coming under this precious view of him as his Saviour.

Suffer me only to assume for a principle, what I hope none present will be disposed to deny,—that man, both by nature and by practice, needs a Saviour, being thoroughly conscious, that in himself he can never be justified before God; and I shall then venture to persuade myself, that the ground of assurance for every truly regenerated believer to expect the Lord Jesus, at his coming, as his Saviour, is a doctrine so fully founded on the express testimony of each of the persons of the GODHEAD, as to carry with it every evidence which God hath judged

needful to give, or man is capable of receiving in the present state.

For the better apprehension of the subject, and to render the investigation of it as clear as possible, I shall consider the evidences distinctly as they arise, in the *first* point of view, out of the character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, *secondly*, as they result from the Almighty Father's appointment of redemption, in his covenant engagements. And, *thirdly*, as they are found in the Holy Ghost's operations, in the confirmation of the whole in the believer's heart. And these, unitedly considered, will, I hope, be found to form the most perfect and satisfying assurance of the doctrine.

And *first*, to begin with that part of the evidence, as it ariseth out of the Redeemer's character and offices in the great work of redemption.

Very evident it must be, to the smallest consideration, that in all the Lord Jesus did or suffered upon earth in the accomplishment of salvation for his people, he acted as their substitute and surety. For in himself he certainly could have needed neither. And to what purpose else, did he assume a body such as ours, to fulfil a law which he had never broken, and to die on the cross a sacrifice for sins which he had never committed?

And as from the purity of his nature, it was impossible he could ever have broken the divine law, of consequence he must for ever, considered as to himself, be exempt from all possible punishment for the supposed breach of it. Hence, therefore, it will necessarily follow, that in all he did and suffered, he acted as the representative of his people. For on no other principle whatever can his character be explained.

Nay, so far, indeed, is the law from being fulfilled in any other sense, by its exactions on the person of

the Lord Jesus, that it would become a breach of its own principles. And the very maxim of equity, which prescribes "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," is broken, when demanding either from the Lord Jesus, unless the righteousness he wrought, and the sufferings he sustained, be accepted for his people.

This state of the doctrine, as it relates to our present subject, is, in my apprehension, so very clear, and unanswerably conclusive, that I do beg of you it may be attended to with an earnestness suitable to its importance.

If, then, we consider the Lord Jesus Christ in this endearing character, as our surety and representative, when assuming our nature, and in that nature fulfilling all righteousness, and expiating all iniquity by the sacrifice of himself, the conclusion is obvious; all that he did, and all that he suffered, was for us and in our stead, and not for himself. If "he was made under the law," it was "to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons." If "he, who knew no sin, became sin for us," it was, that "we might be made the righteousness of God in him." If he took our name, and fulfilled our duties, and bore our punishment, nothing can be more evident than that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." The debt, therefore, being paid, the debtor must be free. The *surety*, having answered all demands, the *principal* is, in consequence, released. *Both* cannot be responsible, for this would be demanding a double recompence, which is inconsistent with the rule of equity. And hence it follows, by the plainest and most undeniable evidence, that every truly awakened sinner, in whose heart the sense of sin, and the dependence on Christ for salvation, is wrought by the operation of the Holy Ghost, is taught, not to look forward to the day of judgment for

the hour of redemption, as a matter then only to be obtained; but to depend upon it as being already accomplished, and to expect the Lord Jesus in that day, in his coming, as his Saviour.

But though this consideration of the subject be very sweet and precious, yet, blessed be God, this is not all. It might still be made, and it hath indeed been made, the question of great earnestness in many a heart, How am I to know that redemption work, as wrought by the Lord Jesus, is accepted by God the Father for *me*? The solemn language of Scripture, on this momentous point, declareth, without reserve or qualification, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." What authority, therefore, can I have, who am a poor, self-condemned sinner, to believe that *my* sins can be transferred; or that the Lord Jesus acted as *my* sponsor, in all his work and sufferings upon earth, for the iniquities of his people?

In answer to this most interesting question, the *second* point of discourse happily comes in to our aid, and proves, by an authority not to be controverted, that in all the Lord Jesus did and suffered upon earth, when accomplishing redemption, it was by the express appointment, approbation, and pleasure of Almighty God.

This view of our subject is also most highly important, and, therefore, let me again request a proportioned closeness of application to it, for its clear apprehension.

I will be very free to confess, that, strictly and properly speaking, according to the nature of things in the common concerns of life, as they relate to the offences which arise among men, it is totally impossible for one man's sins to be transferred to another; or that by the sufferings of one, the guilt of another can be taken away, or the merited punishment remitted. But I hope that this kind of reasoning, as it

relates to transactions among men, will never be brought forward as suitable to form a standard for judging what may, or may not, be proper, in relation to our offences towards God. Every thing, surely, puts on a very different aspect here. And if it can be at all supposed that God himself, the injured party, graciously condescends to point out a way, and such a way, let me observe, as if he had not pointed out, no human, or even angelic being, ever could have thought of: (and which, by the bye, is among the strongest convictions of its truth,) then it will of course follow, that what comes from God himself on this point, can never be liable to error, and must come recommended to our warmest approbation.

In the instance now under consideration, wherein God not only admits a substitute for sin, but commends his love to our particular notice, by the gracious act in giving his only Son for this express purpose; we see that every thing in it corresponds to the highest notions we can form of the greatness and holiness of his nature, and at the same time to our noblest conceptions of his mercy and grace. For the infinite dignity of Him who becomes the ransom, and the authority of Him by whom that ransom is appointed, give at once the most decided sanction to the whole; and prove, that in all the Lord Jesus did and suffered for his people, he acted as much by his Father's appointment as by his own voluntary pleasure. It was God the Father who gave his only Son as a covenant for his people. It was God the Father who anointed him with the Holy Ghost to be the Redeemer. It was God the Father who assisted him, and sustained him in every part of the accomplishment of it. And it was God the Father who promised him, that "when he had made his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed; he should prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should

prosper in his hands. He should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.”

Hence, therefore, nothing can be more evident, than that God the Father hath afforded as strong an evidence as the case can admit of in the present life, that the salvation the Lord Jesus hath wrought out for his people, was as much the result of his appointment, as it originated in the Redeemer's love ; and, consequently, in the expectation of all true believers in Christ, they are authorized, on both considerations, to look for him at his second coming, to judge the world as their Saviour.

Still, however gratifying these united testimonies are, and conclusive as they ought to be considered by the faithful, to satisfy the most scrupulous mind on the grand article of justification before God ; there is one point more necessary to finish the evidence, and that is, the blessed Spirit's witnessing to our spirits, concerning these great truths of God.

Though fully convinced by the former testimonies of the doctrine itself, as a doctrine full of comfort to the faithful ; yet the believer may truly say, I want to know and feel my own personal interest in these glorious truths. A conscious sense of the faith itself, unless followed by a conscious assurance of a real participation in its blessings, will leave me still in doubt, whether in the expectation of the great day of God, I am to look for the Lord Jesus Christ as *my* Saviour. And the concurrence of this testimony was what I proposed to consider under the *third* particular.

It is the peculiar work of God the Holy Ghost, to accomplish in the hearts of the faithful this grand assurance of divine truths ; and all, indeed, is confirmed by the strongest of evidences, when he taketh of the things of Jesus, and sheweth unto the soul.

Now the Holy Ghost hath fully attested that Redemption work was finished, and both law and justice

satisfied by what the Lord Jesus had done and suffered, when by his power he is said to have arisen from the dead. For the apostle very particularly expresses this momentous testimony, when he says that “Christ was justified in the Spirit.”

And the Holy Ghost as fully confirms the same assurance to the heart of the believer, that God the Father hath accepted the redemption work of Jesus as the surety of his people, when in every individual instance, in confirmation of it, he descends as the gift of God upon the mind of the faithful, “to convince of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. So that in every case where the Spirit from on high hath been poured out, and these blessed effects wrought in the soul, there is the testimony of God the Holy Ghost, concurring to the same precious doctrine; witnessing to the believer’s experience, and teaching him, in the expectation of Jesus’s return, to look for him as the Saviour.

Now put all these things together, and consider in one mass of particulars, how all the persons of the GODHEAD, who have co-operated in the great work of Redemption, have concurred also in certifying the truth of it; and I venture to believe that you will agree with me, that the apostle Paul was perfectly authorized to adopt the sentiment of the text, and, of consequence, all true believers, like him, the same; and in the prospect of Christ’s coming in the clouds to judgment, to say, “we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

If I have been happy enough to succeed in producing evidences for the confirmation of the doctrine itself, as I proposed under the first branch of my discourse, I come now to the second object intended from it, namely, to bring before you some of the many peculiar privileges of the believer, who is living in the daily exercise of this blessed hope of the “glorious

appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

And on this point the only difficulty is, where to make selections. For it enters into every part of life, and is diffused through the whole of the conduct. The blessed assurance of being in a state of reconciliation with God, and “having (as the apostle calls it) peace with him through our Lord Jesus Christ,” opens an everlasting source of consolation and joy, through all the departments of religious, social, and personal life. Nay indeed, so highly interesting is the belief of this precious doctrine, to the proper enjoyment of any one event of prosperity, or to the alleviation of any of the afflicting circumstances of adversity, that I cannot see how any true or solid happiness can be found, but in the hope, at least, if not in the conviction of its reality.

Until I know that I am brought into this state, how can I go to God in a way of duty, or be able to explain his intentions towards me, in any of the methods of his providences? But if from a well-grounded hope, under the Spirit's teaching, that I, “who was once afar off, am now brought nigh by the blood of Christ;” and that, personally considered, “I have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;” laying this as the sure foundation of acceptance, I come to God, no longer under the spirit of bondage, and fear, but under the spirit of adoption and grace. I am then authorized to call him, Abba, Father. And as the Father of mercies, and God of all grace, I look up to him, in every approach of sacred worship, and eye his dispensations towards me in a way of wisdom, and goodness, and mercy, in every providence.

A few instances will serve to explain, and at the same time answer the purpose; for similar observations may, by a parity of reasoning, be applied to all the

other circumstances, in which the doctrine is capable of having influence.

To begin with that part which is certainly the highest and most important, as it relates to our communion with God, in a way of ordinances and sacred seasons of worship.

It is impossible to draw nigh to God in any one act of religion with comfort, when we consider God simply as he is in himself, and abstracted from his covenant relation to us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every part of scripture represents God in his Trinity of Persons, "as of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." The law of God demands a purity in the creature, for the due approaching unto him, which no man possesses. "I will be sanctified (saith God) in them that will come nigh me." And every man's breast, if he attends to what passes within, bears sufficient impressions to manifest, that there can be nothing but a mixture of apprehension, and terror, and fear, in all approaches to God, if the acceptance of our persons and our worship rest upon the merit or worthiness with which either be accompanied.

But how very precious is it to a truly awakened soul, who, under the Spirit's teaching, hath been "convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," to behold the gracious provision made for the acceptance both of his person and offering in the covenant righteousness and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ! He enters into the full meaning of the apostle's words, and feels the encouragement they afford to the soul, when he says, "having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus: and having such an high Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." For by virtue of an interest in the person and righteousness of the Lord Jesus, as his Almighty Cove-

nant-head and Mediator, he is enabled to enter into the sacred presence of God, in all the ordinances of grace here, as he is assured of being introduced thereby into the kingdom of glory hereafter.

Hence there are no bondage frames while grace is in exercise, and God the Holy Ghost is leading the believer to a mercy-seat, in and through the blood and righteousness of Jesus. "Perfect love (saith the apostle) casteth out fear." 'I am going,' (the soul will say,) "to my God and Father in Christ Jesus. I know that in myself I am utterly unworthy to be called his son. I have been an enemy to him by wicked works. But he hath said, "Let him take hold of my strength to make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." (Isaiah xxvii. 5.) Lord, I am come, (the soul answers) to find peace in the blood of the cross.'

My brother! Pause over the consideration of this mighty privilege, and see what a volume of persuasions it contains for every renewed opportunity of drawing nigh a throne of grace in all holy ordinances.

Are you acquainted with that exercise of the soul which ariseth out of the view of indwelling corruption? and do you not know the sweetness of that precious Scripture, which authorizes you, in your seasons of worship to look up and behold Him, who appears as your "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and who is the propitiation for your sins?"

Do your cold prayers not unfrequently freeze upon your lips, and the conscious sense of the impurities with which they are accompanied induce fear and apprehension how they will be received? What a relief to the mind doth God the Holy Ghost give, when he enables you by faith to behold that Mighty Angel before the altar with his golden censer, offering up

your prayers, with the much incense of his own merits ! (Rev. viii. 3.)

Are your lips so closed at times, and is your mind so confused, that you know not how to pray, or what to pray for? And can it fail to refresh the soul, under all trials, and in every state of heart-straitenings, when God the Holy Ghost points to the great Intercessor, in his adorable character, going in before the throne in his priestly vestments, making all needful requests for his people !

In such seasons, how very sweet is that blessed promise and encouraging assurance of God, brought home to the heart : “ I create the fruit of the lips : peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is nigh, saith the Lord, and I will heal him.” (Isaiah lvii. 19.)

Nothing can more decidedly shew the vast and infinite importance of the thing itself, than that the soul must be brought into an assurance of having peace with God through Jesus Christ, and have a well-grounded authority for looking up to him as *his* Saviour, before there can be any real enjoyment of God in ordinances : or, as the church beautifully expresses it, to “ sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit made sweet to the taste.”

But the blessed effects of such a state are not confined to seasons of worship only ; they enter into every department of our life, and form the chief source of felicity in all our comforts, and the grand sweetener of all our sorrows.

In social life, the approbation of our friends is made doubly pleasing when we are able to connect with it the approbation of our God. The conscious assurance of being at peace with him adds a tenfold sweetness to the peace we enjoy in the world.

On the contrary, what is that which David calls the “ strife of tongues,” or the condemnation of the un-

godly, when the soul can adopt the sentiment of the apostle, and say, "it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?"

And what an accession of joy must it give the brightest hour the believer is privileged to taste, in his passage through the world, to be able always to add to it, the pleasing prospect of that day of God, when Jesus, his Saviour and Judge, is coming to receive him to mansions of everlasting felicity!

It is a well-known fact, that let a sinner be placed in the happiest situation the world can form, yet, if in the fullest enjoyment of his fancied festivity, a single thought of futurity crosses the mind, like the hand-writing on the wall before the *impious monarch* we read of, this alone is enough to throw to the ground all the props of his happiness.

And if in the very zenith of prosperity, the sinner is made sometimes to tremble, like Felix, at the prospect of a judgment to come; what shall support the soul in seasons of adversity? A portion of sorrow, more or less, must dash every man's cup with bitterness; and the happiest life of sinners cannot find a requiem from sorrow altogether. What a most deplorable state of misery must that man's mind have been in, when he said, "I am sore distressed: for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me." (Samuel xxviii. 15.) To be at once deprived of all resources! Given up by the world, and forsaken of God!

But to the believer, the consciousness of being now in a justified state before God, and the expectation of the coming of Christ as his Saviour, to close all the afflictions and trials of this life in everlasting glory, gives an inward peace and tranquillity to the mind, which reconciles, during the darkest hour, every intervening providence, and enables him to see so much of God in every dispensation, that he is sure the

termination of it must be to the glory of the Lord, and to his own furtherance in happiness. "I know, Lord, (he will say) thy judgments are right, and that thou in very faithfulness hast afflicted me." (Psalm cxix. 75.) In a word, temptations, and trials, and sickness, nay, even death itself, is in the Christian's inventory of good things, when once the soul is secured in the merits and righteousness of the Lord Jesus. For, looking forward to his coming as a Saviour, every thing is at peace with the believer. "Though I walk (says David) through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." It is but a *walk*, not a resting-place. It is but the *valley* of the shadow of death, not even the *shadow* itself. And were it the *whole shadow*, what would this be to the believer when the *substance* is not there? The *body* of death! Jesus sustained it on the cross; it is the *skeleton* only which is now left to his people. And while passing through this, the *rod* of the Saviour's power, and the *staff* of his righteousness, are competent, not only to uphold, but to comfort all the way. Well might the apostle, and like him, every true believer, supported by this eternal refuge, exult in the dying hour, and say, "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, who giveth *me* the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our subject puts on a very different aspect in its application to the different characters which make up life. Like the *pillar* of cloud in the camp of Israel, it forms a bright and pleasing light to the people of God; while, in the same moment, to its enemies it casts a deadly shade of darkness and despair.

My unawakened brother! have you ever considered, with the seriousness the subject demands, the

sure events of that great day of God? Hath it never struck you, what inexpressible agonies must invade the hearts of those who shall then be found on the wrong side?

Suppose the archangel's trumpet was now to sound, and that voice was heard bursting through every tomb, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" would you venture, could you indeed hazard your everlasting welfare for acceptance with God, upon any thing you can call your own righteousness?

Pause over the question, and for God's sake dismiss it not, until, under divine grace, it hath awakened your mind to an inquiry proportioned to its vast importance.

There are seasons in every man's life, in which, if the heart might speak out, it would confess that all is not what it should be. And if in this day of safety, the mind suggests such apprehensions, what think you will arise within on the subject in the day of danger?

If a man's own mind tells him, (as it must sometimes, if it be not hardened against all possibilities of self-deception,) that he could not always plead his good intention now; how will it then appear to his own view, when the films shall be taken off from his eyes, and he comes to learn, when it be too late, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?"

And do not forget, in your expectation of this awful day of decision, that it is a *perfect* righteousness, either in yourself or in your surety, you must have to find acceptance with God. The law admits of no abatement. It relaxeth not a single precept. The *curse* still hangs over every one, as much unrepealed as ever, who, refusing the covenant of grace, and trusting in a covenant of works, continueth not "in all things which are written in the law to do them."

Oh! that God the Holy Ghost may commission my poor sermon to the heart of any one unconcerned sinner present, that he may “see the things which make for his everlasting peace, before they are for ever hidden from his eyes.” “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the way; when his wrath be kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

As for you, who from long conviction of the emptiness and insufficiency of all creature confidences for acceptance before God, have fled for refuge to the hope that is before you, and the language of whose heart is, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength:” never lose sight, I beseech you, if it be possible, of the precious expectation of the Lord Jesus, under this sweet and endearing character, in which we have been considering his second coming to judge the world, as *your* Saviour.

You have been fully taught, under the Spirit’s influence, your own sin, and the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus. You have discovered that this is a *covenant* righteousness, in which the Father’s mercy, the Saviour’s love, and the Spirit’s grace, are all equally concerned in the salvation of sinners.

You have seen, that in the accomplishment of this salvation, the Lord Jesus hath assumed your nature, taken your name, acted as your representative, become your surety, and in all his characters and work hath obtained “eternal redemption for his people.” Having, therefore, lived and died for them, and for them having fully answered all the demands of his Father’s righteous law, will he return to thwart his own designs? Did he once come to save, and will he now come to destroy?

Moreover, by virtue of covenant engagements, and by covenant relations, his people are part of himself. He that is to be your Judge, is your Bro-

ther, your Husband, your Friend. And what a sweet Scripture is that which saith, "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son," on this express account, "because he is the Son of man."

Carry, therefore, I beseech you, those precious views of the Lord Jesus into all the circumstances and transactions of life. Do not think it enough to preserve the recollection of it in seasons of holy ordinances only; but let it mingle in all the events which concern you. Let the sweet thought perpetually cross the mind, both in lying down, and in rising up; when you sit in the house, and when you walk by the way: that the Lord Jesus, *your* Jesus, who is soon coming to gather his people to himself, and to take out of his kingdom all things that offend, is coming, under all those endearing characters in which you have already known him. He that hath now saved will then come to glorify. Say as Paul did; *We* look for the *Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I cannot better fold up my sermon on a subject of this nature, than in the same words with which the apostle Paul endeavoured to comfort the minds of the church of the Thessalonians, on a similar subject. "If we believe (says he) that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you, by the word of the Lord: that we which are alive and remain, unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

SERMON IX.

MINISTERS OF GOD TO APPROVE THEMSELVES IN
ALL THINGS.

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. ANDREW, PLYMOUTH, AT THE
VISITATION OF THE RIGHT REVEREND THE BISHOP OF THE
DIOCESE, ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 1785.

2 CORINTH. VI. 4.

In all things approving ourselves as the Ministers of God.

IT would be foreign to the purpose for which I have chosen these words, to regard their relation either with what precedes or follows in the chapter. Abstracted from every connexion of this sort, the text, simply accepted in itself, may be considered as forming the great outline and directory of conduct for all the ministers of God in every age of the church. In this sense, they naturally lead to a subject which is peculiarly suitable to the present assembly.

It will not, I hope, be judged improper or unbecoming, before so venerable an audience, that I venture to discourse on a topic of this nature. It must be confessed there are characters present, from whom it would have come, strengthened with all the recommendation of age and authority: but it should be remembered the subject itself is the same, come from whom it may. And I should think myself not only the most incapable, but also the most unworthy of performing the duty to which I am appointed, were I to avoid a subject which, of all others, appears to me the most interesting, in accommodation either to *my* inability, or *your* understanding.

Suffer me, therefore, to address you with that freedom on the present occasion for which this place is sacred and distinguished.

“In all things we are to approve ourselves as the ministers of God.”

The expression is exceedingly comprehensive, including the whole of those duties which belong to the sacred order. And in the following discourse, I purpose to consider them in this extensive sense.

I shall previously bring to your recollection the nature and dignity of that high office which, by our profession, we sustain.

I shall then consider the importance of the duties, which, by virtue of it, are expected from us.

And the motives to the whole will form the best conclusion to enforce a faithful discharge of those sacred duties by which only “we can approve ourselves as the ministers of God.”

It will be hardly necessary for me, under the first part of the subject, to advert to any particular argument, in order to awaken your attention either to the dignity of the profession to which we belong, or the solemn purposes for which it is designed.

Set apart as we are from every employment of a secular nature, and called upon to the continual ministration of all the sacred offices of religion; those offices themselves remind us of the high character of a minister of Christ, and how exalted that station is which is consecrated to the noblest purposes of life.

In the exercise of our holy function we act as delegates under a divine authority: we are the representatives, I had almost said, of God: and the commission with which we are entrusted is, of all others, the most momentous and important; no less, indeed, than that infinite object and concern, the salvation of the souls of the people that are committed to our charge.—An office of such magnitude is, doubtless, the highest and most honourable in which our nature can be employed.

Sacred Scripture, under a variety of figurative

expressions, has endeavoured to convey to us a proper idea of its importance, in order to make us duly sensible of those great and noble distinctions to which we are thereby appointed. Hence we are styled, “Ministers and Stewards of God: (1 Cor. iv. 1.) Pastors and Shepherds of his flock: Ambassadors for Christ:” (2 Cor. v. 20.) and that no possible recommendation might be wanting, to stamp the utmost dignity on our employment, we are distinguished also with the high honour of being—“Fellow Labourers with God.” (1 Cor. iii. 9.)

From all which it is evident, to use the language of Holy Writ; “that it is not a small thing that the God of Israel hath separated us from the congregation of his people, to bring us near to himself; to do the service of the Tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them.” (Numb. xvi. 9.) In the high concerns of our profession, there is certainly the greatest honour and excellence that can be annexed to any character.

In describing the sacred order under those eminent distinctions, I would be understood, not doing it so much with a view to magnify the office, as from the importance of the office itself, to excite our attention to the solemn purpose for which it was intended. So far, indeed, I conceive, ought this view of our calling to be from flattering our vanity, that it is an argument only for awakening the most serious apprehensions. Pre-eminence in station of any kind can only be the pre-eminence of doing good. And hence the same word of God that has established the respect that belongs to our employment, has laboured equally to impress our minds with a thorough sense of the immense consequence of that charge to which we are thereby appointed. Through every part of the sacred writings this is visible; and indeed it is expressed in such terms, as leave us

no room to doubt of the importance of our commission, and the sad effects that must follow the neglect or abuse of it.

The prophet Ezekiel, in a very nervous manner, represents the minister of God under the figurative character of a watchman; and it is hardly possible to express any thing more awful or affecting upon the occasion than he has done.

“Son of man, (says he,) I have set thee for a watchman to the house of Israel, and thou shalt hear the words from my mouth, and learn them from me. When I say to the wicked, O, wicked man, thou shalt surely die! if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked man of his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand!” (Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8.) What an awakening consideration is this to all that are called to the care of souls! With what increased strength of persuasion does it come home to the heart of all spiritual watchmen, under the gospel of Christ! cautioning them to look after the sacred interests of their people with the most attentive diligence, “that in the end they may save both themselves and them that hear them.” (1 Tim. iv. 16.)

To the same purport, under the New Testament dispensation, the like carefulness is insisted on, and with a peculiar emphasis. We are perpetually reminded “to take heed to ourselves and to our doctrine; to neglect not the gift that is in us: to meditate upon these things; to give ourselves wholly unto them.” (1 Tim. iv. 14, 15, 16.) In short, it would be almost endless to enumerate all the precepts which are directed to this one purpose; they are incorporated in every part of Scripture, and all earnestly speak the same language; that “we take heed to ourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers, to feed the

church of God, which he hath purchased with his own *most precious* blood." (Acts xx. 28.)

And as if all this was not sufficient, that we of all men, might be defenceless and without excuse, if remiss in the duties of our profession, the Ordination service of our church, in the very moment that we take holy orders, lays before us, once and again, the arduous office we are about to enter into, and describes to us the sad consequence of a failure in the discharge of it, in such affecting characters as are enough to deter any man from engaging in it, whose heart leads him not to the service, and who brings not with him a determined resolution, under the grace of Heaven, to fulfil all the duties of the ministry.

We are exhorted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep in mind into how weighty an office and charge we are called; that is to say, to be Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord. To teach and to premonish, to feed and to provide for the Lord's family: to seek for Christ's sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this evil world, that they may be saved through Christ for ever. And we are exhorted to have always printed in our remembrance, how great a treasure is committed to our charge: that our people are the sheep of Christ, which he bought with his death, and for which he shed his blood: and therefore, if it should happen the same church, or any member thereof, should take hurt or hindrance by reason of our negligence, we know the greatness of the fault, and the horrible punishment that must ensue. We are cautioned, therefore, to consider with ourselves the end of our ministry, and never to cease our labour, our care, and diligence, until we have done all that in us lies to bring souls unto God.

There is much more to the same purport, equally

affecting in that solemn service, which, it would be trespassing too far on your time at present to repeat. What I have already quoted, indeed, is sufficient for my purpose, which is to shew you, that nothing has been omitted to strengthen the voice of Scripture on this grand point; and that it is impossible for any form of words to say more upon the occasion than is done.

From the whole, therefore, you see what an accumulation of arguments there are, to evince the care which is taken to guard the sacred office. It is surrounded with the most solemn admonitions. It is fenced in, as it were, with every weighty consideration adapted to affect the passions of our nature. In short, language seems to labour for expression, in describing the arduousness of the undertaking, and to enforce the whole weight of the duty upon the hearts of those who engage in the ministry, in the strongest terms imaginable.

It is needless for me to add what effects this ought to produce. For us who have voluntarily entered this service; who have given in our names, if I may so speak, unto Christ, and solemnly pledged ourselves for the faithful performance of our sacred office: how great that obligation must be upon all such, not to forget or make light of it. We are certainly interested beyond the common concern of other christians, in the faith of Jesus: we are appealed to by arguments of the most unanswerable nature; and “*how, (then, as the apostle questions, how, of all men,) shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*”

I hope I have said enough, (and more than enough it is hardly possible to say, upon a subject of this nature,) to awaken a thorough recollection of the dignity and solemn purposes of that holy character which, by our profession, we sustain.

I proceed now to the second particular proposed,—to point out the peculiar duties of our order: by the faithful discharge of which only—“we can approve ourselves as the ministers of God.”

The very nature and design of our office will best direct us in the duties that belong to it. The great object of our ministry, as the Lord’s instruments, is undoubtedly to promote the salvation of men. Whatever, therefore, most advantageously tends to this, becomes a principle of duty that ought to be regarded.

It will not be expected that I should enumerate in every instance, the means by which this is to be accomplished. This would lead to too extensive a subject; and, indeed, the great variety of circumstances and conditions of human life, and of the situations in which the clergy are placed render it impossible. After all that can be said upon the occasion, it must be left, in an infinite number of cases, to the particular judgment of a man’s own conscience. To speak, however, in general terms, we may be said “to approve ourselves as the ministers of God” when we conscientiously discharge the duties of our *public ministry*, and are exemplary in all the graces of *private life*.

By the duties of our *public ministry*, I include the whole of what relates to a clergyman’s office, in every part of parochial service. In the performance of all which there seems to be one grand principle that ought more particularly to distinguish every faithful minister of Jesus; and that is, that a man be himself first seriously convinced of the truths of the gospel, and as seriously interested in the momentous concerns of those truths, before that he engageth in the arduous service of recommending them to others. This will guard against all those defects in the discharge of his office, which arise out of lukewarm indifference and

unconcern. And this will also carry with it a conviction to every beholder, that he is a minister of the Sanctuary from principle ; that he finds a pleasure and delight in the service of God, and his attendance upon it is “ not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.” (1 Peter v. 2.)

This I conceive to be the basis of every requisite, whatever other accomplishments may be thought necessary for the proper discharge of all the duties of the ministry.

A man may want the showy ornaments of discourse ; for it is not, it cannot be, the privilege of all to possess the graces of elocution ; but every one sent forth by divine grace will be desirous to convince his hearers that he is himself interested in the service he calls upon them to perform : and doubtless there is that charm, that persuasive eloquence, in the solemn and unaffected behaviour of a gracious minister, when going through any of the offices of sacred worship, that cannot fail to awaken solemnity in his people, beyond all the fine reading in the world without it.

But if, from the want of this first principle, we suffer our parishioners once to conclude, that we attend the duties of our ministry from no other motive but because it is our office ; that it is a task and an obligation upon us ; and they perceive that we perform it with reluctance, and are happy when it is over ; not all the accomplishments of oratory will compensate for this want of devotion. Nothing can so effectually recommend the spirit of true godliness through a congregation, as the serious and devout deportment of the minister ; “ making his light to shine ” in this manner so gracefully “ before men,” must be the best means of exciting them also “ to glorify their Father who is in heaven.”

In the office of preaching, though the same sincerity of conduct is equally expedient yet, perhaps,

other qualities are needful to make a man eminent in this part of his profession.

Here, therefore, it is more especially, that the abilities of the eloquent and learned among the clergy find opportunity for distinguishing themselves: and in the religion of Jesus there is every thing that is necessary to favour a wish of this kind. No subjects upon earth are able to furnish such topics of discourse as the divine truths of the gospel. Nothing can equal that eloquence which hath the name, the grace, the person of JESUS for its subject. And as *his* servants we peculiarly are, so it should be our Master, and his glorious salvation, which we hold forth to the people.

All the great beauties of ancient declamation which we read with so much pleasure, and consider as standards of composition, inasmuch as they are derived from sources infinitely less interesting, are not worthy to be mentioned together with those of Holy Writ. And if the orators of Greece and Rome (as history informs us) were able to rouse all the passions of their audience, though they treated only of matters pertaining to this life; conceive what superior advantages the christian preacher possesses, who draws *his* subjects from the Word of God! who interests his people in all that is worthy to be called interesting, not only of this world, but of that which is to come! whose discourses, indeed, are framed on those grand and magnificent topics, the Redemption of the World, the Resurrection of the Dead, and a future Judgment! These are subjects which ought to rouse every faculty, and to awaken all the passions of our nature, while the preachers of the gospel exhibit them before our view.

Advantages of this kind, however, which peculiarly belong to religion, as they clearly afford superior helps to every other species of public speaking, so are they intended to answer much more important

purposes. The ministry of the word is not committed to our trust for the mere gratification of any rhetorical display, to amuse and please; but, under God, to bless and save. Its professed object is to make men wise unto salvation; to become "profitable (as the apostle speaks) for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.)

And indeed, independent of all this, the very nature of our character sets us above every idea of seeking popular applause from our preaching; "for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." (2 Corinth. iv. 5.) It is his *gospel* that we deliver to our people, and therefore we are expected to do it "with sincerity as to the Lord, and not as to men, knowing that we serve the Lord Christ." (Coloss. iii. 23.) In short, it is the grand and only purpose of all religious discourses, to minister in promoting the salvation of our people; and of consequence, the same should be the only object of our preaching. And happy indeed is that servant of the Lord, whose whole conduct is framed on this plan! who, passing by that praise, which is so tempting among men, studies only to promote the cause of his great Master, and refers all the glory "to that Father who seeth in secret!"

But, perhaps, great as the power of scriptural eloquence may be, when exerted by men of superior endowments, there is an excellence in preaching, not less efficacious to religion, that is within the reach of humbler abilities; and that is, when from considering the peculiar wants of our people, we adapt our discourse to the particular persons, the time, the place, the circumstance, and the occasion of our ministry.

When our congregation is composed, for the most part, of men of *plain understanding*, who have to

learn what are the first principles of the doctrines of Christ, the plainest language should be adopted to the plainest truths of scripture; I mean those concerning our fallen state, and our recovery by the Lord Jesus, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

When we address ourselves to others of *more informed minds*, who are advanced in the path of grace, we may then, with greater propriety, dwell on the more advanced doctrines, which trace that recovery up to its glorious source, in the covenant of redemption between the persons of the GODHEAD, before the foundation of the world.

The several *dispositions* also of our hearers should be attended to. Among the great variety of tempers that are in the world, there are some whose minds must be wrought upon in representing chiefly the terrors of religion; while others must be won by the invitations of divine grace, or supported by the consolations and hopes of the gospel.

And again, there are times when the great and indispensable duties of life demand to be more strongly inculcated, from the evident decay of practical godliness. Other seasons require the faith of Jesus to be chiefly insisted upon, when men, by laying too much stress on moral obligations only, depreciate the power of grace.

And as it is not our happiness to have none but sincere believers to preach to; there are topics to confute the Deist, and to silence the Infidel; all which are objects worthy of a minister's attention, and must occasionally be called forth as his judgment and discretion shall see necessary. In short, we must follow the plan of the apostle, "Become all things to all men, that by all means we may save some," (1 Cor. ix. 22.) keeping ever in remembrance what is said of the great Author and Finisher of our faith; that he "would have all men to be

saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii. 4.)

These are the general and common employments of our function.

But beside these, there is another, and which, indeed, is a very material one, in filling up the duties of our ministry, and that is *the visitation of the sick*: a duty which, if the precepts of our order had been silent in enjoining, would have received sufficient sanction from our own sympathetic feelings. It must have been conceived a peculiar obligation in the minister of Jesus, "to lift up (as scripture expresses it) the hands that hang down, and to confirm the feeble knees." (Isaiah xxxv. 3.)

And indeed, to say nothing of the humanity of the office, it has a very high recommendation from another principle, as it affords one of the best opportunities that can be desired for all the purposes of exhortation and advice.

In times of sickness, and in the absence of temptation, while the passions are hushed, and the world ceases to allure, those arguments, through grace, will be attended to, which in seasons of health, too often lose their effect. And very frequently, not only the sick person, but the friends around, are open to a stronger conviction of the importance of divine things, when the instance before them brings home to their own hearts the full force of the preacher's word. Whenever, therefore, a clergyman, by an opportunity of this kind, can promote the cause in which he ministers, doubtless it must be considered no unimportant part of his office always to regard it.

In saying thus much in the recommendation of it as a duty, it should be observed also, that it is no more than might, with equal propriety, be said of it as a pleasure; for it can be no small satisfaction to

every humane heart to be employed in such works of real charity. This conduct was the most distinguishing feature in the life of Christ. And though painful, as it may be in a multitude of instances, to behold the miseries and distresses of our nature, yet those pains are always requited with a proportioned degree of pleasure, when, as christians and as men, we are endeavouring to soften and alleviate them. And, no doubt, it is one of the merciful ordinations of God, in mingling our pains of sympathy with pleasure; that by means of such feelings, we might be impelled to interest ourselves more than otherwise we should, perhaps, in all cases of suffering, and to make the distresses of others, in some measure, our own.

I need not add, how heightened those feelings ought to be in the minister of Christ, when his reflections tell him he is thereby acting up to the noblest principles of his profession, and following, in that part which is chiefly imitable, the steps of his divine Master.

Beheld in this point of view, what an amiable and engaging character is a minister of the gospel! His life is devoted to the service of his Maker, and the everlasting welfare of mankind. And while the men of the world are busily engaged in the several objects of their pursuits; *his* attention is directed to promote that grand design which brought Christ from heaven, “to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide their feet into the way of peace.” (Luke i. 79.)

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace.” (Isaiah lxii. 7.) And when a life is thus spent both “in preaching the gospel of peace,” and, as it is elegantly expressed in Scripture, “healing the broken hearted, and setting at liberty them that are bruised,” (Luke iii. 18.) con-

ceive, if possible, any station in which human nature can be placed in this world, that is capable of producing equal satisfaction to a man's own heart, or enabling him to become a greater blessing to his fellow-creatures.

The public duties of the ministry, performed in this manner, must, I confess, take up the whole of our attention. But, indeed, what less than this can be necessary "to approve ourselves in all things as the ministers of God. Our office is evidently incompatible, and highly inconsistent with those lighter pursuits of life which occupy the frivolous and the vain. And it is, I conceive, with this express intention that we are set apart from all worldly employments, that we might give ourselves wholly to the work of the ministry whereunto we are appointed. How any man can suppose the duties of his sacred calling fully answered by the mere service of a Sunday, and a few offices of the church, it is hardly possible to conceive! The intermediate space is a large interval. And who shall say, while we are absent from our cures, or engaged in the trifling amusements and pleasures of the world, how many of our people drop from us into the grave, unbenefited by our past services, and lost to any future assistance? It is a most serious consideration, and enough to awaken every degree of assiduity in the discharge of all the duties of our office.

To the public obligations of the *minister* should be added the exemplary graces of the *christian*, and the private virtues of the *man*. For these, after all, alone can give energy to the official parts of duty, and become the finishing distinction of his whole character. It is not sufficient in a clergyman, that he attends, with the utmost regularity, the calls of his public ministry, unless he adds to it a correspondence of godly behaviour in his common intercourse with the world. His

private conduct will always be considered as the truest commentary on his sermons. So that, to make the man of God complete in all the parts of duty, he must crown the whole with a good life.

It were needless for me to illustrate by particulars, the comprehensive meaning of a good life. The text expresses the sense and extent of the obligation, when commanding us in "all things" to approve ourselves as the ministers of God. "To shew ourselves a pattern of good works. (Titus ii. 7.) To be blameless and harmless, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world. (Philip. ii. 15.) To be examples of believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith and purity." (1 Tim. iv. 12.) In short, "as He who hath called us is holy, so must we be holy in all manner of conversation." (1 Peter i. 15.)

And the great expediency of such a conduct is obvious. It is highly essential, not only from its personal value, but from its exemplary influence.

The good or bad qualities of ministers can never be supposed to terminate in themselves; they are reflected all around them. A pastor of religion is the very mirror of his parish, by which his followers, for the most part, regulate their behaviour. An immoral clergyman, therefore, if such a character can be found, is, of all others, an object of the greatest detestation and contempt. Wretched enough as to himself, these ill effects are nothing when compared to the sad influence his conduct has upon his people. When they see a man of this complexion acting with such abominable duplicity; in his *public* profession the servant of God; in his *private* behaviour, what shall I express it?—the servant of sin. One hour recommending the pure religion of Jesus; the next apostatizing from every principle of it! Figure to

yourselves the dreadful consequences of such a life! Conceive, if possible, the lengths which the prevalence of an example so highly pernicious is likely to reach: consider the mischief as extending to the souls of his people: follow them into the future state, and behold many made everlastingly miserable through the fatal imitation of a sinful pastor; then question whether there must not be some peculiar, some more than ordinary judgment of heaven to follow crimes like these. God in mercy forbid that any charge of this nature should ever be laid at the door of a minister of Christ!—No! let us, my dear brethren, as we wish well to the cause of the Lord Jesus, as we feel an interest in the salvation of our people, and as we value our own everlasting happiness, let us, in every part of duty, endeavour to “walk worthy of the vocation whereunto we are called.” (Ephes. iv. 1.) “Let us abstain from all appearance of evil;” and may “the God of peace sanctify us wholly; and our whole spirit, and souls, and bodies be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thess. v. 22, 23.)

I have now described to you, in general terms, the duties and obligations of the sacred order, by the faithful discharge of which only it is, I conceive, that we can “approve ourselves as the ministers of God.” Approve ourselves, not to that hollow, unsubstantial approbation, that vapour of applause, which arises from the world, but that permanent principle of praise brought home to the heart in the testimony of conscience; that prelude to divine approbation, of having “done well as a good and faithful servant of Jesus Christ.”

But who is sufficient for these things?

“We are not sufficient of ourselves, (says the apostle,) to do any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.” And it is He only “who can

make us able ministers of the New Testament." (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.)

Hence we are taught, that amidst all our own endeavours, we must place our chief dependence on the blessing of Heaven. Without this, neither the highest integrity, nor the greatest ability, is competent to the task. "Of Him, from whom alone descendeth every good, and every perfect gift," (James i. 17.) we must seek the assistance of that divine "wisdom, which is from above." (James iii. 17.) And a greater blessing we cannot implore from the Almighty, than 'for his grace always to prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works.'

Indeed, in a matter of such infinite importance, we need also the prayers of all our fellow christians. Nor can it, I should hope, be thought unseasonable or improper on the present occasion, to request of *you*, our *people*, who are so much interested in the event of our services, to remember us daily in your petitions to the Throne of Grace. "Brethren, pray for us. Strengthen the hands of the ministry. For we watch for your souls as they that must give account, that we may do it with joy and not with grief. (Heb. xiii. 17, 18.) That we may rejoice in the day of Christ, that we have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." (Phil. ii. 16.)

Upon a review of what hath been said, it is proper I should conclude the whole with the motives there are to animate and encourage our hearts in the great work of the ministry. An office so arduous may well be supposed to have some more than ordinary recommendations to induce men to the acceptance of it. And indeed there are such as no tongue can fully express, or even imagination conceive.

I know not with which to begin, nor where to end. All those arguments of persuasion that we offer to

our people, to make *them* wise unto salvation, are strengthened with tenfold energy, when brought home and applied to ourselves.

Every motive of personal safety, of interest, of gratitude ; the esteem of men, the favour of God, the happiness of Heaven ; all these, separately considered, would furnish volumes of persuasion to call men to the sacred office. But, after all that can be said upon the subject, the warmest recommendations must fall infinitely short ; and we have the highest reason to conclude, that the faithful servant of Christ must absolutely enter the upper world, before he can possibly conceive the *full* extent of the inducements there are, to engage him in the sacred service of the ministry. For the bare idea of having been an instrument under divine grace, to the salvation of *one* soul only ; and the consciousness of this in a future world, who shall say what peculiar sources of felicity this alone may open to the mind ? what additional rapture it may produce even in heaven itself ! Unless this were clearly ascertained, it is impossible, I think, to describe the extensiveness of those motives by which we are prompted in our labour. And if a single instance of this sort is pregnant with such peculiar happiness ; what accumulated arguments may be derived from numbers. In the great day of the Lord, when all the ministering shepherds of Christ shall appear with their separate charges, conceive, if possible, what kind of sensation it must produce, to stand eminent in the throng for the superior labours of our ministry ! the reflection of the mind, that *you*, under the divine blessing, have wrought so earnestly in the cure of souls, as to have brought “many sons unto glory.” What ideas this must awaken ! what joy unspeakable it must produce ! The very prospect is enough to animate the most lifeless character. I cannot, therefore, close the sub-

ject better, than by leaving upon your hearts the encouraging words of the apostle: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. xv. 58.)

SERMON X.

SUNDAY-SCHOOLS RECOMMENDED.

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF CHARLES, PLYMOUTH, ON
SUNDAY FEB. 22, 1789, BEING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE INSTITUTION
OF SUNDAY-SCHOOLS ESTABLISHED IN PLYMOUTH.*

LUKE I. 79.

To give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

THE text is predictive of the general tendency and design of the gospel. Under the figurative language of ancient prophecy, the effects of that auspicious era are described, when, “through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high first visited us;” (Luke i. 78.) when the human mind, aided by divine energy, began to emerge from that gloom which, for so many ages, had clouded every feature, and the Sun of Righteousness arose to “give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

It is impossible to consider the circumstances included in this high dispensation of mercy, but with the most pleasing and grateful satisfaction. To remark, however, the eventual happy consequences of christianity, would be opening a subject much exceeding the limits allowed to this discourse. My present purpose will be fully answered in observing, that wherever the gospel hath been promulgated, in proportion to its reception and influence on the mind

* The date of this sermon will be sufficient to account for the slenderness of the materials in the construction, and for the manner in which it was written. It was intended for a local operation. It is preserved in the Works lest any of the purchasers of the former editions should be offended,

of man, it hath corresponded to the beneficent designs of Heaven. And though the divine wisdom (for reasons unknown to us) hath been pleased to withhold this glorious light from a large part of mankind, which remains in darkness to this very hour; yet we have assurance, the blessing shall one day be as universal as it is great. A time is predicted, when "the whole earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah xi. 9.)

Sacred Scripture hath not condescended to explain the means by which this wonderful revolution shall be accomplished, and we are incompetent to judge. But whatever instruments Divine Providence may be pleased to make use of, for converting the various nations of the earth to the faith of Jesus, there is one duty suggested upon the occasion, which is particularly incumbent upon us to perform. Impressed as we are by a perfect conviction of the importance of religious knowledge to mankind, that conviction should lead to communicate, by every means in our power, the same blessing to others which we ourselves enjoy. Once persuaded of the great advantages we derive from the full blaze of christianity, there arises an evident obligation of imparting some rays of its brightness to our fellow-creatures.

We are precluded, perhaps, by situation and other circumstances, from effectually extending this benefit to remote nations of the earth, and can only give our feeble aid to the cause in ardent prayers to God, to hasten the kingdom of his divine Son. But though prevented from testifying our christian love in any other manner, with respect to distant countries; yet there are opportunities enough at home, where our duty may be most happily performed. The ignorant and uninformed of our own people form a large class of the community; among whom there are multitudes, in the truest sense of the word, "aliens to

Christ, and strangers to the covenant of grace ; who live as without God in the world ;” and notwithstanding the pure light of the gospel hath shone with such lustre in these British islands, still we may be said (to speak in the language of the text) “to sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death.”

For proof of this, I need not advert to those very melancholy examples of national depravity in our prisons swarming with criminals, and occasioning those numerous executions, the last resource of justice, (which, however necessary, are not the less disgraceful to this enlightened kingdom ;) but without referring to those more glaring instances of atrocity, we need not extend our observation beyond the precincts of every neighbourhood, to be convinced of the prevalence of corruption and profligacy in the morals of the lower order of our people ; circumstances, surely, which become objects of peculiar concern, and demand a peculiar regard. And while missionaries are sent on the charitable errand of publishing to foreign climes the glad tidings of light and salvation, shall it be said we pass over with indifference the spiritual darkness of our fellow-creatures around us ? Shall we suffer our own people “to be destroyed for lack of knowledge ?” (Hosea iv. 6.) God forbid ! Every principle of religion, and even common humanity, all unite to enforce this duty upon us. Nay, independent of every other motive, if only from political and selfish considerations, it becomes high time for some salutary method to be devised, to stop, if possible, the ruffian’s hand, and render the executioner’s office unnecessary. And if we wish to prevent crimes rather than punish them, in no one instance can our philanthropy better appear, than in diffusing such a sense of moral and religious obligation through all departments, and more especially among the lower ranks of life, as may produce, under

the blessing of God, those beneficial consequences. This, I conceive, will be a very happy way of discharging our duty in this particular, and seconding the merciful intentions of Heaven, "in giving light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and guiding their feet into the way of peace."

Among the various methods by which this great object may be accomplished, the early instruction of the children of the poor, in principles of piety and virtue, appears to possess very eminent advantages, and deservedly claims a principal share of attention. For it is supposed, (and not without sufficient reason,) that many of the evils abounding in the lower stations of the world, if traced to their source, would be found to arise, in a great measure, from a neglected or vicious education. Hence the unprincipled conduct which disgraces the after stages of life; and hence the inefficacy of all laws, both human and divine, to produce a reform. For what reform, indeed, can we reasonably expect to take place, when time hath given strength to corrupt habits, and men are grown grey in iniquity? Hopeless, however, as the prospect is, no doubt, we ought not to be discouraged. Every possible mean should yet be attempted to reclaim the oldest and most hardened offenders. But if we would look forward for the probability of one day seeing our people generally virtuous, the matter must be taken up much earlier. It is not sufficient to aim at the reformation of manhood only; we must begin with younger years. We must form the manners of the rising generation in all useful and necessary knowledge, and impress the mind with the earliest notions of duty. This will be striking at the root of the evil, and preventing the growth of vice; which, when ripened by years, is so difficult to remove.

And, aware of the importance of this object, the

wisdom and liberality of the nation have not been altogether inattentive to this great concern. They have, for a long time, been exercised in providing schools for poor children in many parts of the kingdom, that such as are deprived of the aid of instruction by the poverty of their parents, might receive these assistances under the fostering care of a charity school. Nor are the warmest advocates for these excellent seminaries fully sensible of the great extent of their usefulness and value.

Such, indeed, it may be said, is their consequence in society, that to speak of them in general terms only, and without exaggeration, no one event in the circumstance of common life hath contributed more to the public welfare, in the good order of subordination, and the happiness of the community. But to ascertain the precise degree of utility arising from them, is impossible. For to do this, it would be necessary to collect in the aggregate, not only the obvious advantages that result from their establishment; but also the evils which probably flow from the want of them. Imagination, however, may form a faint idea of their importance, in only supposing the many thousands that have been rescued by their means from poverty and ignorance, with all the consequent train of vices; who, had they been left to swell the tide of corruption, what a torrent of wickedness would have poured in upon social life! If, with all these preventives to evil, the delinquency of the times hath demanded so many painful punishments, what must have been the consequence had there been no provision of this kind; and the whole body of the poor had been left exposed to the temptations incident to a low estate, without feeling the least restraint from the curb of education? Nay, what irreparable injuries would the community have sustained in another point of view, had those asylums never

been opened? How many improvements from the efforts of genius and ability would then have been lost to the world! and what brilliant capacities would for ever have remained hid and buried in obscurity, had not their friendly hand first brought them forth to light, and introduced them to the world, who afterwards have arisen to a conspicuous rank in society among our wealthy citizens, ingenious artificers, and useful men!

But after paying all possible praise to these honourable establishments of national benevolence, we have still to lament they are far from being equal to the wants of our poor. Some further provision is yet required, to render a sense of moral and religious duty more generally diffusive among the humbler walks of life through the kingdom. Our present charity-schools, with all their kind assistances, go but a little way to answer this purpose.

There are, indeed, several very evident causes which operate to restrain their influence within narrow bounds. Some of these schools are so framed, in the nature of their foundation, as to admit only persons of a particular description. Others are established upon plans so very liberal, that by providing not only education, but for all the wants of the immediate objects of their bounty, they are necessarily confined to those fortunate few who are happy enough to gain admission into them. But even the humblest of the present charity-schools are yet upon too extensive a scale to come within the full purposes required, *of instructing all the children of the poor*; and any thing short of this, must fail of the end wished for, of inducing reformation among the lower order of people, from the early inculcation of piety and morals. Hence, therefore, from being limited either in plan or ability, they are, of consequence, limited also in their extent of usefulness.

They can take in but a certain number, and of a certain class and description, while the stranger, and by far the greater part of poor children, derive no benefit from them.

Beside these causes, it should be observed, moreover, most of the institutions of charity, for the education of the children of the poor, are confined to large towns and cities: in villages and country parishes there are but few, if any. And in manufacturing places also, where poor children, at a very early age, are obliged to earn the bread they eat, they are wholly precluded every possible assistance from weekly schools, and cannot suffer such an interruption to the calls of labour.

So that upon the whole, admirable as all institutions for the purpose of education are in themselves, and most excellent as they prove in those instances where they can be obtained; yet, as they reach not to the whole body of the poor who stand in need of them, nay, indeed, but to a few (comparatively speaking, as to the bulk of the people,) who come under their friendly shelter, it is plain, that without some additional provision, there will be always left a great majority in every place destitute of instruction.

To remedy, therefore, such defects, and at once to provide for the full wants of the children of the poor, in all useful and necessary knowledge, a matter of late hath been suggested, and is now become the object of much popular attention: I mean the establishment of Sunday-schools.—A scheme of education, framed upon principles so plain and humble, that while it acts subordinately to every other charity-school, it becomes the appendage to all, in receiving such children as cannot obtain the help of nobler charities; affording instruction to those who, from their necessary occupation, are prevented attending weekly schools, and serving as a

substitute in small towns and country villages, where no endowed schools at present exist. And so complete is it for all the purposes of that instruction needful to those humble characters for which it is intended, and at the same time requiring such very slender means for support, as cannot but come within the ability of almost every parish to afford; that there does not seem a better plan which the wisdom of man could have devised, to answer the wants of the poor on this important article, and to promise thereby the most salutary effects to society.

As the professed object of a Sunday-school corresponds, in a great measure, both with the doctrine of the text, and the design of this discourse, it will not be departing from the subject, to consider somewhat more particularly its claim to public attention.

I shall endeavour, therefore, to recommend this novel institution as meriting your warmest support, by pointing out the more peculiar advantages belonging to it, besides the general principles of utility it possesses, in common with other charities of a similar nature.

But as the propriety of educating the children of the poor hath been much questioned, it may not be improper previously to remove, if possible, impressions of this nature, by stating the usefulness of instruction, as far as religion and morality are concerned, among the lower classes of mankind.

On a subject like that of education, which, from its importance, hath necessarily employed the attention, and exhausted all the observation of moral writers, it would be presumptuous to hope to add any thing hitherto unnoticed, or give strength to the arguments that have been already brought forward in its support; and equally ungratifying to the lust of novelty would it prove, to tread the same beaten track which hath been so often gone over. I con-

ceive, however, all disputes on this head may be reduced to a single point.

Let any considerate person reflect, for a moment only, on the character of the idle vagabond, who wanders from place to place, a pest to society, a disgrace to his country, and almost a burden to himself. From whence does this arise, but from the want of early education and discipline? Little raised above the pursuits of mere animal life, and instructed in no principle either of religion or virtue, his only object is to gratify his wants, either in pilfering from the property of others, or extorting help from the hand of charity. He hath hardly an idea of a Supreme Power, "for how shall he believe in Him, of whom he hath not heard;" (Rom. x. 14.) and the duties he owes mankind he is equally insensible of: so that if he be restrained from acts of violence or fraud, it is more from the dread of punishment than from a principle of justice. Thus he lives unprofitable to himself; useless, if not injurious to society, and regardless of duty to his God; and at length leaves the world as he entered it, ignorant of all the purposes of his being, and equally unfit either to live or die.

Contrast this character with the useful and virtuous member of the community, who by a proper education, under the care of a charity-school, hath early learnt the great duties of life, and by divine grace, applied himself to the practice of them; and then determine the importance of instruction, and say, whether a plan, producing such beneficial consequences to the world, can be an uninteresting object of public attention?—The most prejudiced mind surely, can hardly hesitate to acknowledge its utility.

In the circumstances of domestic life, it is an object always consulted. The character, the ability, the disposition, are invariably the first matters of enquiry concerning those we employ about us. No one would

take into his house a doubtful or suspicious person. The door of every reputable family would be instantly shut against him. Whereas, such as have been brought up in habits of virtuous and religious education, prepossess every heart in their favour: and can there be a stronger decision of the argument, than what is drawn from the common and constant practice of human life?

If in answer it be said, it is considering the usefulness of charity-schools in a much more favourable light than experience warrants, to state such consequences as resulting from them, because such effects do not always follow education, it is readily confessed they do not. But I would ask, at the same time, what plan of human policy ever did fully come up to the wishes of its patrons? The wisest system of legislation a nation ever framed, hath never yet, even in a single instance, been able to make all its people virtuous. However fondly it were to be wished, a radical cure could be discovered for the evils of life, we know the idea is too chimerical to be expected. But would any one from hence be weak enough to argue, because a scheme is incomplete, which never in the present state of things can be complete, that it is therefore useless? Because mankind are not perfect in every instance, are all endeavours after perfection to be exploded? If this doctrine were once admitted, and that analogy by which we reason were here adopted, an end would at once be put to every thing useful in life. Even religion itself, the pure religion of Jesus, would then be given up, because it hath not yet produced what it professed, of bringing in universal righteousness upon the earth! It is not, therefore, the question of a moment, whether educating the children of the poor, is an object of public concern, because all that have been taught, have not, in every instance, answered

the full wishes of instruction. Let us suppose only a few good youths every year returned into society, by the means of our different charity-schools, to mix up with the mass of people, (and through the various parts of the kingdom, we may reasonably hope, there are numbers; but suppose a few only,) even these few are the most convincing proofs of their importance. And when we reflect on the multitudes that, from the first institution of those charitable seminaries, have been continually incorporating with the world, who shall ascertain their great extent of usefulness? Nay, even among the untractable and stubborn, on whom education appears to work no good, who seem lost to all principles of duty, and resist every effort for their benefit; may it not still be said, that notwithstanding present appearances, the instruction is not altogether thrown away: for, perhaps, they are restrained in some measure by its help, and if they are now corrupt and vicious, is it not highly reasonable to conclude, they would have been much worse without it? For it should be remembered, principles of duty, once impressed upon the mind, cannot but have some influence; they may be stifled and suppressed, but are seldom wholly destroyed. It is necessary to get rid altogether of the prejudices of education, before full scope can be given to licentious courses. That warning voice which calls from within, must be totally silenced, before all compunction for sin can be fairly done away. And how many are there, running the career of youthful folly, have been awakened by that call, and returned to duty, when the heat of the passions hath subsided! In whom the spark of virtue, though for a long time buried under the rubbish of vice, hath yet remained latent, hid in the heart, and burnt in secret; of itself, indeed, too feeble to get the better of temptation and the corruption that surrounded it, yet preserved un-

extinguished, by the grace of God, hath at length been rekindled, and burnt with a lustre surpassing all expectation.

If such then be the consequences of an early education in principles of religion and virtue, and even in many instances, where the happiest effects have not immediately followed; I may venture to assert the efficacy of it in general; and experience hath given the most ample testimony of its utility in those innumerable instances where it hath benefited individuals.

But however evident the good effects of charity-schools may appear, it should not be dissembled that they have shared in common with many other institutions of a public nature, condemnation and reproach. Nor can it be said that all the objections brought against them have been suggested from improper motives. Many amiable and candid minds have had their doubts of their usefulness and propriety. And indeed, a variety in the sentiments of mankind, on most subjects, seems unavoidable. But this diversity, when proceeding from proper and laudable reasons, is so far from doing an injury to any cause, that it rather tends ultimately to benefit and improve it. And though it is impossible, in the great stream of human opinion, that any plan, however wisely contrived, shall receive the universal suffrage of mankind; yet when benevolent minds suggest their fears, those fears induce caution; and while reasonable and just objections to any part of the system give birth only to improvement, those which are found to arise from contracted and illiberal ideas, receive but the more ample refutation.

Thus, in the present instance, when it is said that ignorance best suits a humble station; that learning is unnecessary for the poor, and gives them exalted notions unfavourable to their future way of life; we

cannot but reject, with indignation, such illiberal sentiments, founded only in pride and calculated to limit the sphere of genius, and to extend the principle of inequality beyond the bounds prescribed by Providence, for the good order and government of the world.

But when the objection arises from apprehensions that learning is improper for the poor, because it breaks in upon the time which should be employed in inuring them to habits of labour : and that so far from contributing to their happiness, it rather tends to produce an opposite effect, by rendering them dissatisfied with the humble station in which the Providence of God hath been pleased to place them : these objections, which do not originate from any unkind or illiberal motives, certainly merit attention ; though when the principles on which they are founded come to be analyzed, notwithstanding the plausibility of argument, they will be found to be more specious than solid.

If by education it were meant to instruct the children of the poor in scientific knowledge, and to lead them through the paths of metaphysical subtilty : if they were taught the abstruse points of religion, rather than the plain doctrines and duties of the gospel ; it would then readily be granted, that such a system of learning would be highly unsuitable to their humble station, and prove exceedingly detrimental, both to their own happiness and the welfare of the community. But when the whole instruction intended, is comprised within the narrow limits of matters only of a religious, moral, and social tendency, in teaching them the duties they owe to God, their neighbour, and themselves ; can it be said, that education upon this humble plan, can prove in the smallest degree injurious ? Can that possibly induce sentiments of pride, when every lesson is directed to hu-

mility? And can that disqualify for the duties or happiness of life, which is wholly contrived to recommend and enforce both? Alas! it is not from knowledge, but from ignorance that danger is to be apprehended: for when the mind is kept vacant, and no fence, no barrier is thrown up against the encroachments of evil, it is not to be wondered at, if vicious principles find an entrance into the heart, already depraved, and, joining with the propensities of nature, lead men astray.

Whatever arguments may be brought against education, upon a larger scale, for the lower classes of society; yet, surely, there does not remain the smallest vestige of objection to this limited and confined scheme. From motives of policy, therefore, as well as christian benevolence, it should seem a very high obligation to give the children of the poor proper ideas at least of religion, and every needful instruction corresponding with their future prospects in life; that by the inculcation of piety, virtue, habits of subordination to their superiors, and a disposition of cheerfulness in themselves, they may be strengthened both in the knowledge and practice of those principles, with which their own happiness, and that of the public, are so intimately connected.

I have neither time nor inclination to enter into the field of controversy on this subject, and combat all the objections which have been brought against charity-schools; though, on fair ground it would, I believe, be no very difficult matter to shew the weakness and fallacy of the principles by which they are, for the most part, supported.

But whatever strength of argument some men may fancy they possess against other institutions, they lose all their power when levelled against Sunday Schools. The pride, the idleness, the interruptions to a life of labour they occasion, the discontent

of mind arising from their station, (which are the most formidable objections hitherto brought against seminaries for instructing the poor, and on which much stress has been laid,) are all fairly done away by this new plan of education, and every shadow of offence is removed, on which the smallest reasonable objection could be founded.

This will, however, more fully appear, in pointing out the humble pretensions this institution hath to public favour, from the peculiar advantages belonging to it, beside the more general helps it affords, in common with other charities of a similar nature.

The great and leading principles of a Sunday School are directed to one and the same end, which is the professed object of all charitable education; to impress on the youthful mind such a sense of religion and morality, as may tend, in riper years, to influence the whole conduct. And as the foundation for this can only be laid in just conceptions of the Divine Being, and the nature of his law and gospel; the Sunday School begins with first endeavouring to inculcate proper and becoming notions of God, and the importance of those truths and precepts he hath given mankind.

Hence, for this purpose, the children are trained in early habits of godliness; they are led to a constant and regular attendance on public worship, and as duly instructed in the necessary (though too much neglected) duty of private prayer; they are prevented from profaning the Sabbath, in the intervals of service, by assembling in their respective schools; and being employed in acts of instruction, they are taught betimes those sacred truths which are "alone able to make them wise unto salvation;" which, however slighted in days of health and strength, are among the highest consolations of sickness, old age, and a death bed. All which advantages are produced by

means of this humble mode of education, among a set of poor creatures, of the very lowest order of people; and such, it should be remembered also, as are deprived the help of more extensive charities, and who from their situation of poverty, or the negligence and ill examples of their parents, would, perhaps, seldom or never have attended the house of God, but consumed their Sabbaths in idleness and vice, in wandering about and corrupting one another.

To bring, therefore, children of this description to an early sense of duty; to instruct those lips to speak the praises of their Maker, which might otherwise have been heard in oaths and blasphemy; and "to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" these are among the common and most obvious advantages of a Sunday-school; and such as of themselves are the strongest arguments that need be mentioned in justification of it.

"The fear of God," however, is but "the beginning of wisdom;" the next great object, therefore, to which the Sunday-school proceeds in the plan of education, is to inculcate such principles as ought to flow from it. Hence, to habits of godliness are added instructions of morality. By familiar lessons and catechisms, and other forms of this kind, with which books for the use of children abound, they are gradually led on to a clear apprehension of all the great duties of life which they owe themselves and the world. And the knowledge of every virtue that more particularly belongs to their humble station, is, by these means, introduced into the mind, in terms that are best accommodated to their tender capacities.

But while these good effects are thus aimed at, by this simple plan of education, what renders this novel institution so very deservedly the object of public favour is, the peculiar property it possesses of giving all necessary knowledge to the rising genera-

tion of the poor, without breaking in upon habits of industry, which are so essential to their future welfare, and to which all children who must work for their daily bread, should, without doubt, be early inured.

The most popular, and by far the weightiest objection brought against charity-schools in general, is taken from this very circumstance; that admitting all that can be said in their favour, yet the time usually spent in them is such an interruption of labour, and proves so highly unfavourable to habits of industry, that, perhaps, more evil results from them than good.

Whether the argument be well founded or not, is beside my present purpose. But human wisdom could not, I think, have framed a more admirable plan to remove this objection, than in a Sunday-school. For, by appropriating the Sabbath only to instruction, and leaving the whole week to the full possession of labour, the claims of the world are preserved uninjured, and the poor have all the opportunity of instruction that is really useful and necessary for them. None of the real or supposed effects of idleness, therefore, arising from other charity-schools, can possibly be found in this. For what idleness can be induced by a school, when every day's work is only interrupted by the stated return of the Sabbath? What indolence can follow instruction of this kind? Or how can children possibly imbibe notions unfavourable to industry, when every lesson expressly teaches them "to labour truly to get their own living, and to do their duty in that state of life, unto which it hath pleased God to call them?"

The object, therefore, so long wished for is now happily attained. The poor may be trained in all necessary learning, without breaking in upon the time which should be employed in inuring them to

habits of labour. In a Sunday-school, all due respect is preserved to the great duties of this life, while suitable attention no less is called forth to the more important concerns of another. And nothing, surely, can more decidedly determine the importance of such a plan of education, or prove its claim to public favour.

But what is a very material article to be considered, in the peculiar advantages of this school, and renders it still more meriting regard, is the slender means required for its support. Though it affords all the instruction that can be really essential for poor children, yet a few pounds annually collected in a parish, are equal to all the unavoidable wants of it. Books, school-rent, and teachers, include almost the whole expense. Other articles of disbursement, no doubt, might very properly be added, where the circumstances will admit, in clothing and rewards for good behaviour; for every thing of this kind becomes a stimulus to improvement, and cannot but excite the diligence of the little community: yet as these are collateral considerations, and perfectly unconnected with the design of the school, (and, indeed, depend entirely upon the opulence of the parish, and the liberality of the benefactors to the charity,) they may, and perhaps, in many places, must be dispensed with. From means, therefore, so humble, and which are certainly within the ability of almost every parish, what happy effects may we not reasonably expect will follow, when they are become general through the kingdom!

Even within our own observation, since the opening these schools in this town, we can evidently trace marks of their utility. Our streets are not so much crowded as heretofore with idle, dissolute children, on this sacred day, but we now see numbers of the humblest of the poor repairing constantly to divine

worship. Wretched and mean, indeed, in their apparel; but the poverty of their appearance, painful as it is to behold, yet, to a reflecting mind, affords but an additional evidence of the great excellence of the charity. For the want of suitable dress among poor people, is the common excuse made use of to apologize for their absence from the house of God. So that almost every one of the scholars of a Sunday-school, is one added thereby to the congregation. And when we consider the numbers that by this means are gathered from the mass of filth and wretchedness, and brought forth to their duty, the mind is opened to a pleasing idea of the great advantages that are likely to result from it. And if we pursue the reflection, and look forward to a few years, and consider the children rising up in life, in the several characters of men, husbands, and fathers, what a reform may we not reasonably expect, under the blessing of Providence, in the morals of our people! Nay, without going so far as a succeeding generation, I should hope the present will not be altogether unbenefited by it. The parents themselves, when they see the public attention so generally called forth for their children's welfare, and the various means made use of to bring them up in the faith and fear of God, will blush to be found defective on their part, and be shamed into principles of duty; so that good will be reverted back from the children to their parents; and in endeavouring to make the next age better, we certainly adopt no improbable method to reclaim and amend the present.

I cannot conclude these observations on the peculiar advantages of a Sunday-school, without subjoining another, as important, perhaps, as any; (which, though it may be rather a digression from the immediate subject of this discourse, yet, in its consequences, is connected with it,) and that is, the ten-

dency that is in it to abolish all party dissension in religion ; and by inculcating principles of universal benevolence, to throw down those partitions which have been erected to the separate enclosures of Christians.

It is a circumstance, I think, ever to be deplored, that an event so illustrious as the Reformation should have been sullied with the smallest stain ; that our forefathers, when they united so amiably to explode the pernicious doctrines of Romish superstition, should so uncharitably have divided afterwards, in forming a new plan upon the ruins of the old. But, unhappily, from a portion of that infirmity which mingles with the best of human actions, no sooner had they destroyed error under one form, but bigotry, like a phœnix springing from its ashes, arose under another : and from that time to the present hour, the church of Christ hath been divided into many separate and distinct parties, until the spirit of Christ is nearly lost among us.

Even our charity-schools, in some measure, partake of this temper, according to the respective principles of those denominations under which they are formed. The plan of a Sunday-school becomes an excellent remedy to heal those needless divisions, for it embraces in its bosom all orders, sects, and persuasions. No difference of religious tenets, or particular forms of worship, is sufficient to restrain its beneficial influence. The only object it hath in view, is to raise up the next generation, without respect of persons, to be wiser and better than their fathers : and anxious in the attainment of this great end, it passes by all other considerations ; perfectly aware, that if it can but accomplish this purpose, in making them good men, there will be but little doubt of their becoming good citizens. I must add, the prospect opens with the most flattering presage of

success. We find the various sects of religion all uniting on the occasion in the establishment of Sunday-schools. A very high proof both of the general approbation of the scheme, and the renewal of a true catholic spirit through the kingdom; and affords reason to hope, under the divine blessing, will be followed with the happiest effects.

From the whole, if what hath been said is sufficient to shew the importance of education among the poor, in principles of religion and morality; the great excellence of seminaries in general, established for that purpose, and the humble pretensions of Sunday-schools in particular; it must follow, we cannot consistently remain indifferent to an object that promises so much good.

The experience of this institution for some time past, in several parts of the kingdom, and for more than two years within this parish, hath afforded the most unequivocal and decided proofs of its utility. It now looks up, therefore, in a more awakened form. It calls upon us in a louder voice. And God forbid, in the present boasted hour of humanity, when the miserable of any country are sure to find advocates for relief in British benevolence, we should be inattentive to any call in which the temporal and eternal interests of our own people are so highly concerned. Surely we ought to illumine this hemisphere, at the time we are endeavouring to throw a ray of brightness on the other corners of the earth. And here, above all places, we should "give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace."

An appeal to your generosity for the promotion of this charity, is all that now remains to finish the subject. But in times like the present, which are distinguished by a promptness to benevolence, surpassing all former ages;—nay, even in many instances,

anticipating application by a voluntary contribution ; it would be both superfluous and improper to add a single motive to liberality. If you are once convinced of the propriety of the institution, I am persuaded no other topic of argument can be needful to dispose you to support it.

I shall only therefore add a sincere prayer to God to bless this and every other endeavour, to bring forward that predicted period, "when the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped ; when the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing. Violence shall no more be heard in the land, wasting nor destruction within thy border. They shall neither hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. I the Lord will hasten it in his time." (Isaiah xi. xxxv. lx.)

S E R M O N XI.

 THE INVALUABLE BLESSINGS OF OUR RELIGIOUS AND
 CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF CHARLES, PLYMOUTH,
 DECEMBER THE 27TH, 1792, BEFORE THE LODGE OF UNITY, AND
 PRINTED AT THE UNITED REQUEST OF THE SEVERAL
 LODGES OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS, DEVON.*

PROVERBS XXIV. 21.

*My son, fear thou the Lord, and the King; and meddle not with them that
 are given to change.*

THE great pillars of a nation's happiness and prosperity are true religion and good government. Without these, it is impossible that it can long exist; for permanent happiness and prosperity can rest upon no other basis.

In religion, or *the fear of the Lord*, (as the text expresses it,) we adopt the only means that can effectually insure the divine blessing, and make provision, at the same time, for the conscientious discharge of those duties which intimately affect the welfare of society, but which lie beyond the reach of human laws to enforce. And the numerous claims and reciprocal obligations, which arise out of social life, can only be guaranteed by a faithful obedience to that necessary rule of order, which, in the language of the text, is called *the fear of the king*. It is evident, in the very nature of things, that this is the only system from which any community of people can promise

* If the reader takes notice of the date of this Sermon, he will recollect, probably, that at that time, in consequence of the recent Revolution of the French nation, the disaffected of our own country were more than usually bold.

themselves a continuance of the blessings of society. For those two great principles, extending to all the relative situations in which man stands to man in his present state; not only regulating his outward actions, but also operating upon his inward motives; purifying his heart and influencing his conduct; establish a foundation which nothing less comprehensive can accomplish, on which the edifice of happiness may be permanently constructed.

This is a fact so plain and palpable, that nothing but the blindest prejudice can obscure it. For let any man figure to himself the most perfect state of human felicity that the power of fancy can conceive, what would be the characters which composed it? Would they not be men of religion and virtue; men of integrity and honour; of justice, truth, and probity? The pious parent, the conscientious magistrate, the obedient subject, the good man. In short, "a city whose people were all righteous:" (Isaiah lx. 21.) where "mercy and truth met together; righteousness and peace kissed each other:" (Psalm lxxxv. 10.) where every individual, in his relative department, was endeavouring to promote his neighbour's happiness as well as his own: where all had learned, and all equally practised, that luminous and comprehensive precept of the apostle, "to honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, and honour the King." (1 Pet. ii. 17.)

In the contemplation of such a picture of society, the mind kindles with the glow of affection, from the consciousness of the means we still possess, through the mercy of God, for the promotion of general good, notwithstanding our present fallen and imperfect state. And though it must be confessed, that this view of human felicity, is rather the result of what *would* follow a due attention to religious and civil duties, than what is actually found in the world; yet

the arguments for the truth itself are not, in the smallest degree, diminished by the real state of things. It is sufficient to the purpose to prove, that true religion and good government do, in themselves, lead to those blessings; the perverseness or corruption of human nature, in slighting the means, or not observing them closely, neither render the principles themselves precarious, nor are they justly chargeable with the consequences. Effects are always corresponding to their causes. Wherever the most eminent examples of religion and virtue are found, there you may infallibly conclude the existence of the most eminent degrees of happiness.

Admitting this reasoning to be well founded, (which cannot, I think, with the least plausibility of argument be denied,) where ought we to look for the highest instances of human felicity, but to this very country, to which through the bounty of Providence, we belong?

The “fear of the Lord and the king;” that is, in other words, true religion and sound government, form that glorious constitution, which is at once the praise and envy of all the earth. And if we may credit the opinion of foreign writers, who from natural prejudices, connected with their national characters, cannot be supposed to be influenced by any partiality in our favour, they have all concurred in giving their decided approbation to our system of government, and have extolled the English constitution in the loftiest terms, and the most unbounded panegyric.

Were I to say, that our present establishment, both in church and state, possesses all the powers, the ability, the vigour, the energy, in short, every requisite to make a people virtuous, and, by consequence, happy, I should scarcely overcharge the picture of our religious and civil liberties. To pro-

nounce a full and just eulogium on the English constitution, it would be necessary to take a comparative view of it with other states, in order to define, with proper precision, its vast superiority ; and by a delineation of its most prominent features, display the peculiar qualities it possesses, to answer all the wants of society in general, and of individuals in particular, (as far as human policy can reach,) in providing for the peace and tranquillity of this life, and (through the merits of the great Saviour of the world,) for all the happiness of another.

Will it be said that these effects do not always follow ; that our nation affords not constant evidences of this truth ? The fact is allowed, but the reason, though humiliating, is easily to be assigned.

For if the sacred and venerable principles of religion be slighted ; if the regular and faithful administration of justice be impeded ; if the fear of God be banished from the mind, and an obedience to secular authority be dismissed along with it : can it become the object of surprise, that the consequences which we are taught to expect from a steady and uninterrupted attention to those great principles of conduct are perverted ? It would, indeed, be matter of astonishment if such causes did not produce their corresponding effects.

Amidst the infinite diversity which appears in the operations of God, in the government of the universe, there is one great object in the Divine mind, which we can clearly trace uniformly carried on, the leading marks of which are strikingly visible ; it is the connexion by which God has inseparably united our happiness with our duty, so that the violation of the one, sooner or later, becomes certainly fatal to the other. Hence, therefore, if our felicity as a people does not keep pace with our advantages as men, it is because we break the chain of order ; we violate the

claims of duty, and in our disobedience or neglect of the means of happiness, the cause of every national or private evil, may, for the most part, be traced to its proper source.

I hope I have fully prepared your minds by these prefatory observations, for perceiving both the great importance of the doctrine in the text, and the infinite consequences as a duty deducible from it. For if the happiness and prosperity of a people become so intimately blended with a conscientious regard to the principles of true religion and good government, the maxim contained in it will appear full of the highest wisdom, and deserving our closest regard. "My son, fear thou the Lord, and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change."

In pursuing the train of reasoning which this passage of scripture furnishes, I solicit your attention to the discussion of the following particulars.

The former part of the precept in the text is, *the fear of the Lord*: under this comprehensive expression, which evidently includes the whole of religion, I shall first point out the obligation to this duty, by briefly representing the blessings we enjoy, in the quiet possession of that reformed church which is the established religion of this country. When I have finished this part of the subject, (which on every account is entitled to pre-eminence,) it will not, I hope, be considered as infringing the sanctity of this place, if, in explaining the second clause of the text, *the fear of the king*, as it is expressed, (which may be supposed to refer to the measures of civil government,) I point out to your notice some of the invaluable privileges we enjoy as a people, under the mild and equitable administration of justice which distinguishes our land.

From the united consideration of these particulars, I am persuaded, that sufficient arguments will arise

to enforce, under the divine blessing, a steady regard and obedience to both those principles of duty, *the fear of the Lord and the king*, that we may be in no danger of falling into that error alluded to in the conclusion of the text, “of meddling with them that are given to change.”

Under the first particular of the obligation to *the fear of the Lord*, from the happiness we enjoy in the quiet possession of our reformed church, it will be hardly necessary, in order to awaken a due attention to the value of this great blessing, to lead your thoughts back to those ages of intellectual darkness, in which the clouds of bigotry had well nigh covered the christian world, and brought on that night of error and superstition, which nothing but the light of divine grace could have dispelled.

You well know that before the glorious light of the reformation dawned upon this land, the pure faith of the gospel was lost, amidst the rubbish of legendary tales and fabulous histories. The sacred Scriptures were perverted to countenance the most absurd and impious worship; and the great doctrines which distinguish the religion of Jesus, as a system of salvation to a fallen race of beings, had given way to every notion folly could suggest, or fancy invent.

Ignorance and superstition reigned with united and uncontroled power. And the sound doctrine which Christ and his apostles had taught, being once contaminated, there appeared to be no end to the growing corruption. One departure from the purity and simplicity of the faith, became but the prelude to another, until the whole formed a mass of absurdities scarcely credible. The adoration of relics and images; prayers addressed to departed saints and martyrs; the absolution of sins purchaseable for money; these were among the least exceptionable parts of the Romish ritual. The fire of purgatory, and

masses for the dead, together with a train of innumerable mediators, formed from any character of real or supposed superior virtue, supplied the place of that great and only Intercessor which Scripture had appointed between God and man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Such, and far worse, if it be possible, was the state of christian faith, when the great Reformers of our country, supported by the arm of Omnipotence, undertook the arduous task of removing from the gospel all that heap of superstition, which the corruption or ignorance of mankind had thrown upon it, and bringing it forth to the notice of the world, in its own lovely and engaging form of apostolic purity.

The idle and unmeaning ceremonies which folly had engrafted upon it were taken away, and the plain and simple services which were substituted in their place, were such only as might best lead the heart to the adoration of Him, whose worship, when pure, must be "in spirit and in truth."

It would be gratifying, no doubt, to trace the steps of those godly servants of the Lord, in this their great undertaking. From the interest we bear in their labours of love, we could not but enter with a proportionate pleasure into every occurrence of their history, from whose services we derive such unspeakable advantages. But it will be more to our present purpose to consider the great object for which they laboured. To see how well suited to all the important ends of redemption that form of worship is, which, through the blessing of God, we at this moment enjoy from their instrumentality.

It would ill become a minister of the Establishment to endeavour to aggrandize the church to which he belongs, by blowing the trumpet of her fame. Indeed it is unnecessary. The services of our Liturgy are confessedly allowed to comprise all the leading principles of our holy religion. The great Articles, both

in faith and doctrine, which are professed in the Church of England, are immediately taken from the scriptures themselves, and derive all their influence from that supreme authority.

And though we dare not—we wish not, indeed—to confine the purity of christian worship within the walls of our church; yet, with becoming modesty, we venture to assert, that, both in doctrine and in discipline, we admit of none superior. Every thing necessary to salvation is taught among us, and enforced with a warmth and earnestness of persuasion suitable to its infinite importance. The great points of faith and repentance; the regeneration or change of the heart; the necessity of the divine operations of the Holy Spirit on the mind of man; pardon to the sins of our nature, through the sole merits and atonement of the great Author of our religion; and his divine mediation as the only channel by which we can approach God in all the acts of worship; as these are among the first principles of the gospel of Christ, they form the leading articles of our creed, and become more eminently distinguished in all the parts of our church services.

But though the profession of these doctrines, which, from their importance, we cannot but consider as indispensable to salvation, induce our recommendation of them to our people with proportioned solicitude, yet the mildness of our church government lays no restraint upon the consciences of men. We use no rigour but persuasion; nothing compulsive but entreaty. As no man is, or can be, answerable to any but the Lord for his religious opinions, so every one in this land of freedom is permitted to enjoy his opinions unmolested. He may conform to whatever mode of worship he thinks proper, provided he do nothing subversive of the sentiments and practice of others. His separation from the

establishment becomes not in the least offensive, nor subjects him to the smallest reprehension.

The Toleration Act is a happy provision of indemnity for this purpose, by which our Dissenting brethren possess that just and undoubted right which belongs to them as christians and as men, of serving God according to their own consciences. A right, which no real friend to religion or good government would wish to break in upon; which, it must be confessed, is equal to all their wants: and if religion be the only object for which they dissent from us, no greater extension of privileges can be desired; for no laws that can be framed, (unless the national establishment itself were done away,) could admit of a greater freedom of worship than they at present possess.

Such are the doctrines and discipline of the church of England. And if the duties to which it leads were made the ruling principle of every man's conduct; if the nation at large were impelled by such motives, what happy consequences must follow! we should then behold every thing that is lovely and amiable in human nature. The golden age, which the fictions of the poets describe, would be indeed realized. According to the figurative language of the prophet, "Then would judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." (Amos v. 24.)

Together with the beauty of holiness prevailing through the land, every principle of moral goodness and virtue would influence our people. The necessity of human laws would be at once superseded; the fence of property might be removed; the ministers of justice would lose their office, nay, the very sanction of authority would be done away. For what should the sword of vengeance be unsheathed, when there remained no more offenders to receive punish-

ment? If mankind were but fully sensible of the invaluable effects arising from a strict obedience to the gospel; if that spirit of grace which is held forth to all, were made the invariable principle of regulating the conduct, what a happy nation should we be!

With what fervency ought we to pray to God to give us this spirit! That he would graciously hasten that day, that glorious day promised in scripture, when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid. When they shall no longer hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, but the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah vi. 6—9.)

But until these desirable events are accomplished, it remains necessary to add the laws of human authority, to the sanction of the divine precepts of religion. This leads to the consideration of the second branch of the argument proposed in the text; to point out to your notice the great excellence of that political form of government, which distinguishes the constitution of this country, which is in alliance with the church, and derives, from that connexion, all the energy necessary to the welfare of the people.

This is a subject which, if pursued through all the parts in which it might be exemplified, would lead far beyond the limits to which I am necessarily restricted; but would amply prove the excellence and wisdom of the British constitution.

It is only by comparative views, with the police of other states, (as I before observed,) that we can form a just and adequate conception of the importance of our own. There is, indeed, another method by which it might be estimated; and that is by its loss. A deprivation of the blessings we now, perhaps, insensibly enjoy, would feelingly convince us of their value. But God grant that we may never learn their importance by such painful instruction!

Without descending to particulars, in proof of the argument, (for the time would be insufficient for this purpose,) suffer me to ask, to what nation shall we go for examples, where the person of the people is so sacred, where the property of the subject is held so inviolable, or where the administration of the law, through all its departments, is conducted with that uniform regard to strict justice and impartiality, as under our present happy government? The right of trial by juries; the power of expressing, in the most unreserved manner, our sentiments publicly upon all subjects, civil and religious; in short, every freedom which tends not to the subversion of order, and every liberty which is not made the cloak of licentiousness, are the characteristics and the privileges of Englishmen.

I am confident that every one who hears me must be so perfectly sensible of these great truths, that it becomes altogether superfluous to point them out as the objects of your attention. You know full well, that if your person be threatened, or your property be in danger, the law is always open to afford the most ample security to the one, and to protect the other. And the administration of justice is carried on, by principles so fair and impartial, that in the decisions of it all party prejudice, friendship, resentment, and even pity itself, are laid aside, that no passion may preponderate, but the scales be held forth with an equal hand to all. The prince and the beggar here are upon a level, and the servant is as great as his master.*

* It was a beautiful idea which gave rise to those paintings in our ancient courts of judicature, where Justice is portrayed as blind, to imply that no surrounding objects are suffered to warp her judgment from a steady and inflexible adherence to truth. The thought was borrowed most probably from the divine legation of Moses, which prohibited gifts from blinding the eyes of the judges, and commanded that no countenance should be given even to a poor man in his cause. Exod. xxiii. 3, 6.—Deut. xvi. 19.

These are blessings soon mentioned, but their effects deserve a long and frequent consideration. Consult the legislatures of other countries, and see whether any thing similar can be found among them. And conceive what a happy constitution of government must that be, taken altogether, where such are the leading principles on which the whole system is founded.

It is in the freedom and security we enjoy, that the common blessings of Providence find time to operate upon the mind, in awakening all the returns from man to his Creator. The homeliest meal, and in the poorest station, is a thousand times more valuable than the most luxurious repast, if in continual danger of being snatched from us by the hand of violence and rapine. And what peace, what self-enjoyment, what disposition either to the service of God or man, can he feel, let his rank in life be what it may, who lives under the constant apprehension of danger, in a country where suspicion is sufficient to condemn, and where punishment often precedes trial?

If we want proofs of the existence of such a calamitous state, the recent example of a neighbouring kingdom, furnishes the most woeful instances of the kind. Your own ideas will best picture to you the melancholy situation of that unhappy country, which is the wretched victim of anarchy and confusion! Even at the very moment that I am speaking, how many worthy souls are experiencing in it the sad effects of the late convulsions! How many already have fallen a sacrifice to the madness of an un-governed and outrageous people! And how many more, while the ebullition of phrenzy remains, may be reserved to the same or greater trials, God only knows.

When we consider their distracted state, the heart must be callous indeed which rises not into senti-

ments of the most lively gratitude to the great Disposer of all events, who has graciously appointed our lot in this land of liberty.

We now stand as upon a peaceful shore, and behold the storm and tempest afar off. The waves which agitate that kingdom reach not to us. Their contentions and their tumults are like the noise of a distant multitude, in whose clamours we have no immediate concern. And though as christians and as men we cannot but feel the most painful sensibility for a nation, torn as it is by such intestine divisions; yet it serves, at the same time, to remind us of our own felicity, and to make our own security doubly grateful, while we sit down in peace, "every man under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree." And surely, the consciousness of this may well make every individual prize the invaluable blessings the bounty of Providence has afforded him, and study to preserve them with the most anxious solicitude. If this plant of civil and religious freedom be of English growth, and peculiar to this soil; and through the fostering care of our forefathers, has waxed to an high tree, under whose spreading branches the people for ages have been sheltered, and on whose choicest fruits they have fed; shall we suffer it now to be dug up by the roots, or cut down and destroyed? Shall we not rather watch over it, and fence it round, and guard it from the ravages of every foe? And above all, pray to God, that the sun, and the rain, and the dew of heaven, may shed their kindest influence upon it, fertilise and make it flourish more and more.

To speak without a figure. It is certainly our duty, and our highest interest, to support that happy constitution to which we belong. To make all private opinion and private consideration bend before it, that we may transmit it, free and undiminished in

all its privileges, to our children, and our children's children, to the latest generations.

If I have not in some measure anticipated what I proposed to offer in conclusion on the latter part of the text, I may safely leave it to your own reflections to draw the inference. For if *the fear of the Lord and the king* be the foundation of national happiness and prosperity; and if the laws of this land have made every provision human wisdom can devise for the security of both, the precept in the text will be the precept of common sense and common policy, with every man who is endued with the least consideration. "Meddle not with them that are given to change."—For what shall we change? What equivalent can be held forth to us by way of barter, to compensate for such mighty blessings? Shall we listen to the visionary schemes of speculative or designing men, and substitute the wild chimera of the imagination in the place of sound policy and good government? Shall we throw down this goodly fabric, which exercised the united wisdom and labour of our ancestors to rear, and begin again to build a new system of laws, which caprice or fancy, or worse motives than either, may give birth to?

Upon the supposition, indeed, that there existed any cause for an alteration; if the regular administration of justice, in any of its departments, were violated; or if the laws themselves were found incompetent to all the purposes of good government; or if the power of the state were exercised in an undue manner, to the prevention of a just and impartial course of equity: then, I confess, it would be the duty of every true patriot, to seek, by every lawful means, the removal of the evil, and restore to the constitution its original energy and vigour. But how far is this from being the case at present! Has the supreme magistrate of the nation, either in his

own person or by his servants, violated or perverted the cause of justice in any of the courts of law? Has he encroached upon the liberty of the subject, or assumed an undue authority, to the injury of the people? You know he has not. So much the reverse, indeed, that by one particular act of his reign, *in making the judges independent*, he hath abridged his own authority, and taken the most effectual method of manifesting his attention to the happiness of his subjects. And when we see united in his character all the virtues of private life, the good husband, the good father, the pious man; these great qualities are the truest pledge for our confidence in the fidelity of the supreme magistrate.

Through the grace of God, he has now reigned over these kingdoms for more than thirty years, beloved, and honoured, and revered, by all ranks and degrees of people. And now, as he advances in life, and of consequence becomes the more endeared to his subjects' affection, surely the evening of his day should be distinguished by a peaceable submission to his authority, and by proper conformity to the laws of the constitution, in the observance of which, his happiness, and his people's, are inseparably blended.

Away, then, with those mistaken notions of evils which exist not, unless in the heated imagination of a few misguided individuals. Let us cautiously avoid being led away by those false lights, which, if followed, conduct only into dangerous paths, that terminate in darkness. Let us rather adhere to the maxim of the text—"To fear the Lord, and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change."

We are certainly a nation highly favoured by the Divine goodness. The gospel of Christ hath shone upon this land with a brightness unequalled among other people. In temporal blessings also, the bounty of heaven hath been poured forth with the same

liberal hand. Even our national afflictions have carried with them the marks of tenderness and compassion. The united power of Europe, which was exerted against us during the last war, was not suffered to hurt. England emerged with triumph from that unequal contest, through the divine aid ; and is at this moment making rapid advances to the highest rank in the scale of nations. And shall we be tempted to forego these advantages, by attending to the false reasonings of mistaken men ? What a melancholy consideration would it be, if after having exerted sufficient fortitude to bear up against all our foreign enemies, England should fall a sacrifice to the clamour of her professed friends !

This would be similar to the fate of ancient Rome. The factions and vices of the citizens themselves hastened the evening of that great empire. For when she had vanquished all who openly opposed her arms, she herself became a prey to the ill conduct of her own people. And it requires not the spirit of prophecy to foresee, that if God in his providence permits the fall of this country, our own unhappy divisions and animosities will be principally instrumental in the accomplishment of the dreadful event.

That the divine mercy may avert from us this visitation, our most earnest prayers ought to be called forth. Let us unite our cordial wishes and our noblest efforts. And, oh ! that all parties would, at least in this, consolidate their strength, to defeat either the open or insidious attempts of "all that have evil will at Zion." Blessed as we are in the free and unrestrained exercise of our holy faith ; happy in our government, happy in our climate, and in every sense favoured by God, beyond every other nation under heaven.

Arise then, I beseech you, and looking up to Him,

“ by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice,” (Prov. viii. 15.) with one voice of animated devotion, let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, that all may prosper that love her ; that peace may be within our walls, and plenteousness within our palaces ; (Psalm cxxii. 67.) “ that there may be no leading into captivity ; no complaining in our streets. Happy are the people that are in such a case ; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.” (Psalm cxliv. 14, 15.)

SERMON XII.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST ESSENTIAL TO GIVE SUCCESS TO ALL MISSIONS FOR THE GOSPEL.

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY IN LONDON, AT
THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY MAGDALENE, BERMONDSEY,
ON FRIDAY, MAY 14, 1802.*

ROMANS X. 14, 15.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a Preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? 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 province of duty to which I am appointed by the service of this day, is one of the most interesting in which I have ever been engaged, during the whole period of my ministry.

When I look round, and behold this numerous congregation, and connect with it in idea the grand object proposed from the assembly; when I call to mind the promises of God, concerning the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom in the latter ages, and stand convinced, from all corresponding circumstances, that the period is hastening fast upon us; while the gracious commission of our departing Lord, given to his disciples in the very moment of his return to glory, still vibrates in the ear; and while I see here an assembly of the faithful, gathered from every part of the kingdom, as if moved by one and the same

* This Sermon is preserved in this collection of the author's works, from the same motive as was, and is, the Sermon on Sunday-schools. But the Missionary Society of 1802, in the sermons then preached, had no collections of money on those occasions. The reader will not fail to regard this intimation.

principle, for this very purpose, to follow up their Lord's command, and to send forth his everlasting gospel, from pole to pole, and "from the river even to the ends of the earth;" I feel animated in the delightful prospect: I begin to anticipate the dawn of that happy day, "whose sun shall no more go down;" and behold already in idea, "Ethiopia and Seba, with the multitude of the isles, as stretching forth their hands unto God."

And although in the recollection of the office assigned me upon this occasion, personally considered, no doubt, there are circumstances enough sufficiently discouraging to damp the ardour of my mind; yet however conscious of my own incompetency to advance any thing new or interesting, on the subject which hath now for several years called up the public attention, I cannot but be emulous to bear a part, however feeble that part may be, in so glorious a cause; neither would I, upon any consideration whatever, forego the pleasure resulting from the consciousness, that I am here engaged in the very first and best of all possible concerns; and the object for which I stand forth this day before you, is no less, under the hope of divine help, than the promotion of the glory of God, and the final happiness of man.

Indeed, in following up the great design of this day's service, I am happily anticipated, in almost every part of it, by the labours of my predecessors, in the department of preaching. They have said all that need be said, or, in fact, all that can be said, in bringing forward a subject which carries with it its own recommendation. And it were altogether inexpedient to go over the ground again which they have so successfully trodden; either in contending for the importance of sending the gospel to the unenlightened nations of the earth, or in pointing out the best methods, under the divine blessing, of per-

forming such errands of mercy. Their observations have been given in before you with so much strength of judgment, and in terms so decisive and unanswerable, that I can neither add to the mass of evidence they have brought in favour of the measure, nor to the eloquence they have displayed upon the occasion.

But, while in this advanced stage of the Missionary concern, I stand here this day under many and peculiar disadvantages from the labours of those gone before me in the office of preaching, there is one point always open for discourse connected with our subject, on which too much cannot be said, nor can it be too strongly insisted upon. I mean, *the absolute necessity that all Missionary undertakings for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom must (to render them prosperous) be under the influence and direction of the Redeemer's Spirit.* This forms the principal feature in the words which I have just read to you from the writings of the apostle Paul. And if I do not greatly err, it forms no less the principal feature in the promotion of the gospel itself. It is to this department of the divine science, and with a peculiar reference to the object of this day's meeting, that I very humbly solicit the attention of my present audience.

I am free to confess, I have my fears that this great and leading point of doctrine is not sufficiently kept in view ; neither doth it so much engage attention in the province of preaching, as its importance demands, even from some of those who preach "the truth as it is in Jesus." We are accustomed to hear, indeed, from ministers of this character, of the Spirit of God, and of the Spirit of Christ ; but the Holy Ghost, in his gracious work and character, as engaged in the economy of our redemption, is not held up to view as he ought to be, agreeably to the nature of his own "eternal power and GODHEAD." And yet a

moment's consideration is enough to convince any truly awakened mind, that as the word of God hath so decidedly shewn the mystery of our holy faith, in the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity; and as plainly assigned to each of the persons in the GOD-HEAD their peculiar and distinct part, in the scheme of redemption; we do not surely follow the teachings of those scriptures, neither are we true to our own profession in the faith of them, while speaking only of the person and operations of *two*, and the Spirit of those two, without the necessary distinction of the person and operations of the *third* also: (so we speak for the better apprehension of our subject.) And more especially, when we are so plainly taught, that the whole of our salvation, so far as it concerns its application to every individual who is made the happy partaker of it, is, from beginning to end, the work of the Holy Ghost.

I conceive a subject of this nature to be, of all others, the most highly interesting to preachers of the gospel: while it is no less intimately connected with the professed object of the *Missionary Society*. And as the apostle, in the words I have chosen to speak from, evidently points out its importance, I make no apology in calling your attention to it.

The sacred writer, in a verse or two preceding my text, had been considering the preciousness of salvation, under that sweet character of it, which must for ever endear it to every heart; namely, that it originates not in human merit, but is solely the result of divine mercy, and looks with the same friendly aspect upon all ranks and orders of men.

“There is no difference (saith the apostle) between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.” As if he had said: So extensively beneficent is the dispensation of grace by Christ Jesus, that, like the rain and the dew, and

the light of heaven, it visits with its genial influence, as well the humblest shrub as the loftiest tree: no place, nation, or climate, being excluded from its saving mercy. "For whosoever (the apostle adds) shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

But here a difficulty seems to arise in the apostle's mind, to thwart all hopes of success in the auspicious consequences of the gospel, among those nations where the gospel hath never come. "How then shall they call on him (says the apostle,) in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

There is an elegant arrangement in these words of the apostle, by which the argument itself, which he had principally in view, is made to rise, by a climax, into the most finished and unanswerable conclusion.

"How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Strictly and properly speaking, this is impossible. A belief in God's grace must precede the voice of supplication for the exercise of it. For it is a maxim of common sense, as well as the unerring doctrine of revelation, that "he who cometh to God must believe that he is." There must be, as our Lord himself beautifully expresses it, a "seeing the Son and believing on him;" that is, somewhat more than a hear-say account of his person and character must be obtained: for I cannot trust my soul with a hearty confidence, into the arms of Jesus for everlasting salvation, until I know who Jesus is, and the grounds upon which that dependence is to be placed on him. The grace of faith, therefore, must go before the exercise of prayer.

This conviction, however, only leads the apostle to another difficulty, and which he immediately subjoins to the former. If it be impossible to call upon God, until a belief in God hath been fully established in the mind, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" Here the hope of salvation seems to be fled farther from our grasp than it was before. Humanly speaking, there doth not appear the least probability that this shall ever be accomplished in nations remote from the sound of the gospel: for if an apprehension of the mind must be obtained preparatory to the conviction of the heart, unless Jesus and his gospel be made known by the natural medium of information, a belief in his salvation cannot take place. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Neither is this all; for as we advance in the argument, we only discover greater obstructions in our way. Like the man ascending the hill, higher objects rise before him, in proportion as he comes near the summit.

However indispensably necessary it be in itself, that the ignorant and uninformed nations of the earth should be brought acquainted with the precious truths of the gospel, before they can receive the smallest degree of faith, upon the hopes and promises of it; yet, while living beyond the sound of salvation, the thing is utterly impossible: "How shall they hear without a preacher?" That some one or other must speak to them on the subject is evident, or from the dictates of nature, they can never acquire it; for if they observe any form of religious adoration, they will not only worship an unknown, but an unheard of God. And too plain it is, that "the world by wisdom know not God."

Lastly, by way of clenching the argument, the apostle brings forward another mighty obstacle, and

which, however lightly considered by some, is in my apprehension, by far the most formidable of the whole. "How shall they preach (says he,) except they be sent?" For the gospel, considered as such, is a system of divine pardon and peace to a lost world. But the herald who brings the olive-branch in his hand, must be commissioned to the office. No man can properly make overtures of peace in the name of another, unless delegated by him, as his ambassador, for the purpose.

Mistake me not. There may be, and God knows there is but too much reason to fear, that many assume this office uncalled, and run unspent. But what saith God of such characters? "I have not sent them, yet they run; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied." (Jer. xxiii. 21.) And is it not to such causes must be ascribed, in many instances, the very awful events we see in our own day and generation, of the little success attending the ministry? What I am contending for, and what, indeed, I am fully authorized by the words of the apostle to insist upon, and with an emphasis proportioned to its vast importance is this: that except the preacher be actually commissioned by Him in whose name he is supposed to speak, and by whose authority he goes forth, his labour is vain—"How shall they preach except they be sent?"

But suppose we invert the medium, by which we have been looking at the subject; for evidently, this is what the apostle all along had in view in the argument, that by a well known figure in rhetoric, he might establish a fact, yet more strongly, by adopting negative propositions to form the doctrine affirmatively. Imagine, that one and the same God who hath founded salvation, commissions his heralds to go forth in the proclamation of it; and that he who gives to our poor fallen nature, redemption in the righte-

ousness of his dear Son, removes all obstructions out of the way to the reception of it, in the hearts of his people; thus qualifying the preacher to speak, while he gives the hearer grace to hear: then all those blessed consequences, which the text by implication declares necessary, will follow; when from *hearing* sinners are led to *believe*, and from *believing*, to *call* upon the name of the Lord, that they may “receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.” “Beautiful,” indeed, “will be the feet,” and we may add, sweet will be the voice of them, “who preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

The text thus analyzed, if you gather the several parts contained in it, into their separate and distinct particulars, there will be found resulting from the whole this interesting doctrine, namely, that “the glorious gospel of the ever blessed God” is in itself a system of the richest mercy, admirably adapted to the circumstances of man, for the promotion of his welfare in this life, and in that which is to come. But that the eventual happy consequences of this divine dispensation, in every instance where it is rendered effectual, must depend upon the knowledge and cordial reception of it, and that knowledge and reception can only be communicated by the power and authority in which it originated. And, lastly, that to every individual to whom it thus comes divinely commissioned, those blessed effects will invariably follow, which the great Author of it hath himself appointed to “make wise unto salvation, through the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

From this very plain and obvious sense of the apostle’s words in the text, my intention is, (as God the Holy Ghost shall be pleased to enable,) to raise a discourse which may correspond to the general analogy of Scripture on this momentous doctrine; and

at the same time answer the particular purposes of our present assembly.

The method I propose to myself, in the arrangement of my subject, is this :—I shall, in the *first* place, take a short view of the nature and tendency of our holy faith, in order to manifest that it fully comes up to the apostle's description of it, when he calls it “the gospel of peace, and glad tidings of good things.”

I shall then go on to consider, in the *second* place, somewhat more particularly, as the principal feature in the apostle's words, and which is to form the principal feature in my Sermon; the absolute necessity of the Spirit's work, both on them that preach and them that hear this gospel of salvation; for the apostle lays the greatest stress on these points, that there must be a concurrence of both causes to render the whole effectual: “How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?”

When I have performed these distinct services, and have gone over both branches of the subject, a very short train of observation will be sufficient, under the *third* division of my discourse, to demonstrate, that in every instance, where the great Head of his church and people is pleased to send his holy word, we have the fullest confidence to hope, that he will give “the hearing ear and the seeing eye, the understanding and believing heart,” for the reception of it; that as an apostle speaks, from being led “to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, in believing they may have life in his name.”

I only detain you one moment, before I enter upon the investigation of each of the particulars I have proposed, to beg an interest in your prayers, that so much divine teaching may accompany what I have to say, that an experimental proof of the doctrine itself may be witnessed in our present assembly. May God

the Holy Ghost, to whose province it peculiarly belongs to send forth preachers, and to open the hearts of hearers ; may he be so graciously with us in our present ordinance, that “ our gospel may come to you, not in word only, but in power, and in much assurance of faith.”

First, then, according to my proposal, I am to take a short view of the nature and tendency of our holy faith, in order to manifest that it fully comes up to the apostle’s description of it, when he calls it “ the gospel of peace, and glad tidings of good things.”

It is probable that this part of my sermon may be considered, by some, as a superfluous service, in the opening on the nineteenth century, to bring forward an encomium on the gospel, by way of proving its beneficial consequences on the human mind. And I would to God, if it were his blessed will, that it had been altogether inexpedient. But you need not, I am sure, be told, that the reverse is the real state of the case. Perhaps there never was a period, take it altogether, since the reformation, in which it became equally necessary as at present, to dwell frequently, or to insist with energy, on the pure and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel.

The very profession of christianity is, with multitudes, no other than a name ; and the very reason for which they are called christians is, from having been born under a christian meridian. And what forms a contradiction in terms, but yet, in reality, is among the prominent points in the fashionable credit of the day, is, that while many of this description pride themselves in their principles of morality, and affect to be very zealous advocates for all virtuous conduct, they wish to detach *both* from their necessary dependence upon the gospel ; a conduct this as weak as it is ungenerous. For in the very moment such partizans of modern philosophy treat the dis-

tinguishing doctrines of our holy faith with contempt, as matters merely speculative and uninteresting, it is, in fact, to that very faith they are indebted for all they know of true and genuine morality.

And what hath the gospel done to merit such ungenerous treatment from mankind? If in insisting upon its peculiar and distinguishing principles, by which it comes recommended to the necessities of the human state, it were justly impeachable with tolerating licentiousness, or countenancing immorality; then, in this case, it is confessed there would be a foundation for the hue and cry which infidelity is continually raising, to run down the more important doctrines of the gospel. But you know full well, and those of our enemies who blow the loudest blast of the horn of contention know also, that while the sweetest notes of the gospel, on which all the true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ love to dwell, are those which tell us that "we have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" we no less bless him, that "that grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth us," and through the constraining influence of the Holy Ghost, no less enableth us, "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

And had I the time, or would your patience permit, I might enter upon a large field of discourse, in gathering together the evidences of the gospel, in confirmation of what I say. For nothing, I am persuaded, within the limits of language, can open a more copious subject for the display of the most lively eloquence, and the calling up all the animation of the human heart. But my object will be more to compress than to amplify. All I wish, and particularly upon the present occasion is, to rescue the gospel from the unjust reproaches of its enemies, by

representing its real loveliness of character, and by stating it in its own plain and unadorned principles ; to demonstrate thereby its vast importance in promoting the best interests of man, both as it respects his situation in this life, and in that which is to come. And I the rather confine myself to this representation of it, because it is under this express feature of character the apostle himself hath considered it in the text, and which, indeed, makes the best appeal to every heart, to forward its beneficent properties, by the dispersion of it through the earth. For here indeed it is, in the fullest sense of the word, “ glad tidings of good things.” And I shall but barely do this when I say, that in its merciful accommodation to the circumstances of mankind, there is nothing left unsaid, nothing left unfinished, nothing left undiscovered, for enlightening, and by consequence, improving the human mind. But as far as is necessary to be known, or perhaps I might add, as far as the understanding is capable of receiving information or improvement, in the present unripe state of our faculties, every thing is taught in the gospel, which through the Spirit’s application to the heart, can form our nature for comfort here and happiness hereafter.

In proof of this, consider man in that state of unrenewed nature in which the text takes up the subject, in first beholding him, (and which, it should be observed, pre-supposes what all the corresponding affections of the human heart, when unbiassed by prejudice and false education, loudly confirm ;) as he is in himself, and in all his surrounding circumstances, a child of sin, of ignorance, and of sorrow. His introduction into the world is in a state of helplessness and indigence : and considered as to the faculties of his mind, though formed with a capacity of receiving knowledge when imparted to him, yet, without this

information, he never can acquire a clear apprehension of those important truths which make either for his present or future welfare.

He is altogether ignorant of himself, and of the purposes for which he is brought into this state of being. He is equally so respecting any apprehension of divine things. He knows nothing either of the being, or of the providence of God, or of those events which belong to his government. He is conscious, however faint the voice from within speaks, that there is an essential difference between right and wrong, between good and evil. For, as an apostle observes, "the Gentiles, who have not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew that the work of the law is written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another." But, while conscious of this difference, he finds a stronger propensity to evil than to good. And while aware, that in the various departments of his conduct all is not right; and that there may be, and very probably there will be, a day of account and of retribution; he feels the power in himself too feeble at times to restrain evil, and the bias too weak to incline to what is good.

But this is not the whole portrait of human infelicity. The drapery requires yet stronger colouring. Added to the distresses which, in defiance of all attempts to suppress, will not unfrequently arise, with great violence in the mind, from the forebodings of guilt; he finds a multitude of sorrows, both within and without, from other sources, springing up to trouble him. He sees and feels, though unable to explain how, or from what cause they come, that "man is born," as naturally "to trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

And even in his brightest hours, and in the enjoyment of his most innocent comforts, death continually

hovers over all. And in the many bereaving providences which a life of any continuance is called to the exercise of, so very frail and so very feeble are all the props, which we sometimes in the pleasantry of the moment, venture to call happiness, that they are breaking down and giving way every hour.

And what, if possible, is worse than all, when the hour of a man's own dissolution is at hand, and the stroke appears inevitable, the anxiety is then awakened, if the mind feel at all, in the dreadful uncertainty of what is beyond the grave; and the soul, immortal as it is in itself, longing for a future life, is yet awfully alarmed at what that life may be; conscious of much guilt, and yet unconscious of any means of atonement. Gracious God! I tremble at the picture which I have drawn of a state so truly calamitous, and which can only be justly conceived by what the sacred writer, in his strong figurative language, calls "the land of darkness, as darkness itself, where even the light is darkness."

It is impossible for the mind to form adequate conceptions of the real misery of such a state, because in this happy region of light and knowledge, there are none so totally destitute of all information on those interesting points, as to be altogether void of some little influence from the knowledge of them. We imbibe, from the very cradle, a kind of historical understanding, which serves at least to amuse, and to afford occasional circumstances of hope. But to see the full effects of misery in the benighted mind, let your imagination take wing, and fly across the Atlantic. Fancy that you are landed on any one of those dark islands, which our Society hath in view in sending the gospel to its inhabitants; where the name of Jesus hath never been heard, nor his gospel known. Figure to yourself some poor distressed creature, pining away under the sorrows of our nature; (for

miserly is the same in every climate,) and while groaning under anguish of spirit from any of the evils of this life, or from the secret apprehension of greater evils which may follow in the world to come, what, think you, would be his feelings, were you to communicate to him what you and I know concerning those precious truths of our most holy faith? What a volume of information would be at once opened to his mind, when you unfolded before him those rich discoveries which the blessed gospel of Jesus affords for softening the evils of this life, and removing all the apprehensions of another.

I cannot stay to particularize, for in this case the subject would be endless ; and to enumerate all that the gospel saith, either in a way of instruction or comfort, would be little short of rehearsing the whole Bible. But let your imagination run through the subject of what might be said, (for I confess my power of description fails,) and then conceive what day-light would pour in upon the soul, when you related to a poor creature of this description what you could tell him of the mercy of God the Father ; of the person, work, and relations of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and of all those sweet and interesting particulars, which are continually manifesting themselves in the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost ! How would the tear dry up, and the countenance brighten at the relation of those glorious discoveries which faith hath made concerning the events of this preliminary state, and the glory which is to follow ! What shall I call this, what can any man call it, but what an apostle in the text hath done, “ the gospel of peace, and glad tidings of good things ? ”

But, perhaps, it may be said, (for indeed it hath again and again been said,) that admitting this to be very true respecting the gospel itself, yet certain it is, from whatever cause it comes, that the conduct of

multitudes of its professors doth not illustrate its importance in society. However in *theory* it appears highly calculated to induce such beneficial consequences, in *practice* its effects are not answerable. With many it is merely a speculative knowledge, floating in the imagination, but descending not to the regeneration of the heart. And in the great mass of mankind, among nations professing the eternal truths of the gospel, it is no more than the mere name. Persons, therefore, of this complexion, who form their judgment of the principles of the gospel by the lives of many of the professors of it, make this the ground of objection to its utility; and argue against the expediency of its being further propagated.

And to be sure, if the religion of the Lord Jesus was to be measured by this standard, in its effects on the minds of thousands who take shelter under its wing, but have never felt, (if I may be allowed the figure,) the life-giving power of its incubation, the warmest advocate for the promotion of christianity would be chilled in all his advances to establish it.

Perhaps the enemy of the gospel would go further in the argument, and call upon us to reverse our imagined flight across the Atlantic, and in the place of it to suppose, that some unenlightened heathen from those regions of darkness were to visit this island, and drop down in the midst of one of the public streets of this great city. He would say, 'Let the uninformed stranger be conducted about from place to place, and take a leisurely and distinct survey of that open and avowed profaneness and ungodliness which is every where manifested toward God; and that great mass of fraud, treachery, and dissimulation, which is continually breaking forth in ten thousand instances between man and man. And then let this poor foreigner be told, after he hath seen enough to form his opinion of the characters

before him, that these are among the professors of the religion of Jesus; and that this land, of all others, is that which is said to be under the meridian light of christianity'—what would be his ideas?

I pause;—I feel the full force of the argument, and dare not attempt to confute what is in itself unanswerable.

But while I admit all that will be demanded on the ground of this question, and blush in the idea that there ever should exist such palpable inconsistencies between profession and practice, I must as firmly demand, whether these things are justly chargeable on the gospel itself? In the circumstances of common life we never conclude a principle bad from the ill use, or the ill application the worthless make of it. And wherefore any man should venture to draw conclusions unfavourable to the pure and holy religion of the Lord Jesus, because many have dared “to name the name of Christ, and yet have not departed from iniquity,” is hard to say. If there had been a single authority to be found in the New Testament to give any countenance to such conduct, the inference might have been just. But you know the reverse of this to be the real state of the case. The universal precept is this, “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, or if there be any praise, think of these things.”

Allow me then only to assume, what I hope no candid person is disposed to deny, that the gospel itself stands free and unimpeached from these perversions: and I am ready to meet the objection in all its force; for it only proves, what above all things I am very anxious should be proved, by way of introduction to what I proposed under the *second* branch of my dis-

course, that somewhat more than head knowledge is necessary, in order to produce the desired effects of the gospel: and I have accomplished all that I desired or intended from the *first* branch of my sermon. Be it allowed, then, that the gospel itself is a rich system of mercy, admirably adapted to the state and circumstances of mankind: but to give it energy in the heart, it requires somewhat more than any outward operation.

I proceed now to the *second* particular proposed, namely, to shew herefrom the absolute necessity of the work of God the Holy Ghost in the heart, both in them that preach and in them that hear the gospel of salvation, in order to produce its eventual happy consequences. “How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?”

In the prosecution of this part of my subject, it will be necessary, for the better apprehension of it, to observe, that what the apostle so strongly recommends, by way of question, is among the most important points of the gospel. For when he demands, “How can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach except they be sent?” he only adopts a bolder figure of speech, to insist upon the necessity of it. It is as much as to say, every mission of the gospel, in order to insure success, must be divinely appointed. And, in my poor apprehension, it is, I confess, an object of the first magnitude in the scheme of faith, and never to be lost sight of, that, unless God the Spirit, to whose province in the dispensation of grace, this peculiarly belongs—unless He sends forth the preacher and blesses the hearer, (to use the nervous language of the prophet,) “the one sows to the wind, and the other to the whirlwind.”

To trace the sacred footsteps of God in this great work of the divine economy, as instanced in our sal-

vation, so as to discover, in every minute particular, the direct and express act of each of the persons of the GODHEAD, according to the several acts described in scripture, as their separate and distinct operations ; this is reserved, no doubt, for the enjoyment of the faithful, when they shall have come to the perfection of their being in a future state, and all their intellectual faculties are ripened into glory. Yet, to mark the outlines of this dispensation of mercy, in beholding the gracious advances made towards the highly-favoured objects of divine love, in the several manifestations of the GODHEAD, this forms the suitable employment of the present life, and with these we are furnished in scripture, so as to form the clearest conceptions.

As in our *creation* the glorious work is said to have occupied the joint agency of the sacred Three, so in *redemption* all the persons are represented as being jointly engaged in the work, and alike interested in the glory and praise resulting from it. And it is worthy your closest attention, that the unerring scriptures of truth, as if to afford somewhat for the mind to lean upon in its better apprehension of these sublime parts of the doctrine of faith, have condescended to point out some more peculiar and distinct operations of each, by way of ascertaining certain particularities of character, in which the manifestation of each might be more distinctly observed. Thus, to God the Father is peculiarly ascribed, in the glorious work of redemption, the act of choosing, constituting, and appointing, the Lord Jesus Christ as the great covenant head of his people, and his people in him. God the Son is peculiarly spoken of, as having accomplished redemption by his blood and righteousness, and wrought every thing essential to salvation in his person and work. And to God the Holy Ghost belongs the effectual application of all the mercies of

the covenant, in the instance of every individual who is made the happy partaker of them, from beginning to end. And hence *baptism* is commanded by the Lord himself, to be administered in the joint name, and, consequently, the persons so baptized are dedicated to the joint glory and service of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Hence the faithful are *blessed* in the same form, and the favour of each is distinctly prayed for, when, by way of benediction is desired, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." Thus, while sufficient manifestations are made of the part which each condescends to take in the economy of redemption, at the same time the gracious acts of one are so much the acts of the other, that in the same moment we contemplate each person as the glorious object of our love and reverence; and thus the unity of the divine nature is never for a moment lost sight of, nor in danger of being forgotten. Though distinct acts, yet jointly operating; and though sufficiently detached to mark the peculiar agency of one from the other, yet all harmonising together in the accomplishment of one and the same purpose, in the covenant of grace. Like the beautiful specific, yet undivided colours of the rainbow, which, though in themselves perfectly distinguishable from each other, so as to be clearly seen and defined, and affording every thing desirable in order to ascertain the diversity of colours; yet at the same time they are so intimately blended and interwoven, that it is impossible, with the nicest eye, to discover where the one begins or the other ends.

I have thought it necessary, for the better apprehension of the subject, to introduce the important doctrine, which is to form the *second* branch of my sermon, of the Spirit's work, with just sketching the outlines of his divine agency in general. That par-

ticular part of it connected with the sending forth Missionaries to preach the gospel, and which is peculiarly the work of God the Holy Ghost, will herefrom more fully appear.

That God the Spirit hath exercised a peculiar and distinct work, in the dispensation of grace over the church of the Lord Jesus, from the very first dawn of revelation, cannot be the subject of question. I should think it, indeed, an impeachment of the understanding of the audience whom I have now the happiness of addressing, were I to suppose it necessary to bring forward evidences in confirmation of so plain a truth. The subject itself, I confess, is among the most interesting that can possibly engage attention; and it would form, no doubt, the most pleasing, as well as the most profitable of all studies, to search from the beginning, "the goings forth of Him" whom the apostle calls "The Spirit of Christ," and which he tells us was in the minds of the fathers, "when testifying before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow." But having elsewhere * very largely dwelt on these points, in separate and distinct discourses, it will be sufficient for my present purpose to advert only to such evidences, in proof of the Holy Ghost's agency in the church, as occur in the New Testament only, and to but a small part of those.

In that memorable conference which the Redeemer held with his apostles the evening before his sufferings and death, the principal topic on which he dwelt was, concerning the person and character of the Eternal Spirit.

He taught them, in the plainest terms, the several manifestations by which the Spirit should reveal himself to their hearts, and by which they should dis-

* See my Sermons on the GODHEAD and Operations of the Holy Ghost.

cover his gracious presence and operations. That it was his peculiar work "to take of his, and shew them unto his disciples." That "he should guide them into all truth." That "he should bring all things to ⁵their remembrance whatsoever he had taught them." And, in short, so essentially necessary was the work of his grace in their hearts, that the whole efficiency of the Redeemer's merits to the necessities of his people, could only result from his divine agency.

And in a more particular manner, in reference to the work of the ministry, Christ absolutely restrained the exercise of the commission he had given them, "to go forth into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," until the descent of the Holy Ghost. They were commanded to "*tarry* in the city of Jerusalem, until that they were endowed with power from on high." And then they were "to be witnesses unto Jesus, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." And hence, we are told, in conformity to this, upon every occasion, "they went forth and preached, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following."

Now, if with this leading trait in view, you consult the word of God for evidences in proof of it, you will find that in all the subsequent appointments to the ministry, the ordination of the Holy Ghost was considered as the sole authority, by which the commission of the preachers became valid.

In the appointment of a successor to the office of the traitor Judas, the apostles ventured not to give their voices, until by prayer they had implored direction from God, to know whom he had chosen. And that this appointment originated peculiarly in God the Spirit, seems decidedly proved from a very memorable circumstance of his gracious interposition upon this occasion.

In the church at Antioch, as the disciples ministered unto the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." And after this ordination we are told, "they dismissed them to the work, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost."

And as the Lord the Spirit commissioned to the ministry, so we find also the same Lord restrained from it. For when Paul and Timothy assayed to go into Bythinia, it is expressly said, that "the Spirit suffered them not." And indeed, so much did the apostles wait for his direction and influence upon all occasions, in the circuit of their preaching, that from a divine vision of the night, which Paul had respecting Macedon, they drew this conclusion, that "the Lord had assuredly called them to preach the gospel there;" and on the other hand we are told, (and perhaps from similar intimation,) that "they were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia."

In short, so truly conscious were the apostles, in all their ministration, of acting under the immediate authority and influence of the Holy Ghost, that Paul solemnly thanks God, upon various occasions, for the whole success of his ministry. "For this cause, (says he to the church of the Thessalonians,) thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe. Our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost."

And as the success of the preacher's labours wholly depends upon his being called to the work, and sent forth by the Spirit's immediate direction; so, no less, to render it effectual to the hearer, the same Almighty Power must dispose the heart to receive "the truth in the love of it."

A beautiful proof of this we have, in point, in the instance of Paul's preaching. He had been called over to Macedon in an extraordinary way, by the ministry of a vision, to preach the gospel. And the apostle himself was perfectly satisfied in his own mind, that the direction was from above. But yet, as if to shew the church, that unless the same Lord, who sends the preacher, opens the heart of the hearer to the cordial reception of the truth, it cannot be effectual, we are expressly told that, in the instance of a poor woman called Lydia, it was "the Lord who opened her heart, so that she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul." And this serves to explain to us the reasons of those questions which we meet with directed to the churches, and which, from their frequency, seem to have been very common. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you? If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

I have been more particular in the selection of authorities on this grand point of the gospel than I otherwise should have been; not because it is not one of the plainest truths of the Bible, but because it is so often thrown into the back ground of preaching: and I feel extremely anxious that the doctrine should be brought forward, and placed on its own plain and incontestible principles. We live in a very awful day. And there are not only *hearers*, of whom it may be truly said, like the church of Ephesus, they have not so much as heard "whether there be any Holy Ghost;" but there are *preachers* (how shall I speak it?) who are so blind to all that concerns his divine influences, as to assert the suspension of his operation since the days of the apostles. As if the immediate followers of our Lord needed his aid, and the subsequent periods of the church were competent without

it!—as if the world had been ripening in grace, and the Spirit had withdrawn, because mankind were holy enough without it!—as if God the Holy Ghost felt no longer concern for the church of the Lord Jesus, and was become, therefore, a spectator inattentive to her best interests!

Holy and Eternal Spirit! is it not to be ascribed to the unceasing influences of thy grace, in that patience and long-suffering which thou hast exercised in thy church, that those lips have not been closed in everlasting silence, which have dared to treat thy person and operations with contempt! For my part, may “my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,” when I cease to speak of thee and thy divine teachings, as the sole cause from whence we derive all our knowledge of the Father’s love, or the Saviour’s grace! And may it be my portion, whatever reproaches it brings upon me from a carnal and ungodly world, uniformly to assert, agreeably to thy divine teachings, that in the instance of every individual believer, who is the object of the Father’s everlasting love, and the Saviour’s redeeming grace, that to thee he owes the saving application of both, and is thereby made “willing in the day of thy power.”

Forgive me, my reverend brethren, if I express myself on a subject of this most interesting nature with more than ordinary warmth. There is but one heart that I have a right to be jealous over in this numerous assembly: and of that one I know enough to know, that it needs the perpetual influences of the Holy Ghost to restrain, to teach, and to regulate it. But I know too well, at the same time, the deceitfulness of the human heart at large, not to be convinced, that the matter is of so general a nature, as to demand the earnest examination of all. An opportunity like the present will probably never again be afforded me on this side the grave. I dare not, there-

fore, be unfaithful. I presume not to dictate. But I venture to suggest the subject of inquiry to your most serious consideration. And it will be a blessed appropriation of what I have said, if the very calling up your attention to it, should lead every minister home with more awakened sentiments than when he came here, to consider the infinite importance of the thing itself, in being commissioned to the work, in every renewed instance of our ministry, by the Holy Ghost.

Are we not all missionaries to our respective congregations? Do we not know, that unless sent forth by the Holy Ghost we shall "labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought?" Are we not here to consider the important object of sending Missionaries to foreign parts? and shall we not be solicitous to know that we ourselves are sent of God?

I may, for aught I know, be singular; but I do not hesitate to say, that, to the want of this divine commission it must be ascribed (what otherwise would appear paradoxical, and is a fact as extraordinary as it is common) that there are men who both write and preach, and some of them apparently with earnestness, on all the great points of the gospel, while by their conduct in persecuting the real professors of vital godliness, they plainly prove that they have "no part nor lot in the matter." John the apostle strikingly defines their character. "They went out, (he saith,) from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us."

I consider them only as so many barristers, whom this world's interest hath retained on the side of revelation; and who, but for the profit, would as readily have come forth on the opposite side of the question. And is it not (I ask the question with great awfulness) is it not such our Lord himself had in view, when he

said, "Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them I never knew you, depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

I proposed to be but short, under the third division of my discourse, and shall be much more so than I originally intended, from having so much trespassed under the foregoing particulars. And, indeed, I have anticipated all that I designed to say, under this branch of my subject, in the establishment of the doctrine itself, and which once established, every hearer must be competent to discover the evident conclusion which arises out of it. For let it be supposed only, that God is the teacher, and that both minister and people are brought under his divine influence, then all the arrows in the gospel quiver, being directed by his unerring hand, will come with a convincing power, and that precious effect Paul speaks of, will be felt in every assembly: "the secrets of the awakened heart will be made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, the hearer will worship God, and report, that God is in that word of a truth."

We have a striking instance, related in history, by Ruffinus, of this divine operation, which took place at the Council of Nice. A godly man, of no great learning, became an instrument, in the hand of God, of converting a learned philosopher, on whom the bishop's arguments had had no weight. The converted Christian gave this apology for himself. 'Whilst you reasoned with me, (said he,) against words, I opposed words; and what was spoken, I overthrew by the art of speaking: but when, instead of words, power came out of the mouth of the speaker, words could no longer withstand truth, nor man resist the power of God.'

From this induction of particulars, the doctrine of the text is fully proved, and established. How important soever salvation by Jesus Christ be to the world at large, men cannot hear without a preacher, neither can they preach except they be sent. But when God the Spirit commissions the one to speak, and enables the other to hear, then will be “beautiful the feet of them who preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.”

I shall not have fully answered the purpose for which I stand up before you this day, if so much of this teaching has not accompanied my feeble ministry, as to carry conviction to every heart, both of the infinite importance of missionary undertakings themselves, for the spread of the gospel, and of directing your minds to seek the Spirit’s influence, as the only possible means to render those undertakings successful.

If the gospel of Christ be what the text declares it to be, and what I have endeavoured imperfectly to prove, “the gospel of peace, and glad tidings of good things;” and if in its whole tendency and design, it be so admirably adapted for advancing the temporal and eternal happiness of mankind; then it will follow, that to promote its extension through the earth, must form the noblest act of human benevolence.

And do not forget, that the same gospel which points to the Spirit’s work, as the sole cause of glorifying the Lord Jesus, naturally implies, that God carries on his designs by human instrumentality. If ministers cannot successfully preach, except they be sent, neither can churches hear without a preacher. So that, while an entire dependence is founded on the power of God, the province of man is as clearly defined. Hence, therefore, there is a call upon every heart, to co-operate in so glorious a design, whenever a mission is undertaken for the promotion of chris-

tian knowledge. And I cannot suffer myself to suppose that there is a single person present, whom the grace of God hath inclined to attend our services this day, that can need the least stimulus to a duty of this nature. Who indeed can look over a vast region "sitting in darkness, and the shadow of death," unaffected, unfeeling, unconcerned!

But while these considerations have a general claim on every mind, there are some with whom they plead with more resistless eloquence. You, who have known what it is to be brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, who have felt the misery of the human state by nature, and have tasted that the Lord is gracious: what shall I say? You, to whom the Lord Jesus is at this moment precious, in his person, work, and character, and in all the fulness and suitableness of his salvation: is it not the earnest desire of your soul, that the mercy you have found should be extended to others? Are you drinking of that river of life, "the streams of which make glad the city of God:" and do you not wish, that your neighbour's parched ground may be refreshed also? Nay, independent of all other considerations, if Jesus be dear to you, is it not the first object of your soul, that his name may be great, and his praise may be sung, from "the rising to the setting of the sun;" and that the trophies of his grace may correspond to the greatness of his salvation?

In calling upon you for your exertions in promoting the divine glory through the earth, I would desire to point to a department of usefulness, in which the poorest of the Lord's faithful people will find ample scope for exercise. It may be, that many a gracious soul is circumscribed, by the scantiness of his circumstances, from putting forth his helping hand in acts of liberality equal to their wishes; yet such can, and I hope do serve the cause of Jesus by their sup-

plications at the mercy-seat. And if you feel interested in those sacred moments, when drawing nigh a throne of grace, for the salvation of the dark and benighted parts of the earth; remind God of his promises, and plead with him for the fulfilment of that Scripture, in which he hath said, "He will give the heathen to his Son for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession!" Tell God the Father what the Lord Jesus Christ hath done and wrought. Tell him of his own faithfulness and truth to a thousand generations. Plead with him, (for he hath said that "for these things will he be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;") plead with him for his own glory, for his own name's sake, and by every argument which arises out of the state of man. Implore the Father of mercies, and God of all grace, in behalf of a miserable, wretched, sinful, dying world. And let the animated resolution of the prophet be your resolve; "for Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake will I not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

And, while a desire for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom through the earth thus occupies your most awakened concern, and calls forth the voice of prayer and supplication, it will not be deemed, I hope, a digression from the main subject of my discourse, if I intreat an interest in your prayers for the *Missionaries* who are at home. There are dark villages and remote corners of our own country, in which, respecting gospel light, the inhabitants sit as "in the region of the shadow of death." Some few persons, commiserating their situation, have stepped forth to their relief, and by means of little tracts, and other labours, have endeavoured to diffuse the knowledge of the Lord Jesus and his gospel among them. Much good hath already been done by this means,

and more remains yet to be accomplished. And as every man hath his sphere of usefulness in the little circle where he moves, however small and contracted it may be, suffer me to hope that the bare mention of the thing itself will induce every one that hears me, both to promote the extension of divine knowledge by his prayers, and by the circulation of those religious books which, under grace, are so admirably calculated for this purpose.

But chiefly you, who are called "the priests of the Lord; whom men call the ministers of our God;" with what an accumulation of argument are you called upon to follow up all these, and every other possible method of forwarding the interests of your God and Saviour through the earth. It would ill become me to point out the numberless methods by which, under the divine blessing, this great object may be accomplished. But still keeping in view the leading design of my sermon, I do venture to suggest, that both in our endeavours to extend the knowledge of the Lord abroad, and in our respective congregations at home, if we are anxious to be brought under the Spirit's leadings and influences, we shall certainly adopt the most effectual means to render our labours successful. The imagination can hardly form suitable ideas of the blessed consequences which may be supposed to follow, when both ministers and people are brought under the rich anointings of God the Holy Ghost. For while the one is thus enabled with meekness "to receive the engrafted word, which is able to save their souls," the other may, with humble confidence, be led to hope, that his going in and out among the people will be "in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ."

And allow me yet further to observe, (and which is by no means the least interesting part of my subject,) that while the congregations of the faithful, as

well ministers as people, are thus perpetually taught to keep in view the necessity of the Spirit's work in every step that is taken in the path of salvation, we remove at once thereby all those stumbling blocks out of the way, which are thrown up on the one hand by the *supposed free-will* of human ability; and on the other hand by the *assumed freedom* of those who would turn "the grace of our God into lasciviousness." There can be no license given to the errors of either, while the advocate for *free agency* is unceasingly reminded, that it must be "God that worketh in him, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure:" and the man of licentiousness is solemnly taught that they only "who are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God." For if "they live after the flesh, they shall die; but if, through the Spirit, they mortify the deeds of the body, they shall live."

Finally, brethren, may God the Spirit, of whom I have presumed to speak, graciously bless all the exertions which his wisdom shall be pleased to direct for the extension of the Redeemer's name and glory through the earth. One circumstance connected with our subject is particularly striking, of which I would beg to leave the full impression upon your minds. In your endeavours to promote the kingdom of Jesus, you have the pleasing thought of being engaged, not only in the best of causes, but in one which must ultimately be successful. Here are no *peradventures*, nothing is *precarious* or uncertain. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear."

Great God! We wait the fulfilment of thy blessed promises! We long for the dawn of the latter-day

glory! Hasten, in thine own appointed time, the accomplishment of it; when a "little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation;" when at "the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Amen.

SERMON XIII.

CORPUS CHRISTI.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON, PREACHED IN CHARLES CHURCH,
PLYMOUTH, LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 2, 1814, BEFORE
THE CORPUS CHRISTI SOCIETY.

THE province of duty to which I am called by the service of the day, being to address the Members of the CORPUS CHRISTI which are present, on the subject of their Society, I have been led to conceive, that the most suited to the occasion will be to direct your attention to the contemplation of Him who is the glorious head of the whole CORPUS CHRISTI, both in heaven and earth: and among the many sweet portions which the word of God furnisheth for this purpose, there is one which I would desire more especially to bring before you, as the foundation of my Sermon. I pray God the Holy Ghost to unfold and apply all the blessed contents of it to your hearts and mine. If you will open your Bibles, you will find the portion to which I refer,

EPHESIANS i. 22, 23.

—*And gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.*

EVERY view of Jesus is precious; but there are some views of him which are eminently so, and when those views are opened and explained to the minds of his people by God the Holy Ghost, they have a gracious tendency to endear Christ to the heart, and to form him in the heart, “the hope of glory.”

It is very blessed thus to learn, under that Almighty Teacher, what Christ *is in himself*; and what *he is*, and *hath been*, and *will be for ever*, to his people; what he did for his redeemed “before all worlds,” when, at the call of God the Father, he stood up their covenant-head and surety; what he did for them *in time*, when he died for their sins; what he is doing

for them *now in heaven*, in the exercise of his unchanging priesthood ; and what he will do for them *to all eternity*, when he shall come to gather his whole church together in one, that “where he is, there they shall be also.” These, and the like animating subjects, and which God the Holy Ghost, under one form or other, is continually bringing before the church, concerning the person and glories of her Lord, open such a source of holy delight, as leave at an infinite distance every other consideration, and fill the heart of the redeemed with “a joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

In this portion of the word of God, which I have just read to you as the proposed foundation of my present Sermon, we find the Holy Ghost, by the ministry of his servant the apostle, engaged in bringing forward to the view of the church the person of the Lord Jesus, under the endearing character of the Head of his body the church.

The apostle had opened the chapter with laying down as a principle (what all the other parts of scripture confirm) that the source and fountain of all spiritual life is *in Christ* ; that God the Father had “chosen the church in Him before the foundation of the world,” to a state of “holiness, and to be without blame before him in love ;” and now, under the same full impression, the apostle closeth the chapter, in summing up the subject with the description of Christ’s person and offices, as the glorious Head of his body the church : “And gave him (saith the apostle) to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Every word within the bosom of this precious scripture is full of the highest importance, and would amply recompense the labour of a separate and distinct attention. But the limits of a sermon oblige me to compress within a narrower compass, what I

wish to propose to you from the text itself, and which I shall endeavour to bring under a few leading particulars.

In the accomplishment of this purpose, my *first* design (as the Lord shall be pleased to enable me) will be directed to shew you the scriptural doctrine of that glorious truth, which is expressed in the opening of the words of the text—"And gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body."

From the establishment of this foundation, we shall rise to the consideration of what may be called the *second* grand division of the text; namely, of *the church* which is here said to be Christ's body, and over which Christ is the constituted head—"The church, which is his body."

I shall then have a *third* branch of discourse to bring before you, when I have finished the former services, and which will be to call upon you to attend to some few outlines (and the merest outlines they can only be) concerning his person and offices in this headship of character, of whom it is said, and without a figure—"the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

But, before I enter upon the service which (under the hope of strength from the Lord) I have proposed to myself to perform before you this day, I would entreat the Corpus Christi which are present to do, as the apostle did for the church, and that we may all bend our knees together before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he may "give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, ac-

ording to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all!"

My first proposal is to shew you the scriptural doctrine of that glorious truth with which the text opens—"And gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body."

Now, the whole tenor of Revelation is express to the same point as the text,—Christ is *given* to his church and people. This forms one of the grand and leading principles of our most holy faith; for all that Christ hath, and is, in his divine office and character as Mediator (God and Man in one person), is *given*. Yea, Jesus himself bears testimony to the same: "God so loved the world (said our Lord), that he *gave* his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.)

And let me observe to you by the way, that this doctrine forms a most blessed encouragement to the faith of the believer. For when at any time Jesus comes home to the affections of his people under some sweet office or relation, to view the hand of God the Father in the appointment, makes the whole doubly blessed. Every child of God feels the importance of such a consciousness in the heart, that God's Christ is our Christ, and God's chosen our chosen.

And with respect to the gifted headship and authority of Christ, this becomes so far from lessening

the personal dignity and glory of the Lord Jesus, that it tends the more to confirm it. Had he not been God, he could not have been competent to the exercise of that headship over all things, which the text expresseth, and which, from the very manner of expression, "over all things," must include universal, unlimited, everlasting, monarchy; taking in the whole creation of God.

And for the better apprehension of the scriptural sense of this doctrine, it should be remembered, that all this is spoken of Christ expressly in relation to this headship to his church. For, independent of this, the Son of God, as God, possesseth, in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost, all the eternal and distinguishing attributes which constitute Jehovah; being, in his original essence and nature, "One with the Father, over all, God blessed for ever, Amen." Hence, in respect to his own eternal power and GODHEAD, nothing can be said to be *given* him; for all are his, from everlasting to everlasting.

But if the Son of God will condescend, for the vast purposes included in the act, to assume the nature of man, (as to our infinite joy, and the unspeakable praise of the riches of his grace, he hath condescended,) and in the union of that nature with the GODHEAD, to become the servant of Jehovah, *then* truly and properly may it be said, that all things relating to his headship, as Mediator, are *given* to him. And, it is in this sense, that every thing which, in the Scriptures of God, is said to be *given* to the Lord Jesus Christ, is meant. Very sweetly and blessedly to this purpose, Jesus expressed himself in his prayer to his Father, when he said, "Father! the hour is come! glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him!"

So much with respect to the headship of Christ over his body the church, as the *gift* of the Father.

But we must not stop here. In the contemplation of Christ as the head of his body, the subject would be unfinished were we not to include in it the Father's gift of the body also. For we are expressly told, in this same chapter (without staying to notice other scriptures to the same amount), that this body, the church, was "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. According (saith the apostle) as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." And mark what follows: "That we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise and glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. i. 4, 5, 6.) Hence therefore we have in this blessed scripture, as plain as words can make it, a most positive assurance that he who gave the head gave the body also. And the matter, indeed, is in itself obvious; for in the same moment (be that moment known by whatever name it may in the language of the eternal world) that Christ became a constituted head, there must have been a body, for the admission of this headship: the one implies the other; the very being of both is included.

And those sweet scriptures I have quoted go further; for they assert an *holiness*, and a *blamelessness*, derived to the church from her union with her Lord: yea, she is expressly said to be not only "holy, and without blame before him in love," but "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto the Father, according to the good pleasure of his will;" and all these blessed privileges not only before a single act of good or evil hath been wrought, but "before the foundation of the world."

It must be confessed (and indeed it will be readily confessed), that such a contemplation of Christ and his church, considered in all its vast designs and consequences, is a subject infinitely beyond the grasp of the human, or even the angelic intellect. But thus far, under the guidance of scripture, we may penetrate; and, while forming our conclusions by this standard, we shall be liable to no error. When, to the infinite mind of Jehovah, before whom, past, present, and future, can form but one and the same object, Christ came up, at the call of his Father, before all worlds, the head of his body, the church; the church no less, at the same moment, as the body of her glorious head, must have been beheld with him. And is it not; (I presume not to decide, but only propose the question;) is it not in reference to this sublime, though to us mysterious, subject, the Son of God had respect, when under the spirit of prophecy, he is supposed to say, "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them?" (Psalm cxxxix. 15, 16.)

I pause for the moment to remark, what a world of grace the church of God is called to, from the interest into which she is brought by these things. And let the imagination form, if it be able, a conception of the world of glory which is to follow! The apostle, struck with the contemplation, cried out, "Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not; because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God! and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear we shall be

like him, for we shall see him as he is!" (I John iii. 1, 2.)

Having now accomplished what I proposed under the *first* branch of my subject, in shewing you the scriptural doctrine concerning the headship of Christ, I come to the *second* proposition; namely, to consider what is meant by *the church*, over which Christ is the appointed head. The words of the text are, "The church, which is his body."

By the church, which is his body, we shall very readily apprehend is meant somewhat more than the general acceptation of the word *church*. None, I hope, who hear me, will for a moment suppose that the church can consist in any thing that is *local*, or *stationary*. It is not confined to any particular place; to a kingdom, nation, or parish. The church, which is Christ's body, hath nothing to do with things which are merely outward, neither stone walls nor steeples. "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands!"

We of the church of England dare not limit the church of Christ to our establishment; neither will our dissenting brethren of any denomination venture to claim an exclusive right to the church of Christ out of it. "Men shall not say, lo here! or, lo there! (said the great Head of the Church himself) for behold, the kingdom of God is within you!"

It forms an awful thought! but it is exceedingly to be apprehended by what we behold in life, that thousands who call themselves members of the Church of England, as well as thousands who profess to dissent from her, have all alike "a name only to live," while both are virtually "dead before God:" and, on the contrary, tens of thousands, who never heard of either, and to whom the names of Churchman or Dissenter would be words without meaning, will one day appear, to the everlasting confusion of

both, when arising amidst the real members of Christ's church to the wonders of eternity! The Lord Jesus himself hath said enough to warrant this conclusion, when speaking of the events of that great day. "Many (said Jesus) will say to me in that day, Lord! Lord! have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity:" while, on the other hand, Jesus saith, "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And he will send his angels, and gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven." (Matt. vii. 22, 23; Luke xiii. 29; Mark xiii. 27.)

If you therefore enquire, Where then is the *church* considered as the congregated body of Christ?—the Church of England hath modestly answered the question: 'The church of God (saith she) is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly administered.' To the same amount the Lord Jesus himself bears testimony: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." And in like manner, God the Holy Ghost: "Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.) Yea, God the Father testifieth to the same: "I heard a great voice (said John) out of heaven, saying, Behold! the tabernacle of God is with men; and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." (Rev. xxi. 3.)

Hence we learn, that it is the presence of God which constitutes his church. And in the assemblies

of the faithful throughout the earth, wheresoever that presence is eminently manifested in a work of grace, or in a word of power, there Christ's church is, and there God dwells. "The name of the city from that day (saith the Lord by the prophet) shall be *Jehovah Shammah*, the Lord is there!" (Ezek. xlviii. 35.)

But the text hath somewhat more particularly *personal* in it, when speaking of the church of Christ as his body, than what is merely congregational.

For the better apprehension of the subject, it will be proper to observe, that the Scriptures of God have *two* distinct meanings concerning Christ's body; namely, his *personal*, and his *mystical*, body.

The *personal* body of Christ is that perfectly holy, pure, and spotless portion of human nature undeived from the fallen stock he came to redeem, which he took into union with his GODHEAD; thereby forming in the union of both, One Person, Christ. And of such infinite moment became the construction of this *personal* body for the immense purposes for which the Son of God became incarnate, that the whole Three Persons of the GODHEAD took part, and were engaged in the accomplishment of it.

God the Father put his almighty hand to the work; for so the Son of God bore testimony, when, under the spirit of prophecy, ages before the event took place, he said, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a *body* hast *thou* prepared me." (Compare Psalm xl. 6. with Heb. x. 5.)

God the Son no less was engaged in this mysterious act, and thereby manifested the GODHEAD of his nature: for thus the Holy Ghost bears witness concerning him. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood," he also himself "likewise took part of the same:" and again, "For verily, he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." (Heb. ii. 14, 16.)

Observe, I pray you, those acts of *taking*, and of *taking by choice*, with the *motive* and *cause* which gave birth to *both*. For these are not only *personal* acts, which can only be ascribed to his own divine will and pleasure, but they also decidedly prove the *part* which the Son of God took in this great work, and by consequence most clearly shew his own eternal power and GODHEAD.

And as the person of God the Father, and the person of God the Son, both took part in this wonderful work of forming the body of Christ, so no less do the Scriptures ascribe the almighty agency to the person of God the Holy Ghost: in confirmation of which, we find an angel commissioned to bring the church acquainted with it, when announcing to the Virgin Mary the circumstance of the miraculous impregnation. The angel said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God!" (Luke i. 35.)

What a blessed testimony is here given to the church concerning this momentous article of our most holy faith! And I hope that I shall be pardoned by the church, though it be rather digressing from the immediate subject of my present sermon, if I request the congregation for a moment to pause over it, and consider well the vast weight of evidence it brings to this glorious truth, from those three Almighty witnesses, "which bear record in heaven!"

Brethren! there never was a period in the church of God when such testimonies became more precious! We live in a day of *rebuke and blasphemy*! We are arrived to the latter times, of which "the Spirit speaketh expressly, when men shall depart from the faith!" We have indeed already seen the prophecies of the apostles beginning to be accomplished;

“ Men denyiug the Lord that bought them, and bringiug upon themselves swift destruction !”

In such perilous times which are come, methinks the believer in Jesus should prize those precious testimonies with tenfold value. I would carry them about with me as the credentials of my holy faith wherever I went. They should lie down with me, and arise with me. And while I mark what the Holy Ghost hath said concerning these modern infidels which were to distinguish the latter day apostacy; that “ they were before of old ordained to this condemnation:” to call to mind no less what the same Almighty Teacher hath said by his servant the Baptist; “ He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.” (Jude iv. John iii. 33.)

But to return. It is not Christ’s *personal* body of which the text speaks, but Christ’s *mystical*. Christ in his members; Christ in his people: this is the body, the church, to which the Holy Ghost alludes when saying, “ And gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.”

And here opens a most interesting subject to call up all the affections of the regenerated heart: for the Bible itself is full of description concerning the persons and character of those who constitute Christ’s mystical body; all the persons of the GODHEAD speak of them, and with the utmost complacency and delight. They are called by a great variety of names; but all designate one and the same features of character; sometimes, the *seed* of Christ, at others, his *offspring*; they are said to be his *spouse*, his *children*, his *people*, his *brethren*, his *chosen*, his *beloved*, his *jewels*, his *sheep*, and the like. And “ their names” are said “ to be all written in the book of life.”

It were an endless undertaking to enumerate all that is said concerning Christ and his members. It is

hardly possible to open the word of God in any part without immediately finding some passage or other in allusion to this subject; and the lovely part connected with the whole is, what the Holy Ghost uniformly holds up to the church, that Christ and his church are one. The whole body is comprehended in him; He the Head, they the members; He the Root, they the branches. Christ himself, as Christ, is never spoken of or considered in the Scriptures as a private person, but always, and invariably, as the public Head, and common Root, of his whole body, the church. He was chosen first in point of order, and they in him; *He* given to be the head over all things to the church, and the *church* to him. And as Jehovah saw "it was not good" for this God-Man "to be alone," the Father gave him this church, as "an help-meet for him:" so in this union for the Lord's glory, and his people's happiness, every thing of nearness and dearness was secured, and the church everlastingly blessed in being "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

Before I enter upon the *third* branch of my sermon, I would beg the Church of Jesus who hear me, not to pass too hastily away from the contemplation of such a subject as we have been glancing at, of Christ and his mystical body.

My brother! you particularly who feel yourself not unfrequently borne down under the pressure of temptation, and the remains of indwelling corruption, who often groan, being burthened from the body of sin and death you carry about with you from day to day: brighten up at the reviving prospect of this union with Jesus! While we feel what *we now are* in the present fallen and degraded state of being, let us always connect with it in the recollection what *we originally were* in the Divine view, when God our Father presented the church to his dear Son, and

Jesus then betrothed the church to himself for ever in a covenant never to be broken. And to these views let us add another, namely, *what we shall be*, when Jesus will bring home his bride, cleansed from all her filthiness and from all her idols. How sweetly God the Spirit bears testimony to Jesus concerning this, when comforting the church on this ground: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church: so ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself; for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth it, and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." You see how blessedly the Holy Ghost dwells upon this point, insisting upon the love of Jesus to his church as in fact so much love to himself. And so indeed it is: for while the church is made everlastingly blessed in him, Christ becomes everlastingly glorious in his church. And the final preservation of the church in glory, when Christ shall bring her home, is "to himself; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." Let such views comfort the whole church of Jesus! (Ephes. v. 25, &c.)

I hasten to the last branch of my discourse, which was proposed to bring before you some few outlines (and, as I said, they can be but the merest outlines) concerning his glorious person and offices in this headship of character, of whom it is said, and without a figure, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

But who shall take upon him to mark out the infinite dimensions of his fulness, who is not only comprehensive of every thing that is blessed in himself, but the source of all blessedness to others; so per-

sonally full that his very overflowings are the alone supply to "fill all in all?"

The Holy Ghost is the great preacher of Christ's fulness when he saith, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily." But whose faculties are equal to the apprehension of the Spirit's meaning? Are we to understand by these expressions, that the substantial glory of his *Divine* nature was so transfused into the whole of his *human* nature, that the fulness of the GODHEAD pervaded the whole of that nature, both in person and actions? And was it such a subsistence and indwelling of the Son of God, in that holy portion of our nature which the Son of God assumed, that the manhood, losing its own personal properties in the GODHEAD, became glorious in the Divine? As iron taken into the fire loseth all its original appearance, though it still continues iron, and comes out again wholly fiery? Here again, I only humbly presume to enquire, not to decide.

But in speaking of the fulness of Christ, it is not enough to say that all the glory of the church above, and all the grace which the church below receive, flow from him (because neither glory nor grace can be in any other way communicable to creatures), but to come up to the full sense of the expression in the text, we must go further, and consider Christ himself as the original and essential glory and grace of both: for the church herself is his fulness, and Christ is the church's fulness, so that here is a fulness indeed altogether incalculable and inexpressible. And hence the Apostle prays for the church, that "they might be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God!" (Ephes. iii. 18, 19.)

And although we are unable to trace the subject

of Christ's fulness very far, yet from what is said in the close of our text, that "he filleth all in all," we are constrained to conclude that this runneth through all the departments of nature, providence, grace and glory; and that, literally and truly, it is the Lord Jesus who is "the head of dominion" to all the creation of God, as he is, 'in a sweet and more peculiar way and manner, "the head of union" to his church.

I beg your indulgence to prove this in a few scriptural illustrations.

To begin with the works of *creation*. "All things" are said "to have been made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." (See John i. 3, 10. Heb. i. 2, &c.) Yea, more than this; the Holy Ghost, by his servant the Apostle, tells the church, that not only "by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers;" but, that "all things were created, not only by Him, but for Him," and that "he is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (Col. i. 16, 17.)

I pray you to notice well the striking expressions here made use of, which not only ascribe to Christ the whole works of creation, but as directly declare, that the whole was made FOR him, and that BY him all things consist. So that without this glorious person, God and Man united, the creation would have had no bottom, no foundation to have rested upon. For nothing created could have stood *without* God; and none but Christ could have stood in a personal union *with* God. Hence, therefore, Christ, as Christ, (that is, God and Man in one person) is the creator and upholder of the whole creation of God. By him all things consist. "He filleth all in all."

In like manner in *providence*. “The government is upon his shoulder.” He upholdeth all things by the word of his power: so that all, and every minute circumstance, from the highest battlements of heaven to the lowest parts of the earth, from the setting up and putting down nations and empires, to the numbering the very hairs of our head, all are his; yea, he hath “the keys of hell and of death.”

And in the kingdom of *grace*, no one will question that the whole is treasured up in the person of our Redeemer. Not a grace can be dispensed but from him and by him. “Of his fulness do we all receive, and grace for grace.” The very charter of grace runs in these words: “Men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.” (Psalm lxxii. 17.)

And with respect to *glory*. We are told, by a message from heaven, that the Lamb, in the midst of the throne, feeds the church. So that all the sanctities of the upper world derive all the communications of glory (and by which their felicity is made tenfold more blessed) from Jesus. So that the fulness of him that filleth all in all is every way manifested: rising up and running through all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory.

I pray the church who hear me in what I say concerning this glory of our Lord, constantly to keep in remembrance all the way we go, that in all these grand things it is Christ as “the Head over all things to the church, which is his body,” that we are speaking of. For, as to the infinite fulness here mentioned, it is the fulness of the God-Man Christ Jesus, and in which he is the Head of *union* to his body the church; and the Head of *dominion* to all his creatures. “He upholds all things by the word of his power;” and as such, “He is (as the Holy Ghost saith of him) the Saviour of all men;” and in no other sense can it be said: but he is the especial

Saviour "of them that believe," because he is the Head of union to his body the church.

I hope the church of God will be led into the perfect apprehension of this headship and fulness of their glorious Redeemer. A great part of their blessedness of enjoyment in Jesus will depend upon it. It is not the fulness of the GODHEAD only, unconnected with his *human* nature, but the union of the *human* with the *divine*, which renders our Lord so gracious and proper an head for communication. Had Jesus been God only, those communications could never have been made by him to his people, as they now are from an head to his members; and then there would not have been in this case that sweet and tender (what shall I call it?) that undescribable fellow-feeling in the channel that now is, for his Jesu-mercy to flow from his heart into ours; and then the church would have lost the most precious parts of this Jesu-mercy, which God our Father intended the church should have, when he gave us his dear Son, and in our own nature united to the GODHEAD, to be "the Head of his body the church:" and then how many, many love-tokens should I, his poor pensioner, have lost: and you also, who know what his Jesu-love means (to say nothing of the incalculable losses of the whole body of the church) had we never any of us known Jesus in his two-fold nature, the *human* with the *divine*; whereby having known in his own feelings what our feelings are under exercises, he knoweth how best, in all cases, to administer the suited relief. The Holy Ghost makes use of this very argument when comforting the church: "In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he knoweth how to succour them that are tempted."

It is true, indeed, the GODHEAD of our dear Lord becomes the fountain of all supply, whereby "he filleth all in all." So that had Christ not been God,

never could his love and his mercies have held out as they now do, and will do for ever. But while we know and rejoice in that assurance, that as God he hath an infinite fulness which never can be diminished, we know and rejoice also that all flow to his church and people (and so shall flow to all eternity) through a nature like our own. His Jesu-love, which is the united love of God and man in one Person, and which is peculiarly and personally his own, (for none but Jesus can have it or know its feelings,) will be unceasingly communicating itself from his heart to ours. And all his church on earth, in a life of grace, and all his church in heaven, in a life of glory, will be for ever receiving from him as the fountain of both; and when the redeemed below shall all be brought home to meet the redeemed above, still all covenant-blessings are expressly appointed, from the love and grace of God our Father, to flow in with a full tide of glory from the *divine* nature of our Lord, in and through his *human* nature, as the Head of his body, the church, being everlastingly and to all eternity the same, “the fulness of him which filleth all in all.”

Hail! thou glorious Head of thy body the church! Come, Lord, in our midst this day, and give a renewed manifestation of thine HEADSHIP to all thy members here present! Make this place of thy feet glorious! Fill our hearts, and the hearts of all thy family upon earth, with grace, as thou art filling the souls of our brethren in heaven with glory! Let thy whole Corpus Christi, who are yet to be gathered into thy kingdom, be brought home, “when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea!”

And now let me call upon the whole church of God who hear me, to pause, and look back upon the sacred ground, in the holy inclosure of scripture,

which they have trodden over, on the vast subject of Christ, "The head of his body, the church, the fulness of him which filleth all in all."

Mark well the hand of God our Father in the appointment! Behold the comprehending union of the church with her glorious Head! And do not fail to note down, and in characters more durable than though written with a pen of iron, that He who chose the Head chose the body also in him, and to a state of unspotted holiness, "before the foundation of the world." So that whatever circumstances, in the after-events of time, should arise from the lapsed state of sin and misery in the church, (and nothing could arise unforeseen and unprovided for by the Divine mind,) nothing should counteract the original purpose. The church is expressly said, by the Holy Ghost, to be "saved and called with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.) Who that contemplates a subject of such infinite properties, and founded in such infinite wisdom, but must feel constrained to cry out with the apostle, and say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

When you have duly pondered these things, let me next call upon you to consider, with no less admiration, love, and praise, the wonders of his person concerning whom such things are said; and, oh! for grace, that that Almighty Lord, who is the one glorious object on whom every eye in the eternal world is fixed, may become the only object of desire to his church upon earth; for surely the language of every member of his body must be the same: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and who is there upon earth that I desire beside thee! My flesh and my heart faileth; but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!"

It evidently appears from the whole sum and substance of revelation, that Jehovah's grand design from one eternity to another, hath been to glorify his dear Son as Mediator. Every thing in the Bible is ministering to this one end. Christ is the only ordinance of heaven. Creation-work and redemption-work are with an eye to him. Salvation is in no other ; for "there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

And (I speak with all possible reverence when I say,) that it should seem, but for the voluntary act of the Son of God at the call of his Father, taking human nature into an union with the GODHEAD, there could not have been a platform for the display of Jehovah's glory in the way in which that glory is now manifested, in the salvation of millions of souls, and to manifest the grace and love of all the persons of the GODHEAD towards our nature, in the face of Jesus Christ. And hath not this undertaking of the Son of God brought forward to view such discoveries of Jehovah as have opened revenues of everlasting glory, adoration, and praise from the church, which, without the Son of God coming forth from the bosom of his Father in our nature, never could have been known by us to all eternity ?

And while I am upon the subject, let me add, (with equal reverence and awe,) that the infinite condescension of the Son of God, in emptying himself of his glory, becoming the servant of Jehovah, and humbling himself to the death of the cross, hath done more to glorify God, than all the sins of his people have done to dishonour him ; or the everlasting and unsinning obedience of the whole creation of God would have honoured him, had sin never entered into the world !

And as from Christ's headship to his church, the acts of the head are, to all intents and purposes, the

acts of the body, his righteousness as the head, becoming virtually the righteousness of the whole members of his mystical body, so it will follow that the whole church of God must be beheld and accepted in him. To this point, immensely important as it becomes to the redeemed, God the Holy Ghost bears his decided testimony, when he saith, "He was made to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) And to add no more to this delightful view of our glorious Head, and the church's interest in all that belongs to him, just let me observe, that, what from the infinite dignity of his person, and what from the humblings of his nature, and the infinite merit of his obedience, righteousness, blood-shedding, and death, a whole eternity of glory to all the members of his mystical body will never be an equal recompense, so as that there should remain no more to be paid, when millions of ages shall have passed away: still there will be such a redundancy of merit in our Almighty Head, from the immense revenue of glory he hath brought in to Jehovah, that, as the prophet speaks, "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." His church will be continually receiving from his fulness everlasting felicity, and always receiving, without the possibility of ever ceasing to receive; and Jesus himself becoming more full by filling them, and receiving more glory in every instance of his members glory in him; and the whole persons of the GODHEAD receiving endless revenues of praise, adoration, and love, from the felicity of the church in Christ! "The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this!"

And now, what is there wanting to make the whole complete before God, but that the members of this glorious Head of his body, the church, should be living *to* him, and living *upon* him, and living *by*

him, and deriving all *from* him. If God our Father hath given him to be the head of his body, the church, shall not the whole Corpus Christi do the same? If Christ is the head of union, the head of influence, the head of communion, of power, efficiency, fulness, grace, glory, will any of his members seek supplies elsewhere? If he be the fulness which filleth all in all, shall not his whole redeemed say, as one of old did, "All my springs are in thee?"

And it should be remembered, that all the grace which, as an head, is communicated to the members *by* Christ, must be kept alive wholly by the grace which is *in* Christ; precisely the same as a stream depends wholly upon the fountain. If the fountain ceaseth to give out, the stream ceaseth to flow. If Jesus were to remit his supply, (which, to his praise, he will not,) there is nothing inherent in his members to preserve life. To use the strong language of the Holy Ghost, it is "holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." (Col. ii. 19.)

And while the church is thus living upon their life-giving head, and daily, hourly, minutely, receiving fresh communications from him "who filleth all in all," they then accept of Christ, upon God the Father's own terms; "for of him (saith God the Holy Ghost,) are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." (1 Cor. i. 30.) Hence, if Christ be made of God to his church all these things, in him alone they find them. Then do they learn from God the Holy Ghost, that Christ is their righteousness, yea, the very righteousness, as an head to the body, in which they appear before God. For so the Holy Ghost witnesseth, that "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all, and upon all

them that believe." (Rom. iii. 22.) And in like manner the sanctification of the body, the church, is no less wholly derived from him the head. That holy portion of manhood taken into union with the GODHEAD, and constituting the head of his church, contained in it the seeds of holiness for every individual member of his body. And hence God the Father engaged "to pour his spirit upon his seed, and his blessing upon his offspring." (Isaiah xlv. 3.) Hence, God the Holy Ghost bears testimony—"If the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches." (Rom. xi. 16.)

But if men look only to Christ's righteousness as a means of procuring acceptance to their sincere endeavours, (as the unhumbled pride of nature tempts them to call them,) instead of making it the sole cause of their acceptance before God; and if the sanctification they seek comfort from, is a supposed improvement of their own gifts and graces, no wonder the souls of such people should go lean before God! and no wonder in the hour of need they should be at a loss for comfort, while trusting to the reeds of Egypt, instead of resting wholly upon the Rock of ages!

Brethren! it is a blessed life of grace to be coming to the Lord Jesus every day, and all the day, as we came the first day we heard of his name; and under a sense of want, and weakness, and unworthiness, and sin, to be seeking from our spiritual head the daily grace, as we need the daily bread. Sweet was the lesson taught the church by the Holy Ghost, and happy the soul that the Lord the Spirit enabled to practise it. "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof." (Psalm lxxi. 15, 16.)

And now, may God the Holy Ghost give grace to the whole church of Jesus, to keep up and maintain, by lively acts of faith, an unceasing communion with the glorious Head of his body the church, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all!"

Ere long, the Son of God will take home to the everlasting enjoyment of himself in glory, the whole Corpus Christi. He will then, finally, fully, and completely, acknowledge the church for his own before a congregated world as the gift of his Father, the purchase of his blood, and the conquest of the Holy Ghost. And then, from an union with his person, and a communion in all his graces, being fully prepared, in body, soul, and spirit, for a participation of all the glories of eternity in him, the whole church will enter with him into the joy of their Lord. And then shall we have a complete apprehension and enjoyment of that blessed Scripture, which now to faith appears so sweet, and will then be realized to our everlasting sight: "At that day (saith the Lord), ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you."

. The Corpus Christi hymn will be found with the Author's other poetical pieces in a subsequent volume.

UNION WITH CHRIST,
THE ONLY POSSIBLE MEANS OF
ENJOYING COMMUNION WITH GOD;

OR,

An Answer to that interesting Question,

“WHAT IS THE TRUEST PREPARATION IN THOSE WHO COME TO
THE LORD'S SUPPER?”

Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence,——
—— But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not.—

LUKE xiii. 26, 29.

TO THE
PARISHIONERS OF CHARLES,
PLYMOUTH.

THE very sacred and responsible situation in which I stand related to you, in my parochial character, will, I hope, justify the freedom I have assumed, that, while sending forth this little work to the Christian world *in general*, on a subject so infinitely interesting as that of the Lord's Supper, I desire to present it particularly to *you*, my Parishioners.

I cannot, I dare not dissemble ; but my fears have been long awakened, that this solemn ordinance of our holy faith is not properly understood by numbers, who are, nevertheless, in the constant habit of receiving it ; and the observation of every renewed attendance at the Table tends but to confirm my apprehensions.

The subject itself hath very frequently called forth my best exertions to explain, both from the pulpit and the desk ; and more especially in those seasons when occasionally it hath been introduced in the course of my Evening Lectures. But as many of you (and particularly among the higher rank of my parishioners) have not condescended to honour those lectures with your presence, I have ventured to adopt this method, as hoping it may prove more conciliatory, and shall have great cause to bless God, if my morning meditations become more acceptable than my evening labours. That He who alone can give energy to the best intentioned services, may commission the present feeble endeavour to the promotion of His glory, and your welfare, is the earnest prayer of,

Your unworthy servant in the Gospel,

ROBERT HAWKER.

UNION WITH CHRIST,

THE ONLY POSSIBLE MEANS OF ENJOYING

Communion with God.

IF there be any one plain matter of fact fully ascertained by scripture, and confirmed from the universal experience of mankind, it is the assurance, that man in the present state of existence, both by nature and by practice, is a fallen, guilty creature before God. And however the unawakened professor of christianity, who amuses himself with trifling around the skirts of religion, may hesitate at the candid acknowledgment of this great truth, yet the serious communicant at the Lord's table, is supposed by the very nature of the service, to have admitted the fact with full consent, unqualified with the smallest abatement. For what indeed is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, but an implication of some known breach between God and man, in which the merciful Creator, having of his own free and unmerited bounty provided a means of reconciliation, hath, in testimony thereof, appointed this ordinance as a standing memorial of the same; to indicate his gracious design in the recovery of his fallen creature, and to convince the sinner of his disposition and readiness to pardon, and receive him again into favour, through the sole medium of reconciliation in the person and incommunicable salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ? In this light, and in this light only, can the holy Supper be considered; and as such becomes what may not improperly be called a

visible gospel; because it is proposed to the *eye*; as the word preached is addressed to the *ear*; and both, corresponding to the accomplishment of one and the same purpose. And whoever hath not such views of this ordinance, is evidently a stranger to the very design of its institution; and can have no more occasion to partake of it, than a man without hunger hath for food, or the healthy for medicine. And indeed, should a person of this description partake of it, his participation must be wholly confined to the mere outward elements of the bread and wine only: for the inward apprehension of the body and blood of Christ he is as unconscious of, as the deaf of sound, or the blind of light. He may, I confess, have communion with the table, with the elements upon the table, and with the persons around the table; but he can have none with God in Christ; for this is peculiarly their privilege, who spiritually “eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of man.”

Assuming this for a principle perfectly unquestionable, I advance one step higher in the subject, and observe, that neither is it enough, as a suitable qualification for partaking of the Supper of the Lord, to have this proper conception of the nature and design of the service, unless there be added to it also the knowledge of a *personal* interest therein. The gospel indeed is proclaimed to the sinner's ear; the table is spread to the eye of sense; but the enquiry of every awakened mind will be, Is it proclaimed and spread for *me*? Am *I* among those who feel truly interested in its saving invitations? It is in vain to all the important purposes of salvation, that mercy and grace are proclaimed, unless it be *personally* applied to every individual's own case and circumstances. The most plentiful table, however spread, will not satisfy the hungry, unless it be partaken of: neither can the most sovereign medicine

prove efficacious, unless administered. And by a parity of reasoning, the rich mercies of the gospel cannot save the soul, unapplied to the heart by the gracious operations of the Holy Ghost. It is a glorious consideration, no doubt, that God hath given such a ransom as is made for sinners in the blood of Christ. But what is it to you, or to me, personally considered, unless we have an interest therein? Though brought *before us* in the ordinances of the gospel, it is not enough, unless we are brought *into it* by the precious effects of a gracious application. And the question must everlastingly be recurring, and with increasing earnestness at every renewed view of the subject, by all truly serious minds, what interest have *I* personally in it? How am I convinced that it is for *me*? An unappropriated ransom becomes no ransom at all! An unapplied Saviour is no Saviour!

Cautiously proceeding in my subject, that from laying down the plainest principles in the beginning, no reasonable objections to the consequences resulting from them may afterwards arise, I advance yet one step higher in the argument (and which indeed brings me into the very platform of the whole doctrine) and observe, that as a personal interest is indispensable, in order to a real participation in the blessings of the gospel; it will follow, that the only possible method by which this can be accomplished, must be that which the Redeemer himself hath insisted upon with so much earnestness in the whole of his gospel; namely, that by the regeneration of the soul, and its personal union with him, through the operations of the Holy Ghost, the great blessings of redemption are conveyed to the souls of his people: and that, in fact, so infinitely important is this great work in the whole scheme of the gospel, to the personal salvation of each believer, that it must actually

take place in the instance of every individual, before that individual can be truly said to be in a state of grace, or capable of enjoying communion with God in any of the ordinances of worship.

The authority of the word of God on this point, is not only decisive and unanswerable, but happily for our argument, is capable of being explained on principles even of common sense and reason. Let any man make an experiment in his garden, and determine the matter for himself, and from his own observation. What possible benefit can result from the fatness and moisture of the most fruitful tree, to the withered, sapless branch, which is severed from the tree, and hath no connexion with it? And what can the soul receive by way of communion in the gifts and grace of the Lord Jesus, while void of an union with *his* person, and remaining in the original state of a withered, fruitless nature, which is universally “dead in trespasses and sins?”* Or, to make the

* I take occasion in this place, as a matter intimately connected with our subject, to correct the *order* in which the translators of our Testament have placed the words of the second verse of the 15th chapter of St. John’s Gospel; which certainly enervates the sense, and is indeed repugnant to the whole testimony of God’s word on this important doctrine. The original text they have very properly translated, but a subsequent verse might have taught them, that in the order of placing the words they have erred: *παν κλημα εν εμοι μη φερων καρπον*, &c., the literal translation of which is no doubt as they have rendered it—“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit,” &c. But when the Lord Jesus in a following verse declares, “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth *much* fruit;” they ought to have known that there could be no branch really in Christ but what must bring forth fruit. Had they therefore only transposed the words, (and which every critical reader of the original text cannot but know they might have done without the least violence to the rules of grammar,) and placed the pronoun *εμοι*, with its preposition after the verb *φερων*, instead of putting it before it, the sense would have been clear and intelligible, and consonant to the uniform doctrine of scripture; for then it would have been “every branch that beareth not fruit in me;” obviously meaning, what all scripture asserts, and experience proves, that there can be no fruit but in, and from Christ. “Without him we can do nothing.” “From me (as he says by the prophet) is thy fruit found.” (Hosea xiv. 8.)—“And every plant which the heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” (Matt. xv. 13.)

similitude yet somewhat nearer to the case in point : What advantage doth the prop derive from its situation near the side of some sweet flower, whose tender stalk it is placed purposely to support, and hath indeed no other object to which it ministers ? And what are all the kind influences of the sun's warmth, or the clouds' fatness to its unconscious state ? And such is the situation of that professor in religion who, unconnected by any vital union to the person of the Lord Jesus, stands in the church's garden but as a stick, supporting indeed (if it can be called support) the tender plant of the gospel with his unmeaning hand, but himself all the while neither rooted nor grounded in Christ : and on whom all the dew and rain of the sweetest ordinances fall but in vain.

I use these similitudes not merely as being the best calculated to illustrate the vast importance of the doctrine I am anxious to establish ; but also because I find metaphor and figure particularly made choice of by the sacred writers to explain the same. The scriptures indeed, with no less elegance than simplicity, have been pleased to adopt a great variety, by way of rendering the subject familiar ; and, as if in accommodation to the feeble apprehension of the human mind, that what one figure might fall short in illustrating, might more fully be elucidated in another ; and altogether so operate to the establishment of this infinitely interesting truth, that no misconception or mistake might arise.

Thus in one place, we find the great doctrine of the soul's union with the Lord Jesus represented under the image and figure of a graft on a stock : in which the original, corrupt, and sinful state of man by nature, is compared to the branch of "the wild olive tree," which is wild by nature, and incapable by any act of nature, of bringing forth good fruit. And in allusion to the sovereign, free, and unmerited grace

of God, which alone can gather the soul from the stock of corrupt nature, and unite it by grace to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, this branch is said to be "cut out of the olive tree, which is wild by nature, and grafted contrary to nature, into the good olive tree," and then to partake of "the root and fatness of the tree." A beautiful and highly-finished resemblance to the gracious doctrine it is designed to shadow out, and as far as spiritual things can be illustrated by natural, it corresponds in every particular. All men by nature, as to their barren, corrupt, and unprofitable state before God, are like the wild olive tree, and totally incapable, without converting grace, of producing fruit. But when once an act of sovereign mercy hath taken the soul from its original stock, and united it to the person of the Lord Jesus, then it may be truly said, (and with still greater reason, if possible, as corresponding the nearer to his nature, who is a Spirit,) "in him," spiritually as well as naturally, "to live, and move, and have our being." For all spiritual life, apprehension, strength, moisture, and fruitfulness is derived from him. And all gracious souls, on whom the Lord hath wrought this saving change, are as sensible of the different effects, from their original state of nature to the happy change by grace, as the effects are visible by any process made by the graft on a stock in the vegetable kingdom. They know to whom they are united, from the blessed communion and refreshments of his grace. The Lord meets them in their prayers, meets them in their ordinary walks, and in a thousand instances manifests himself to them "otherwise than to the world." And they meet him when in the discovery of any of his providences, in reproofs or mercies they trace his footsteps, or hear his voice, and are enabled to see that every thing which concerns them is under his direction. Hence

they undertake nothing but in his strength, and desire nothing so much as his glory; and thus continually finding all their springs to be in Him, they are deriving out of his fulness, as the branch from the vine, "grace to help in every time of need."

The same doctrine is as beautifully set forth in another part of scripture, under the figure of the *human body*, in which the Lord Jesus is represented as the *Head*, and his people as the *members*; from whom it is said "that the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. iv. 16.) Here the metaphor varies from the former, but this is only intended by a pleasing variety to illustrate the same interesting truth somewhat more fully. And as in the human frame there is but one and the same vital principle pervades and runs through every part from their union with each other: so where once a spirit of grace hath quickened, animated, and renewed the soul, which was before "dead in trespasses and sins," and united it to the person of the Lord Jesus, the life of grace which originates in the Almighty Head is diffused through all the members of his mystical body, and preserves them in an union with him, and with each other. Hence that sympathy and affection which takes place between them; by which both in sorrow and in joy they feel alike, and weep or rejoice together. And this certainly forms, as well it may, every believer's own personal experience, when from the Spirit's teaching, he is enabled to discover his being gathered out of nature's corruption, and can trace his affinity and connexion with the Lord Jesus, from the uniformity of heart and mind between the Head and its members. I mean when one opinion, one sentiment, one desire manifests itself in both. If what the Head commands, the feet and hands obey:

and what Jesus forbids the heart doth not desire.— Oh ! it is a luxury known only to the truly regenerated believer, when he can discover a willing conformity to his spiritual Head in all things ; and in the most trying dispensation is enabled to say, “ It is all well : ” good is the will of the Lord.

And were it not for departing rather from the main object I have in view, I would stay one moment longer in this place just to observe, that this beautiful figure which so sweetly explains the affinity of Christ with his people, as plainly proves the nearness of relationship in the Lord’s people, and their regard for each other, for they are said to be “ members one of another,” as well as “ members of his body, his flesh, and his bones.” And though diversified as they are in this mystical body, according to his gracious appointment, who hath placed them where they are, yet that there should be no schism in the body, they are supposed to have the same care one for another ; and if “ one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.” A divine testimony of being passed from death unto life, when believers find their love drawn out to a member of Christ’s mystical body, because he is united to the person of the Lord Jesus, and when they minister all they have to minister, in the name of a disciple !

But to return.—The sacred writers, in order to follow up still more their illustrations of this affinity and union of believers with the person of the Lord Jesus, as if nothing was too much to illustrate and explain a doctrine so important in its consequences, adopt another metaphor, that of the *married state*, by way of representing the spiritual union between Christ and his people.

They shew us that, as the Lord Jesus, when assuming our nature, for the *general* purposes of re-

demption, first married that nature to the person of the GODHEAD, and in that union wrought out redemption for his people ; so by his gracious Spirit's operation now on the soul of every believer brought to spiritual life by regeneration, he first unites that nature to himself for the *special* purpose of salvation, then renders that union effectual to such believer for his own *personal* assurance of it. The prophets, ages before the Lord Jesus became incarnate, declared, that this was among the express purposes of his mission. "I will betroth thee to me for ever : yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercy. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." (Hosea ii. 19, 20.) And the Holy Ghost by Paul, when using the same figure, directly explains it in reference to the spiritual union between Christ and his people, when he says, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and his church." (Eph. v. 32.)

Neither are the experimental proofs of this doctrine which the sacred writers have thus frequently set forth, less manifested among true believers than under either of the former. For they whom the Lord Jesus hath quickened, and united to himself by the Holy Spirit's work on the heart, are as sensible of this spiritual union from the unity of sentiment and affection, as the natural affections in common life testify the degree of attachment. When once a truly regenerated soul can echo to the language of the church, and say, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine : " when the interest of one becomes the interest of the other ; and so intimately blended are their desires, their affections, their pursuits ; that while Jesus is present the soul rejoices, when he is absent the soul mourns : as these are never the effect of natural causes, and those fragrant flowers of grace

grow not in nature's garden, the possession of them affords so charming a testimony of grace wrought in the heart, that there can be no possibility of mistake or delusion. It is delightful, indeed, to observe the mutual privilege there is in the property of each other by virtue of this union. The Lord Jesus hath made his people his, both by his Father's gift, (John xvii. 2.) by his own gift, (Eph. vi. 25.) by conquest, (Psalm xlv. 5.) and by possession, (Hos. ii. 19.) And the soul puts in her humble claim to the person, and gifts, and graces of the Redeemer, as well in being given to Christ by the Father as by his own purchase, and by a voluntary surrender when "made willing in the day of his power." Hence the tender language of Ruth to Naomi becomes the language of the heart to the Lord Jesus, in every truly united soul: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." (Ruth i. 16, 17.)

And lastly, to mention no more, when the sacred writers, in order to represent the cement of an eternal union between the Lord Jesus and his people, adopt the bold and nervous metaphor of a *temple*: it cannot but strike the most ordinary reader, how great a stress is laid upon the doctrine itself, thus frequently set forth. "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners" saith one of the apostles, in allusion to the original stock of corrupt nature in its alienation and departure from God, "but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth

unto an holy temple in the Lord." (Eph. ii. 19,—21.) And to shew the antiquity of the doctrine, and to demonstrate that this was the grand design of the gospel, the prophet Isaiah was directed to make proclamation in the holy mountain, under the same figure, that this was the purpose of the Messiah's mission. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; and he that believeth, shall not make haste." (Isaiah xxviii. 16.) Jesus is both the foundation stone in the temple, for there is no other, and the key stone and corner stone of every arch. And when believing souls, by the Spirit's work, are brought to make him their sure foundation, by which he bears the whole pressure and weight of their sins, and their sorrows, and they are enabled to cast all their burden upon the Lord, both spiritual, temporal, and eternal; how refreshing is the view, and how evident doth it manifest, upon all occasions, the intimacy of the union there must be subsisting between them! For as the foundation stone of a building bears the whole weight and pressure of the building; so the Holy Ghost gives witness to the Redeemer that "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree:" and as every part of an arch is intimately connected and linked together, and kept in beautiful symmetry and order by the key stone: so true believers in Christ are preserved by Him in their spiritual building, to Him and to each other, and it is impossible they can ever be separated while He standeth sure. To use another expression of Christ, They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his Almighty hand. (John x. 28.)

But though from the gracious condescension of the Holy Ghost, under whose inspiration the sacred writers have conveyed to us so much information, by way

of metaphor on this great doctrine, we are indebted for the clearer apprehension of it; and in conformity to this authority (which it must ever be the highest wisdom of every man to copy after) I have humbly adopted the like use of figure in order to illustrate the same glorious truth; yet I beg it may be thoroughly understood at the same time, that it is not to figure and metaphor only, this grand and infinitely interesting doctrine is left for support. Blessed be the divine benignity, when consulting the weakness and prejudices of the human mind in its present fallen state on this point, the Lord graciously condescended to go further. The redeemer himself, upon many occasions, while on earth, was pleased to speak of this union with his people, in terms so plain, so full, and so perspicuous, that faith hath every testimony to lean upon which can be necessary for the clear assurance of a doctrine so consolatory and refreshing.

In that memorable conversation he held with the Jews, as recorded in the sixth chapter of John's gospel, the union with his person is insisted upon so repeatedly as the only possible means of deriving advantages from him, that the Lord Jesus makes it the basis of the whole superstructure. Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. And except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." (John vi. 51, &c.) Natural, unrenewed minds, like the Jews of old, unable to receive spiritual truths through the medium of carnal reasonings, will be ever questioning what they cannot understand, and asking in the same lan-

guage as they did, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" But to those whose spiritual senses are awakened, and exercised "to discern both good and evil," through the power of the Holy Ghost, and are enabled by him to compare "spiritual things with spiritual," they will enter into the full meaning of our Lord's expressions, and know in their own personal experience, that saying of Jesus, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him:" for this union with his person answers every enquiry, and solves every doubt. The soul once awakened, and brought into action by the Spirit of God, hath its principles of life suited to its spiritual nature, as much as the body to its corporeal feelings. Hence we read in scripture, of its hungerings and thirstings, its pains and its pleasures, its desires and pursuits, its conflicts and its trials, with all the several passions by which the reality of existence can be ascertained; and at the same time, from the direction of certain of those passions to the person of the Lord Jesus, as the grand object of desire, it is as plain that the soul united to the Redeemer, lives upon his fulness, is made strong in his strength, draws its sole pleasure from his love, and suffers misery from his displeasure; is made happy under all its conflicts by his support; and in short, by living a life of faith on the Son of God, finds a suitable grace to help in every time of need. Souls under this influence discover a beauty and a suitability in those scriptures, which must for ever be veiled from every carnal eye. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." (John vi. 63, 57.)

You will confess, I hope, that it is not to figure

and metaphor alone the momentous doctrine is referred, when the Lord Jesus himself hath been so gracious to convey the full assurance of it in terms so plain and familiar. And as during the season of his ministry, he was pleased to afford such decisive testimony of this saving truth in his conversation, so we find in the close of it, in that delightful prayer of the recommendation of his people to the Father (as if to refresh the minds of his disciples with the recollection of a doctrine on which so much of their present comfort, as well as their eternal welfare, depends) Jesus made this the very argument for every blessing he prayed for: that as the Father had given his people to him, they were in union with him, and were one with him, as he is with the Father: "I in them (says Christ), and thou in me:" (John xvii. 23.) most plainly proving, (if the plainest words can be admitted to prove any one matter of fact,) that as there is a mysterious union of person in the essence of the GODHEAD between the Father and the Son: so in the manhood of the Lord Jesus there is an union between him and his people, by virtue of the Spirit's operation in uniting souls to Christ, and by which "because he lives they must live also." (John xiv. 29.)

And indeed, were not the rich privileges of the gospel assured to believers by some such infallible testimony, I do not see by what clear and unequivocal marks the Lord's people would be known. Neither would there be that analogy in scripture which there now is, between our loss and ruin in the *first* Adam, and our recovery and salvation in the *second*. For as, on the supposition that I myself had no union with the first Adam by nature, and was not descended by *generation* from him, I could not possibly be included in the condemnation of his fall, entailed upon all his race: so it must follow, that unless I have an

union with the second Adam by grace, and am made his by *regeneration*, I am far from being interested in the blessings he hath entailed upon all his spiritual seed. For as the original sin of Adam would not have condemned my soul, but because originating from him I derive a nature prone like his to evil, and both by descent and disposition I clearly prove the stock from whence I sprung: so, by a parity of reasoning, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, and the merits of his death, will not justify me before God, unless I am interested in it by right of inheritance also, and am proved to be his by *adoption* and *grace*. So that the whole efficacy of all gospel blessings, mercies, and privileges, which the Lord Jesus hath wrought out for poor sinners, must depend, as to their saving application to the instance of every individual, upon this previous union with his person. We must (according to our original figure) be first taken out of the *olive tree which is wild by nature*, and grafted contrary to nature into the *true olive tree*, before that we can partake of the root and fatness thereof. We must first be married to the person of the Lord Jesus, before we can be instituted into all the privileges of that union. It is only from this gracious, and soul-enriching connexion, that all those exceedingly great and precious promises result, which are peculiarly their inheritance, "who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John i. 13.) By virtue of this, they have communion with the Lord Jesus in every thing which belongs to his mediatorial character. Communion with his person, communion in his graces, communion in his merits, in his righteousness, death, resurrection, advocateship, and eternal glory. Hence *one* prophet was taught by the Holy Ghost, to call the Redeemer by that adorable name, "the Lord our righteousness:" (Jer. xxiii. 6.) and *another* was com-

missioned by the same power, to speak the language of every renewed heart in those words, "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." (Isaiah xlv. 24.) And what prophets proclaimed ages before the Redeemer's incarnation, the apostles declared after his return to glory, to be the great end of his mission, "to be made sin for his people who knew no sin, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.)

Neither are these all the effects of this soul-refreshing doctrine. It is a blessed addition to it, to consider that the Lord's people, in consequence of this union with the person of the Redeemer, not only partake in his merits, but he graciously participates in their sufferings. The foot indeed, cannot be supposed to be crushed, but what the head must feel. And while believers find an interest in all that concerns the Redeemer's kingdom, he takes part in all that belongs to their welfare. As "he hath borne their sins," so he is said "to have carried their sorrows," "and in all their afflictions he is afflicted." How soothing and consolatory the recollection of such a tender participation in the hour of suffering hath proved, and must in all ages prove to the tried and distressed members of his mystical body, who shall take upon him to say?

But yet further—It were to leave unfinished the interesting view of the unspeakable mercies resulting from this gracious union of the Lord Jesus with his people, were it not to be subjoined, that to the same great cause not only the blessings which belong to the peace and comfort of this life must originate; but all the security of the eternal happiness of another will alone flow. It is a matter of solid assurance to the stability of our faith, (though seldom it is to be apprehended by what we behold in the conduct of

real christians, considered in this point of view) that all the grand events which are to take place after death, in the instance of true believers, rest upon this eternal basis, their union with the person of the Lord Jesus. Their *resurrection*, we are positively assured, is not to be effected like others, by an exertion of almighty power only, but it is secured to *them* by a nearer process. "For if the Spirit of him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii. 21.) Observe, "by his Spirit that dwelleth in you:" then it should seem that death doth not destroy the union between Jesus and his people. His Spirit still dwelleth in them:—though the body be reduced to dust, it is still united to the Lord, and as a germ in the seed of the vegetable world, is the cause of their re-creation; so the Spirit of the Lord Jesus becomes the source and cause of the resurrection at the last day. And as in the instance of the *resurrection*, so also in the event of the *judgment* which is to follow, their case is peculiarly secured from even the apprehension of condemnation, in consequence of their union with the Lord. For though "all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive according to the things done in the body;" yet to *them* it is to *receive* the reward of their Redeemer's merits, not to be arraigned for their sins, or to await the issue of their trial. He that is their Judge hath been, and still is their Saviour, their husband, their brother, their head; and they, "members of his mystical body, his flesh, and his bones." "There is therefore now no condemnation (the apostle says) to them that are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 1.) That condemnation, blessed be God, with the sentence that followed, was fulfilled once for all his people on Him their Almighty

Head, when he "witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate," (1 Tim. vi. 13.) and when by virtue of it, "he bore their sins in his own body on the tree," (1 Pet. ii. 24.) Then "he redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them;" for he "suffered the just for the unjust, to bring them unto God." And if he suffered for them, how shall they be again arraigned? If "he who knew no sin was made sin for them;" was it not that "they might be made the righteousness of God in him?" "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. And if there be no possibility of condemnation, there can be no possibility of punishment. So blessed and consolatory is the view of that great day of God to all his people, who from their personal union with him in the *Judge*, look for the *Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ! And to sum up all: as in *judgment*, so in the *glory* which succeeds; this personal interest with the King of glory becomes the eternal security of reigning with him above, as they have been united to him below. For so run the words of the charter: "To him that overcometh (and they overcome by the blood of the Lamb) will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his throne. I will make him a pillar in my temple, and he shall go no more out." (Rev. iii. 21, 12.) Hence may every renewed soul, with whose spirit the Holy Ghost witnesseth that "they are made kings and priests to God and the Father," exult in the same triumphant language as the apostle, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us

from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. viii. 35. 38, 39.)

If I have not wandered so far by way of illustrating and explaining the doctrine itself, but the apprehension of my reader may be competent to connect in his mind the remembrance of what was before insisted upon, of the infinite importance of this principle, our union with the person of the Lord Jesus, as the sole foundation of any real interest in his great salvation; the result of all that I have said will be in correspondence to the title page of this little work, that "union with Christ can be the only possible means of enjoying communion with God." All preparations short of this, are in fact no preparations at all. You may have in them indeed the *form*, but not the *power* of godliness. And were they multiplied by thousands, and followed up with ten thousand sacraments, ordinances, prayers, and the like; yet, void of this life-giving, soul-enriching principle, they only tend to carry the heart *from* God, instead of bringing it *to* him; because they prompt the mind to place religion in that which it is not; and could the unmeaning worshipper but have his senses spiritually exercised, he might hear a voice of expostulation from the holy place solemnly answering, while seeming only to enquire: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord?" (Isa. i. 11.) What a solemn proof indeed doth the word of God afford of this awful effect in the most diligent attendance to divine things, void of divine grace, in the character of the traitor disciple. Judas was as prompt in following the ministry of the Lord Jesus as any of the other apostles! Judas heard, as well as they, his divine discourses. Judas saw with them his mighty miracles; and Judas sat

with him at his table, and perhaps received the Holy Supper from his gracious hands. But all the while Judas had no part or lot in this matter.

My brother! pause one moment, and reflect on the infinite importance of what hath been said. I do not ask you what forms you observe; what preaching you attend; what sacraments you follow: for these are all outward things, frequently proceed from outward causes, consist in outward performances, and go no further than outward service. But I would very earnestly and affectionately desire you to get a decisive answer to your own heart; whether amidst all these, God the Holy Ghost hath been your Teacher? and whether he hath so taught you, that "Christ is formed in your heart the hope of glory?" Do you ask how this shall be known? The answer is direct.—Wherever an union is formed in the soul with the person of the Lord Jesus, there the Spirit of the Lord Jesus dwells: and certain it is that he dwells in none but where that union is formed by his gracious operation. The language of an apostle to this point is at once plain, and his authority unquestionable: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the spirit of Christ dwell in you. But if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. viii. 9.) Do you know whether he dwells in you? Yes! if as the glorifier of the Lord Jesus, which is his distinguishing character, he humbles *you* to lead to *him*, which is his uniform act. If he convinces you of your emptiness, and the Saviour's fulness, and is bringing you daily, and sometimes hourly, in a way of barter, to resign your sins for his righteousness, your ignorance for his wisdom, your weakness for his strength, and in short, under every want, to see that "all your fresh springs are in him:" these are precious proofs of an union with his person, and as such very clearly manifest in what the truest

preparation, not only for the Supper of the Lord, but for every other ordinance and means of grace, must consist. For by this gracious process of divine teaching, the soul is made sensible of its poverty, its wants, and its misery, and by being continually brought to Christ for every supply, is kept humble and depending; the best state a soul can possibly be found in: and hence acceptance with God is looked for, not in the duty, not in the ordinance, not in repentings, and tears, and services, and prayers, and sacraments; but wholly in the Lord Jesus Christ. All these indeed, as so many gifts of the Holy Spirit, are plain *effects* of divine love, and *evidences* that a spirit of grace is wrought in the heart; but not in the smallest degree the *cause* of salvation: and to trust in them, or to seek healing from the use of them, instead of Christ alone, would ultimately prove the worst of all diseases.

I do not know whether I sufficiently explain myself by these terms to the apprehension of every reader. But I cannot be mistaken, I think, by the humblest capacity, when I observe, that as the express work of the Holy Ghost is in all things "to glorify the Lord Jesus," whatever hath a gracious tendency to this effect, must proceed from his teachings: and as the Saviour is certainly glorified most, when the sinner is most humbled, there cannot be a better evidence that this gracious effect is wrought in *your* heart, than that your duties make you more humble, that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus may be more exalted in your view; or to use the highly-finished experience of the apostle, when you can say as he did; "Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me, for when I am weak (that is, helpless, hopeless, in myself) then am I strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." What saith the reader's experience to

these things? If I have been so highly favoured, through the good hand of my God upon me, as to convince your understanding, that all ordinances void of this life-giving power, this spiritual union with the Lord Jesus, can never bring the heart to God; I shall have carried you, perhaps, much further than you originally intended, and have robbed you of what the unhumbled pride of our nature is ever too much attached to, to part with easily; I mean that *something* which we fancy we have in ourselves, and in our own preparations, to recommend us to the favour of God. This refuge of lies will at once be swept away. For if the only *habitual* state of every truly regenerated believer, must arise from an union with Christ, in being "rooted and grounded in him;" it will as necessarily and unavoidably follow, that the only *actual* preparation for every duty, or ordinance of worship in our approach to God, must originate in the gracious influences and teachings of the Holy Ghost. The going forth of the soul towards the Lord in a way of desire, or in the exercise of love, or hope, or joy, or faith, or repentance, or in short, any other christian grace in the believer upon the person of the Lord Jesus, are particularly his gifts, and proceed from his operation. As He alone is the Interpreter of the mind, both of the Father and the Son to his people, so is he the Interpreter of their mind and desires to the whole GODHEAD; and it is his express work to glorify the Lord Jesus, in taking of the things of Christ to shew unto his people. And if so, what a mass of weakness and folly (to speak the least offensively of it) must be that swarm of books, called *Weekly Preparations*, which human wisdom hath drawn up for the use of communicants, and without which so many formal professors of religion would not venture to go to the Lord's Supper! That they are in direct

opposition to what is taught in scripture is evident, for it is there said, and in the plainest words, that “the preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, are both from the Lord.” (Prov. xvi. 1.) “That the Spirit helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.” (Rom. viii. 26.) And yet in defiance of these plain scriptures, forms of prayer are drawn up in these books for every day in the week, preparatory to the day on which the Lord’s Supper is to be administered, which are directed to be used whether the heart can pray or not, or whether the soul be in a state of joy or grief, of darkness or light, is bowed down with a sense of indwelling sin, or triumphing in the righteousness of the Saviour. If all the wisdom of man was concentrated and brought into one person, and that person should devote a whole life to draw up a form of devotion, which should answer all the wants, and express all the desires of an awakened believer for one single day of his life; he would still find a somewhat unsaid which the heart wished to say, and somewhat said which the heart could not at all times consistently express. And how it could ever enter into the mind of man, that a form could be composed to suit all the various wants and situations of the Lord’s tried family in their approaches to his Supper, is wonderful to conceive! Neither is this all. The very title of these books shews their fallacy. “A Week’s Preparation.” A *week’s* preparation! As if a week’s abstinence from business or pleasure, to which the heart is wedded all the while, could beget a divorce; or a week’s hurrying over a few unfelt prayers, in which the heart is uninterested, could bring the soul nearer to God!—And yet to see how scrupulous *some* are in going regularly through these appointments, as if the whole merit of the service depended upon finishing the prescribed forms, before

they presumed to eat the bread, or to drink the wine at the altar. How hath it grieved my heart upon those occasions to behold *many* (and some of them tottering with age and infirmities) whose long attendance on these forms one might have thought would have been sufficient to have learnt them all by rote, yet regularly spreading their books the moment they have taken the place at the table, and seemingly very anxious to have finished the prayers appointed before the minister approached to give them the elements! Alas! I have said to myself, if those spiritual crutches were taken away from those worshippers, what would they have to lean upon? It might truly be said by them, as Micah by his idols, "Ye have taken away my gods which I made: and what have I more?" (Judges xviii. 24.) Had the apostles of our Lord in the institution of this holy Supper taken with them their Jewish ritual of prayers, and instead of making Him the sole object of their attention, had they been earnest in repeating their forms of worship; what intercourse and real communion would they have lost! And how in this case would the beloved disciple have leaned upon his Lord's bosom?

But I expect a clamour to arise against me here, from among that class of communicants who are tenacious of their books. Perhaps while I am shewing the fallacy of what is called a *weekly* preparation, I shall be misconstrued, as if I discountenanced *all* preparation whatever. But this is far from my design; and the man of candour and sincerity will not, I am persuaded, be under the influence of such an opinion. I do indeed desire to be understood, as very highly reprobating that preparation which is in *man*, because I learn from an authority not to be questioned, that "the preparation of the heart is *from the Lord.*" And hence, I earnestly desire to recom-

mend to every sincere worshipper, to seek the Lord's face, in the Lord's strength. And let me ask; is it not taking the most effectual method, under divine grace, to accomplish this purpose, when, instead of resting on the forms and ceremonies of ordinances, as if the Lord was a Lord of ordinances, we use the ordinance itself but as the channel and medium of drawing nigh unto God? If we attend the Lord's table in the Lord's preparation, and "go forth (as David says he did upon all occasions) in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of his righteousness, even his only;" (Psalm lxxi. 16.) this is a preparation indeed, and which I not only recommend, but earnestly contend for; in which there can be no deception, no mistake, no disappointment. And when God the Holy Ghost hath thus "breathed upon his garden," the church, and the *spices* of grace are *flowing*, whether it be in prayer or praise; then, and not else, believers, which are as "trees of the Lord's planting," will sit under the shadow of ordinances "with great delight, and his fruit will be sweet to their taste."

Suffer me, if it be only for example's sake, to suppose that I am now speaking to some sincere soul, who hath at least the *desire*, if not the *evidence* in himself, of this *habitual* frame of preparation I have been insisting upon, in an union with Christ; and is waiting only now for that *actual* preparation of the heart, which is peculiarly the Spirit's work to accomplish, either for attending the Lord's table, or any other ordinance of worship. In circumstances like these, let the present frame of the mind be what it may, supposing my reader be "under heaviness through manifold temptations;" or walking in darkness from the hidings of the Divine countenance; or complaining of a cold, treacherous and deceitful heart; or bowed down with the weight of sin; or in short is in either of those trying situations well known

to the people of God, which operate at times with peculiar heaviness through in-dwelling corruption, the trials of the world, or the persecutions of the enemy, and induce a state of mind unsuited for the purposes of communion. Now in all these instances, as well as numberless others of a similar nature, which are continually occurring; as both the means and cure are peculiarly among the operations of the Holy Ghost, so from him alone come those gracious and perfect gifts by which that cure can be accomplished. And the method by which he carries on his divine influences in the mind, in illuminating darkened souls; refreshing weary souls; quickening those which cleave to the dust; bringing pardon to those which are bowed down with the burden of sin; strengthening the weak; supporting the feeble minded; comforting the distressed; affording a seasonable relief, as the case may be, having a grace for every time of need: such a view of the gracious work of God the Holy Ghost opens so blessed and profitable a subject of contemplation, that while it affords the most satisfying conviction of the truth of the doctrine itself, in seeing with whom all preparation is lodged; it teaches the soul as humbly to await for those gracious gifts of the Holy Spirit, by which alone the soul can draw nigh profitably unto God. It would not come within the limits which I have proposed to myself in a work of this nature to follow up the subject, in exemplifying in *all* the cases with which it is capable of being explained: but a few of the more prominent will be sufficient to illustrate the doctrine itself, and at the same time serve to shew how, by a parity of reasoning, every sincere worshipper among "the praying seed of Jacob" may apply it to his own case and circumstances, according to the particular state in which he may be exercised.

I will *first* suppose the case of *a state of darkness*, in which the soul is complaining of being forsaken of God, under the hidings of his countenance, walking in darkness and having no light, and crying out in the language of Job : “ Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me ; when his candle shined upon me, and when by his light I walked through darkness ! ” (Job xxix. 2, 3.)

This frame of mind is not uncommon among the Lord’s tried ones ; in which though the union with the person of the Lord Jesus is not destroyed, neither the Spirit’s in-dwelling residence removed, yet the sensible manifestations of his influences are for the present abated or withdrawn.

I stay not so much to enquire into the *cause* of this frame of mind ; (though in our remission of duties, unwatchfulness, spiritual pride, self-confidence, and the like, it might easily be traced ;) but my present business is not so much with the *cause* of the evil, as with the *means* of the cure. And this can proceed from no source, but that preparation of the heart which is from the Lord : for as “ no man hath quickened his own soul, so none can keep alive his own soul.” (Psalm xxii. 30.) But the interesting question is, how is it induced ? Not surely by our prayers, our repentings, tears, humiliations, preparations and the like ! Alas ! a man may run through the whole of these in *self-preparation* and yet be wholly unprepared by the Lord.—For how excellent soever means of grace are in themselves, yet they are but *means*, the whole efficacy of which must be from God ! But if you say, How then shall the soul know when it is the Spirit’s work, and not man’s ? the answer is direct. The very state of the soul will readily distinguish the Lord’s *absence* from his *presence*. For if the Lord be absent, the heart is uninterested, unawakened, like Ephraim’s of old : though “ strangers

have devoured his strength, yet he knoweth it not." (Hosea vii. 9.) He is neither properly affected with his sins, nor distressed with his temptations: the barren frame he is in is hardly felt by him, and still less lamented; and his very prayers if followed, are followed as a duty, and become, what they must ever in this case become, a burthen, not considered as a privilege. But when the Spirit returns (and well is it for sinners that he doth not wait for their first approaches to return) he comes with a quickening, illuminating, and reproofing power. He quickens to a sense of their situation, shines in upon the darkness of the mind, gives them to see their misery, and reproofs them in the cause of it; and thus opening a view of their wants, those wants awaken desire, and that desire begets a hatred of sin, and a longing for the return of the light of the divine countenance. And thus, like Ephraim again, when brought back to the Lord; after they are turned they repent, as he did; and after they are instructed they smite upon their thigh: for they are brought with self-humbling, self-loathing, and self-abhorrence before the mercy-seat; and the blessed Spirit ultimately produces those effects in which David exults, when he says, "O send out thy light and thy truth, that they may lead me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: for I will yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." (Psalm xliii. 3, 4, 5.)

Not unsimilar to the instance of a darkened soul is the case of an offending soul, which while rendered insensible through "the deceitfulness of sin," can find no freedom of approaching God in his ordinances. The book of God affords many melancholy proofs of such a state, in the testimony it gives of scripture saints that were far gone in transgression, and of

some that remained long under its hardening influence. And the present experience of believers but too plainly proves that the same is not uncommon now. For indwelling corruption is the same in all. And there are no gifts, nor graces, nor attainments, nor experiences in the spiritual life, which are in themselves sufficient to keep from falling. But "they that are kept (as we are told by one whose own history afforded him matter of full conviction to certify the truth of it) are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." (1 Peter i. 5.)

And if you have not sufficient strength to keep *from* falling, it can hardly require scripture authority to prove that you cannot restore yourself *when* fallen. And where then is any man's resource, but in the Spirit's gracious work? David was made truly sensible of this in his recovery, and hath left it upon record for the instruction and comfort of others, when fallen: "he restoreth my soul." And well was it for David, and so is it for thousands like David, that our recovery is not the effect of our prayers, but the predisposing grace and mercy of God in Christ. And among all the blessed manifestations of this grace, none can be sweeter, because none can be more affectionately recommended to our tenderest feelings, than the compassion which the Redeemer manifests in the recovery of his sheep straying from the fold: when, according to his own most gracious promise, "he seeks that which was lost, and brings again that which was driven away, and binds up that which was broken, and strengthens that which was sick. And as a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so doth the Lord seek out his sheep, and deliver them out of all places, where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." (Ezek. xxxiv. 16, 12.) And what endears this compassion of the Saviour to his

people still more, is the manner in which this mercy is shewn in their recovery, which is all free, spontaneous, and in a sovereign way, suitable to the greatness of his character, and like himself. Not waiting the return of the backslider, not withholding his mercy until that mercy is implored, but bestowing it very frequently without application, without the smallest pretensions to his favour, and at a time when we have done nothing to merit his returns of love, but have done every thing to deserve his severest displeasure.

How refreshing and consolatory to the heart is such a view of the Redeemer's attachment to his people: that though they so frequently leave him, yet he leaves not them; and hateful as sin is to the purity of his nature, yet the person of the sinner is still the object of his favour. "Though his children break his statutes, and keep not his commandments, and he visits their transgression with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes:" still, there is a blessed *nevertheless* in the covenant, which will not permit "his loving-kindness to be taken from them, nor his faithfulness to fail." (Psalm lxxxix. 34.)

Do these lines appear before one of this description? Have *you*, my brother, wandered from the Lord, and do you now feel that self-loathing and abhorrence which ought to arise in the review of your own perfidy and ingratitude? Is the name, the person, the righteousness, the forbearance and compassion of the Lord Jesus, dear to you; and do you feel the rising desire, the awakening prayer opening in the soul, that Jesus would again "draw you with the cords of his love, that you might run after him?" Go then, my brother, go to the still waters, and the pastures of his ordinances, beside which Jesus "feedeth his flock, and maketh them rest at noon." Depend upon it these feelings of yours are among the

first intimations of his blessed Spirit's work on the soul, in preparing for the renewed visits of his favour. He is coming with grace to pardon, and grace to sanctify, and (as he says himself) to be "as the dew unto Israel." Every gracious movement you feel, is from his blessed Spirit, who turns the heart, and gives repentance to the soul, and carries with it that gracious language of mercy; "thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return again unto me, saith the Lord." (Jer. iii. 1.)

Let me add one instance more (and it shall be but one) of the Spirit's work in the preparation of the heart, I mean when wanderings in times of prayer, the absence of affections, and a coldness and indisposition to divine things, plainly manifest that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, but all our sufficiency must be from God."

It is no uncommon thing with gracious minds, to discover in themselves a greater indisposition to religious duties, when they are actually engaged in those duties; and like the apostle of old, *then*, more especially, "when they would do good, evil is present with them." (Romans vii.) And the reason is plain. Corruption in the heart is then most likely to break out, when we are taking pains to suppress it. And as the swelling tide rages with more fury in proportion to the obstructions it meets with in its way: so the corruptions of our fallen nature will form a tide of a more furious current in our affections, when by drawing nigh to God we seek to throw up a fence to resist, and keep them under.

Neither, in those seasons, do gracious souls find more immediate resistance from the corruptions of their own nature, arising ^{within} *only*; for the temptations of the enemy from without also, as generally assail with most violence when they draw nigh the mercy-seat. He knows full well what effects are in-

duced from the soul's communion with God, to undermine his kingdom in the heart, and therefore as of old, the prophet was shewn when "Joshua the high priest stood before the angel of the Lord, Satan was standing at his right hand to resist him;" (Zech. iii. 1.) even so it is now; when the Lord's people in the righteousness and strength of their spiritual *Joshua* stand before the Lord, Satan still resists, by inducing wandering thoughts, calling off the affections, and harassing the mind with evil suggestions and unbelief, that their prayers may be hindered.

And if you ask, why the Lord permits these things under which his people go heavily from day to day? the answer is direct. It is to humble them before the mercy-seat: to make them more and more sensible of the plague of their own heart: to let them see that all preparation is from the Lord, so that self-confidence may be rooted out, and Christ alone rooted in. By this process of his grace the Lord overrules evil for good, in teaching most feelingly that our best services, our purest prayers, our most holy things, can only "be accepted in the Beloved:" for our very robes must be all washed, as those were which John saw of the saints in glory, "in the blood of the Lamb." All this, I confess, is a humbling lesson to the sinner, but it blessedly tends to the exaltation of the Saviour, when we recollect at all times, that "he bears the iniquity of our most holy things," as the high priest represented him of old. (Exod. xxviii. 38.) And it ought to be the most refreshing consideration to a poor bowed-down soul in the hour of prayer, when groaning under the united pressure of in-dwelling corruption and the attacks of Satan, to call to mind that though we are all sin, Jesus our advocate is all righteous; and while as in ourselves we cannot but appear full of evil before God; yet in him we are accepted, who, while

he appears before God, appears purposely for his people.

In describing the incompetency of man to prepare himself for coming before the Lord, I have indirectly proved (what I am anxious to prove) the necessity of seeking it from God. And if you are among those who know enough of the plague of their own heart, to know its wanderings, its coldness, and frequent indisposition to divine things in seasons of devotion, you will be able to gather enough from hence, under the blessed Spirit's teaching, to know that it is "his Spirit alone, who worketh in his people both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." Beg of him, therefore, my brother, that he will give you that will, and that ability in your hallowed seasons of worship, in calling off the wandering thought, disposing the vacant mind, suppressing the rising corruption, and "when the enemy cometh in like a flood, to lift up Christ Jesus as the standard against him." Oh! it is blessed to feel his gracious influences helping our infirmities, in our seasons of prayer. They are all ordinances of delight, when the Spirit breathes upon them; precious sacraments, precious prayer-days, precious sabbaths, while the Spirit goeth before in his quickening, life-giving power, as the Lord in the camp of Israel, guided their path by the pillar of the cloud; but we drag heavily as Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea, when "the chariot wheels are taken off." (Exod. xiii. 21; and xiv. 25.)

If I have said enough to explain the subject, in proving both the importance of a personal union with the Lord Jesus Christ, as forming an *habitual* preparation for the purpose of enjoying real communion with God; and that the *actual* preparation is in the blessed Spirit's work also, in exciting grace in the heart, and calling forth the exercise of it in every single act of prayer, or praise, or faith, or repent-

ance ; I shall have answered the object I had in view in this little work, and have only to add an humble petition to the footstool of the mercy-seat, that both writer and reader may be brought under the rich anointings of that Holy Spirit, to know, by more than a hear-say knowledge, those precious truths of God. Might I presume to copy after so bright an example of a faithful minister of the Lord, as an apostle, I would beg to adopt his words, and to fold up my paper in his affectionate language : “ For this cause (says he) I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by his Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” (Ephes. iii. 14,—21.)

POSTSCRIPT.

PRESUMING that some one at least of my readers (if it be but *one*) hath received ample conviction, under the divine teaching, of the truth of the doctrine contended for in the foregoing pages : and is not only thoroughly satisfied in his mind that there must be an in-dwelling principle of life wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God, quickening and uniting it to the person of the Lord Jesus, before that there can be any one act of a spiritual nature performed by the soul upon the person of the Lord Jesus, in a way of communion by the medium of ordinances, or in the exercise of faith, or repentance, or prayer, or praise, or, in short, any one grace of the blessed Spirit's operation : presuming, I say, that the reader is not only perfectly satisfied of the absolute necessity of this *habitual* frame of mind being formed in the soul for the enjoyment of God in his ordinances ; but presuming still further, that under this conviction he hath entered yet deeper into the subject, and having made it a matter of close examination in his own heart, and of prayer before God, to know whether he be the highly favoured object of this grace, and hath obtained a full answer in a well-grounded assurance that " Christ is formed in his heart, the hope of glory : " to one of this description and character I conceive it may be further helpful to prosecute the subject yet a few pages more, in the enquiry, how that *actual* preparation in the awakening and going forth of the soul in seasons of worship, may be best promoted. For though (as hath been I hope already fully proved) every grace, as well in its own nature

and principle, as when brought into exercise, is of the blessed Spirit's gift, and cannot come but from his immediate influence ; yet as in the way of ordinances we are commanded to *seek* those out-pourings of the Holy Ghost, it may well engage our enquiry in what way are believers to be found waiting his gracious visits in an attendance on ordinances, and more especially that blessed ordinance of the Lord's own appointment in the holy supper. (Ezekiel xxxvi. 37.)

In reply to this question, and in venturing to suggest a few leading directions which appear to me, I confess, most likely, under God's blessing, to promote this desirable end, I shall suppose myself addressing *one* who is uniformly living in the *habitual* frame which I have before described, of a real believer in Christ ; going in and out in the engagements of the various means by which a principle of grace is kept alive in the soul, whether in public or private ; the closet, the family, or the church. I shall suppose my reader to be thus living " a life of faith on the Son of God : " not in the short and occasional trammels of a *week's* preparation, but in the daily and sometimes hourly pursuit of the " one thing needful," and seeking the Lord's face in the Lord's strength ; and is now come to the house of prayer, and to the table of Jesus, under the humble hope of enjoying communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Now in what ever frame of mind the heart may be, (and certainly in so large and tried a family as the Lord's is, there will be a great variety in the several circumstances and frames of mind among the several characters of it,) yet the approaches of the Lord's household for the supply of their several wants will be one and the same. And the proclamation at the table is as gracious as it is extensive, and as pressing as it is promising : " Ho ! every one that thirsteth,"

is the cry, "come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat, yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." And while the invitation goeth forth "to the hungry and the heavy-laden, the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind," the only precedence shewn at the table of Jesus is, that the most famished is the first to be supplied. And so very accommodating hath this gracious service, as a channel of conveying spiritual mercies, been found, that while to some it becomes a *commemorating* ordinance, to others it hath proved a *quickenig*, or *confirming*, and others again have found it a *communicating*, *strengthening*, and *refreshing*, and not a few have experienced it to be a *sealing* ordinance. But "all these worketh that one and the self same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

Impossible, however, as it may be, to speak on a subject so extensive in its nature as to suit the exact state of every believer's experience, which not only differs in a thousand instances from each other, but is continually varying in our own circumstances also ; I conceive that the short interval between the morning service of the church and the approach at the table, might be most advantageously employed by every believer, so as to invite the influences of the Holy Spirit, and prepare the soul for the more awakened approach to the table. And there are such an infinite variety of subjects to call up earnest prayer and meditation, on which the mind might ruminatè in the many solemn circumstances of the moment, as is enough to engage the warmest affections of the soul. If, for example, I were to attend the house of God upon this occasion, during the interval in which the service is suspended after the morning preaching is ended, and while the servant who ministers at the table is preparing for the ordinance ; I would en-

deavour to awaken my attention to that interesting service, by calling to my recollection the vast and essential difference in the privilege of those who approach to God in the ordinances *now*, compared to the Old Testament dispensation. The apostle hath beautifully represented it. "Ye are not come (says he) to the mount which burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest:" you are not drawing nigh in the *old* covenant of works; you are not set without the *rail*, which even to touch produced instant death; but you are come to Mount Sion, "the city of the living God; the heavenly Jerusalem; the general assembly and church of the first born; to God the Judge of all; and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." *Your* Jesus, recollect, if so be that union is formed in the soul. *You* are brought "within the vail, and having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," *you* are not only permitted, but even commanded "to draw nigh with full assurance of faith." And such views of mercy and clemency will certainly tend to excite thankfulness and an holy confidence. For in my apprehension it forms one of the highest privileges of the believer, thus to draw nigh to the mercy seat: for it is this which makes ordinances sweet, when we approach with the freedom of children, and not with the spirit of bondage. And if you, my brother, in this interval of worship will call up your thoughts, examine the ground of your confidence, and lean by direct acts of faith upon the person and righteousness of the Mediator, you will find this to be the direct way to God, for the express purpose of enjoying communion with him, both in this and in every ordinance of devout worship.

But if you ask the question, what prayer would you recommend upon this occasion before the service begins? That prayer, and that prayer only, which

grace shall awaken in the heart. To prescribe a *form* of prayer; to suppose that *any* form can possibly suit the various wants of the soul; or to suppose that the soul can be satisfied upon those occasions with even *general* expressions, which always imply a sad vacancy and a state of ignorance respecting its own wants and necessities; is to suppose a state of great deadness indeed! Can you, my brother, be satisfied with a situation like this? Have you no *special* request to make known unto God? What! are you come to the table, even the table of Jesus, and do you see him as it were with the eye of faith on his throne of grace, and behold him holding forth the sceptre of his mercy, and asking in those endearing words: "What is thy petition, and what is thy request, and it shall be performed?" and have you no petition or request to give in? Alas! prayer itself must ever be an heavy burthen and an irksome task, if the soul hath nothing particular to pray for, no grace to ask, no want to be supplied, no infirmity to deplore, nor temptation to be strengthened against, nor any lately received mercy to acknowledge. Do you say you know not how to express yourself in prayer? So said the apostle when he found confidence in the teaching of the Holy Ghost. "We know not (says he) what to pray for as we ought." But "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities," when our "groanings cannot be uttered." So thought Hezekiah, when he offered up one of the sweetest, because one of the most successful prayers, we have upon sacred record. He tells us, he could only "mourn as a dove, and chatter like a swallow." (Isa. xxxviii. 14.) And when the soul can only mourn or sigh, or in broken sentences pour out its wants before God, nay, when it can do neither, the *look* of faith, as of the dying Israelites in the wilderness, will form the most expressive prayer: the promise is, "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet

speaking, I will hear." (Isa. lxxv. 24.) "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else: beside me there is no Saviour." (Isa. xlv. 21, 22.)

I shall suppose that the soul is thus engaged in prayer and meditation during the interval of worship between the sermon and the ordinance, and that the mind is roused to attend to the immediate service of the table in the call of the minister, "Let your light so shine," &c. From this period the whole attention ought to be taken up in a close regard to the interesting service of the table, that God the Holy Ghost, whose gracious work it is "to take of the things of Jesus to shew to his people," may mercifully make it the medium of divine blessings, in bringing the heart *to* God, and revealing *God* to the heart. To offer any observations by way of comment in explaining the several parts of the service, would in a great measure defeat its own purpose. The gracious promise of God is, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." It is, therefore, an highly injurious attempt, in my esteem, to interrupt the mind in such seasons, by calling off the attention from waiting on *divine* teaching, to listen to what is *human*. And supposing (what we cannot but suppose) that the soul is under those suitable impressions which a conscious drawing near the Lord Jesus in his ordinance cannot but induce; while we desire to sit down at his feet, to offer him our hearts, and to "hear the gracious words which proceed out of his mouth," such a frame of mind supersedes the necessity of all other instruction.

The only part of our communion service where any foreign aid, in my opinion, may be thrown in as helpful to keep up attention, is in that interval which is unoccupied during the season of *others'* receiving. In large communions such as ours is, this interval includes by much the largest portion of time spent at

the table; and for which no provision is made. But if I am right, it forms so precious a season, that I venture to think, if it were profitably employed, would exercise some of the best christian graces, and afford the highest pleasures of devotion.

In respect to the particular *time* of receiving, whether among the communicants at the *first*, or *last*, or any *intermediate* table, I have nothing to recommend. For this I conceive should be regulated by every one's own personal feeling. The plan I should observe myself, would be to go to the table in that moment when I found my heart most drawn towards it. So that if in the early season of administering, I found grace much in exercise, I should then desire to draw nigh. If on the contrary, a deadness or indisposition prevailed in the early part of the service, I should wait for another table, lying low in the mean time before the Lord for his quickening influences. And if several tables should have been dismissed before I found a freedom to approach, perhaps a nearer view of the table and the sight of others waiting round the cloisters of our Bethesda might awaken desire, and hence I should draw near. But if none of these things had effect upon the present coldness or darkness of my heart, I should still hope in the very moment of receiving, the Lord might manifest himself to the soul. That kind expression directed by the minister, and personally applied by the Holy Spirit; "the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for *thee*;" hath been found to awaken desire, when every other hath failed, and prompted the soul to cry out under its influence, "Lord, how is it thou dost thus manifest thyself to me, and not unto the world?"

It never should be forgotten also, that at the table of Jesus we sit around it as children of one and the same family, and are intimately connected with the spiritual concerns of each other. So that unless we

enjoy what is called the communion of saints, as well as communion with the Lord, we lose part, and a very sweet part also, of our enjoyments. Hence, therefore, a soul truly alive to divine things enters with a warmth of affection into all the personal interests of every believer around him. He makes their wants his own; and their cases, as far as he knows them, or supposes what they are, the subject of his prayers. He knows the Lord's family is a tried family, and therefore by praying with them, and praying for them, he feels that brotherly interest which is abundantly recompensed in the very engagement, and tends to unite the heart both to them and to the Lord. And let no one suppose that these employments form any parenthesis in our own devotions: if they did, indeed, they would still carry with them their own apology. But the truth is, they are so sweetly constituted, and over-ruled by the great Head of his family, that while we pray for them, we do indeed pray for ourselves.

I only throw out these few hints to shew how very interesting a part of divine service it affords, and how advantageously every moment of that large interval which necessarily occurs during the administering to many tables might be employed this way. But whether the reader shall enter with me, or not, into the full opinion; *one* point respecting it I must contend for, and that is, that we preserve *communion* with the service, throughout every part at least, that our prayers are offered up for every table, both at their *entrance* and *dismission*, that suitable blessings may be bestowed upon them according to their wants, and the fulness to supply which is in Christ Jesus.

I add no more, but the prayer of Hezekiah, "that the good Lord may pardon every one that draweth nigh to seek God, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary."

THREE TRACTS
ON THE SAME SUBJECT OF
THE LORD'S SUPPER:

I.

THE LORD'S FAMILY, THE ONLY INVITED GUESTS AT THE LORD'S TABLE.

II.

THE KING COMING IN TO SEE THE GUESTS AT HIS TABLE.

III.

THE KING SITTING WITH HIS GUESTS AT HIS TABLE.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A Guide to the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper ;

AND

THE WELCOME GUEST AT THE LORD'S TABLE.

THE LORD'S FAMILY
 THE ONLY INVITED GUESTS
 AT THE LORD'S TABLE.

AND how is this proved? Are none invited to the Lord's Supper but the Lord's people? I answer, No. And it is proved from Scripture; and in terms which cannot be mistaken; for they are very plain, and very full, and satisfactory. Among a great variety of evidences to this amount, take the following:

First. From the *Names* by which that sacred ordinance is called.

It is called *the Lord's Supper*. Now a supper is a family meal. Whatever way-faring men may have passed by in the day, and had refreshment, yet, at the supper it is the household only who are supposed to be present, and no intruders. The master of every well regulated family is supposed to have shut his doors at even, having first gathered his little ones around him, and presented them with himself before the throne of the Lord; and then, the whole sit down together to supper, and bless the Lord in their food before they retire to rest. In like manner, the Lord Jesus having in the end of the world, as it is called, "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," sits down at this ordinance which he hath instituted in perpetual memory of himself and sacrifice; and being

encircled with his family, and no strangers present, he feasts himself with his redeemed, and they with him, in this holy Supper. He is supposed to be so intimately present with them in spirit, to lead them into blessed and endearing views of himself, as he was with the disciples of old, when he first ordained this service. And the same or similar soul warming, soul comforting, soul strengthening discourses, which he delivered *then*, are in effect, delivered to his family *now*. And, therefore, it can be none but his family, his children, his body the church, can be bidden to the Supper. And while none others are invited, not one of these, his household, should be absent. The Lord's Supper is a standing ordinance in the church, to shew that salvation is wholly on the ground of Christ's person, blood, and righteousness. Here upon earth, the church is gathered to Jesus, to celebrate it *by faith*. And ere long, in heaven the whole family will be brought together in one vast assembly, to celebrate it *by sight*. Hence the Lord's Supper is for the Lord's family, and they are the only invited guests at the Lord's table. They only will be, and not a single one of them absent, "at the marriage Supper of the Lamb." (See John xiv. 15, 17. Rev. xix. 9.)

Again. It is called *the Communion*. And what, as far as relates to Christ, is a communion, but Christ as the head, and his people the body, formed and united in one? Hence they, and they only, have communion with him, and he with them. But what communion without union? Supposing a body not united *to* Christ, what possible enjoyment can there be *of* Christ? There must be a uniting to Christ by regeneration, before there can be a communion with him in his gifts and graces. Without being quickened by a new and spiritual life *in* Christ, there can be no partaking *of* Christ. For supposing that I had

not sprung from the Adam of the earth, I should have had no part in Adam's transgression : so, in like manner, if I have no quickening by the Adam, the Lord from heaven, I can have no part in Christ's redemption and righteousness. There may be, and it is to be feared there too often is, a rushing to the ordinance of the Communion by persons unquickened by grace, and unregenerated by the Spirit. But this is no real communion with Christ. Such persons may have communion with the bread and with the wine, but they have none with Christ. They cannot say with Paul as they receive it, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" These are spiritual enjoyments, and known only by the Lord's family. Judas was at the Lord's table. Judas had communion with the bread and wine at the table. Judas received the sop. Judas had the outward sign. But Judas never knew what was the inward and spiritual grace. He had no part or lot in the matter. The communion with Christ, can be had by none but those which have union with Christ. It is the children only, which have a right to the children's bread. The Lord's family are the only invited guests to the Lord's table.

Once more. It is called *the Lord's Passover*. Christ our Passover is said "to have been sacrificed for us." And, therefore, it is added, "let us keep the feast," (1 Cor. v. 7, 8.) And every child of God, regenerated by the Holy Ghost, that by grace can say with Paul, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;" may with equal truth, and indeed ought with holy boldness, to say, "Let us keep the feast." And, hence it appears that this feast, which is a feast upon that sacrifice, can be truly kept by none but such for whom that sacrifice was made, and who have interest in that

sacrifice. It were a folly to talk of a feast by way of commemorating a mercy, and yet unconscious of the mercy itself. It is the people of God which have redemption by Christ's sacrifice; and, consequently, they only can be interested to keep a feast upon it. To every other there can be neither sacrifice nor feast. As it was with Israel of old in their passover, so is it with the true Israel of God now. The passover was to them a token of the Lord's deliverance of them. The supper of the Lord is with us a representation of our deliverance by Christ's death. With them it was a *shadow* of Christ. To us and them Christ is the *substance*. And the feast upon it is our memorial to the Lord, as theirs was for an ordinance for ever, (Exod. xii. 12.) Hence the Lord's family are here again discovered to be the only invited guests at the Lord's table.

Lastly, to add no more. It is called, and by the Lord Jesus himself at the institution of it, *the New Testament in Christ's blood*, (Luke, xxii. 20.) And what is a testament, but the giving legacies by will? When the testator dies the will is proved, and the gifts contained therein are paid. Hence, Jesus makes his will, his testament, and seals it in his blood. The ordinance of the New Testament in the holy Supper is instituted, and the several legatees are invited to come, and give in their claim for what Jesus hath left them. But what have the rest, not mentioned in his will, to do there, when they have no legacies to receive? There must be first a right to prove the Lord's will; and at the same time to prove our relationship to the Lord, as mentioned in his will; and then, and not before, we come to his table for our legacies. So that it is Christ's church, Christ's spouse, his children, his people, his redeemed, his chosen, which are the invited guests at the Lord's table. The Lord's words are: "Gather (he saith) my saints together,

those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice," (Psalm, l. 5.)

I do not think it proper to dwell upon the names by which the holy Supper is sometimes, but very improperly called. I mean the *Sacrament* and the *Companion to the Altar*; for both are unscriptural. The *Sacrament* was a term borrowed from heathens. The Roman soldiers used to call their oaths sacraments. And to talk of *Altar* services, or *Companions to the Altar*, in reference to the Lord's Supper, is still more highly improper. For to call the communion table in churches the altar is sinful. Believers in Christ have no altar but Christ himself. He is our New Testament Altar, our only Sacrifice, and only High Priest, and Sacrificer. There can be no other. And with respect to *Companions to the Altar*, with all the trumpery which poor unregenerated persons rest upon in going to the Lord's table; all can only be the result of the blindness and ignorance of their minds. The Lord the Spirit is the sole Companion to Christ the Altar; and every preparation of the heart of man and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord, (James i. 17.) But enough hath been said, under the first branch, from the *names* by which the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is known, in proof that the Lord's family are the only invited guests at the Lord's table.

Secondly. I go on to observe, that the *Invitations* given to the Lord's Supper, become a further proof to the same point, for they are given *only* to the Lord's family. And this confirms the truth yet more.

Now in following up this evidence let it be observed, that the whole scriptures of God in all the proclamations of mercy are held forth to the poor, to the maimed, to the halt, and the blind. The gospel itself is not set forth in more full and extensive characters, to shew the rich and free and boundless

grace of God in Christ; than the persons are described, to whom that grace will be welcomed from their conscious sense of their great need of it. And it is worthy remark, that in addition to all that had been said before by Christ himself, and all his servants, in encouraging every broken-hearted sinner to come to him; Jesus closed his public preaching with a loud call: and the Holy Ghost closed his sacred canon of scripture with the same. For thus we read: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." (John vii. 37, 38.) And of the Holy Ghost we read, in the last chapter of the Bible and almost the last verse: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him that heareth say, come; and let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. xxii. 17.)

But then, let it be well understood, both in those scriptures and in the whole tenor of the word of God, the *persons* invited are defined by their qualities, and their wants are described; by which alone is discoverable their need of Christ, and his usefulness to them. If any man *thirst*: the man must thirst, or he will never desire the water of life. If any *will*: the soul must be *made willing* in the day of Christ's power; or the person of Christ, and the salvation by Christ will have no charms with him. And elsewhere in scripture they are defined as *the poor in spirit*; as *the needy in soul*; the *halt* by sin; and the *blind* in heart; yea, by nature, "dead in trespasses and sins!" And who are these but the Lord's people in nature, and whom the Lord calls by grace? So saith the Holy Ghost by his servant James. "Hearken my beloved brethren! hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?" (James ii. 5.) Here we see their characters, and

prove their relationship. They are God's children, though poor. They are heirs of the kingdom, though in wretched circumstances. Hence they are the Lord's family, and as children manifest their right to their Father's table.

And as the word of God thus defines their persons, and draws the features by which they are distinguished; so the work of grace upon their hearts demonstrates that they are the guests, and the only guests the word of God all along hath in view, to whom the word of salvation is sent. The Lord's table is the Lord's gift, and not man's desert. He that invites the guests provides the fare. He that spreads the table gives the appetite. And that soul, and that soul only, and every soul of this description to whom Jesus is welcome as a free, full, and complete Saviour, shall be welcome to Jesus as a poor, needy, and helpless sinner. And who, in every instance, can this be, but the redeemed of Christ? Who but they that belong to Christ can be welcome to Christ, or Christ to them? Who can indeed feast with a full spiritual appetite upon a full Saviour, but the hungry, longing, perishing sinner? To offer Christ to any other, is like proposing medicine to the healthy, or food to the dead. The Lord's family are the only invited guests at the Lord's table!

Thirdly. In addition to the two former marks of the *names* by which that sacred ordinance is known, and the *invitations* which are only given to the Lord's people; let me further observe, that the *preparations* for the real enjoyment of the Lord's Supper most plainly prove also, that the Lord's family are the only invited guests at the Lord's table.

None but God can dispose the heart to seek God. He that would draw nigh to God, must seek the Lord's face in the Lord's strength. "The preparation of the heart of man, and the answer of the

tongue, are both from the Lord." (Prov. xvi. 1.) Now it is the Lord's family only that can be prepared. For when by grace the poor sinner is brought out of darkness into light; hath felt the plague of his own heart; and been led to see somewhat of the loveliness, and suitableness, and all-sufficiency of Jesus for salvation; he is then in a state of grace before God, and *habitually* at all times prepared for the Supper, and every other ordinance of the Lord. And when at any time the Lord the Spirit calls forth the graces he hath given him into exercise, he is then *actually* prepared for every spiritual enjoyment of the Lord. This is what John meant when he said, "We have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And this is what David prayed for, when he said, "O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thine holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the Altar of God (Christ, God's Altar); to God my exceeding joy." (Psalm xliii. 6, 7.)

And if the preparation of the heart be wholly from the Lord, what a folly must it be (to speak in the least harsh terms of it,) to take up a round of books and week's preparation, which thousands make use of to qualify them for the Supper of the Lord! The very title of those books is enough to convince any man, if he was not doubly blind, of their folly. A *week's* preparation! What, is the Lord to be served by *weeks*? Is the change of heart the work of a *week*; to be put off and put on, as those persons do their books, only before and after the Communion? How hath it grieved my soul when I have beheld many of this complexion, and some of them grown old in the service, coming to the Lord's table with their books, and running through all the words which are there taught them before receiving; and then again after, ere they ventured to leave the table. Might not the

greatest charity say with the prophet, "Surely these are poor, these are foolish, they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God." (Jer. v. 4.)

All these considerations (and others that, if needful, might be added) plainly prove, that the Lord's preparations of the heart are the only preparations; and as the Lord's people are the only prepared people for his service, it is they, and they only, to whom the invitation to his Supper is sent. Of consequence, the Lord's family are the only invited guests at the Lord's table.

And now if the reader wishes to prosecute the subject further, he may read another Tract on the same service, entitled, *THE KING COMING IN TO SEE THE GUESTS AT HIS TABLE*. In the meantime, if what hath been here proposed shall have proved satisfactory to any one of the Lord's humbled ones; if it hath carried, under God's grace, conviction to his heart, respecting both the nature and design of the Lord's Supper; for whom it is provided; who are the invited; and by whom all preparation for the worthy partaking of it is given: and if the reader hath a well-grounded hope in himself that he is one of the Lord's family, perhaps he may find his mind under the same gracious influence, led to the mercy-seat to express his wants and desires, in terms not unlike the following prayer:—

P R A Y E R.

GRACIOUS Lord God! Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! In the name of thy dear and blessed Son, I pray for grace to present myself at thy mercy seat. It hath been proclaimed in thy church, and to thy people, that my Lord is about to hold a feast at his table on the sacrifice of Christ's broken body and blood. Lord! may I be of the happy number? I would come as a poor needy sinner. And I would pray my God, who spreads his table and invites his guests, to prepare my otherwise unprepared soul, both to accept the invitation, and to be found a welcome guest before thee.

I look up to thee, O thou blessed and eternal Spirit! who art the alone quickener of dead souls, and the glorifier of Christ Jesus; that thou wouldest work in me, both to will and to do of thy good pleasure. Oh! give me such a deep view of sin; and with it such a deep view of the fulness, suitableness, and all sufficiency of redeeming grace in Christ; that while my soul feels, as it ought to feel, an abiding sense of my own total unworthiness before God; the the view of Jesus and his finished salvation may comfort and encourage me. Bring me, Lord, to that fountain which is open for sin and uncleanness. Wash me, and make me white, in the blood of the Lamb! Clothe me with the robe of Jesus's righteousness, that when the King comes in to see the guests at his table, I may be found by him in the wedding garment of his righteousness, and have a gracious reception!

And oh! thou blessed Redeemer! thou who art the Lord of the feast, and the whole substance of it! wilt thou be graciously pleased to manifest thyself to me at thy table; and while thou art visiting one

and another of thy redeemed there, with the smiles of thy love, oh! for some sweet token to my poor soul also, given me by thine own hand. Let me hear thy voice; let me see thy countenance: for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely!

Everlasting praise to my God and Father for taking me into this covenant of grace, and for having given me to his dear Son. Lord accept me in him. Give me to know my adoption character in him: and both here and for ever may my soul be found holy in him, and without blame before thee in love. And may my soul be in such lively actings of faith at the table of thy dear Son, that I may enjoy all the blessings of thy covenant love in Jesus Christ. Glory be to Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, now and for ever. Amen.

THE KING COMING IN TO SEE

THE

GUESTS AT HIS TABLE.

“AND the wedding was furnished with guests.” Yes! So we read concerning the gospel feast, in the days of Christ’s flesh. And such is it now at the Lord’s Supper, in the day of Christ’s power!

When the Lord’s servants *now*, as did the Lord’s servants *then*, go forth to call in the spiritually poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind; there will be also numbers come with them of very different characters: and who, from never having felt soul sickness, can never desire soul healing. Such have no part nor lot in the matter. It is in this present hour, in the calling of the church out of the *spiritual* Egypt of sin, as it was of old in the bringing up the church out of the *natural* Egypt of the world: a mixed multitude went up with them, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. And thus hath it always been, and must always be, while the church is dwelling in this world, and the pure seed groweth up among the tares. What the Lord Jesus once said on this subject must hold everlastingly true: “For many are called, but few chosen.” The gospel, like the public bell of the church, is calling in the children of the kingdom to their feast. But while this is doing, others uncalled will thrust themselves in with them. But here is discoverable the distinction. The truly called are said to be “the called according to God’s purpose. For whom he did predestinate, them he also called.”

(Rom. viii. 28, 30.) Hence the church sings her hymn, to the divine praise, for this grace. "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling : not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.) Whereas the un-called hear only the voice, and neither know the want of grace, nor can sing of salvation.

And what is the remedy for these things? And how shall the godly discern the ungodly? The answer is : it is not their province upon all occasions. And though holy men lament it, yet the Lord, who appoints things as they are, and is training his children in this school, makes them thereby exercise the greater jealousy over their own hearts concerning it. But neither the best taught ministers nor saints can see through all coverings, so that in every case they might separate the precious from the vile. But there is One that can, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who saith, "All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts." (Rev. ii. 18, 23.) And when he cometh in to see the guests at his table he doth all this ; for "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. iv. 13.)

In the mean time let the child of God take this with him as a sure mark of comfort. Every truly invited guest at the Lord's table covets above all things the Lord's presence. He waits with holy joy for the Lord's coming in to see the guests at his table, and to feast with them. For what would the table, or the things upon the table, be without Christ? The language of his heart is, what think ye? Will not Jesus come to the feast? Oh, yes! Jesus must come, he is engaged to come, he is constrained to come. For Jesus knows that it is a day of *want* to his people. And, therefore, he hath bidden them to

come boldly to the throne of grace, that "they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." And Jesus knows that it is a day of *trouble*, and he hath said, "I will be with thee in trouble." So that the Lord is sure to be there. And as to the Lord's examination of his guests, it is none but graceless, unawakened, unregenerated souls which shrink from Jesus's enquiry. The child of God longs for the Lord's coming that he may be tried. He desires to be sifted to the uttermost, as a poor needy creature, depending wholly upon Christ. He tries himself. He begs every child of God that he meets with to try him. And lest creatures may overlook his sins and corruptions, he looks to the Lord to try him. His language is, "Try me, O God, prove me, search my thoughts, see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.)

Let us figure to ourselves what one of the parables of Jesus saith: "The wedding was furnished with guests." And now what follows? "When the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on the wedding garment; and he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." (Matt. xxii. 11, 12.) It should seem to have been the custom in Eastern countries, at their weddings, to provide the guests with wedding garments. And it is possible that this man had refused it, being better pleased with his own. But whether this was the cause or not, certain it is, that if this parable be considered in allusion to the Lord's marriage with our nature, every soul united to Christ is clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. And as the holy Supper, which Jesus hath instituted, is intended to represent, both our union with Christ and our redemption by Christ; the wedding garment which is

provided for all the guests, is worn by all the guests ; and that soul which is not clothed with it, however he thrust himself in to the table, was never invited there, and will be thrust out, when the Lord comes in to see the guests at the table ; and like this man, being Christless, he is speechless. Very sweet and precious is the holy Supper thus considered, as an emblem of union with Christ, and redemption by Christ. And the Lord which makes the feast makes every provision for the feast. He is himself both the meat and the drink, both garment and covering. Hence every redeemed soul sings, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God. For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness : as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Isaiah lxi. 10.)

The man without a wedding garment is the representative of all ; be they many or be they few who are found in the day of the King's coming in to see the guests at his table, as well as in the day of every other enquiry, and especially the great day of God, without the garment of Christ's righteousness. And I pray the reader to observe, it is not said, that this man had *no* garment ; for no doubt he had one : but then it was his own ; one of his own providing ; probably such as many men wear now—the tattered garment of their own : the Pharisee garment—"God I thank thee that I am not as other men are !" A motly garment made up of law and gospel ; partly a man's own merit, and partly the merit of Christ. Oh, what multitudes clothe themselves in this covering ! (Isaiah xxx. 1.) They deal with God in, and through Christ, as a procuring cause only for acceptance ; but then it is their own prayers, their faith, their repentance, obedience, and the like, to which they look for

the obtaining of God's favour. They suppose that God will accept, as they call it, their sincere and best good deeds for Christ's sake; and therefore the garment they appear in before God, is this motley garment of their own.

As the clear apprehension of this doctrine is of the utmost importance, both for our appearance before the Lord at his table, and every other ordinance of worship now; as well as when the King comes in finally and fully, to separate the precious from the vile; I would beg the reader to attend to the proper distinction of the subject yet a little more particularly. If he would desire to avoid the awful state of the man as described in the parable, it would be wise to seek for grace to avoid his conduct: for the man that is Christless *now*, cannot but be speechless *then*.

That the righteousness of Christ, and his righteousness only, is the wedding garment of the Lord's people, is evident from the smallest consideration. Look at every other, and observe what a flimsy covering all must make.

Suppose a man were to go in a covering of his own good works. What is a man's own good works? What are alms deeds, and charity, and the milk of human kindness as it is called? Where did a man get these things? What hath any man which he differeth in from another, but what he hath first received? Who is it maketh one man poor, and another rich? For a man to go to God for acceptance because he hath been charitable, and kind, and humane, is to insult God with his own gifts. The Holy Ghost, by the Apostle, hath said that "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. xiv. 23.) Hence it will follow, that whatever is given in charity, without an eye to God in Christ, is not only void of merit, but, on the contrary, it is sin. So that so far are the good works, as the world calls them, in acts of almsgiving

and charity, means of recommending to God, that they insult God: and the proud self-righteous person in this garment of ostentation, will be found naked and guilty before God. Perhaps it may be said by some, that upon this statement all the high-sounding deeds of thousands which have filled the world with their praises will come to nothing. To which I answer, No doubt they will. Yea! I go further, and say, that they will be found to originate in pride and sin. For God the Holy Ghost saith, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." All the charities of life, all the gifts of men, all the pretended love to the scriptures of God, while destitute of faith in Christ, and solely given with an eye to his glory, is sin before God. Remember what the Holy Ghost saith, "Without faith it is impossible to please him." (Heb. xi. 6.)

Again: Suppose a man to go in the confidence of his own righteousness, in justice and morality, and what the world calls an holy life; what are these in the sight of God? Supposing, what we know to be impossible, supposing a life of uprightness and conscientious dealing among men; yet what recommendation can this bring with it in the sight of God? "If thou be righteous, (saith Elihu,) what givest thou him? or what receiveth he at thine hand?" (Job xxxv. 7.) My brother! pause over this thought! Supposing man could stand before God in such a righteousness as this, how would the scripture be true which declareth "the whole world to be guilty before God?" And in this case what would become of the blood-shedding and righteousness of Christ?

Once more. Neither doth the wedding garment mean the graces of the Holy Ghost in faith, repentance, and amendment of life. For though these are very blessed fruits of the Spirit, and shew the work of God to have been wrought in the renewed soul,

and are highly essential as evidences of a change of heart; yet are they but *fruits* and *evidences* only, and by no means a *cause*, or even a *party cause* in the soul's acceptance before God. Christ alone is the *cause*, and every part of scripture confirms the truth that we "are accepted *only* in the beloved."

If it be demanded then, What is the wedding garment? The word of God shews: it is the finished righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. A garment completely whole, and one entire covering. It is as the robe of Jesus at the cross, which was without seam woven from the top throughout. A garment never to be sullied nor worn out. A robe that can never fade. The covering of the church of God to all eternity. In which God our Father beholds all his children, and in which they now are alike beheld upon earth and in heaven. Reader! have you this garment? Is it your *sole* covering? It is a wedding garment. Are you married to Jesus? Is he your head, your husband, your Redeemer, Saviour, the Lord your righteousness? Lord! grant that when the King cometh in to see the guests at his table, I may be so clothed; and sure I am I shall find a gracious welcome.

Supposing then, that at the King's coming in to see the guests at his table, the child of God is thus found, what will be the corresponding affections? This forms a very suitable enquiry; and the result of it under grace is blessed.

The *cause* will be discoverable in the purposes, counsel, will, and pleasure of God. And the *effects* will follow. In the *cause* we discover the original and eternal love of God the Father, the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. And the *effects* wrought in the heart from this source will be as evident and plain.

If God my Father hath *chosen* me in Christ, *adopted*

me in Christ, *accepted* me in Christ; and if Christ hath betrothed me to himself, married me to himself, and redeemed me to himself; and if the Holy Ghost hath regenerated, quickened, illuminated, called me from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto the living God; surely all the blessed consequences must follow; and I that was once darkness am now light in the Lord! Is it so then; and am I thus found at his appearing, and in his kingdom? Am I acquainted with the plague of my own heart? Do I feel my own emptiness, and am I sensible of Christ's all-sufficiency? Is he the fairest and loveliest unto me, and the chiefest among ten thousand? Surely, if these things be so, I shall rejoice to be found at all ordinances of my Lord, and be delighted when the King comes in to see the guests at his table.

Again: If under the sense of our own nothingness and Christ's all-sufficiency, we are looking forth with holy joy to our Lord's coming, that when he comes in to see the guests we may sup with him and he with us; this will give another sweet evidence of our preparedness for his coming. It is our completeness *in him* that is our joy, and not our own attainments *by him*. It is blessed, indeed, when we can say the Lord is our portion; but far more blessed to know that we are his. For his right in us is the *cause*. Our's in him the *effect*. Here, as in the case of love, it must be said, "if we love him, it is because he first loved us."

Reader! what saith your soul's experience to these things? Are these your tokens? Do you thus know Christ? Are you thus adorned with the wedding garment, that when the King comes to see the guests at his table, you may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming? If so found, and so graciously prepared by God the Holy Ghost,

I venture to believe that your whole soul will go forth to meet him; and in somewhat of divine breathings like what follows, if awakened by grace, you will pour out your heart before him:

P R A Y E R.

GREAT Master of the feast! Precious Lord Jesus! by every great and glorious name, and by every tender and endearing name would my soul call upon thee, and welcome my Lord at his own table! Lord! I pray thee come in and see thy guests at thy table. Thou art thyself all the feast. Thou art the Sacrifice, the Sacrificer, and the Altar of thine offering. For by that one offering of thyself once offered, thou hast perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Behold, Lord! thy redeemed, thy children, thy people, here met at thine invitation to be fed by thy bounty, and to commemorate the sweet memorial of thy death. Lord! be thou with us in every part of the feast.

Surely, God our Father hath drawn us here, for Jesus himself hath said, that none can come unto him except the Father, which hath sent Jesus, draw him. Surely, God the Spirit hath inclined our souls to come here; for it is he that hath put an hungering and thirsting in our souls after Jesus, and which none but Jesus himself can satisfy. And, surely, God the Son hath invited us here; for Jesus did promise that when he was lifted up he would draw all to him! O precious testimonies of a precious covenant God in Christ. Here then we are come; and may the Lord give all his people a gracious welcome!

And is Jesus the King come in to see the guests at his table? Surely, then we shall have a blessed time of it! Lord! behold we are thine! Are we not all clothed in thy wedding garment? Sit down, dearest Lord! at the head of thine own table. Break to us the bounties which thou thyself hast spread. And, oh! that every guest among the poor, and hungry, redeemed of thy family, may hear for himself those blessed words, and feel the sweetness of them to his soul, in the Lord's own invitation: "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Amen.

THE KING
SITTING WITH HIS GUESTS
AT HIS TABLE.

It was blessedly said by the church of old, at a time when grace and faith were in lively exercise, and the church conscious of her Lord's presence, "While the King (said she) sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." And such must always be the case when Jesus comes to feast his redeemed. If the spikenard of Mary filled all the house with the odour, when she only anointed the feet of Jesus; what everlasting perfume must be the fragrancy of Christ's person and bloodshedding to fill heaven and earth, when "he offered himself an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour?"

Reader! look, I pray you, and figure to yourself, by faith, the lovely table of the Lord Jesus spread with the emblems of Christ's body and blood. See Jesus sitting at the head of his own table, encircled with a company of his own redeemed ones, and about to minister to them the sacred tokens of his dying love. Look at the humble guests. They are, indeed, wretchedly poor and miserable in themselves, but every one clothed in the wedding garment of their Lord's righteousness, and wearing the robe of his salvation. All with eyes and hearts fixed on Jesus, and all calling to him in the language of the church, saying, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat of his pleasant fruits." And the Son of God is

heard, by the ear of faith, answering, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Song, iv. 16.—v. 1.)

And what are the royal dainties at this princely banquet? Doubtless Christ himself. He is the whole sum and substance of the feast. "His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed." The holy Supper, in the one great design of it, is to commemorate the death of Christ. As in the one great sacrifice when he offered himself, and by that "one offering he perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" so the commemoration in the Supper hath this one great object in view. We look to Jesus in all, and through all. He is our Altar, our Sacrifice, our High Priest. "For as oft as we eat this bread, and drink this cup, we do shew forth the Lord's death till he come."

But while this view of Christ our Passover is the one great object and design of this institution, it is our mercy and our happiness, under grace, to behold all the vast concerns connected with it. The redemption which we here commemorate is the redemption of Christ's people as his people. They were his people before that he redeemed them. They had relationship to Jesus before sin, before the fall; yea, before the foundation of the world. And Jesus redeemed them because they were his. God the Father chose them *in* Christ, gave them *to* Christ, adopted them as children *by* Christ, and accepted them *in* Christ from everlasting. And hence in the holy Supper, while setting forth redemption by Christ's blood, the forgiveness of all our sins, according to the riches of his grace, we set forth also thereby the love of God the Father, the grace of God the Son, and the fellowship of God the Holy Ghost.

Reader, pause and contemplate the blissful subject, under all these gracious views, as you draw nigh the Lord's Supper. And while you behold the King sitting at his table, call to mind that the very purpose for which he is there, and for which you are invited to sit down with him there, is to those purposes, and that "he waits to be gracious." He is come indeed as a King with all sovereignty of grace and power. But he is no less come with all tenderness as a Friend, and as a Brother. His whole heart is his people's. And the sole design of ordinances, is to lead his redeemed into the most tender and endearing acquaintance with himself. When John, the beloved apostle, saw the Lord Jesus in vision after his return to glory, he tells the church, that he saw him clothed "in a vesture dipped in blood." As if the Son of God meant thereby to say, 'See I wear these vestments, purposely that you may never lose sight of my everlasting love to my church and people; and the everlasting efficacy of my blood and righteousness.' So that none of his little ones need to despond or fear, as if Jesus would overlook a single soul of his redeemed family. They shall all have their own personal and distinct portion. Some indeed will enjoy more; some less; according to the state and degree of faith, at the time, in exercise in their heart. Some, like Mary, will lie low at the feet of Jesus; others, like Lazarus, will sit at the table with him. But notwithstanding these distinctions, all have an equal share in the love of his heart; for all are alike redeemed with one, and the same price of his own blood. And though it be no doubt a matter of high favour, from the strength of faith given to some more than to others, thereby to have the first glimpse of Jesus at his table, or the first look from Jesus giving the sacred love-tokens to them with his own hand; yet every child of God, effectually called by

grace, is made an equal partaker of the divine nature, "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." It is blessed, yea, truly blessed, to feel the heart burning within, while Jesus is talking with us by the way, while opening to us the scriptures, and making himself known unto us in breaking of bread and of prayer. Nevertheless, all the redeemed are alike the object and subject of his love; and as highly interested in all that belongs to Jesus, as those who are favoured with more open revelations of him. For it is not what his people feel, but what Christ is, which forms the standard of the soul's acceptance with God.

The limits of a Tract will not allow the entering into all the particulars which may be supposed to form the substance of communion between Jesus and his guests at his table. But a few of the more striking, as constituting the general privileges of the whole family, it may not be unprofitable to glance at.

And *first*. The ground-work and foundation for every other, ariseth out of that personal knowledge and interest Jesus hath in all his family. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." This, like a golden chain which begins at the first link, in the opening of the Old Testament, in marking the Lord's people, runs regularly through the whole line of grace through the New, and may be traced in the instance of every character. Hence we read "that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." And the next account of him is, that "he became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Hence "Moses found grace in the sight of the Lord." And the Lord added, "I know thee by name." Hence the Virgin Mary is said, "to have found favour with the Lord." And the consequence was, "she was blessed among women." And in all these, and a thousand other instances, the thing is *personal*. Not their gifts, not

their graces; not what they have done, or what they can do, or have attained, but what they are in the Lord's view. "Thou hast found grace (saith God) in my sight." Hence at the table, and indeed at any and every other ordinance, all the blessings given, all the love-tokens imparted—these are effects from the first and predisposing *cause*: "Thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name." This is the sole cause. Reader, pause over the contemplation. If in this birth-right, we go to the Lord's table, we shall never go in vain. We go as children; the chosen, the people of the Lord's inheritance. "This people (saith the Lord) I have formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise." It is a blessed thing, when a child of God can truly say, "The Lord is my portion." But it is a far higher note of joy, when the Lord saith, we are *his*. If I am *his*, very sure it must follow, the Lord is *mine*. For my being his, is the *cause*. And the Lord's being mine, will be the *effect*. Oh, who shall calculate or sum up the blessedness of the Lord's personal choice of his people! Let that soul who is taught of God, and in whose spirit the Holy Ghost witnesseth that he is a child of God, let him value if he can those precious words, with which the Lord comforts every individual of his church: "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel; Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine!" And hence all the sweet promises which follow. I beg the reader to turn to them, Isaiah xliii. 1—7.

Secondly. Next to the grace manifested to the *persons* of the Lord's people as the foundation of all mercy towards them; we go on to contemplate the comprehensive *knowledge* the Lord hath of all that belongs to them; and the *interest* he takes in all that concerns them. Here opens an immense subject,

which runs through all the departments in nature, providence, grace, and glory. With what holy rapture and delight must the child of God go to the table of God, while conscious that he goes there as a child of God to receive the suited supply to every want, and to answer his every necessity. He that hath chosen the *persons* of his people, hath chosen also the *state* and *circumstances* of his people. It is he that hath made them what they are. He it is which first gave them being in Christ; and at the same time arranged all the purposes for their well-being in Christ; and so ordered, that every thing should subserve and minister to the divine glory and their happiness. So that the renewed soul at the Lord's table, conscious that the Lord's grace is to his *person*, and the Lord's knowledge to all his *wants*, and that Jesus is at the head of the table to supply, feels a confidence to unbosom himself to the Lord, as one that hath interest with the great Master of the feast. He will say, 'My God knows my person, and I have found grace in his sight. He knows also every thing that concerns me, and what will best suit his own glory and my happiness. How can I do otherwise than speed well, while Jesus is at the head of his table. His words are, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."' (John x. 10.) Oh! how very sweet and soul-satisfying would be all ordinances, and especially the Supper of the Lord, if all the Lord's redeemed which go there were enabled, under the influences of the Holy Ghost, always to have in view the choice that the Lord from everlasting hath had to the *persons* of his people; and, consequently, the comprehensive knowledge he hath to all that *concerns* them.

But *thirdly*. While these sweet and precious views should be everlastingly uppermost in the heart, and

never upon any occasion, either at the Lord's table, or elsewhere, lost sight of, it would much tend, under grace, to keep the child of God in a stayed state upon the Lord, when forming just conclusions of the Lord's love by the standard of the Lord's grace, and not by the Lord's gifts. As the right apprehension of this point is in my esteem of vast importance, I beg to state it somewhat more particularly: and I pray the Lord to bless it to the Reader.

It is the grossest of all mistakes, to calculate the Lord's grace by the Lord's gifts; or to estimate the favour in which we stand to the Lord by what we receive, instead of drawing conclusions from what Jesus is. It is not the largeness of Jesus's gifts by which we form a judgment of his favour towards us, but from the largeness of the love of his heart towards us. Even among men, we do not make it the *standard* by what men *do*, but by what they *mean*. A wise and prudent father may dearly love his child, and yet be very sparing in his gifts. Nay he may withhold them rather from the greatness of his love, lest too much bounty might injure him. Now it is said of our God and Father, that "he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." We cannot estimate his love by his gifts; since his withholding may be the fruit of love. But if he hath said, "I know thee by name, and thou hast found grace in my sight"—all that follows, is the result of this first affection. Nothing can go higher. In heaven itself, it is not the holiness of the church, neither the worship of the church, which forms any part cause of their acceptance. That the church hath found grace in the Lord's sight, is the sole cause of the church's glory. And that the church is beheld holy, is in the holiness of Jesus; and all her acceptance is in the Beloved. And one look of the Lord upon Jesus and the church in Jesus, is

beyond all blessedness in all the attainments of heaven.

If I were to detain the Reader with a short observation more, it should be to say, that the Supper of the Lord, which opens sweet communion with Jesus at his table, brings with it also the heartfelt enjoyment of the favour, love, and personal communion through Jesus, with all the Persons of the GODHEAD. The death of Christ, the great subject kept in view at the table of the Lord, becomes truly blessed, not only in being a complete and adequate remedy for sin ; but also in being so from God's own appointment. One of the most delightful parts in the sacrifice of Christ's death is, that it is of God. It is God which hath set forth Christ, "as a propitiation through faith in his blood." And every child of God, who hath found grace in God's sight, hath found also that the pleading this, at the mercy seat, is a most blessed and successful way of beginning, and maintaining communion with God in Christ. So that at the table of the Lord, having found grace in his sight, we enter into a most blessed, and soul-satisfying apprehension of redemption by Jesus, in the appointment and covenant love of God the Father, and the quickening, renewing, and sealing grace of God the Holy Ghost. The blessed Spirit thus witnessing with our spirits, that we are the children of God.

Reader ! Do these views of the Lord's Supper correspond with yours ? Is it indeed with such gracious apprehensions that we both go to the feast ? Do we behold the King sitting at his table ; and have we received, and do receive from his royal hand, all the blessings for which he comes to feast his people ? Let us then, before we arise from the mercy-seat, and leave the Lord's table to return to our own, thank the great Master of the feast, for all the love-tokens of his favour, and beg him to go

with us to our respective habitations, and be our rest.

P R A Y E R.

BLESSING, and honour, and power, and glory, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain, for ever and ever! Surely our God is gracious in having instituted such a feast for the setting forth of his love. I have tasted, I do taste, that the Lord is gracious, and that his mercy endureth for ever. Oh! what a miracle of love is the whole purpose of God, concerning his church and people! Chosen of God to be holy; then fallen by sin, then redeemed by blood, yea, the blood of the Son of God; then regenerated by the Spirit, and now feasted upon the body and blood of Christ. And ere long to sit down in the kingdom of glory, to feast my ravished soul in the unceasing enjoyment of God and the Lamb for evermore. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!

But Lord, before I depart, let me drop one petition for thy Zion, and that part of thy church more especially with whom I am here partaking of thy bounties. Lord, answer every cry of thy children. Give out largely to the supply of their wants. Suffer none, no, not one of thine, to go empty away, but let thy poor, and thy needy, give praise to thy name. Surely Jesus is constrained to bless his own. He will not hide himself from his own flesh. If thou, dearest Lord, wert to withhold thy bounties, thou wouldest not be more full. And if Jesus were to give out ever so largely, Jesus cannot be diminished! Lord, pronounce a blessing upon every one, and let all the people say, Amen. The good Lord pardon all the unworthiness of his people, and give the whole congregation grace to bless the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Israel's God in Covenant, now and for ever. Amen.

A GUIDE
TO THE
ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,
AND THE
Welcome Guest at the Lord's Table.

Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.

PROV. ix. 5.

A GUIDE TO THE ORDINANCE

OF

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

‘WHAT grieves me most, (said a poor man, whose friends called a minister to visit him in his sickness,) what grieves me most (said he) is, that I never have received the Lord’s Supper.’ ‘How came it to pass (said the minister to him) that you neglected it?’— ‘Because (said he) I never thought myself worthy.’— ‘My poor brother! (replied the minister) you are only adding one deception to another. The truth certainly is, that you ought. Had it been a real sense of unworthiness that kept you back from the Lord’s table, the same cause would have made you fear also, that dying in that state, you would be for ever kept out of the kingdom of heaven; and therefore, nothing would have satisfied your mind in this state of apprehension, until the cause of your fear had been removed. I rather think, my brother, that *unwillingness*, and not a sense of *unworthiness*, hath been the sole cause of prevention with you: a proper attention to this interesting subject would have taught you, that the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper was never designed for holy angels, but for polluted sinners. The Lord Jesus saith himself, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” And all the invitations he hath given are “to the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” So that if a sense of sin had made you in earnest in the desire of salvation, this would have become the very motive

to have led you to the Lord's table.'—'I fear (answered the poor man) that this is but the true state of the case. Alas! I have been living to the world, and not to God. I have been neglecting the one thing needful; but I hope it is not too late. Will you be kind enough to inform me of the nature and design of that solemn service? It may be, the Lord will yet raise me up. I shall much thank you for your instruction on the subject.'—The minister consented to the request, and thus began his discourse:—

'From the nature and design of the Lord's Supper, in its institution, it is evidently intended by its great Author to be a standing ordinance in his church, for the perpetual observance of his people in all ages; by way of representing, in outward and visible signs, the great blessings of redemption, which he hath purchased by his righteousness and death. The church service very well expresses itself, when saying, that 'it was ordained for a continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.' Hence, bread and wine are the elements made use of, by way of denoting the body and blood of Christ. The bread broken represents his body broken; and the wine poured out intimates that his blood was shed for the redemption of his people. So that the Lord's Supper is a standing memorial in the church of this great event, and is therefore very properly called *a feast upon a sacrifice*.—For the sacrifice was once made, and but once, when Christ offered his body on the cross for human guilt. "For by that one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." But the feast of the Supper itself is to be often repeated, as a continual love-token of Jesus to his people, by way of keeping the remembrance of it alive in their hearts. And that the Lord Jesus himself designed it so, is evident from the words which he spake on its institution:

“Do this in remembrance of me.” And his servant, the apostle, follows up his Master's steps in the direction, when he tells us, that “as oft as we eat that bread and drink that cup, we do shew forth the Lord's death till he come.”

‘This may serve, in some measure, to explain the nature and design of the Lord's Supper. But the scriptures of God, in order, as it were, to afford the clearest apprehensions of a service so important in itself, and so necessary to be generally known and understood by his people, have condescended to give us further information on the subject, in the causes of its institution, as well as to convey, at the same time, an idea for whom it is particularly intended. And this they have happily accomplished, by recommending to our notice, under different names, such as might best express its gracious tendency.

‘Thus, for example, it is called “The Communion of the body and blood of Christ ;” intimating thereby, that somewhat more is meant than a mere participation in the outward elements of bread and wine : for this plainly implies, that there is a channel of communication opened between Jesus and his people. They are supposed to have been regenerated and united to Christ, by the operations of the Holy Ghost ; so that they are living members of his mystical body. And hence they have communion with him, in all that concerns their salvation. He communicates to them, in ordinances, his graces and the gifts of his Holy Spirit ; and they, by divine power, communicate to him, their love, their obedience, thanksgiving, and praise.

‘Hence therefore, by the way, we may observe, that under this representation of the ordinance of the Supper, it is plain to discover who they are that are the real partakers of it ; namely, none but those who have real communion with their great spiritual Head :

for unless united to him by a vital union, as the branch is to the vine, or the members of the body to the head, there can be no communion with his body and blood. A participation in the ordinance, a communion with the bread and wine, a communion with the ceremonies of the table, or with the persons around the table, all these may be obtained. But these are far short of what the apostle means, when he says, "The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

'So again: when the ordinance is called the Lord's *Supper*, this idea is conveyed with the expression, that it is a spiritual feast for the Lord's household and family. And perhaps it is particularly called the *supper*, being instituted by the Lord himself, in the *evening* of the day, at supper time. And moreover, as it was "in the end of the world that Christ came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" so the end of the day (although it doth not imply that this is the only season for administering it) becomes the best resemblance, in point of time, to the period, when the great sacrifice it was intended to represent, was offered; and therefore called the *Supper*. And perhaps yet further, as the supper is the most general meal of the family, when all the household are supposed to be gathered together, and none absent, it meant to say, that the Lord Jesus would have all his family around him upon this occasion, and not one wanting. A true emblem this of the "marriage supper of the Lamb;" when all the faithful will be returned home, from the day of this mortal state below, to sit down at the table of Jesus, "with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father."

'But whether either of these ideas, or all of them

together, are intended by calling it the ordinance of the *Lord's Supper*, I will not contend: but one thing we learn from the term, and particularly descriptive of the persons for whom it is designed, and that is, that they must be of "the household and family of Jesus." For as in your house, or mine, at supper time, when the several branches of the family are met together, we should consider the coming in of an uninvited stranger as highly intruding and unwelcome; so, depend upon it, the Lord Jesus allows of no approaches to his Supper, unless by those of his own household. He hath already told us, that many will plead with him at the last day, having eaten and drunk in his presence, and that he had taught in their streets; to whom he will say, "I know you not:" (that is, I know you not in any ways of communion with me,) "depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

'Once more: when the ordinance is called the "New Testament in Christ's blood;" (and which, perhaps, of all other names, is the most proper, because it is the very term by which the Lord Jesus himself hath thought proper to distinguish it;) the notion conveyed under this expression is this: that Christ, having, by virtue of his covenant engagements for our redemption, assumed our nature, and accomplished salvation for his people, hath instituted this ordinance, to testify, by these outward signs and seals of the covenant, that all the promises of God, of pardon and forgiveness of sins, together with everlasting happiness in heaven, are by his blood, and are thus represented to us in these tokens; and that all the worthy partakers of it expect salvation in no other way.

'Hence, therefore, this view of the ordinance clearly points out for whom alone it is designed; namely, for such as seek favour and mercy with God

in this covenant way ; who desire to be accepted only in the beloved ; who renounce themselves in every point of view, as meriting any thing from God, and who have fled, therefore, from a covenant of works to lay hold of the covenant of grace.

‘ And there is this additional evidence to be found under this character of the ordinance, when called the *New Testament in Christ’s blood*, to point out who are designed to be the partakers of it ; and that is, the blessings obtained by the death of Christ are like the testamentary gifts and legacies of a departed friend to his family and children. So that we must first prove our relationship to Christ, before that we can lay claim to the legacies in his will. We must, in this particular, do as men of the world do, who take out the probate of the will of their friends to testify their right. We must also prove that we are Jesus’s relations, by those characters under which they are known, before that we can consider ourselves justly entitled to the blessings which he hath bequeathed to his people. The church, which is made up of true believers, is said to be the *Spouse, the Lamb’s wife*. “Thou shalt not be for another man, (saith the Lord by the prophet,) so will I be also for thee.” (Hosea iii. 2.) “I will betroth thee unto me for ever ; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies : I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.” (Hos. ii. 19, 20.) And again : true believers are called also, the *seed of Christ*, and the *children of God*. “I will pour out my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring.” (Isa. xlv. 3.) “To as many as received him, (saith one of the Evangelists,) to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,

nor the will of man, but of God." (John i. 12, 13.) Examine your own state by those characters. Are *you* among the relations of Christ? Are *you* betrothed to him? Have *you* the marks and spots of God's *children*? If you say, How shall I know? the word of God tells you. They who are married to Christ have forsaken all for him. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Are you led by the Spirit? Do you live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit?

' There is one name more by which we distinguish this holy ordinance, and that is, when we call it the *Sacrament*; I say by which *we* call it, for it is a name which is no where to be found in scripture, and certainly is improper. For the word itself is a military term, borrowed from the Romans, signifying an oath of obedience; and in this sense, it rather implies what we engage to do for Christ, than the commemoration of what he hath already done for us. Whereas the ordinance of this Supper is designed to represent the finished salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. But if in accommodation to the general acceptance of this term, we do call it a *sacrament*, then it carries with it this idea; that the love-tokens of Jesus at his table, are given, and received, as mutual pledges to each other: on the Redeemer's part of grace; and on their part, of affection. The highly privileged partakers are supposed, by his Spirit imparted to them, to have "renounced the hidden things of dishonesty," and to be drawing nigh to present their bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to the Lord, which is their reasonable service." And the Redeemer is supposed to sit at the head of his table, in order to bestow suitable and seasonable gifts and mercies, according to the wants of his family, "and grace to help in every time of need."

' These distinct and separate names, whereby the

holy Supper is known, afford such views of the ordinance itself, as cannot fail to represent it to the mind in all its characters. And while they graciously answer this purpose, in explaining the nature and design of it, they serve no less at the same time to throw such a light upon the service itself, as clearly proves the persons for whom it is designed, and to whom alone it can be useful.

‘I would only just observe, further, from those different representations, that we discover also that our adorable Redeemer, in the institution of the holy Supper, intended it, not only as a commemorating ordinance, but as a refreshing, comforting, quickening, awakening, soul-strengthening, heart-sealing ordinance. And no doubt there are thousands, among truly awakened believers, who can, and do, bear testimony to its efficacy, as a mean of grace in the Lord’s hands, that it has answered all these purposes to their souls, in a multitude of instances, as their circumstances have variously required. So that what the Lord Jesus hath said, they have experienced ; that “ his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. They spiritually eat his flesh and drink his blood ; they dwell in Christ, and Christ in them ; they are one with Christ, and Christ with them.”

‘And if in addition to this short account of the nature and design of the holy Supper, we were to go further, and consider, how all the objects of the Redeemer’s merits, and sacrifice, and death, are represented thereby, we should discover, that, simply as an ordinance and mean of grace, (and it is to be carefully considered, after all, in no other light,) nothing could have been more admirably adapted, to answer all the purposes for which it was designed. What, for instance, can depicture the great evil of sin, more than the representation of his death and

passion, by which alone the dreadful effects of it are taken away? And what can be equally calculated to awaken love in the heart, as the bringing forth to view, by lively emblems, the unequalled affection of him, "who hath so loved us as to give himself for us."

'But, passing over the consideration of these things, as leading into too extensive a subject for the limits of a little tract to include, and which indeed the Holy Ghost alone, in his gracious work, can impress upon the heart, the most interesting point you seem to be concerned in is, to know for whom this supper is designed; and whether you come under the character of those who are invited to partake of it.

'If you will but attend to the form of invitation given, and diligently mark the character of those who are invited, from those who are *not*; you never can be at a loss to discover the one from the other. Jesus, as it were, stands at his table, and says in the most gracious words, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and drink. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." These are very plain expressions for every one that is truly in earnest to examine his heart by. If *you* are weary and heavy laden with the burden of sin: if *you* thirst for pardon and salvation by Christ, more than the hart pants for the cooling stream: if *you* hear Jesus knock at the door, and desire to admit him; if *you* long for the mercy of God unto eternal life, equal to the most vehement desires of nature: surely you may safely interpret the call of Jesus as directed to yourself; and thus invited, you come at his call, though truly conscious of being unworthy.—But if, while Jesus thus calls, and describes whom he invites, from those he doth not; if

you have never felt sin a burthen ; neither is the deliverance from it the first and most anxious concern of your soul : if your desires for attending the holy Supper be no greater than because you find others attend, who are of your own age and circumstances ; certainly, in this case, you can have no more to do with the Lord's Table, than a dead body hath with food, or a blind man with light. Nothing can be clearer, than that it must be the most consummate ignorance to suppose, that a *week's preparation* can prepare ; or the *qualifying for an office* can recommend ; or three times a year, can make a man worthy, who hath no other sense of worthiness, than that it is his duty, and therefore he attends ; and who, if the real sentiments of his heart were to be expressed by words, must say upon all those occasions, ' I should not attend now, but because it is the usual time, or because the qualification I want compels me to it, or because three times a year it is a customary duty, and therefore I come.' "

The minister here paused, as if to give the poor man time to reflect a little. He then added,—' I shall leave those solemn considerations with you, my brother, for the serious examination of your own heart by them ; and praying the Lord "to give you a right understanding in all things," I shall only add a prayer, which is suited to the state and circumstances of every truly prepared communicant. Read it over carefully before you make use of it, and if you find the sentiments it breathes correspond to your own feelings, and are such as you can truly adopt ; doubt not but that you are among those who are graciously invited to the Lord's Table, and may safely draw nigh with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.' "

THE PRAYER.

O LORD God ! Thou art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. A poor dying worm of the earth, self-condemned, and self-loathing, most humbly desires grace from the Holy Ghost, to enable him to draw nigh thy mercy-seat, in that new, and living way, which thou hast opened for poor, lost, and undone sinners, in the blood, righteousness, and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have heard it proclaimed, O Lord, in thine house of prayer, by one of those who stand there to minister in thy great name, that the Lord Jesus died from his own free love, to save poor sinners : and that those who come to thee for mercy and salvation in his name, he will in no wise cast out. It has been proclaimed also, in thy church, that the Lord Jesus holds a feast to commemorate this precious death ; and that those who are invited and commanded to come to it, are the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. It hath been told me also, that the Lord Jesus loveth and receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. Great God ! as my heart testifieth to my face that I am a miserable sinner, and have sinned and come short of thy glory ; as I am *poor* in every sense of the word, as to any goodness of my own ; *maimed* in all the faculties of my soul, by reason of sin ; *halt*, so that I cannot stretch forth my hand to save myself ; and *blind*, so as not even to know what is right : Oh ! that the Lord may receive me in the lowest place at his table, (for I am not worthy to gather up the crumbs beneath it,)

and by his Holy Spirit, help me to cast myself down at the feet of rich mercy, and plead for it only in the way and according to thy gracious promises in Christ Jesus.

Dearest Saviour, be thou everlastingly adored, for the love thou hast shewn in condescending to be the surety and sacrifice for poor sinners. Help me by thy Spirit here, and at thy table, to renounce all other ways of salvation. Lord, give me grace to take up the resolution of desiring or seeking nothing among men, but Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And, Oh! thou blessed and eternal Spirit, who art one with the Father and with the Son, do thou graciously work in me such a knowledge of my sin, and such a love to the person of the Redeemer, that by thy quickening, illuminating, convincing, converting, heart-strengthening power, my soul may be always brought under thy precious influences, so as to live a life of faith upon the Son of God, and dedicate myself to his service for ever. In partaking of the emblems of the Redeemer's body at his table, I would pray for grace to *renounce* all things unbecoming my christian calling. Not only the *world* and its allurements; not only the *flesh* with all its vile lusts and affections; not only the *devil* and all his works and temptations; but all self-confidence, and self-righteousness, which might prompt my vain heart, to seek justification in that way before God. I pray for grace also, to be enabled to *accept* the Lord Jesus with all that belongs to him: his cross, as well as his crown: his rod as well as his staff, as my sole hope, and only dependence for salvation. And I pray for grace to *dedicate* myself, from henceforth and for ever to be the Lord's, both by his purchase, and by my voluntary surrender; that my soul with all my faculties, my body with all its senses, my gifts, influence, ta-

lents, relations, time, opportunities, and power, may be his own, whose by right they are, who gave me them for his glory and my welfare.

In this manner, Lord, I desire to come to thy table : and if my God will graciously accept me, my tongue shall speak thy praises now, and eternal hallelujah will I offer before God and the Lamb for ever ! Even so, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

THE WELCOME GUEST

AT

THE LORD'S TABLE.

It is the Lord's Day, (I said to myself when first opening my eyes from sleep in the dawn of the morning,) it is the Lord's Day, and Jesus holds a feast at his table. Generous Saviour! not only art thou calling the sinful dying inhabitants of this lower world to the precious ordinances of grace in thine house of prayer; but thou art spreading thy Table with the blessed emblems of thy body and blood, and inviting the wretched and the needy to sit down with thee, and freely partake of them!

I read in scripture, that Ahasuerus, who reigned from India to Æthiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces, made a great feast to his high captains and lords. Jesus also, whose dominion is "from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth," holds a feast. But the banquet of the Redeemer differs widely from that of the Persian Prince. For while the earthly Monarch invited none but the great, and the rich, and the noble of his kingdom; the heavenly Sovereign, sends out into the highways and lanes of the city, to call in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Dearest Lord! it is to my soul one of thy most precious characters, that thou "receivest sinners and eatest with them."

But let me pause: how know I, that I am among the number invited? Let me look again at the invi-

tation. Jesus saith, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." Observe, my soul, the expression. If *any* man! Jesus doth not say, If any *good* man, any *worthy* or *deserving* man; but if *any* man. If then, any man that is thirsty be the welcome soul, Oh! for a spiritual thirsting, that I may long to go to this soul feast, and pant after it, "more than the hart doth for the water brooks." When the poor and the needy seek for water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, doth not God say, "I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them?"

Surely, if my soul be athirst for Jesus, then is both the invitation and the promise made to *me!* Why should I doubt it, when both so exactly correspond to my state and circumstances. Arise, my soul, and go: Jesus will not reject thee. Never hath he rejected any, never will he reject any truly thirsty soul, whom his blessed Spirit maketh "willing in the day of his power." Hath he not said himself, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out?"

The very recollection of his precious words hath warmed and encouraged my heart. I feel my soul drawn out in prayer. Let me hasten to arise from the bed of sleep, and before I go into the world, or see a soul of my family, or friends, let me seek grace from God the Spirit, to lead me to the mercy seat, that I may see, with an eye of faith, the Lord Jesus, that best of all friends, and dearest of all relations, and through him and his gracious intercession, find acceptance with God in Christ.

P R A Y E R.

Most gracious God! a poor beggar of the earth, well known unto thee, both by reason of thy mercy,

and long-bestowed mercies upon him ; and his ungrateful and unworthy returns, in disobedience and sin, still venturing to rely on thy clemency, knocks once more at thy mercy gate.

Will the Lord receive me at his footstool, vile and unworthy as I am? And with the first opening of the day, will he mercifully open my heart to all suitable and seasonable impressions of grace ; that I may offer the first fruits of my lips, for the light of the new day, to which thy mercy has brought me, and seek new pardons for all my renewed transgressions, in the blood of the Lamb ?

Truly may I say, O Lord, with the church of old, "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed. Because thy compassions fail not, they are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness." That I am alive this day ; that I am preserved through another night's dangers, and all the perils to which I have been exposed, in the defenceless state of sleep ; that I am brought not only to the light of a new morning, but to the morning of another precious Sabbath ; that a throne of grace is still open for such a sinner as I am, to flee unto ; and that my Almighty Advocate and Propitiation, is still living, and ever liveth, to make intercession for sinners ; these are among the numberless unmerited mercies of my God.

And will God the Holy Ghost graciously remind my unthinking and forgetful heart, that these are mercies not only great, and undeserved in themselves, but *distinguishing* mercies, of divine love, which thousands and tens of thousands in the world, more deserving than I am, have not !

Lord, help me, by thy quickening influences, to call to mind how many precious souls, in one part or other of the world, have taken their flight into the regions of eternity, since the shades of the last night closed in upon the earth ! How many at this mo-

ment, are groaning upon beds of languishing, unable to arise and go forth to meet the Lord in his house of prayer! May I not say to thee, O blessed Jesus, as the disconsolate sisters did, in the days of thy flesh, concerning their brother, "Lord, many whom thou lovest are sick?" Is it so then, O God, that thy mercy hath distinguished my lot with such grace, and peculiar favours, and shall I feel none of those awakenings in my heart, which may lead me to fall before thy throne with suitable acknowledgments?

O, gracious God! thou hast not only distinguished me with health and peace, and the blessed opportunity of going to thy house of prayer; but thou hast spread thy table with the love-tokens of thy favour; and worthless as I am, I am invited to draw nigh, "with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." And while multitudes have no house of prayer to go to, no ordinance of worship to enjoy, but live where there is a famine, not of bread and water, but of hearing the word of the Lord, I am not only allowed to attend thine house, to call upon thy name, and to hear from thy sacred word thy gracious assurances of mercy, but Jesus puts that high honour upon me, to sit down with him at his table! What shall I say to my God for these distinguishing proofs of his love? "What am I, and what is my father's house?"

Most gracious and indulgent Lord! since thou art thus pleased to regard such a creature as I am, with those marks of thy favour, Lord, prepare my unprepared heart, to attend thy table, with all suitable qualifications. Let me be much in the Spirit on this thy holy day. "Send out, Lord, thy light and thy truth: let them lead me, let them bring me to thine holy hill, and to thy tabernacle: then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy."

I look up to thee, O thou blessed and eternal Spirit, thou Quickener of dead souls, and Glorifier

of Christ Jesus ; my eyes are up unto thee, that thou wouldest work in me, both to will, and to do, of thy good pleasure. Oh ! give me such a deep sense of sin, and such a clear view of the fulness and suitability of redeeming grace, that while my soul feels, as it ought to feel, a proper sense of my unworthiness before God, the view of Jesus's righteousness, and all-sufficiency, may comfort and encourage my heart. Bring my soul this morning to that fountain of Jesus's blood, which is opened for sin and uncleanness. And when thou hast washed and made me white in the blood of the Lamb, clothe me with the robe of salvation, that "when the King comes in to see the guests at his table," he may own me for his own, as the purchase of his redemption, in being clothed with the wedding garment of his righteousness.

Excite in me, O Lord, such spiritual hungerings and thirstings for this soul-feast, that I may eat of the bread of life, and drink of the water of life, even the precious body and blood of Christ : that I may know, by heartfelt experience, that "his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed."

And, O ! thou blessed Redeemer, thou who art the sum and substance of all the feast, wilt thou graciously condescend to manifest thyself to me at thy table ; and while thou art visiting one and another with the smiles of thy love, Oh ! for some sweet token, given by thy blessed hand, to me. "Let me hear thy voice : let me see thy countenance ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely."

Grant, dearest Lord, that no dulness, or deadness of affection, may arise to damp the joy of my soul, at thy holy ordinance ; but let my heart burn within me while thou art talking with me by the way : and do thou, as thou didst to thy disciples of old, "make thyself known unto me in breaking of bread."

Everlasting praise to my God and Father, for bringing me into this covenant of grace, which admits of such a Surety and Atonement for the sins of his people, as is the Lord Jesus Christ our righteousness. Grant me, gracious Lord, such lively faith; and that the acting of this faith be in such full exercise in my heart, that the withered hand which thou hast healed, may be stretched forth, to take all the covenant blessings and promises, which are sealed to thy people at the ordinance of the Holy Supper, in his blood, and righteousness; and may my eyes be so enlightened to see the hope of my calling, that Jesus may appear to my view as he did to the beloved apostle, in all the glories of his priesthood, with "his vesture dipped in blood;" and going in before the mercy-seat, with my name, worthless as it is, amidst the names of all his people, on his hands, and on his heart. And while my soul is thus feasting on the fulness of the Redeemer's complete and finished salvation, grant gracious Lord, that thy grace, and Holy Spirit, may be working in me all those covenant impressions of repentance and faith, which may manifest whose I am, and whom I serve.

Now, blessed Lord, may I arise from before thy mercy-seat, under those awakenings of thy Holy Spirit, and go forth in the strength of the Lord God, and experience so much of the goings of my God and King in his sanctuary, that I may cry out with thy servant of old, "One day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

Help me to ascribe to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as to Israel's God, the kingdom, power, and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

I find my mind refreshed as I arise from the mercy-seat, and can truly say, "It is good to draw nigh to God."

Let me now descend from my chamber, and meet my friends and family. Are they in health? preserved from fire, from robbers, from death? All these are new motives to thankfulness. Gracious God! how art thou going before me, in a thousand instances of mercy, and preventing me with the blessings of thy goodness!

But now for family worship.—It is sweet to draw nigh to God in our closets; it is sweet to draw nigh to God in our houses and our families; and it is sweet to draw nigh to God in the tabernacles of his sanctuary. How awful is the state of those prayerless families, who, having neither the fear of God before their eyes, nor the love of God in their hearts, lie down, and rise up, like the herds of the stall, never saying, “Where is God my Maker?”—Lord, grant that the dreadful prayer of thy servant the prophet, may never be found applicable to me and my household, when he says, “Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name.” (Jeremiah x. 25.)

Let some one of my household read a portion of the word of God’s grace before we offer up prayer, by way of sanctifying our little congregation. It is done.—Pause a moment over it.—Observe how God speaks in his holy word to his people. May we not all say, as David did, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth!” But did not the Lord speak in his word to each of our souls, personally and particularly? Was there not somewhat in it peculiarly adapted to our present state and circumstances, as though the Lord had said to each of us, to you, to me, to all, is the word of this salvation *sent*? Blessed Spirit! may I ever hear thy voice speaking in thy word, that, under the gracious impression, I may say, “O, how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Mine eyes

prevent the night watches, that I may be occupied in thy word."

Let us fall down with reverence before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and while we bless him for all past mercies, let us seek from him all future favours. And oh! that God may pour out upon us a spirit of grace and supplication, and so shed the sweet influences of his Holy Spirit over our little assembly, that we may truly *pray* in prayer. Great God! have compassion upon our blindness, ignorance, and necessities. Give to each of us such a sense of our own personal wants, that we may not rest satisfied in an application for *general* mercies; but may we, every one for himself, find at this time an especial errand to the court of heaven, and wrestle with our God in prayer, that none may come away without some token of favour from our God and King!

Prayer ended, we now sit down to a moderate use of the good things of God's providence. But, my friends, let our most ordinary meals *be sanctified by the word and prayer*. What a reproach is it to many who sit down at the fullest tables, that the name of the great Giver is, perhaps, hardly mentioned! Is not that scripture too often proved: "their tables are a snare to take themselves withal?" Some precious souls there are, who enjoy more of Jesus's presence at their ordinary meals, than others do at the Lord's table. Be it my portion, and the portion of my household, to see so much of Jesus always before me, that my food may be doubly sweet, eaten under his gracious eye, and received from his dear hand. Dearest Jesus, come and sit down with me at the table which thou hast spread. Be thou thine own almoner, and accompany thy kind gifts for the body with grace for the soul, and every morsel will then prove a blessing.

But, my children and friends, and all you that are

around me, let our conversation be of the best things, while we partake of the bounties of the best of Beings: while we eat of the fat and drink of the sweet, let our talk be seasoned with grace. Surely it is but common justice, (to say nothing of gratitude,) that while we eat of the Lord's provisions, our conversation should be of the Lord's goodness. Would it not be a reproach to enjoy the gift, and yet forget the Giver? Upon all those occasions, methinks, I would call to mind the precept of the Jewish lawgiver: "These words (says he) which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.—Sweet, charming subjects for the most edifying conversation! I would beg for grace at all times to do so, with my children, or my servants, (if I have any,) or my friends around my table. I would be for ever speaking of the dear Redeemer, and his love to my soul. I would tell to every one around me what a gracious Saviour I have found: I would point to his redeeming blood, and say, Behold, behold the way to God! And this shall be the everlasting topic of my discourse wherever I am; whether at home or abroad; whether at meals or at work; whether in the house or by the way. All times and all seasons; all things and all circumstances; I would pray God might be instrumental to minister to this one end, of bringing home Jesus to my soul, and of awakening remembrance and love to his person in my heart. Precious Lord! let me but in all things discover thy manifestations towards me, and then in all things I shall find thee, and in thee find all things.

The breakfast being finished, we arise from table. Now each to meditation. My soul, thou art to meet

Jesus at his table to-day.—Be more solicitous to appear there in the robes of his righteousness, and in the wedding garment of his salvation, than the gay and the unthinking are to appear at church in all the follies of dress and splendour.

Now I am alone—and yet I hope not alone, for my God and Saviour is with me. How doth the world sink in my esteem while Jesus and his salvation are in view! But, alas! how cold, how dead and lifeless are my affections towards him! Though I came here to seek my God in retirement, and have shut the door, to be alone with him, yet what a crowd of vain thoughts have rushed in after me! what disinclination is there in me to seek his face! Oh, for some influence of the Spirit! I would say with Job, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.”

Let me meditate upon the holy service to which I am invited, and see whether, like David, while my heart is musing, the sacred fire will not kindle within me. Oh! what sights are to be seen at the Lord's table, and what benefits may I not hope to find there! Did ever any thing represent love like that of the Lamb of God, dying to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself! What great love, free love, distinguishing love, expensive love, strong love, everlasting love! Lord, teach me and all poor sinners to love thee, who hast so wonderfully loved us.

Oh, what a value for immortal souls is there exhibited in the death of the Lord Jesus! Oh, what value ought I to put upon my own soul, and the souls of others, purchased with so great a price!

But what inestimable benefits are to be derived from this gospel ordinance of Jesus's institution in his holy Supper! Here he renews, at every fresh opportunity, the fresh tokens of the pardon of sin ob-

tained by his blood. Here believers find pledges, that they are brought into a state of adoption and grace. Here they receive new supplies of strength, for confirming gracious habits, for the quickening of faith, for the resisting temptations, for the weaning of the soul from the world, and for preparing for heaven.

My heart is again warmed in the view of these things ; and as the hour of public worship is arrived, let me not resemble those who by coming late to the house of God, disturb others, and seem to say, that they are not much interested to be present at the opening of the service themselves. I would not wish that private devotions should break in upon the stated times of public ordinances.—Both are beautiful in their season.

Now I am at the door. Let Jacob's sentiment be always mine ; " Surely the Lord is in this place ! How dreadful is this place ! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Lord, keep my foot, as I go into the place where thine honour dwelleth, that I may be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools, " for they know not that they do evil."

Now I am entered. Is not the eye of Jesus instantly upon me ? Doth he not know the secret purposes of my soul ? Doth he not know the desire I have to him, and to the remembrance of his name ? It is a refreshing thought. For if the eye of Jesus be upon me, then doth he know all my state, and wants, and circumstances. Ah ! but then he knows my sin, my unworthiness, my transgressions. True ; but doth he not know my sorrow for them ? Doth he not know that I came here to seek pardon, to find grace, to hear his voice, to adore his love, and to praise his name ? And will he not, in opposition to all my coldness, deadness, and unworthiness, will he not afford me all I need ? It is his own love, not my desert, which is made the standard

of his dealings. Though I come so far short in the measure of my duty to him ; praises to his name, he never comes short in the measure of his love to me. Though my heart is cold, yet his is warm. He doth not always wait to be kind until I ask it of him, for then I should go without a thousand mercies which I now enjoy ; but he saith himself, “ Before my people call, I will answer ; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear ”

Hark ! the service begins !—Oh, for a heart seasoned with grace, that I may *hear* as one that is hearing for eternity, and *pray* as one that is praying for everlasting life.

* * * * *

The Sermon is ended.—See what multitudes are hastening out, and what eagerness appears in them to be gone. Alas ! do they know that the ordinance of the Holy Supper is about to be administered ? Do they call to mind that Jesus is at his Table to bestow the blessings of pardon and peace ? Alas ! they are running away, as if it was the day of Judgment, and not the day of grace. Oh ! had I the power of persuasion, I would say to them, “ Return to the Lord, while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. To-day is the accepted time ”—to-morrow may be the day of vengeance.

Is it fancy, or did I indeed hear the Lord Jesus saying unto me, “ Will you also go away ? ” Lord, I would say as Peter did, “ To whom shall I go ? thou hast the words of eternal life.” No, dearest Saviour, unworthy as I am, I dare not leave thee ! My necessities do but compel me with more earnestness. I consider also that I am not invited because of my worth, but because of thy goodness : I come, therefore, as a poor polluted creature to be cleansed,

as a poor diseased soul to be healed, as a hungry sinner to be fed, and as a thirsty soul to be supplied with the water of life. And if Jesus will but receive me, the blessing of one that is ready to perish will come upon him. O Lord, make it a healing, strengthening, refreshing, sealing ordinance to my soul; and it will put more gladness in my heart than in the time when corn, and wine, and oil increase.

But see! the minister hath set forth the love-tokens of the Redeemer's feast, and now calls upon the congregation to shew their love to the person of the Lord Jesus by their offerings to the Lord's poor. Lord, accept my mite which I beg to drop into thy treasury, for it is all thine own, O Lord, and of thine own I give thee. I would give all that I can give with cheerfulness; for my God loveth a cheerful giver. I would give all I *do* give, as to Jesus; for every poor member of his mystical body he considers as himself. I would give all that I am *able* to give, for Jesus gave all for me, when "he so loved me as to give himself for me."

The collection of the alms finished.—The invitation to the feast next follows. Listen, my soul, to the names of those which are called, and mark well if thine own be in the list. If but *one* character described of those for whom the table is spread, be among them suited to thyself, rise up with the earnestness of one of old, and say, "Here am I, Lord, for thou calledst me."

But now I am at the Table. Jesus is come in to see the guests. Oh, for one gracious glance of his eye, to tell me I am welcome! Lord, do thou enter my very heart; there prepare the upper room in my affections; there abide, and enable me to keep the passover, even thy passover, at thy house, with thy disciples. Oh! if my heart be tempted to wander, look with the same eye thou didst upon Peter, that the

look may call me back and pierce my very soul, and tears of true repentance like his may flow. And to all my unbelief, fears, doubts, and misgivings, now I am so near my crucified Jesus, help me, like Thomas, to thrust my hand into his precious side, that, under the clear conviction, I may cry out, "My Lord and my God!"

But be hushed, my soul, the Lord's servant is coming towards thee. Read no book, for books cannot teach thee what to say, but look wholly to Jesus; keep an eye fixed on him. All I can say to my God is, what my God hath first spoken to me. While, therefore, the steward of these sacred mysteries is presenting to me the elements, and saying, Take, and eat this, and drink of this cup, in remembrance of Jesus; Lord, I would say, Whom shall I ever remember, if I am capable of forgetting thee? But are these the emblems of thy body and blood, and were they given for *me*? For *me*, a poor worm? For *me*, a sinful worm? For *me*, who have made thee to serve with my sins, and wearied thee with my iniquities? And is this the manner of my God's dealings with men?

And doth Jesus indeed say, that I am to eat and drink this in remembrance that Christ died for me; and these are the pledges of his love and my pardon? Witness then, all ye angels of light, witness all ye, my christian friends and brethren around me, and, above all, witness for me, my gracious God, Father Son, and Spirit, that on my bended knees I do most humbly, and heartily, and thankfully, accept those covenant tokens of the dear Redeemer's death; that I neither seek nor desire salvation in any other way, but in the *doing* and *dying* of the Lord Jesus. I here accept him in his person, in his characters, and in all his relations, as my *all in all*, for time and eternity. I determine from henceforth to know nothing among

men, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Living and dying, may I be found in him, owning him for my Prophet, Priest, and King. And oh! may he condescend to own me as the object of the Father's everlasting love, his own redeeming grace, and the Spirit's work, when he comes to be "glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe!"

Now I withdraw from the table to make room for others. But let not my heart withdraw from still taking part in the service. There is a communion of saints, as well as communion with God. And next to the enjoyment of fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, through the Holy Ghost, be it ever my portion to have communion with all the members of Christ's mystical body, who are parts of himself, that I may "rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

Some there are, whom I have seen, that in the intervals of the service at the table, are reading, and some who hold conversation, and some withdraw when they themselves have received. But if I mistake not, the Holy Ghost yet sheweth *a more excellent way*. Neither reading nor conversing, however proper in themselves, are proper works for ordinance seasons at the Lord's table. Our hearts are supposed now to be fully employed in those soul-refreshing contemplations, which that Holy Supper is so admirably calculated to awaken. And how can we be better engaged, than in taking an interest in all the cases of the many soul-exercises with which the family of the Lord Jesus are distinguished?

I would therefore keep my eye upon the table while others are receiving; and desire grace from the Lord to warm my heart, that, as I behold one, and another, presenting themselves before the Lord, I may mingle my prayers with theirs, that a kind Saviour may hold forth his sceptre of mercy, and grant a sui-

table blessing to every case. Perhaps that poor woman, (I would say to myself,) who is now drawing nigh, may be under peculiar distresses from the buffetings of Satan; and the great enemy of souls is treating her, as his captive, with terrors and fears. Lord Jesus, I would say, let thine eye be upon her; let not the enemy worry thy poor sheep, but do thou appear to her for her relief, and cause the tempter to flee away!—There is a man yonder at the table who, perhaps, is under heart-sraitenings in prayer, and who, though the blessed Spirit hath not suffered the *desire* after Jesus to be extinguished, yet the soul can only groan over its own weakness, and cannot weep after the Lord equal to its wishes; shall not such cases, if there be such before thee, blessed Saviour, attract thy kind attention, and procure from thee relief? How many others may be present (I would say to myself) who are fallen under great withdrawals of the Spirit as to his *comforting* operations; and who are crying out, ‘The Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me!’—How many, are writing bitter things against themselves, and fearing that the Lord’s mercy “is clean gone for ever!” How many, who have lost all evidences for the time of their interest in the covenant! And how many who fancy their prayers are denied, and they know not what to say, nor what answer to make, when unbelief in the heart, and the enemy of the soul, are acting in confederacy together, saying, “Where is now thy God?” Oh! what a roll, like that of the prophet’s, written “within and without, of lamentations, and mourning, and woe,” doth the cries and groans even of a little congregation of truly regenerated believers contain, were the whole open to our view, when they come to spread their separate and distinct cases before the Lord at his table! And shall not my soul bear a part with them? Shall I look

on with indifference, and feel no interest in the Lord's family, to which I trust I belong? Shall I receive grace and favour from my God, and their God, and not leave a petition with the King at his table, which is covered with blessing, that he will not send a single soul empty away! Grant, dearest Saviour; before the service be broken up, and the table be dismissed; grant some sweet token to every one, that, like well-satisfied guests, they may arise from thy banquet, and find cause to bless and praise the great Master of the feast, for what they have handled and tasted of the Redeemer's body and blood, crying out, with holy Simeon, "Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!"

And, Lord, I would say (if a poor sinful worm, like myself, may presume to pray for others,) in a particular manner bless those thy servants who are employed as thy stewards at thy solemn feast. Enlarge their hearts; open their mouths to speak to this people; and, while they break the bread, and drink of the cup, oh! may their own souls feed richly on the body and blood of their Divine Master.—Let their souls be abundantly supplied with the good things of the feast; and while they are busily engaged, as thy servants, to invite and encourage, and minister to others, let them not go unserved themselves.

Let me take one view more of the Holy Table, before the service ends. Oh! what a miracle of love is it to see sinful men feasting upon the precious body and blood of a crucified Redeemer! Surely now is come "salvation and strength." Seal all our pardons, dearest Jesus, in thy blood, and may every eye see the King in his beauty, and behold with faith the heavenly land which is very far off.

The service ended—I now retire to myself, to

review the mercies of the day, and to pray over the whole. What subjects arise in my heart, for thanksgiving to my God! What motives of humbleness of soul for the numerous imperfections of my prayers and praises! Oh! for that happy hour, when I shall have no longer occasion to mourn my unprofitableness under ordinances, but when even ordinances themselves shall be done away: when I shall sit down, to go out no more, at the marriage supper of the Lamb and drink of the new wine with Jesus in his kingdom: when God and the Lamb will be the everlasting object of my praise; and I shall be at the fountain head of bliss for ever and ever.—Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

The limits of a tract like this prevent much enlargement. But as we have been following *the Welcome Guest at the Lord's Table*, through all the services and employments of the day, we would not leave him until he had finished his devotions with the night.

Returned then from the public worship of the sanctuary, to the private meditation and prayer of the closet, how many solemn and precious subjects immediately arise to his view!

What a wonderful condescension is displayed in the whole work of salvation! Well might the apostle cry out, in the contemplation of it, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we," poor sinful, dying creatures of the earth as we are, that we "should be called the sons of God!" When I call to mind my meanness by nature, what can be equally astonishing as that "the High and Holy One which inhabiteth eternity" should not only *look*, but even *dwell* with "the man that is

of an humble and a contrite heart!" "Lord! what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou so regardest him?"

But when I call to mind, yet further, my vileness by reason of sin, how greatly is my astonishment increased! Who hath ever thoroughly drunk into the depth of sweetness in that precious scripture, which saith, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly?"

Now I am retired from every eye but his who seeth not as man seeth, and who knoweth me better than I know myself. Descend, blessed and Holy Spirit, and give me grace to act faith upon the Father's everlasting love, the Redeemer's unceasing grace, and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Ghost.

Is God my Father? my covenant Father and God in Christ Jesus? Surely there is somewhat very sweet and endearing in the very name of Father! Then all the tendencies of his dispensations towards me are in a fatherly way. Though he be my Sovereign, and my God; yet is he no less my Father.— And therefore do I not know, that while he orders all things concerning me as my Sovereign, never doth he forget his relation to me as my God and Father in Christ Jesus. Oh! it is sweet to eye God in this light! It is precious to come before him when I behold him in this manner! My faith finds great strength to lean upon him. I can then leave all things in his Almighty hands which concern me both for time and eternity, while I thus view him.— What though he sitteth upon a throne, yet it is a throne of grace unto which I have boldness to approach by the blood of Jesus. I see by faith my Redeemer wearing still my nature, and clothed in a vesture dipped in blood; and at every renewed oc-

casion of drawing near, do I not hear that voice which saith, "As a man spareth his son that serveth him, so will I spare thee?" (Matthew iii. 17.)

But let me look up with equal love, adoration, and praise, to him, who is one with the Father, "the brightness of his glory, and express image of his person." How sweet to view him in his person, to behold him in his greatness, in his fulness, in his glory. And how doubly sweet to behold him as my own, by a right of appropriation: not simply as a Saviour, but as *my* Saviour; not merely the Redeemer of another, but *my* Redeemer.

While I am thus enabled to look on the dear person of the Lord Jesus, I can rejoice both in what he hath done *for* me, and the relation which he stands in *to* me. He hath become my surety, my sponsor, and representative. He hath fulfilled all righteousness for me, and will fulfil all righteousness in me.—And having satisfied all the demands of the law of God which I have broken, he hath also satisfied by his blood the penalty which was due to me for the breach of it. Sweet consolation! Moreover, I behold in the person of the Lord Jesus that nearness of relation into which he hath condescended to put himself to me. All the tender affinities of the Father, the Friend, and the Brother, which he kindly and mercifully assumes. He is my Advocate also, my Counsellor, my High Priest, and Mediator. In a word; he is every thing to me; wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; *all in all*. So that in him is all fulness, and for this express purpose, that "of his fulness we may all receive, and grace for grace."

And no less let my soul for ever feast itself with longing eyes and the warmest heart of devout adoration and affection, when looking up to God the Holy Ghost, from whose mercy alone it is that I have derived any knowledge of the Father's love, or the

Redeemer's grace. Precious thought! that thou, O God the Spirit, art my teacher; the quickener of my soul when originally dead in trespasses and sins; and now, when at any time dead to devotion, the glorifier of the Lord Jesus to my view, both in my first knowledge of him and in every renewed instance of his love; the reviver of all my languishing frames; the restorer of all my departures and back-sliding; the Author and strengthener of every grace that is good in me; the comforter and consolation in all my dejection and troubles; and who is both the earnest and seal of all my assurances for time and for eternity. Hail! Holy and Eternal God! with the most profound reverence, and the warmest gratitude would I desire now, and for ever to bow before thee. Rather let my right hand forget her cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, than that I should cease to adore thy person, or remember thy precious work!

As it forms a most essential part in the life of him, who is a *Welcome Guest at the Lord's Table*, to see that *after* his return from the ordinance, the impressions there made may remain upon him; it will be highly proper, in retirement and prayer to seek aid from God the Spirit for this purpose; that as Moses's face shone when he came down from the mount, and which was visible to every beholder, so the true believer in Jesus may be enabled, by Almighty grace, to carry such a sanctity of deportment with him into all the circumstances of life, that it may appear both unto himself, and unto all men, whose he is, and whom he serves; and that he also hath been with Jesus.

It is delightful to observe what a plentiful provision God hath made in his word for this purpose;

that to all the fears, doubts, unbelief, and misgivings of the heart, what a multitude of rich promises are given. As for example, while the soul of the believer is crying out, "We have not sufficiency of ourselves to think," or do "any thing ourselves;" the answer is, "Our sufficiency is of God." While the soul of the mourner is groaning by reason of sin, and saying, "My iniquities are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear;" the answer is, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And when the soul complains under *hardness of heart*, God promiseth to "take away the heart of stone, and give an heart of flesh:" when groaning under temptations, God promiseth that his people shall not be "tempted above what they are able; but with every temptation he will make a way to escape." In short, to every case and to every circumstance, there are such "exceeding great and precious promises" afforded, as clearly testify, that it is in divine strength and divine faithfulness help alone is found. But the limits of a Tract prevent enlarging. It will be proper to close the whole with prayer, as this little work began; which the *Welcome Guest at the Lord's Table* may, as he finds occasion, adopt in his retirement and meditation, before he returns to the second duties and employments of family worship.

PRAYER.

Most gracious and merciful God! the poor pensioner of thy bounty, who presumed to knock at thy mercy-gate in the morning of this holy day, to implore thy grace, and seek thy favour, now ventures to come again with his best offering of praises and thanksgiving, for all the unnumbered mercies he hath

received from thine Almighty hand through the same. Thou art indeed, O God! a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God; and great is thy faithfulness.

But while I bless thy bounty, and desire to praise the riches of thy grace for the many sweet and precious manifestations whereby my soul hath been refreshed and made joyful in thine house of prayer, I cannot but take shame and confusion of face, in the recollection of my unworthiness and unprofitableness before thee. Oh! when will that happy hour come, when I shall no longer have cause to complain of a cold and lifeless heart! Oh! my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God! Eternal praises to that precious Lamb, who beareth away the iniquity of my most holy things! Praises to that Holy Spirit of consolation who applies Jesus to the healing of my soul's wounds!

Dearest Jesus! I have been commemorating thy death at thy table. I have been beholding thy agony and bloody sweat, thy cross and passion. Lord, grant that while I have been beholding Jesus Christ thus evidently crucified before me, the world may be crucified to me, and I unto the world. Do thou, dear Lord, so enable me to die unto sin and be alive unto God, that I may bear about continually the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in my mortal body. And oh! thou blessed Spirit, do thou work in me both to will and to do of thy good pleasure. Make my body thy temple. And as I am bought with a price, and am no longer my own; enable me to glorify God in my body and in my spirit, which are God's. Lord, lead me into an experimental, vital acquaintance with my dearest Saviour, Jesus Christ, and him crucified; that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. I would earnestly desire to present my body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable

to the Lord, which is my reasonable service, and to be no longer conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of my mind. And grant, Lord, that the life I now live in the flesh I may live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Precious, precious Jesus, may I be wholly thine, and by a life of receiving and living upon thy fulness, may I be growing up into thy lovely image in all things!

And, finally, dear Lord, fit and prepare me for heaven. Oh! may I be daily, hourly, looking out, and longing for thy coming. Oh! may every renewed visit at thy table make me more earnest for the participation of that inheritance with saints in light. And while I enjoy the shadow of good things to come here, may the substance be more desirable. While thy tabernacles below are so amiable, may a desire of thy temple above be increasing upon me. If a day, an hour, here, be so precious in thy presence, what must an eternity be in thy temple above. Oh! when shall I come to appear before my God in glory.—Hasten, dear Lord, and let the day break, and the shadows flee away! Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountain of spices!

Now to the Father, Son, and Spirit, be endless, undivided praises. Amen.

SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS

UPON SEVERAL

Select Portions of Holy Scripture :

AFFECTIONATELY PRESENTED TO

THE CHURCH OF OUR MOST GLORIOUS CHRIST.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A COURSE OF SERMONS, OCCASIONALLY
DELIVERED IN THE CHURCH OF CHARLES, PLYMOUTH,
BEFORE THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

P R E F A C E.

THE lease of my life, according to scripture tenure, (Psalm xc. 10.) being nearly run out ; and unable, from increasing years and increasing infirmities, to hope much longer the going in and out, as I have done, for nearly half a century, with the Lord's people in the Ordinance of the Holy Supper ; I have thought, to gather up the *Fragments* which have been used upon those occasions, might not be unacceptable, neither unprofitable, under the Lord's blessing, to supply in the best manner I am now able that deficiency. Peradventure, (I have said to myself, as I ruminated on the subject,) from the good hand of my God upon me, those small love-tokens to the Church may speak when I am silent, and find their way also into places where I have never been. And, in this sense, my very inability may be rendered subservient to greater usefulness. The thought warmed my heart in the moment as it entered. And under the impression I could not help saying,—should the thing be of the Lord ; should that sovereignty of grace, which is not limited in its operations to great or slender means, condescend to make this little work minister, under his Almighty power, to any of his chosen ones, to afford comfort upon those interesting occasions ; the Lord will be glorified, and his people made happy, when the hand which now writes shall have long mouldered in the dust.

Let it not be supposed, however, from what I have now said, as if I lamented an inability, the natural consequence of age, and the gracious ordination of unerring wisdom. Not so : I dare not regret that my life is nearly over, and that my labours are nearly finished. Indeed, indeed, I rejoice in the prospect. Through the tender mercy of my Lord, I have had my day ; and a long day of mercies from the Lord it hath been. And, as one well fed and nourished at his Lord's table, whenever the bountiful Lord of the feast shall command the cloth to be removed, sure I am, through his grace enabling me, I shall arise, return thanks, and depart.

In relation to what is here affectionately presented to the Church of our most glorious Christ, I shall not anticipate, by an enumeration of Contents, the several subjects ; only to observe that they are *Sacramental*. The ordinance of the Holy Supper is in itself, when spiritually received, a most sweet, and costly, and refreshing service of the Lord. It will be my mercy, and the Reader's also, if an unction from the Lord be upon the perusal ; that with the Apostle we may be able to say, “ Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ ; and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.”

ROBERT HAWKER.

Plymouth, Charles Vicarage.

SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS.

I.

MELCHIZEDEK, PRIEST OF THE MOST HIGH GOD, BRINGING
FORTH BREAD AND WINE.

GENESIS xiv. 18—20.

And Melchizedek king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was the Priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him and said: Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand.

It is always blessed, and always profitable, when, under the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, the redeemed, and regenerated child of God, is enabled to trace his mercies to the fountain head of mercy; and to run up the whole, into the great source of love, in the discovery of Jehovah, in his Trinity of Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, coming forth and making himself known to his church in the Person of our most glorious Christ. God, in the essence and nature of his Being, is incomprehensible. And although He hath, in infinite condescension, been pleased to make known his perfections, by distinct acts of grace, to the church in Christ; as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in One and the same glorious God: yet it is the Son of God only, who by assuming into union with himself our nature, becomes the visible Jehovah, to whom it belongs to unfold, and accomplish, all the divine purposes, in all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory.

And it forms one of the sweetest, and most interesting of all subjects, when we can, and do, behold

the tendencies of the Lord Jesus, in the discoveries he is at any time pleased to make of himself to his people, by way of proof of his love, and that his whole heart is with his people. Hence we read, that "his delights were with the sons of men, before the mountains were brought forth, and when there were no fountains abounding with water." (Prov. viii. 24—31.) Hence, after creation work had called the church into being, immediately sacramental symbols were formed; and on the fall, ordinances were also appointed, to lead the mind of the Lord's people into endearing apprehensions of the Person and grace of Christ. And these shadowy representations which had their substance all in one, and the same glorious object, however diversified, as best suited the different ages of the church, all pointed to one and the same centre, and had their completion in Him. Before the tabernacling of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, and even after, when he had tabernacled and finished redemption work, and returned to glory; until the Holy Ghost came down, in a more open display of himself, in the efficiency of his ministry, in "taking of the things of Christ, and shewing to his people;" neither the person of Christ, nor the vast object of salvation in Christ, were so plainly discovered, as since the Lord's ascension, they are now revealed by the Spirit. Nevertheless, when taught by Him, and "the gospel is preached, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," the church of our most glorious Christ doth now very plainly discover, that there were sacramental symbols, which from the first did set forth the great and leading features of our most holy faith, even in the garden of Eden. And the Patriarchs in successive ages, taught of God, as plainly saw "the day of Christ afar off, rejoiced and were glad;" as the apostles beheld the Son of God, substantially and bodily in flesh, when

“their eyes looked upon him, and their hands handled of the word of life.”

My text hath a relation to a striking example in proof; and which I venture to consider a plain and palpable illustration of it, now we are enabled to read the solemn transactions there recorded, through the medium of the gospel.

I must not allow myself to take up more of your attention than is absolutely necessary, upon this occasion; but I would beg it might be observed, that at the time the text records, when the King of Salem brought forth bread, and wine, to meet the Patriarch Abram, he was returning from the slaughter of the kings. This is the first war, the first battle, ever fought upon earth. And it is worthy notice, in relation to our subject, that the Holy Ghost hath thought proper to bring the church acquainted with it: as if to introduce more pointedly Melchizedek in his priestly office. And it very fully illustrates the truth of that doctrine; I mean of the universal corruption of our nature in the Adam fall transgression, which renders the priesthood necessary. The Holy Ghost, by James, hath shewn the fall to be the origin of the *one*; while this act of Melchizedek sets forth the necessity of the *other*. “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” (James iv. 1.) And as the evil of sin is thus traced to its source in the fall of man; so here is shadowed out the priesthood of Christ for the recovery. And that this was the main point intended, by the King of Salem bringing forth bread and wine, is evident; because had it been for the refreshment of the body only after the toils of war; wherefore was it so particularly mentioned of Melchizedek, that “he was the priest of the Most High God?” And when we add to these views, that the Son of God is said to

have been “ a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek ;” and who alone, and no other, in after ages, brought forth bread and wine in that holy Supper, which was made a standing memorial of his death ; it should seem, as a most clear and established point, that this service of Melchizedek was purely sacramental.

It will form a very interesting subject for our present meditation, preparatory to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, if, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, we make further enquiry on those grounds, into what may be supposed to have been the leading object and design of it. And it will be our mercy, if we are enabled to have a spiritual and scriptural apprehension therein, that “ we may know the things which are freely given to us of God ; not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” (1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.)

The plan by which I propose to consider the subject is, in the *first* place, to enquire into the nature of the blessing itself, pronounced by Melchizedek, when in the name of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, he blessed Abram ; and blessed the Most High God for Abram, in having delivered his enemies into his hand. I shall then proceed, *secondly*, to enquire, whether, as the priest of the Most High God, the bringing forth bread and wine was not sacramental, and symbolical of higher things, than the mere refreshment of the body. And if the Lord be pleased to accompany our researches into this subject, and shall give us some spiritual apprehensions, to behold the connexion of the one with the other ; the priesthood of Melchizedek, in bringing forth bread and wine, to refresh the great father of the faithful, being symbolical of the everlasting priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ ; I shall hope

“the savour of His Name” will be on our meditation, as “ointment poured forth.”

I begin, as was proposed, with the first branch of the discourse, namely, an enquiry concerning the nature of the blessing itself pronounced by Melchizedek on Abram, in the Name of the Most High God. And happily for our purpose, our enquiry is answered at the very entrance. There can be no doubt, or hesitation, to whom it refers, and who is intended by it. The uniform tenor of scripture is express to this purpose, to shew that it is that One, glorious, and comprehensive blessing, which Jehovah, in his Trinity of Persons, hath given to the church, and is folded up in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The whole charter of grace is contained in those words: “Men shall be blessed in Him.” (Psalm lxxii. 17.) For strictly and properly speaking, there can be no blessing out of Christ; and he is essential to make every other blessing, be it what it may, a real blessing. Where Christ is not, there is no blessing, be the other circumstances of life what they may. And where Christ is, there can be no real evil, how unpromising soever things may appear. His presence and favour sanctifies and sweetens all, (as it is expressed in one of the Psalms:) “because thy loving kindness is better than life.” (Psalm lxiii. 3.)

And what endears it to the affections of the Lord's people, in a most gracious and sovereign manner, is this; namely, that all the Persons in the GODHEAD are alike revealed in this eternal purpose, concerning our most glorious Christ; for in Him, Jehovah, in his Trinity of Persons, hath made himself known, and is engaged by covenant engagements to his people. And I pray you to observe, by way of confirmation, (for it could not have been without design, yea, and an abundant design and signification too,)

that the glorious incommunicable name of the (El Olyon) Most High God, is thrice mentioned in this short scripture of the text. Melchizedek was the priest of *the Most High God*. Blessed be Abram, of *the Most High God*. Blessed be *the Most High God*. And the blessing itself thus given to Abram, and to every individual in the Covenant, who is the object and subject of the same sovereign grace, in Christ with Abram, is marked through the whole Bible, as coming from the joint love and favour of Jehovah, in his Trinity of Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

It is delightful to observe with what emphasis the blessing itself is expressed by the Holy Ghost, through the whole body of the inspired writings. It is called, *The blessing of Abram*; because first made to him. For thus it is worded: "Now the Lord had said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation: and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee: and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. xii. 1—3.) But, that the church of God might not overlook the glorious Person here so blessedly spoken of, and forget Christ, in what was here said to Abram, the Holy Ghost would not leave it to the comment of any man to explain, but graciously was pleased to do it himself. For thus we read. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not; and to seeds as of many; but as of one; and to thy seed which is Christ." (Gal. iii. 16.) Hereby decidedly settling the whole doctrine on its own proper basis, and shewing, that the blessing, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, was not Abraham, but our most glorious Christ.

And I would very earnestly and affectionately, before you go further, desire you to pause, and to observe, how very graciously the Holy Ghost hath stamped his almighty seal on this grand truth, in every part of his divine word. It runs, like a golden thread, through all the Bible. It links together in one the whole church of God, and all in Christ. Hence we find Isaac, the immediate successor of Abram, blessing Jacob in those striking words: "God Almighty bless thee, and give thee the blessing of Abraham." (Gen. xxviii. 3, 4.) Hence, Jacob also, when a dying, blessed his children, and with a particular eye to Joseph, spake of this blessing, as "the God of his father, who would help him, and the Almighty who would bless him, to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills." (Gen. xlix. 25.) Hence Moses also, before his death, under the same gracious influence, blessed the Lord's people, with whom was deposited the promise. His words are as striking as the former: "And this is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel, before his death." (Deut. xxxiii. 1.) And thus in like manner, down to gospel times, the blessing ran in the same form of words, and all pointing to Christ. The persons interested in it were all included in this one comprehensive character: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. iii. 29.) And the promise itself, comprehended in it union with Christ, and all the consequent blessings from Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. i. 3.)

I must not dismiss this branch of our subject, until that I have first made a request that the blessing, wherewith Melchizedek blessed Abram, be considered, and duly considered, in the high and infinite

importance in which it is spoken of in scripture, as one special, peculiar, and personal blessing, perfectly distinguishable from every other; and therefore as such, emphatically called, the blessing! For in fact it is, Christ himself; in whom, are all temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. There are a thousand, and ten thousand blessings, so called in life; and such indeed they are, in the common circumstances of mankind, contrasted to the miseries of our fallen nature. But Christ is the blessing of blessings; the mercy of mercies: without the possession of whom, though a man had the whole world at his command, and his cup running over, yet would he be miserable in the midst of all. Hence, the profane Esau, whose dwelling was “the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven from above;” that is, he had a fulness of all carnal joys; was miserable in the midst of all; and in the bitterness of heart exclaimed, “hast thou but one blessing, my Father?” (Gen. xxvii. 34—40.) Ah! no; there is but one Lord Jesus Christ, the only blessing, the only portion of his people, and a portion indeed enough to live upon to all eternity! For, as it is said in scripture, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” (Acts iv. 12.)

I proceed now, as was proposed, under the *second* branch of our discourse to enquire whether Melchizedek, as priest of the Most High God, when bringing forth bread and wine to Abram, did not do it, in this high office; and whether there was not a sacramental and symbolical signification in it, of higher things than the refreshment of the body.

I begin the subject on this part of it with observing, that there is nothing novel, in relation to this sacramental observance, in the days of Abraham; for in Eden we have several corresponding circum-

stances, and especially when explained by subsequent scriptures, in confirmation of the doctrine. Surely the "tree of life in the midst of the garden," was highly symbolical of Christ. For as the first paradise had this tree of life in it, so in the final representation of the same, John saw in vision, "the Tree of Life in the midst of the street, and on either side the river." (Rev. xxii. 2.) And that Christ is meant by both is hardly necessary to mention, much less insist upon, for Christ in the midst of his church is the sole life of his church, in relation to natural, spiritual, and eternal life. And that it became sacramental to the church, is evident from hence, in that, not like ordinances of sacrifice, in which somewhat typical was offered by the believer; here, in this sacramental service, nothing was to be done but received.

Secondly. We have seen, in what hath before been mentioned, with what a world of tenderness the patriarch Abram was brought into a knowledge of the Lord, when the Lord invested him with the blessing of the covenant; that in him, and his seed, meaning (as hath been shewn) Christ, should "all the families of the earth be blessed." But without an eye to some outward testimony, as symbolical of this inward grace, there was at that time no ordinance, no rite, no service, no, nor scripture, to keep alive in the mind the remembrance of this incalculable blessing. For let it be here observed, (and it is an highly important observation too, on the subject,) that the rite of circumcision did not begin until many years after, (certainly not less than *twenty*) when Ishmael had arrived at the age of *thirteen*. (Gen xvii. 25.) So that it follows, unless we consider this act of Melchizedek bringing forth bread and wine, and blessing the patriarch, was intended sacramentally, there was no ordinance in the church of the Most High God,

under the patriarchal dispensation, neither for years after the Lord had thus blessed Abram by Melchizedek's priesthood. Noah, when coming forth from the Ark, offered a sacrifice immediately on his deliverance from the deluge, and with an eye to Christ, whom the ark prefigured. And it is very blessedly said upon that occasion, that "the Lord smelled a sweet savor of rest." (Gen. viii. 20, 21; Ephes. v. 2.) And when this priest of the Most High God went forth with bread and wine to bless Abram, it was, when the patriarch had returned from the slaughter of the kings, in the first war which sin had introduced to desolate, (as the deluge had done before,) in the after ages of the world, mankind. And were not both punishments the effect of sin? And in the deliverance of the Lord's people from both, is it not wholly from salvation by Christ? And as in the one, why not in the other, might it not be supposed to have been set forth by a shadowy representation?

Moreover, in the *third* place, it will be difficult to explain, upon any principles whatever, why the priesthood of Melchizedek is mentioned, in the bringing forth bread and wine; unless he acted in this high character in so doing; or wherefore he is called a priest at all. For we never read of any other act of Melchizedek's priesthood; neither was there any other ordinance at that time; or even a church to perform the office in. And although the Holy Ghost hath been pleased to throw a veil over the person of Melchizedek; whether, as some have thought, it was Christ himself, or, as others, he was but a type of Christ; yet, as a priest of the Most High God, it cannot be supposed that he sustained a character of such dignity without any ministry. And when is added to this view, what the Holy Ghost hath said of him, in the epistle to the Hebrews, we may well suppose the introduction of Melchizedek at this interview

with Abram, had somewhat in it of vast importance. (See Hebrews vii. throughout.) I have said so much on the person of Melchizedek in my *Poor Man's Commentary* on that chapter, that I think it unnecessary in this place to enlarge. I would therefore, only now, just observe, that he, whose priesthood is said to have been for ever; and who is declared to have been greater than Abram; and whose descent was "without father, without mother, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life;" we may safely conclude, on scripture grounds, would not have been here described as the priest of the Most High God, and neither before, nor afterwards, noticed, had not this act, of bringing forth bread and wine, been of an higher nature than the mere refreshment of the body.

And *lastly*, to mention no more: If we pass on to the time of the church during her wilderness state, after leaving Egypt, and observe what is there said in relation to a similar transaction, I venture to think, this subject respecting Melchizedek's priesthood, in the days of Abram, in bringing forth bread and wine in a sacramental way, receives a more striking confirmation. The Holy Ghost himself hath explained the subject, and shewn that the ordinances in the wilderness were like to this of the patriarch, having bread and wine, and were purely sacramental. For thus we read, by the ministry of Paul: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." (1 Cor. x. 1—4.) Here we see both the ordinances, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, set forth. For it

is not only said that the people were baptized, but that they spiritually fed on Christ. For as the manna from heaven set forth Christ, (John vi. 48—51,) so the water from the rock is said to have been Christ himself. And that both were considered sacramental, and alluding to the ordinances which Christ in after ages instituted, seems likely from Paul's connecting both together. "I speak (said he) as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. x. 15, 16.) And let it not be forgotten that the Holy Ghost, by Paul, in this scripture, makes no mention of *circumcision*, or the *Passover*; (and which were both standing ordinances in the church, during the wilderness state, and afterwards;) for there was nothing *sacramental* in either; being wholly *typical* of Christ himself, and not referring to any act of his people. So that there was no sacramental service but this: and this of breaking of bread, was daily observed after the church was formed, on the coming of the Holy Ghost. (See Acts ii. 46.) Hence, upon the whole, therefore, I cannot but conclude, that upon the presumption, that this, which the Holy Ghost, by Paul, calls "eating the same spiritual meat, and drinking the same spiritual drink," was meant by the Lord the Spirit to denote sacramental: we behold the whole three distinct and distant ages of the church from each other, enjoying their high privileges in our most glorious Christ, spiritually and sacramentally. Under the *patriarchal* age, in the bread and wine brought forth to Abram, by Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God. Under the *Mosaic* dispensation, in the spiritual meat and spiritual drink in the wilderness. And as appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, at *the table of the Lord*, where, by the out-

ward signs of bread and wine, every redeemed and regenerated child of God spiritually receives and lives upon the body and blood of Christ.

If I have been happy enough to explain this subject upon true scriptural ground, the priestly office of this king of Salem, will appear, in a sacramental point of view, highly interesting in the present hour, to the church of our most glorious Christ. What a subject of infinite importance to the divine mind must have been the salvation by Christ, which, from the first dawn of revelation, and from age to age, hath been set forth by every shadow, type, and figure, spiritual and sacramental, in the church and among the Lord's people. "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," at once proclaims and confirms, as with the broad seal of heaven, that the whole of redemption is solely in and by the person and work, of the Lord Jesus Christ. So that his person is the great object of faith, and his salvation the great subject of all confidence and joy. All the Persons in the GODHEAD have concurred in the appointment of the vast design; and the whole is accomplished and completed by the Lord Jesus Christ. And these glorious events being thus ratified and confirmed to the church, in the blood of Christ, all that remains for the redeemed and regenerated child of God, is, to receive sacramentally the outward symbols, which the Lord himself hath appointed for the refreshment of the soul by faith; as Abram was refreshed, after the slaughter of the kings, by the bread and wine.

It is the mercy also of the Lord's people, at the holy Supper, to receive those outward tokens of the Lord's inward manifestations, from the Lord himself, as Abram did from the hands of Melchizedek. He was the priest of the Most High God, and he only qualified to do it *then*. And Christ is he alone, who can do it *now*. And it is a thought, always to be

cherished, and never lost sight of, at the Lord's table, that his perpetual and everlasting ministry was confirmed by oath: "the Lord hath sworn and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm cx. 4.)

One word more. Let it not be forgotten, to whom this priest of the Most High God brought forth bread and wine. It was to Abram. Yes! *to Abraham and his seed were the promises made.* It is the same even to the regenerated church of the Most High God: the ordinance of the holy Supper is brought forth in bread and wine. The blessing of Abram is one to Abram's seed. There can be no sacramental, no spiritual participation by any other. A dead body might as easily be supposed to receive sustenance from food; as a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, and unregenerated to a new and spiritual life, to receive benefit from the Lord's Supper. There may be indeed, (and who shall say how often there is?) a partaking in the outward sign of the bread and the wine, where there is no spiritual communion with the body and blood of Christ. It is possible, in the army of Abram, some were there who were refreshed in body by the bread and wine, and yet had no part nor lot in the matter sacramentally. For all were *not* Israel, which were *of* Israel; neither because sprung from Abram after the flesh, were they children of promise. (Rom. ix. 6—8.) Outward things are nothing. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? or what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. vi. 14.)

The Lord, our most glorious King of Salem, and our Melchizedek be with us, on the approaching celebration of the Supper, and bring forth the true spiritual bread and wine of his own body and blood. And may he say to us his redeemed ones, as to his spouse of old, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Song v. 1.)

SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS.

II.

THE JEWISH PASSOVER TYPICAL OF CHRIST.

EXODUS XII. 26, 27.

And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover.

It is hardly necessary for me, in speaking to you on the subject of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, to observe, that the ordinance itself is a feast of commemoration upon a sacrifice; even of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The sacrifice was once offered by Christ, and but once; "for (as the Holy Ghost testifieth) by that one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.) But the feast of commemoration is to be often observed. At the institution of it, the Lord thus commanded: "This do, in remembrance of me." (Luke xxii. 19.) And the Holy Ghost, by Paul, saith: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come." Every renewed observance of the Lord's Supper therefore is a feast of commemoration on that one glorious sacrifice; and is to be continued in the church of our most glorious Christ until his second coming. And who shall say, but what some of Christ's redeemed ones may be found in the very act of commemoration at Christ's coming?

I know not whether it hath ever struck you, but so it is: God the Holy Ghost evidently intended that the minds of the Lord's people should be directed to

the Lord himself, in every sacrifice and in every ordinance, whether sacramental or typical, from the first to the last, in all the institutions of holy services he appointed. If we look at the subject, from the first moment of sacred ordinances in the garden of Eden, as well as under the law, what was the whole substance of these shadowy representations but Christ? The first institution that we read of, after the fall, was the offering made by Abel and Cain. And the Holy Ghost was graciously pleased not to leave the very different offerings of these men to human conjecture, to form opinions upon; but in infinite condescension explained them himself. For thus we read: "By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous; God testifying of his gifts; and by it, he being dead, yet speaketh." (Heb. xi. 4.) What faith? Evidently faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. xiii. 8.) The difference between Abel and Cain lay here (as I have elsewhere shewn in my *Poor Man's Commentary* on the Bible; Hebrews xi.) Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; for Abel had an eye, by faith, to Christ, the promised seed. Cain had none. Abel knew himself to be a sinner, sprung from the fallen race of Adam, and as such came with the firstlings of his flock, in token of his conscious sin; and therefore desired, to represent by the blood of this sacrifice, that he founded his whole hopes of acceptance in the blood of Christ. Whereas Cain, in his offering, had respect to God only as a Creator; neither confessing himself as a sinner, or as one needing salvation: and as such, was the first deist the world ever knew. Hence it is said, that the Lord "had respect to Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect." (Gen. iv. 4, 5.) Hence also,

though so many ages and generations have passed since those events took place, yet their testimony remains, and "Abel, though dead, yet speaketh."

I pray you not to pass away from the contemplation of this subject, until that you have first considered the grace of God in this appointment to his church and people. As Jehovah in his trinity of persons, had fore-viewed the fall, and fore-appointed the Lamb to be slain, from the foundation of the world; what a very blessed method was this in our God, to teach his chosen ones, as, in the instance of Abel, to have recourse to those shadowy ordinances, by way of keeping alive in their minds Him, in his glorious person and salvation, who in the fulness of time would come "to do away sin by the sacrifice of himself?" What a wonderful plan in the stores of Omnipotency, to bring to view things so remote, and by faith in his people to realize and substantiate them, as if present! And what is the ordinance of the holy supper now but to the same effect? Do we not, to all intents and purposes, behold in the sacred elements Christ crucified; and spiritually eat the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are refreshed by the bread and wine?

Among the several striking memorials under the Old Testament dispensation, to prefigure the striking events which would distinguish the person and work of our most glorious Christ, under the New, that of the Jewish Passover became eminently conspicuous; so much so, that the apostle Paul, taught by the Holy Ghost thus to interpret it, decidedly calls "Christ our Passover, sacrificed for us;" and adds, "therefore let us keep the feast." (1 Cor. v. 7, 8.) And that Moses, the man of God, under whose ministry, by the Lord's express commandment it was appointed, considered the whole as intended to set forth Christ, is evident from what is said of him in the book

of the epistle to the Hebrews: "Through faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first born should touch them." (Heb. xi. 28.) Moses, and the whole band of heroes of the Old Testament church, which are spoken of with such illustrious testimony in this chapter, beheld by faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, in every service and sacrifice they offered. "Without shedding of blood there was no remission of sins." And every one of them substantiated Christ in the shadow; and lived, and died, in the full assurance of faith; that "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." (1 John i. 7.)

In the further prosecution of this subject of the *Jewish* Passover, as one among the many interesting events in the Church of the Old Testament, which had respect also to the New; and which will form, under the teaching and unction of the Holy Ghost, a most suitable meditation, for our present service, preparatory to the ordinance of the Holy Supper; I purpose to consider, in the *first* point of view, somewhat more largely, the statement given in the sacred scriptures of the *Jewish* Passover itself. I shall then *secondly*, call upon you to observe with me, what a beautiful resemblance it had to the person and work of Christ, the one only real and true Passover. And from both I hope the Lord will be so eminently with us, by shining upon his holy word, and shining at the same time in our hearts, that in our drawing nigh to the Lord, in this gracious ordinance of his own appointing, we may discover that Christ is the very Paschal Lamb which was offered for us, and hath taken away our sin, by the sacrifice of himself: who by his death, hath destroyed death; and by his rising to life again, hath restored to us everlasting life: therefore with Angels, and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify his glorious name; evermore praising and saying; Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of

hosts; heaven and earth, are full of thy glory! Glory be unto thee O Lord Most High. Amen.

I begin as I proposed, in the *first* place to consider somewhat more largely, the statement given in the Sacred Scriptures, of the *Jewish* Passover itself. It is worthy our closest observation, with what a vast apparatus, as well as a world of tenderness, our glorious Lord introduced this hallowed ordinance, and appointed it for the perpetual observance of his people, until the substance being come, the shadow might for ever cease. It was the first of all the ordinances, which, when the Lord was forming his Church, he instituted by type and figure, to set forth that infinite redemption, to be accomplished in the after age of the Church, by the death of Christ. And so intent was the Lord upon it, that in the very night of bringing his people out of the bondage of *Egypt*, though occupied, as we may well suppose they were, with numberless concerns, in the bustle of their departure; yet this holy service was first to be performed. They were to kill and eat the Passover, as soldiers on a march; with "their loins girded, their shoes on their feet; their staff in their hand; and to eat it in haste," (Exod. xii. 11.) And Moses the man of God, when summing up the divine command, and assigning the reason, added, that the act itself was to set forth, that that very night, the Lord would pass through *Egypt*, and while delivering his people, would destroy *Egypt*, in their first born. "It is a night, (said he) to be much observed unto the Lord, for bringing them out from the land of *Egypt*: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of *Israel*, in their generations," (Exodus xii. 42.) And, my brother, pause over the relation of this wonderful event, and then say—if the deliverance from the bondage of *Egypt*, became a subject worthy perpetual observance unto all generations of *Israel*; what

ought to be the remembrance of the Lord's people in all ages, of that Almighty deliverance, by the death of our most glorious Christ, from the everlasting bondage of sin, death, hell, and the grave, in the celebration of the Supper of the Lord! If such was the sacred regard observed to the *shadow*; what an holy attention may be supposed suitable to the *substance*? If a *temporal* salvation was so weighty, what must be the everlasting redemption, realized and completed as it is in the death of Christ, "our Passover, sacrificed for us?"

The several striking particulars, by which the Jewish Passover was to be observed, come next to be considered. "A Lamb without blemish, a male of the first year," was to be set apart, for the purpose of this service. This lamb was to be taken out, "from the sheep, or from the goats." It was to be kept up four days before it was slaughtered; namely, from the tenth day of the month, until the fourteenth day of the same month. And in the evening of that day, the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel was then to kill it. And the blood was to be taken, and the two side posts of the houses, and on the upper door post of the houses wherein the Israelites were to eat it, was to be stricken therewith. And the flesh of the Lamb was to be eaten in that night by the people; "roast with fire, and unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs," they were to eat it. Not to be eaten raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire: his head, with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And nothing was to be let remain of it until the morning: and that which remained of it until the morning, they were to burn with fire. "And thus (said the Lord) shall ye eat it. With your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through

the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first born, in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token, upon the houses where ye are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord throughout your generations: ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. And it shall come to pass when your children shall say unto you, what mean you by this service? That ye shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped."

So much in relation to the sacred history of this wonderful service. I call it *wonderful*, for in every sense of the word, we cannot but so consider it. For at a distance so remote, as the time of the Church then was, to the death of Christ; and that such a coincidence of circumstances should be brought together, and at the very hour the Church was forming; for the observance of statutes, and ordinances, to begin with this one, in which, as far as type and figure could go, almost every minute representation set forth Christ; is surely such a promulgation of the mind and will of God, on this momentous doctrine, redemption by the blood of the Lamb, as when compared with the thing itself, could only have been known, and in the appointment of Him, to whose comprehensive view, past, present, and future, form but one object. Hence, every redeemed, and regenerated child of God, is constrained to cry out in the contemplation, "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. i. 24.)

That Moses the minister in this Jewish dispensation, passed over the whole shadowy representation, and beheld Christ the sole substance of it, is expressly declared by God the Holy Ghost himself, as is shewn by that scripture which hath been before quoted: "Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first born should touch them." (Heb. xi. 28.)

Let me now in the *second* place, as was proposed, call upon you to observe with me, what a beautiful resemblance this Jewish ordinance of the Passover had, yea, and in the most minute point, to the person and offering of Christ, the only real and true Passover sacrificed for us.

I begin with the first feature in this sacred ordinance, namely, of the Lamb. And as the Holy Ghost by Moses, opened the appointment of the service with stating, what was to form the basis of the Passover, in that of a "Lamb without blemish;" so must this be the first, and indeed substantially the whole, of our Gospel Ordinance, in the holy Supper. It is Christ himself in his own person. The one great and glorious object of faith, is Christ's person. Faith seizeth upon the person of our most glorious Christ. This is the *object*. And the one offering of Christ, in the sacrifice of himself; this is the *subject*. Hence, the Holy Ghost taught the church by Peter, to know her Lord under this distinguishing character. "Forasmuch as ye know (saith Peter) that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conversation; (that is, including both the *original* birth sin of our fallen nature, and our *actual* transgressions the effects of that fallen nature) received by tradition from your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb, without blemish and without spot." (1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) A few *scriptural* views of our most glorious Christ on this

ground, will be sufficient in point, for the establishment of this leading truth : and if the Lord the Spirit, enables our minds thus *spiritually* to behold him, it will blessedly prepare us, for the *spiritual* celebration of the Lord as our Passover, in this holy Supper. Now Christ is expressly said in scripture, to be "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. xiii. 8.) And nothing can be more certain, than that in the eternal purposes of Jehovah in his trinity of persons, such was the decree in the council of peace. Hence Peter, on the day of Pentecost, under the immediate unction and teaching of God the Holy Ghost, thus expressed the glorious doctrine before the people of Israel. Speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, he said, "Him being delivered by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (Acts ii. 23.) And hence also, as Christ was thus in the decree, and thus set up from everlasting ; so in all the time state of the church, before the Son of God openly tabernacled in substance of our flesh, every sacrifice shadowed forth *Him*. The Lamb of the morning, and the Lamb of the evening, as well as the Lamb at the Passover, all referred to *Him*. Without *Him* the whole had no meaning. In *Him* every shadow became substantiated. And hence, through all the ages and generations of the church, the Holy Ghost, (if one may presume so to speak) delighted in glorifying our most glorious Christ, so to designate his divine person. The prophet Isaiah, looking forward unto gospel days, and under rich aboundings of the Spirit, beheld him by the eye of faith, going to his crucifixion ; and described him under those endearing characters : "He is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter ; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." (Isaiah liii. 7.) And the prophet

John the Baptist, when Christ came, and went in and out before his people at Jerusalem, looked upon Jesus as he passed, and more than once spake of him in the same character. "Behold (said he) the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John i. 29—36.) And to add no more; John, the beloved apostle, when in vision he saw the church surrounding the throne of God, gives this very blessed relation of it: "And I beheld, (said John) and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain." And he heard the song, and the very words which the church sung upon that occasion; "Thou art worthy (said they) to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." (Rev. v. 6. to the end.) And the same inspired apostle relates another similar vision which he saw of "the Lamb in the midst of the throne," surrounded by the church, which had "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 9. to the end.) My brother! are not these views of our most glorious Christ decidedly satisfactory and conclusive, to demonstrate that the Lamb in the Jewish Passover typified the Lamb of God? Surely every enlightened eye of the true Israel of God in that service, as well as Moses, "through faith kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood." And is it not in the present hour, wholly with an eye to the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world, that every redeemed and regenerated child of God, among the true Israel, commemorate Christ's death in the holy Supper? Doth not every one of his redeemed and regenerated ones behold him *now* with the eye of faith, as truly as John did *then*, in the midst of the throne, as a Lamb which had been slain, bearing on his glorified body the marks of our salvation? And is he in the

midst of the throne? Surely, then, he is the Lord on his throne; accessible to his people in every direction; the centre of all fulness, all grace, and all glory; so that we may, at all times, and upon all occasions, come boldly unto him, "and find grace to help in all time of need."

I pass on, *secondly*, to another feature in the Jewish Passover, in which our most glorious Christ was strikingly depicted; namely, in that the Lamb was separated from the flock, out of which he was taken, the *tenth* day of the month, until the *fourteenth* day of the same month, and then killed. It is hardly possible that any mere coincidence of common circumstances could have produced so exact an agreement between events so distant from each other as the Jewish Passover, and the sacrifice of Christ, had not a divine appointment been in it. But when we read this relation concerning Israel in the Passover, setting apart the Lamb, and connect with it that the Son of God in our nature entered Jerusalem *four* days before his sacrifice and death (John xii. 1—12.); when we read the direction given Israel for taking the Lamb "from the sheep, or from the goats;" and behold the Lamb of God, chosen from among the people, "a male of the first year," and Christ in the strength of life; when we go on to contemplate other striking similarities, between the one and the other; namely, the Paschal Lamb of Israel, of the Old Testament, with Christ the very Paschal Lamb of the New, in the evening of the day, alike killed, and precisely at the same hour, even the *ninth* hour, corresponding to our three o'clock in the afternoon; and which had been marked, all the way down to gospel times, as the hour of the evening sacrifice, by the express appointment of the Holy Ghost; see Ezra ix. 4, 5; Psalm cxli. 2; Dan ix. 21; Mark xv. 25—34; Acts iii. 1, &c. when we behold the Lamb

of the Passover roasted whole with fire ; and with this, read the Evangelists in their relation of our most glorious Christ, the Lamb of God sustaining in his own person the fiery wrath due to his people, when enduring those agonies in the garden, and on the cross ; when we observe the strict injunction given Israel, that not a bone of their Paschal Lamb was to be broken ; and read in the gospel, that the Roman soldiers who attended the crucifixion of Christ, were restrained from breaking (as was usual in their executions of criminals,) the bones of Christ, on purpose “ that the scripture should be fulfilled ;” (See John xix. 32—36.) when, I say, we take a comparative statement on these things of scripture with scripture ; who but must be overwhelmed in the contemplation of the united view ? and, under divine teaching, while pondering over Israel’s Passover, feel the same conclusion arising in our minds, as wrought upon the apostle Paul to say, as he did, “ Christ our passover is sacrificed for us !” (1 Cor. v. 7.)

But we must not stop here. While we behold so many corresponding features between the Passover of the Old dispensation and the New, in relation to the Person and Offering of our most glorious Christ ; the subject will yet be more abundantly striking in this particular, when we connect with it the church in her present interest, as set forth in the sacrifice of Christ, compared with what Israel were enjoined in the celebration of their Passover. The first thing which was done in the observance of the Jewish Passover, was “ the sprinkling of the blood,” on the houses of the children of Israel, to distinguish them from the Egyptians. Such is the blessed property now. It is not enough to prefigure the death of Christ ; the regenerated child of God commemorates his personal interest therein. Hence the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven,

are said to be come to Jesus, "the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling." (Heb. xii. 24.) It is called *speaking* blood; for it speaketh *to* God, of the person and efficacy of the blood of Christ; and it speaketh *from* God, who is well pleased for Christ's righteousness sake: and thereby confirms his everlasting covenant. And being sprinkled upon the hearts and consciences of the Lord's people, they are delivered from the wrath to come, and have "peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The next observance in the Jewish Passover was, namely, that the Lamb should be eaten; not simply looked upon, but eaten; yea, and wholly ate, and none left. Such, but in an infinitely higher degree, even *spiritually*, is the Lamb of God in the gospel Passover. We receive Christ by faith. We spiritually feed on his body broken, and his blood shed, the sole life and nourishment of our souls. Yea, Christ is wholly eaten. Nothing of Christ can be left uneaten. For every sinner who in himself is *wholly* lost, needs a *whole* Saviour to redeem him. The person, work, and grace of Christ, is one complete whole, and which every sinner requires for his own personal salvation. And another distinguishing character in the Jewish Passover, is marked also in the Christian; namely, the *whole congregation* was alike to eat of it. And the same holds equally now. The *spiritual* participation of the body and blood of Christ is so essential to life in all the church, that the Lord Jesus said himself, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." (John vi. 53.) Observe, I say, the *spiritual* participation of the body and blood of Christ. And this the ordinance of the holy Supper signifieth. Not the mere *outward* sign, but the *inward* receiving. For as the Lamb of the Jewish Passover was not to be eaten "raw, nor sodden

with water ;” so neither in the Christian celebration of the Passover can Christ be received into a carnal, unregenerated heart. And as no leaven was to be seen in the houses of the Israelites at their feast ; neither doth the Lord allow any leaven to be in the hearts of his people, at ours. And lastly, to add no more : as Israel were commanded to celebrate the Passover in the night of their departure from Egypt ; so the true Israel of God now are supposed to be on the daily look out for their departure from the Egypt of this world, with “ their loins girt, and their lights burning ; and they themselves like unto men that wait their Lord’s return ; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.” (Luke xii. 35, 36.)

And now, then in conclusion : if, in reference to the holy Supper of the Lord, I may venture to propose to you the same question as the Jewish children were supposed to ask their fathers, in allusion to the Passover ; “ What mean you by this service ?” what will be your answer ? They were taught by their parents the leading points of faith. “ Thou shalt say unto thy son, we were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.” (Deut. vi. 21.) But we may truly say, yea ; and shall most assuredly say, if taught of God, we were bondmen not merely to Pharaoh, but to sin and Satan ; to death and hell, and the grave. And the Lord our God hath brought us out ; when, “ with his own right hand, and his holy arm, hath he gotten himself the victory.” (Psalm xcvi. 1.) In our approaching, therefore, the table of the Lord, to commemorate this mighty salvation, accomplished solely by the glorious person and the incommunicable work of our most glorious Christ ; let each communicant see to it, that it is in his most holy name alone we draw nigh, and in his righteousness alone we trust.

Every thing of leaven was strictly commanded to be put away from the houses of Israel, when celebrating their Passover. And if the *type* admitted nothing to mingle with it; what a daring attempt must it be to add any thing of ours to the *substance*! The whole, and sole *cause* of salvation, is in Christ. What, through grace, we bring in our renewed hearts, are but *effects*. Every thing we have, and are, from the gifts and comforts of the Holy Ghost in believing, are what we receive, not what we give. And to substitute even the graces of the Holy Ghost in the place of Christ, or even with Christ, as part Saviour; is not making Christ what the scripture reveals him, *all, and in all*. In the Jewish Passover, it was neither the bars nor bolts of their houses from without, nor all the prayers or praises offered up within, that kept the people in security; but the blood sprinkled on the lintels and door-posts. And such can only become the salvation of the church now. "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin."

And if, under such impressions, the spiritual church of our most glorious Christ come to the Lord's table, their enjoyment at the table will be spiritual; and their return from it no less spiritual. And when, at any time, if in your houses your children, like those Jewish children, should put the question, "What mean ye by this service?" Oh! what an edifying subject would arise therefrom, to unbosom the full flowing heart of the truly redeemed and regenerated believer, to impart every suited information to his little ones, as their tender years might be able to apprehend it. I have often figured to myself, the godly parents or masters of families, when encircled by their household, answering the enquiries of those around them, for whose everlasting welfare they cannot but be highly concerned; and even anticipating their questions in speaking of the Lord's table,

and of the Lord of the table, in all those endearments of his love, in the accomplishment of our salvation. Surely every such a circle, and family, hath the Lord with them : and even their common refreshments at their own table are in some measure made sacramental, “in breaking of bread, and in prayer.”

I only add a prayer to the Great Master of the feast, on the present and every future occasion of commemorating Christ, *our Passover*, at his table, that his presence may be so eminently with the whole of his redeemed ones, as to enjoy spiritually, and scripturally, the manifestation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to our persons, as we are in Christ ; the sure testimony of our present interest in Christ, and the sure earnest of our everlasting union with Christ to all eternity. Amen.

SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS.

III.

THE SAVOUR OF CHRIST'S PERSON AND OFFERING, THE SOLE
CAUSE OF THE CHURCH'S ACCEPTANCE BEFORE GOD.

EZEKIEL XX. 41, 42.

I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. And ye shall know that I am the Lord.

THAT was a very interesting moment with the church, and grace was in lively exercise, when looking to her Lord with holy rapture and delight, she sung her love song to his glory, and cried out: "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy Name is as ointment poured forth." (Song i. 3.) Thy *Name*, that is the Person of our most glorious Christ; and his *good ointments*, all that belongs to Him, in which the church is interested, and with which he hath perfumed all heaven with his blood and righteousness. He himself, being the one glorious *object* of all faith; and his finished salvation, the *subject* of all joy.

I know not whether, under divine teaching, you have entered into the spiritual apprehension of these things. But very sure I am, that the spiritual church of our most glorious Christ can find nothing else to live upon. This is the only life of the soul. Here is the very marrow of the feast, which the Lord promised to his people in the holy mountain. Here alone is the true wine of the gospel. (Isaiah xxv. 6.) And hence it is, that while to a carnal eye, neither

the Person of Christ, nor the salvation by Christ, have any charms to attract attention; to the redeemed and regenerated child of God, he himself is "the altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousand;" and his redemption, the everlasting joy of the soul. In the contemplation of the infinite greatness and almightiness of his Person, blended with the infinite fulness and suitability of his work; what Christ is to her, and what he hath done for her; yea, what he is still doing for her, and will continue to do, to all eternity; the church never ceaseth her love song, but continues every day, and all the day, to chaunt it, through the whole wilderness state, and in the words of the prophet to say: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord: my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Isa. lxi. 10.)

And all this is heightened in the consideration of the peerless grace manifested to the church, in the contrast to his unequalled glory, and her debased circumstances. For never surely can there be any thing more disproportioned than the infinite holiness of Christ, and the fallen state of man. And that Christ should so love his church, as to give himself for her, is a marvellous love, passing knowledge. Moreover, his love is the sole cause of ours. For "if we love him, it is because he first loved us." (1 John iv. 19.) And had he not, by the sovereignty of his power, subdued the natural enmity of our heart, induced by the fall, and not only loved *us*, but inclined our hearts to love *him*; never should we have loved him to all eternity. Put your hand upon a stone wall, or a marble chimney-piece, is it warm? Nay then, if it be, you must know that somewhat

different from its own nature hath warmed it ; for it is the very nature of stones to be cold. And such is the heart of every son and daughter of Adam by the fall, cold to the love of God by nature, and impossible to be warmed but by the sovereignty of grace.

And it is this rich, full, and free grace, which makes all the difference between “the righteous and the wicked ; between him who serveth God, and him who serveth him not.” All men that hear, or read their Bibles, hear or read alike of the love of God. And thousands there are that hear, or read, or do both, concerning that love of God, from one Lord’s day to another, know nothing more of it than by this outward ministry. But the redeemed and regenerated church of our most glorious Christ, not only hear, or read, but understand ; not only know by *reason* the truth of God, but by *revelation* ; not simply consent with *head* knowledge, but by *heart* influence, to the glorious things contained in salvation ; and have, and do, “set to their seal that God is true.” Put the richest feast before a man without appetite, and what benefit can be derived from the mere sight ? Spread the supper of the Lord before the unawakened sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, and what spiritual enjoyment can he derive from it ? There must be a relish, a life in the soul, to the spiritual apprehension of spiritual objects. Hence the Holy Ghost taught the church by Paul, that the love of God is not only preached, or heard, but “shed abroad in the heart.” We then not only read, but taste, that the Lord is gracious. We not only are *come* to the blood of sprinkling, but we know it, and feel the blessed properties of it, as *speaking* blood ; for it speaketh peace to the conscience in Jesus Christ. You see, therefore, on what ground the church stood, when she expressed her delight in her Lord’s person ; and felt a fragrancy in his love, “as ointment poured

forth." And it is to the same savour the words I have just read to you have respect, when the Lord promiseth to accept his people, and when he hath accomplished those purposes concerning them, which are enumerated in the text : " I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people ; and gather you out of the countries, whither you have been scattered : and I will be sanctified in you before the Heathen : and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

If you will open your Bibles at this chapter from whence these words are taken, you will perceive how very graciously they are introduced by the Holy Ghost. The Lord the Spirit had been speaking, in the former part, of his Israel, in a way of reproof, for their backsliding and departure from the Lord. And here, towards the close, the Lord points out how his grace would be manifested towards them, in their recovery, in the latter day dispensation. Looking forward to the times of the gospel, (for Ezekiel's prophecy evidently had special reference to that period) the Lord draws the very outlines of redemption, and marks the more prominent features of it, one by one. In the verse preceding, the Lord thus speaks : " For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land serve me ; there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things." Had we any doubt on our minds, in relation to *what* the Lord God referred, when speaking of this his holy mountain itself, or *when* the time should be for its establishment, the prophets Isaiah and Micah would at once explain. Both express the glorious truth in the same words. " And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be

'established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go, and say: 'Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.'" (Isa. ii. 2, 3.—Micah iv. 1, 2.) Here is the delineation of the glorious gospel of the ever-blessed God! And the verse which follows of the text explains *how* the Lord will accept his people. "I will accept you with your sweet savour." Jehovah the Lord God, in his Trinity of Persons, is thus engaged in covenant agreement to accept them. And this acceptation is in their sweet savour; namely, in the Person of Christ, and in the infinite merits of the blood-shedding and righteousness of Christ. The next point is, *when* they shall be accepted. And this, the Lord God himself declares; namely, "When I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries whither you have been scattered." That is, (speaking in gospel language,) when the Lord, the Holy Ghost, shall have "reproved them of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment!" (John xvi. 8.) And this was the *third* great promise of our Magna Charta in the Bible. The *first*, Gen. iii. 15. The *second*, Gen. xxii. 18. And the *third*, Gen. xlix. 10. Compare it with Eph. i. 10. Hence the Lord by the prophet, Jer. xxxi. 10—14.

But we must not stop here. The gracious promise is extended further. "And I will be sanctified in you before the Heathen." This is among the triumphs of Jehovah, in his Trinity of Persons, when the church is finally, fully, and completely, brought home in our most glorious Christ. When "all things shall be put under his feet." And when the Lord shall "gather out of his kingdom all things that

offend." (Matt. xiii. 41.) So that the enemies of our Lord shall be destroyed, and his saints made everlastingly blessed in him. To this amount are the words by the prophet: "The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory. And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and for a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Heph-zibah, (that is, *my Delight*,) and thy land, Be-u-lah, (that is, *married*,) for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." (Isa. lxii. 2—4.) And lastly, to crown all, and which is the very coronet of the church, as she is in the Lord; those blessed promises are closed in, with this most delightful assurance: "And ye shall know that I am the Lord." This was to be the distinguishing character of the latter day glory to the church. (See Jer. xxxi. 31. with Heb. viii. 11, &c.) For the blessedness, and happiness, and everlasting safety of the church, do not consist in gifts, and graces, but in the knowledge of, and communion with, the Lord himself. Not in what the Lord *doth* for his people, but what *He is*, to his people. Not in their attainments *by* Him, but their union *with* Him. And do not fail to observe one thing more, from the whole; namely, that the Lord undertakes for the whole, and the church is altogether passive while receiving those acts of grace. "I will accept you; I will bring you out; and I will gather you from all places where you have been scattered: I will be sanctified in you, before the Heathen; and ye shall know that I am the Lord." Here is nothing of man; it is all of God.

What I further propose, in the prosecution of this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to enable me,

and with a special eye to the holy Supper of the Lord, in which the acceptance of the church can only be in Christ, and in the sweet savour of his finished salvation; is, to view the bottom and foundation, where the Lord hath himself bottomed every thing pertaining to the church; namely, in the joint love, and grace, and favour of Jehovah, in his trinity of persons, manifested to the church in our most glorious Christ. It is the Lord God that is said to accept the church in her sweet savour. I shall then, *secondly*, enter somewhat more largely into the vast and interesting subject of the church's sole acceptance in Christ, as relating first to his person, and then to his work; in which, if the Lord be our teacher, (which I most humbly implore,) I venture to hope, that our Sacramental Meditation now, and our drawing to the Lord at his table then, when the ordinance is set forth, may be accompanied with so much savour from the Lord, as may give a spiritual refreshment to our spiritual apprehensions, that, like the church of old, the Lord Jesus may be fragrant to our souls, as "the ointment poured forth."

But before I enter upon it, let me particularly request of you to keep in remembrance, as we go along, what I have briefly hinted to you before; namely, that in this great and sovereign act of grace, it is all grace; nothing in man, either before or after; either in labour, or in attainments, which can contribute an atom towards it. The church in every individual member, is wholly and altogether passive in it. And what is more, the church is all alike equally passive, and equally incapable, to any one act of spiritual life, until quickened of the Lord. So that babes, little children, young men, or fathers in the church, are all in the same circumstances. Hence, if there be any who feel a longing to be accepted in the sweet savour of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his complete salvation,

there is no preparation on your part that can render one more suited than another. All are alike receivers only ; for it is expressly said, that “ of his fulness do all we receive, and grace for grace.” (John i. 16.) This is a very sweet consideration to be kept in view, while attending the means of grace. The first breathings of spiritual life in grace, as the first breathings of a child in nature, both are equally of the Lord.

And let me add a short observation more. To such, as the Lord in times past, hath called from nature to grace; every subsequent act in the going forth of spiritual life, upon the person of our most glorious Christ, or in faith in his finished salvation ; as the whole flows from the same source in the Lord, so all are but the fruits and effects of the life of God in the soul. We see spiritually, we feel spiritually, and we enjoy spiritually, the blessed consequences of the renewed life ; but all these are but actions, derived from that life, as so many *effects* from the *cause*, and not the cause itself. When we are taught that our Lord God accepts us in our sweet savour, because we are in Christ, and accepted in Christ ; though we receive faith to rejoice in this, and have the savour of it like ointment poured forth ; yet it is in what Christ is, and not what we feel, that our joy is found. Similar to effects in nature. When at any time our natural senses are regaled with the fragrancy of flowers, after the sun hath shone upon them and melted their finer odours, and the air is impregnated with their sweet perfume, our senses are not the *cause*, but simply receivers of the *effect* ; for the whole, in the operations of nature, as in grace, is from the Lord. I know what it is to enjoy these things, through mercy, and am very earnest that the Lord’s people should enjoy them too. But I would caution them, as I desire grace for caution in myself, never to substitute *effects* for the *cause*; or lose sight

of the *one*, in the possession of the *other*. Spiritual apprehensions of our most glorious Christ himself, and a scriptural knowledge formed in the mind by the Lord himself, of our acceptance in his Person, and his sweet savour, is infinitely preferable to all of what we feel. For the *former* of these is one fixed and certain thing; the *latter* will necessarily vary, and be more or less, as our faith is stronger or weaker. The Lord give to his people present, such a spiritual apprehension of our most glorious Christ, that the word of his grace, in this blessed scripture, may bring with it a clear demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that the Lord God hath "accepted us with our sweet savour."

I begin, as I proposed, *first*, to view the bottom and foundation of all our mercies, where the Lord himself hath bottomed them, in the everlasting love of God, in his trinity of persons, to the whole election of grace, in the Lord Jesus Christ. And I do this the rather, because it is, of all others, among the sacred truths of our most holy faith, the one, the very one, we are for the most part apt to overlook or forget. And yet there is not a day, no, nor sometimes an hour of the day, but what the Lord gives occasion to magnify the riches of his grace herein. Every revelation made in the renewings of the Holy Ghost, teems with this blessing; in the love of God the Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Spirit. And I beg to repeat, what I have often said before, and which never can be too often repeated, namely, that where the whole Three Persons in the GODHEAD are not equally honoured, loved, and adored, as the joint cause of all our mercies, resulting from the unity of the divine essence, it must be, because the operations of each, in the work of grace, either are not known, or are not, as they ought to be, properly regarded. For

am I baptized in the joint name of the Holy Three in One? Am I blessed in the joint love of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? And is the regenerated and sanctified church considered as having fellowship daily, and sometimes hourly, with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit? And must not these personal and distinct acts of grace endear to the heart, in equal regard, the glorious Jehovah in his trinity of persons? Oh! what a blessedness it is in the soul, when, from the sovereign work of the Holy Ghost, whose gracious work is communion; that our hearts are directed into a spiritual apprehension and enjoyment of "the love of God the Father, and into the patient waiting for Christ." (2 Thess. iii. 5.)

And it should never for a moment be overlooked, or lost sight of, that these gracious and distinct acts are only known and enjoyed, as we know them in the person of, and through our union and relation to, our most glorious Christ. The grace, mercy, and love of the Father to our persons, is, as we are in Christ. For it is by the spiritual and scriptural apprehension which we have of our most glorious Christ, that we can have any knowledge of, or communion with the holy Persons in the GODHEAD, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And it is the several and distinct acts of the Holy Three in One, as acts, which nothing but divine power could order, or divine power could execute, which bring home to the soul testimonies of this grand bottom of our most holy faith, and necessarily prove, "that there are Three which bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One." (1 John v. 7.)

But from this foundation, I now proceed to the superstructure, which was the *second* branch of the subject which I proposed, and which is the leading feature of my text, namely, of the acceptance of the Church solely in Christ: first, in relation to his Per-

son, and then to his work in the finished salvation which he hath wrought out for all his people; the savour of which hath endeared the church to all the GODHEAD, and made her lovely in the loveliness which the Lord hath put upon her.

In relation to Christ's person as Christ, it is always blessed to have in view that this began before all worlds, and will continue when there shall be no worlds. For when our glorious Head, as Head of his body the church, was set up from everlasting, the church was then chosen in him. (Ephes. i. 4.) Very beautifully, as well as blessedly, our most glorious Christ takes notice of this himself in his well known character of Wisdom. For speaking of the ancient settlements of eternity, in reference to his church, he saith: "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 was I by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him: rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. viii. 22, &c.) And when we come down to the time-state of the church, and after the fall, it is blessed to observe, that our recovery sprang from our connexion with him. He redeemed his church, because she was his church. And indeed in every relationship the right of redemption was his. (Levit. xxv. 25.) And so infinitely grand and momentous was the glorious work, that the Holy Ghost graciously appointed the several ordinances and typical representations, all along, from the very first sacrifice in the garden of Eden, until the Lord Jesus Christ finished redemption by the sacrifice of himself, to set it forth. A few of the more prominent, in direct allusion to the sweet savour the Lord mentions in the text, will be enough in proof.

I begin with that, which is the first recorded in scripture with an eye to Christ; namely, the offering made by Abel. It is said of this man, that "he brought of the firstlings of his flock; and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering." And this is said, in express distinction from that of the offering of Cain; "to whom the Lord had not respect." (Gen. iv. 4, 5.) But the Holy Ghost hath graciously explained the cause. "By faith (it is said, Heb. xi. 4.) Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts." What faith? Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Abel knew himself to be a sinner; and as such, had an eye to Christ the *promised seed*. (Gen. iii. 15.) Cain knew it not. He acknowledged it not. He made an offering therefore, but not in sacrifice. "He brought of the fruit of the ground," acknowledging thereby God's right as Creator; but not as Redeemer. Hence, the different acceptance by the Lord. So that here we behold the opening of that blissful subject, which the Lord alluded to in the text: "I will accept you with your sweet savour." Abel offering by faith in Christ, had the sweet savour of Christ. Hence the Lord had respect first to Abel's person, and then to his offering; both being perfumed with the blood of Christ, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." (Rev. xiii. 8.) And hence it was then, as it is now: "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." (Ephes. i. 6.)

Let us pass on to another striking memorial, to the same amount, in the instance of the offering of Noah. For as Abel's was the first we read of in the *old* world; so this of Noah's was the first in the *new*. And thus we read concerning it, when Noah came forth from the ark: "Noah builded an altar unto the

Lord ; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour ; or, (as the margin adds) a savour of rest." The same as in the margin to the scripture of the text. (Compare Gen. viii. 20, 21, with it.) Evidently here again, the *sweet savour* was the person and *offering* of Christ, to which Noah had respect, and in which the Lord accepted both Noah's person and his burnt offering. And "Christ is the rest wherewith the Lord causeth the weary to rest ; and he is the refreshing." (Isaiah xxviii. 12.) Hence the Psalmist saith, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul ; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." (Psalm cxvi. 7.) And hence also the Lord Jesus himself allures "the weary, and the heavy laden, to come unto him, that they may find (in him) rest unto their souls." (Matt. xi. 28, &c.) And the same runs like a golden thread through all the church, both of the old Testament and of the new, down to the gospel days ; where we find the Holy Ghost by Paul, thus speaking to the Lord's people : "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children ; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." (Eph. v. 1, 2.) Here, indeed, is the sum and substance of all that went before. For if the shadow of the thing came up before God, with such acceptance, what must have been, and now is, and everlastingly will be, the substance, even the glorious Person, and the sweet smelling savour of the blood-shedding and righteousness of our most glorious Christ, in whom alone the church finds acceptance with God ?

But we must not stop here : for God the Holy Ghost, in glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ, was graciously pleased to add one striking representation more of the infinite importance of his Almighty

Person and Offering, in becoming the sweet savour to his people, both to themselves, and in all their approaches before God. In the close of the canon of scripture, as if to leave the full impression of it on the church, John was favoured with a vision of our most glorious Christ, in this his high priestly office. "And another angel came, and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." (Rev. viii. 3, 4.) I need not offer a word by way of explanation to shew who this angel was; for none but Christ himself, the Angel of the Covenant, could act in this divine character of the church's Priest and Mediator. The whole dispensation of the old Testament shadowed him forth, even down to new Testament days, when Zacharias ministered at the altar of incense. (Luke i. 9 to 11.) We find Aaron in the same ministry, as typical of Christ, engaged continually. (See Levit. xvi. 12. Numb. xvi. 46.) And, indeed, the whole tenour of scripture bears one complete correspondence to the same. Very sweetly and graciously doth the whole confirm what the Lord hath said, in the words of the text; "I will accept you in your sweet savour." But for this acceptance in our most glorious Christ, the Beloved, not only our offerings must and would be rejected, but our very persons found unsavoury before God. Yea, the jealousy of an holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, would break forth upon us with devouring flames, as upon Nadab and Abihu, when offering "strange fire before the Lord." (Lev. x. 1, 2.) Hence it will follow, that but for thus being accepted in the sweet savour of Christ,

in our holiest moments, when on our knees before God, we might be struck dead. In the Lord's house, or at the Lord's table, our prayer sins, our ordinance sins, our sacramental sins, can have no acceptance before God, unless the Lord Jesus Christ hath taken away the iniquity of them. His glorious person is the sole cause of favour; his righteousness, whom God hath set forth a propitiation. It is by his blood we have boldness to enter into the holiest. And all the access here in grace, and hereafter in glory, is in him. Hence the church is said "to have washed their robes, (not their *sins* only, but their *robes*, that is, their best things) and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.)

If I have succeeded, through divine teaching, to set this subject forth upon true scriptural authority, and have shewn how the acceptance of the Lord's people is in their sweet savour as they are in Christ, it will follow, by the plainest of all possible conclusions, that our knowledge of the Lord must be the immediate result of our knowledge of our acceptance in Christ. There can be no knowledge of God in his trinity of persons, but as God is known in Christ. The Father's love to the church in Christ; his choice of the church in Christ; his acceptance of the church in Christ; and his adoption of the church in Christ; all these, and every other act of divine favour and delight in the church, is only as the objects of divine love are in Christ. For the Lord's testimony is said to be "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein we are accepted in the beloved." (Eph. i. 6.)

The result of the whole, then, will be this: that there can be no possibility of drawing nigh to God but in the person and bloodshedding of our most glorious Christ. He is the only propitiation; the only sweet savour of acceptance. He hath alone wrought it, alone accomplished it. Salvation is in

him ; salvation is in no other : “ neither is there any other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.” (Acts iv. 12.) And what endears it yet more to the awakened and regenerated child of God is this ; namely, that the whole Persons in the GODHEAD have all alike concurred, and do concur, to confirm it in the heart, and understanding, and consciences of the people. Sin being an infinite evil in its very nature, because it is committed against an infinite God ; none but an infinite being could make satisfaction for. Neither after the satisfaction made by the Son, could the apprehension be received into the soul, but by the revelation of it by an infinite person. Hence the whole persons in the GODHEAD are equally engaged in the mysterious and wonderful design, and become equally entitled to the joint adoration, love, and praise of all that are made the happy partakers of this unspeakable gift, in grace here, and glory hereafter.

Shall I then, in conclusion, beg the Lord’s people which hear me, in all their approaches to the throne, and especially in their intended approaches to the Lord’s table at this time, to have this always in view. The Lord saith, “ I will accept you with your sweet savour.” Without this there is no acceptance. What the Lord said under the old Testament dispensation is not altered a tittle under the new. It was not the mere oblation made to the Lord, in which the church was accepted ; but “ the offering without leaven.” Neither was it “ the burning it on the altar, that made the sweet savour,” for this was forbidden. But it was “ the offering seasoned with salt.” This was that which sanctified, and which gave a savour to all. Hence the command, “ with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.” (Lev. ii. 11—13.) And what a beautiful and lively representation of the Lord Jesus Christ ! What could more strikingly set forth

both the person and the finished salvation of Christ? He, and he alone, is the "salt of the covenant." For as there is nothing savoury in meat without salt; so there can be nothing savoury, or acceptable before God, but as it is in Christ. And what endears it yet more, it is expressly called "the salt of the covenant:" for Christ himself is the covenant of the people. (Isaiah xlix. 8.) And as salt is the cause of preserving from putrefaction; so Christ, the salt of the everlasting covenant, is the sole preservative from everlasting corruption; the awful consequence of sin, death, judgment, and eternity. Well might our dear Lord say, "Have salt in yourselves; and have peace one with another!" (Mark ix. 50.) The Lord give a blessing to his holy word, that we may bless God, "who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by his word;" and our promising God be known and felt in the hearts of his people, as our performing God, when he saith, "I will accept you with your sweet savour."

SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS.

IV.

CHRIST, THE BREAD OF LIFE.

JOHN VI. 35.

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life : he that cometh unto me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

THE church of our most glorious Christ is wholly spiritual. And such the Lord Jesus Christ himself declared it to be, when, in his conversation with the woman of Samaria, he said to her, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 23, 24.) Hence, from this high authority, we scruple not to conclude, that the church of our most glorious Christ is wholly spiritual. All our knowledge of Christ is spiritual. All our apprehensions of Christ are spiritual. All our communications *from* Christ ; all our communion *with* Christ ; all our enjoyments *in* Christ: all are spiritual. Neither can any that are truly born again live a day, no, nor an hour, in real health of soul, but as that life and health are both derived from him. The sun's beams do not depend more upon that great luminary of the day, nor the stream on the fountain, than the soul on Christ. Hence the church herself was so thoroughly convinced of this, that at the close of a beautiful Psalm, in which the person and glories of Christ had been celebrating, she cried out: "All my springs are in thee." (Psalm lxxxvii. 7.) And indeed it is

this which forms the only real standard of character, to mark the Lord's people from all carnal worshippers. For the mere *form* of godliness, or the highest natural attainments in the profession of godliness; in reasoning, or talking, or even preaching, about godliness; differ as totally from the *power* of godliness, in the spiritual life of God in the soul, as tinsel from gold; or the painting of the picture of a man on canvas, to the man himself in real life.

And indeed it forms not only the distinction among mankind at large, in respect to religion, of nominal from real, or shadow from substance, but among the Lord's people themselves. They are enabled, by spiritual communications from the Lord, and spiritual desires awakened by the Spirit in their souls towards the Lord, to discover how the pulse of their affections beats in spiritual life, and how very graciously the Lord is frequently coming forth in the manifestations of his love towards them. Yea, by this spiritual life of God in their souls, as discovered to them in the person of our most glorious Christ, they can, and do, discern the tendencies of all the persons in the GODHEAD, manifested to them, as they are in Christ. If, for example, I am come to Christ, as the source of all spiritual life, for my daily supplies of grace, and all covenant blessings, it is evident that I am come to Christ by the drawings of the Father: for Jesus himself saith, that "none can come to him except the Father draw him." So that herein I not only prove to my soul's joy, that I am really and truly come by the Father's drawing; but I also prove the everlasting love of the Father in this sovereign act of grace, in drawing me to his Son; for God the Father hath himself declared, by his servant the prophet, that because of "his everlasting love to his people, he hath drawn them." (Compare Jer. xxxi. 3, with John vi. 44.) And the Lord Jesus hath added

another blessed confirmation of the same when he saith : " All that the Father giveth me shall come to me : and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." (John vi. 37.) Hence, therefore, here is a double testimony to the great truth combined, both from the Father and the Son. And that God the Holy Ghost is equally engaged in those sovereign tokens of love, is confirmed in the whole tenor of scripture. His saving work of grace, in the hearts of the Lord's people, is communion. There can be no fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, but as the Lord the Spirit excites it. His gracious acts are directed to this very purpose, to open and reveal to the souls of the Lord's people the love of God the Father, and the grace of God the Son ; and then, drawing out the hearts of the Lord's people, in acts of faith, and love, and adoration, and joy, upon the persons in the GODHEAD. And hence that very sweet prayer put up by the apostle for the church, is expressly to the person of God the Holy Ghost : " And the Lord (said he) direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

The words of my text, which I have just read to you, are a beautiful illustration of this delightful doctrine ; and if the Almighty Author of them will graciously open and explain them to our hearts, we shall very readily perceive in what the spiritual life of a spiritual worshipper differs, from all the mere carnal professions and professors, in the world. If you will open your Bibles, at that part of holy scripture from whence the text is taken, you will observe upon what occasion it was that our Lord so expressed himself. He had been miraculously feeding five thousand persons with five barley loaves and two small fishes ; and had moreover filled twelve baskets, with the fragments which remained, " over, and above, unto them that had eaten." And this afforded the

blessed opportunity to our most glorious Christ, to speak to his disciples, and in the audience of the multitude, upon the sublime subject of spiritual food. And in a Sermon, which, with very little interruption, is continued from the 26th verse of this chapter, to the end, the Lord delivered that most sweet discourse, out of which the words of my text are taken. The Lord be everlastingly loved and praised for it! And God the Holy Ghost no less be everlastingly loved and praised for recording it, and causing it to be preserved and handed down to the church through all the intermediate ages, to the present hour. Sure I am, it hath refreshed the souls of many that are now in heaven, while they were on the earth. And equally sure I am, it doth now daily refresh the church, and will continue to refresh the church under the sweet unction of his savour, until time shall be no more.

“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger: and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” And it is most blessed to observe, how much the Lord dwelt upon the delightful subject, through the whole of his Sermon. He expressed the same doctrine repeatedly, and in a great variety of terms, by way of making it familiar to his people. “I am (said Jesus) that living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” The carnal Jews, within whose hearing the Lord of life and glory so expressed himself, unconscious of any thing of a spiritual nature, as all carnal men are; and taking Christ’s words in a literal sense, as all carnal men do; raised at once an objection against them. “How (said they) can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Upon which the Lord Jesus answered: “Verily, verily, I say

unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

The figure of bread, and of eating, and deriving sustenance therefrom, and the like, is most happily chosen, because it is of all other subjects, that we are most familiar with, and which our necessities daily compel us to the use of. For as in nature, so in grace; bread, which is called the staff of life, in consequence of its importance, is not more needful to the support of the body, than Christ, the bread of life, is to the soul. And as in *nature*, the man in health looks for his stated food, regularly day by day; eats it with delight, feeds upon it, tasteth, and enjoyeth the sweet savour of it in his mouth, and receiving it into his stomach; it becomes assimilated to his nature, and is the great preservative of life; so in *grace*, the redeemed and regenerated child of God, he also, when in spiritual health, hungers and thirsts for Christ; finds Christ, day by day, in his word, feeds upon him by faith, receives him into his heart, and relisheth the taste of him in his spiritual mouth and appetite, "sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb." And thus from union with Christ, as the Lord Jesus himself expresseth it, "You (said Christ) in me, and I in you," (John xiv. 20.) the gracious words of Christ in the text, are fully proved to our soul's joy: "Jesus said unto them, I am the

bread of life ; he that cometh unto me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

In the further prosecution of this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to favour, what I propose, is, to consider those words of our most glorious Lord, with reference to this precious doctrine, under the double view in which they are presented to the church ; namely *first*, of the Almighty person of the Speaker, who calls himself the bread of life : " I am the bread of life." And, *secondly*, of the characters of those, that come to him, and the blessed consequences of that coming. " He that cometh to me shall never hunger : (never hunger any more for the husks of this world, having found all spiritual sustenance in Christ) and he that believeth in me shall never thirst" (never more thirst, for any of the unsatisfying things of time and sense) having all fulness and sufficiency, in the glorious person and the finished salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord in his abounding grace, give to all his redeemed family before him, such apprehensions in our spiritual faculties, both of his person, and his fulness ; that we may indeed, each for himself, discover, as the Lord hath said, " He that eateth me even he shall live by me : " and as the Lord elsewhere expressed it in his conversation with the woman of Samaria ; whosoever drinketh of the water of this world's well, shall thirst again, " but whosoever drinketh of the water which I shall give him, shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him, a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." (John xiii. 14.)

But before I enter upon the subject, under those two branches of it ; *first* of the Lord himself ; and *then* of his people ; I would beg to detain you at the threshold, with previously reminding the whole church of God which is here present, of the infinite

importance of the subject itself. Let me not be thought unkind when I say; it is to be feared by what is visibly to be seen in the present day of much profession, that there are not a few, who have long sat under the preaching of the gospel, who have no saving knowledge of the great and distinguishing truths of the gospel: like many, who at the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, partake of the outward sign of bread and wine, but are altogether strangers to the inward and spiritual grace. And such will always be the case in both instances, as long as men are unacquainted with the person of Christ. For without a spiritual and scriptural apprehension of his person, how shall there be a well founded confidence, in his blood and righteousness? Who can feed upon Christ, the bread of life, if Christ himself be unknown? All of this character, be they many or few, are like the professing church which was at Sardis, of whom the Lord himself said, "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." (Rev. ii. 1.)

And while I say thus much, under the hope of the Lord's blessing it to the heart and conscience of any that hear me, who need the inquiry; let me add for the comfort and encouragement of the little ones of Christ, that the spiritual apprehension of Christ's person, and the spiritual communion with him as the bread of life, are wholly from the free gift and grace of the Lord. There are no provisions nor preparations, neither deservings nor undeservings, to qualify or disqualify, on our part. The happy receivers of the unspeakable blessing are simply receivers only; and all alike passive, when the Lord gives the grace. As the light from heaven shines unasked, and shines as lovely on the poor man's cottage as the king's garden—such is grace. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and

cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." (James i. 17, 18.) Hence, therefore, being altogether passive as to the gift, and without any merit to qualify for the blessing, the church of our most glorious Christ, in every individual, hath nothing more to do, than as we do by the light and the air, thankfully receive both; walk by the one, and breathe the other. The Holy Ghost by his servant the Prophet, hath so beautifully expressed this simple dependance upon the Lord, as the standard of character, for ascertaining the Lord's people from the world, that I cannot forbear bringing it before you. "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men." (Micah v. 7.)

And having endeavoured to call up the attention of that class of people for whom I particularly designed those observations; before I enter upon the more immediate subject of this discourse, in contemplating Christ *the bread of life*; I hope, I shall not trespass the bounds of moderation, if I detain you with a short remark further; and chiefly for those, to whom I confess I have an especial eye, in the very subject itself: I mean, that part of the Lord's family (if any of that description be here), who are truly redeemed and regenerated; and yet for the most part, in their walk and conversation, live in the unconsciousness of it. From the sense they have of sin, both original and actual; and from the conviction they have received, and constantly confess, of the righteousness and all-sufficiency of Christ; as these are the true scriptural marks the Son of God himself hath made the evidence of the work of

the Holy Ghost upon the heart and conscience ; (see John xvi. 8—11.) there can be no doubt but that the Lord hath called them by sovereign grace, and from the power of darkness hath translated them into the kingdom of his dear Son. Nevertheless, from continually poring over what passeth and repasseth in their own mind, instead of dwelling wholly upon the infinite glories of Christ's person, and the infinite suitability, and fulness, and all sufficiency of Christ's salvation ; calculating more of the state in which they suppose themselves to appear in before God, by what *they feel*, than by what Christ *is* ; and forgetting that the whole of the acceptation of the church, that our very being and well being is in our most glorious Christ ; losing sight of these precious foundation truths in our faith, they have but little enjoyment of the divine life ; neither of the blessedness which belongs to the Lord's people, in having daily, hourly, "fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." It will be a mercy of no ordinary kind, if the Lord the Spirit this day, in his glorifying our most glorious Christ, and taking of his, to shew unto his people, should so bring him home to the heart and understanding of any and of all his chosen ones ; that we may all have a true spiritual feast, and by faith feed upon Christ, the bread of life, to eat and live for ever.

I begin, according to my proposal with the *first* branch of the discourse, namely, of the person of our most glorious Christ, who calls himself by this divine name, "the Bread of Life," and the very expression implies his own eternal power and GODHEAD. For how could he impart life, unless in himself he had life? yea, and was, and is, and everlastingly must be, life in the abstract. Hence it is said of him, that "all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was

life, and the life was the light of men." Every thing in the Gospel is bottomed on this sure foundation. The Son of God possesseth, in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost, all divine attributes and perfections. They are *his* underived. *His* is the Essence and Being of God, no less than the Father and the Holy Ghost. And his own statement of himself is in perfect correspondence with it when he said, "I and my Father are One." (John x. 30.) Such are among the outlines in holy scripture, concerning the person of the Son of God, as God. Such is he proclaimed to the church, as the glorious object of our faith. And such we receive him to our soul's joy: who is one with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, and "who is over all; God blessed for ever. Amen."

But we do not stop here. For while all that relates to our most glorious Christ, is necessarily bottomed on the almightyess of his person, as God, in oneness with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in all the essence and perfections of the GODHEAD; the manifestation of himself to his church and people, ariseth out of his assumption of our nature, in that holy portion of it underived from the fallen stock of Adam; but miraculously formed by the united operations of the Holy Three, and taken by the Son of God, into personal union with his GODHEAD; so that the divine nature, and the human nature united, thus became one glorious Christ. (See Heb. x. 5. Luke i. 35. Heb. ii. 14, 16.) Hence, under this character, as God and man in one; our Lord Jesus Christ comes to his people, as John describes him; "That which was from the beginning which (saith John) we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life: For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and shew unto you, that eternal life which was with the

Father and was manifest unto us." (1 John i. 1, 2.) And here then we behold the infinite suitability of our most glorious Christ, in becoming visible, through this human nature, to his people; and of executing all the vast purposes and designs of Jehovah, in his Trinity of Persons, in and through all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory.

From those views of our most glorious Christ, we behold under divine teaching, how it is, that by his union with our nature, he becomes to his church and people, as he graciously saith himself; "the bread of life." For hereby, he can, and doth communicate to them through the medium of his human nature, the life and spirit he imparts from his divine. And hence, when we are spiritually enlightened to an apprehension of his person: and to the completeness of salvation in him, and by him; we then no less are spiritually enabled to discern what nature, in her highest attainments untaught of God, can never discern; how, from this blessed compound of God and man in one Christ, he is the bread of life and the water of life; and communicates to all the members of his mystical body, "all things that pertain to life and godliness." Yea, we not only feed on him spiritually by faith, and feel our souls refreshed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus; as our bodies are, day by day with the bread that perisheth with using: but our most glorious Christ is himself to us the sum, and substance of all blessedness. He is bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, cloathing to the naked, medicine to the sick; and, as the Prophet described him, "an hiding place from the storm, a covert from the tempest, rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." (Isaiah xxxiii. 2.)

If I have happily succeeded in giving a true scriptural description of the person of our Lord;

though it hath been, as it must necessarily be, but very short and imperfect; concerning whom, it must be said, without an hyperbole, "there is no end of his greatness:" I will now request your attention, to what was proposed under the *second* branch of discourse; namely, of the character of those that come to Christ; and the blessed consequences of their coming. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger: and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

Coming to Christ, and believing on Christ, are one and the same. For there is no coming to Christ for salvation without a knowledge of his person: and the knowledge of his person implies a belief in him for salvation. The one great object of faith is the person of our most glorious Christ. Our adorable Lord himself thus expresses it: "seeing the Son and believing on him." (John vi. 40.) The redeemed and regenerated child of God is supposed to be made acquainted with the person of Christ, who he is: and then, so to know him, as to feel a desire after him. There is a beautiful order in the Spirit's work in the heart. "He shall glorify me" said the Lord Jesus. (John xvi. 14.) He first, therefore, glorifies the person of Christ to our view: and then it is said; "for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 15.) The Holy Ghost so shews the finished salvation of Christ, which he hath wrought for his people, that the mind and affections are won to the belief and enjoyment of it. We therefore so behold Christ, in our spiritual apprehension of him, as to know him; so know him as to love him; so love him, as to be delighted both with his person and salvation; and from feeling our need of him, and his infinite fulness and suitability to all our wants and circumstances; with his love to us, and his readiness to save us; that we heartily and cordially believe in him to our salva-

tion, as to renounce all other means, and come to God only by him. And when Christ is thus revealed to the heart, and understanding, and conscience; and all the tender sensibilities of the mind are called forth into exercise by the Holy Ghost, and fixed on the person of our most glorious Lord, and satisfied with the perfection of his blood and righteousness; here is the full scriptural confirmation of Christ's words; "he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

But while these are precious testimonies to assure every redeemed and regenerated child of God of his salvation in Christ, the words of the Lord Jesus, in the text, lead the mind into a yet nearer, and more intimate knowledge and enjoyment of him. There is a coming to Christ, and believing on Christ, so as to be weaned from all creature excellencies, and all creature attainments; and never more to hunger or thirst after aught but Christ: and which implies that spirit of affinity, and union with our most glorious Lord, as Moses taught Israel, when he said, "Cleave unto him, for he is thy life." (Deut. xxx. 20.) There is an union of soul, a oneness of mind, like musical instruments harmonizing to one and the same sound. They are in sweet concord. Such is the redeemed and regenerated child of God, when brought into this union with Christ; there is an unity of feeling and of desire between them. The mind is propelled towards Christ; for Christ hath manifested this affection to the church. There is a personal union, a vital, spiritual union; "for he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. vi. 17.) So that one and the same spirit is in both. Somewhat not un-similar, only in an infinitely inferior degree, which Ruth expressed to Naomi, when she said, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go; and

where thou lodgest I will lodge : thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God ; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried : the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." (Ruth i. 16, 17.)

I know not whether I sufficiently and clearly express myself on this subject : but I mean to say, from all that I have said, that in our coming to Christ, and believing on Christ, as there is a fellow-feeling in our most glorious Christ towards his body the church ; so there is in his body the church towards Christ, when awakened and regenerated by the Holy Ghost. Indeed the whole persons in the GODHEAD concur and co-operate in this gracious act. For as our most glorious Christ, by marriage, hath taken into union with himself his church and people ; and the Holy Ghost which dwells in Christ, by regeneration dwells in Christ's people also ; so God the Father, who hath given the church to his dear Son, hath impressed such an instinct in every one married to Christ, as to incline and draw their souls to Christ, to run after Christ, and long for Christ, and hath excited such desires after Christ as Christ alone can satisfy. And what I particularly beg the church to remark with me on this interesting view of this kindred of relationship, which we have with our most glorious Christ, is this ; namely, that it is all special, personal, and peculiar, and hath privileges which belong to the Lord's people as members of Christ's body. Angels know nothing of such connexion. They have not, for they cannot by their very nature feel such approximation. Elect angels indeed they are, as the church is an elect church in Christ. But both their election, and preservation by Christ, is wholly from Christ's *dominion* : the church by *union*. They love Christ for his upholding power as their Lord. The church love him as an Head and Hus-

band. They are servants: we are children; yea, our Lord Jesus Christ not only stands in every relation to us, and fills all; but brings us into a oneness with himself, being bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; and "we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones." (Ephes. v. 30.)

And now then, shall I pause, to enquire of the several hearers in the congregation, what savour of Christ have any of you found, accompanying those precious words of Christ, when proclaiming in the text, "I am the bread of life?" And what unction from the Lord the Holy Ghost have any of you received, so as to be coming to him, never more to hunger, and to believe on him never more to thirst? Whose heart hath the Lord caused to "burn within you while the Lord himself hath been talking to you by the way, and opening to you his holy scripture?" Infinitely mysterious and sublime as the subject is in itself, that Christ should feed his people with himself; and as the *pelican* in the wilderness feeds her young with her blood, so the Son of God should declare his flesh to be meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; yet the *effects* are visible, however secret and hidden the *cause*! If any here present hath so received Christ, and tasted that the Lord is gracious; it is among the plainest and most palpable truths to discover the gracious consequences; if your spiritual faculties are quickened from the death of sin, and brought forth into action by a new and spiritual life, every one of them will be going forth in desires after Christ, and in communion with Christ. The *eye* being enlightened to see Christ by faith; you will behold him as the church of old did, "the altogether lovely, and the fairest among ten thousand." The *ear*, unstopped by Almighty power, "to know the joyful sound, you walk in the light of God's countenance; in his

name rejoice all the day, and in his righteousness to be exalted." The *mouth*, which spiritually eats of Christ, finds him to be sweeter to the taste "than the honey and the honeycomb." The *feet*, which in a state of nature, never moved with any desire after the Lord, now run the ways of God's commandments, being set at liberty. In short, all the affections are spiritually going forth after Christ. And all the spices of myrrh and cassia, with the wine of the pomegranate, are as nothing compared to the fragrancy of that "precious blood of Christ," which hath perfumed all heaven; and which, when sprinkled on the guilty conscience, "cleanseth from all sin." Look at the contrast among the unawakened and unregenerate. The *carnal eye* can see no beauty in Christ to desire him. The *deaf ear*, like the deaf adder, "refuseth the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely." If persons of this description attend ordinances or means of grace, it is a bodily attendance only; for the scripture saith, "they draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him." They have never been awakened, never regenerated; they have no sense of sin, no desire of salvation. Hence they have no spiritual life in Christ; no spiritual apprehension of the want of Christ; no spiritual desires after Christ; no spiritual knowledge of Christ; no spiritual communion with Christ. And while the Lord Jesus Christ day by day is the spiritual food of his redeemed ones, and is proclaiming himself, and making himself known to them, as "the bread of life;" all is a problem to every carnal man, and the question from their vacant minds ariseth as from the Jews of old, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Ye that are followers of the Lord in the regeneration, take with you those blessed words of our most

glorious Christ, and fold them up in your bosom for your daily meditation. And fail not day by day, and hour by hour, to eat this bread of life as necessary for the soul as the common bread is for the body. And I earnestly entreat the church not to forget, but remember, that in this and all other spiritual blessings, the whole of the Lord's people are simply receivers. There is no merit nor worth ; no provision, nor preparation, in one more than in another, that hath the smallest pretensions to this "bread of life." As the light from heaven, or as the dew or showers upon the grass, all are free, and cometh down from the Father of lights ; so the grace of God hath the divine will only for its source ; and admits of no superiority in one more than in another. All are what they are, from sovereign grace alone. The words of the Holy Ghost by Paul decidedly state this doctrine, and put it upon its own proper basis ; namely, it is all as established by the unerring counsel and pleasure of God. At every step we take in the divine life, we may hear the gracious expostulation, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" and "what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?" All, therefore, are simply receivers, and no more !

And as all are receivers, so are they *alike* receivers. The babe, the young man, the fathers, have their exact proportion. Like the gatherers of the manna in the camp of Israel, every one, it is said, gathered according to their eating. "He that gathered much had nothing over ; he that gathered little, had no lack!" No ! He that hath Christ, hath all that he needeth in Christ. Christ is a whole Christ to all. Grace is not to be estimated by the largeness of the gift, but by the love of the giver. One word more, and I will relieve your attention. I said that I had an especial eye, in this subject, of "Christ the bread of life," to that class of the Lord's

people who are too apt to overlook the completeness there is in Christ for all we can possibly need; and are for ever calculating more of their state before God from what they *feel*, than from what Christ *is*; more from what passeth in *themselves*, than what hath passed in the everlasting covenant, "ordered in all things and sure." It will gladden my heart if the Lord, in his rich mercy, shall carry conviction into the minds of all such, not only of the infinite suitability, but of the infinite fulness of our most glorious Christ, that as the whole of life, and the whole of salvation, is in his person, and in his all-justifying righteousness; coming to him we shall "never hunger, and believing on him we shall never thirst." And while his is the sole glory, so ours will be all the happiness in Christ Jesus our Lord.

SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS.

V.

THE BREAD AND WINE RECEIVED BY THE LORD'S PEOPLE,
IN THE LORD'S SUPPER, SYMBOLICAL OF COMMUNION
WITH THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.

I COR. X. 16.

The cup of blessing which we bless ; is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ? The bread which we break ; is it not the communion of the body of Christ ?

WE have once more in contemplation the ordinance of the holy Supper. And if the Lord so please to spare to the morrow, the Lord's people are invited to meet the Lord, in spiritual communion together, at the Lord's table. Ordinances are precious things, when, through grace, they are used as mediums and carriages to bring the heart to the Lord. For when the redeemed child of God, by regeneration, is made a new creature in Christ, his spiritual senses, being brought into a supernatural life, those hallowed services, acting in subservience to the unction of God the Holy Ghost, call them forth into exercise of communion with God. And this is such a state of blessedness, of holy familiarity with the Lord Jesus ; and in Him, and through Him, and by Him, with all the Persons in the GODHEAD, in the life of faith upon earth, as can only be exceeded by open vision, in the life of glory in heaven. It is not describable, by any powers of communication, from one to another. Language fails to convey any suitable apprehension of it. For as it is said, in reference to the sorrows of the distress of soul, "the heart knoweth its own

bitterness ;” so is it equally applicable to that gladness of the mind in spiritual communications from the Lord to his chosen ones: “a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.” (Prov. xiv. 10.) Who indeed can be competent to discover what passeth between the Lord and his people, when Jesus giveth them to eat of the *hidden manna* ; and handeth to them in secret the *white stone*, in which is written “the new name, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it!” (Rev. ii. 17.) It was thus with the spouse, when under divine influences, and she felt her soul on fire, arising on the wings of faith and love, she seemingly took flight after her beloved, crying out as she ascended, “Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” (Song vi. 12.)

And I have often thought, when contemplating those relations given in scripture, of the continued manifestations of Jesus to his church ; what aboundings of grace must be in the heart of our most glorious Christ, from whom such streams are so perpetually issuing. For, over and above the vast and stupendous work of redemption itself, the appointment of ordinances, to open, and keep open, the constant memorial of it, very fully proves what He had said from everlasting, that “his delights were with the sons of men, before his works of old, and before the earth was.” (Prov. viii. 28—31.) By such *outward* signs the Lord graciously intimated his *inward* affections ; and very blessedly made known the truth of that scripture, where he hath said, by one of his servants the prophet : “Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good ; and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart and with my whole soul.” (Jerem. xxxii. 41.)

I stay not to notice, at this time, the numberless testimonies of the kind with which the Old Testa-

ment saints were blessed, in the days prior to the gospel. This would lead me into a subject too extensive. But otherwise it were easy to shew, that from the first dawn of revelation, which came in immediately on the fall, unto the full meridian of the gospel, every service and every institution were shadowy representations of Christ. For if Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, this was, because he offered it *by faith*, with an eye to Christ. (Heb. xi. 4.) If Abraham laid Isaac on the altar intentionally for a burnt-offering, this also was typical of Christ, "whose day he saw afar off, rejoiced, and was glad." (John viii. 56.) If "Moses kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood;" this no less was by faith in the view of Christ, "our passover sacrificed for us." (Heb. xi. 28. I Cor. v. 7.) If the church sat under the "shadow with great delight, and the fruit was sweet unto her taste;" of whose shadow, and whose fruit, did she speak, but His whose coming she longed for, and for whom she waited, when the day of gospel light should break, and the shadow flee away, and "her beloved would be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether!" (Song ii. 17.) In short, every institution which the Old Testament saints observed, were all, more or less, shadowy representations of the good things then to come; but "the body was Christ." Their faith in the person of our most glorious Christ, gave a subsistency to those images, as if they had Christ in immediate possession. They realized His presence as if visibly with them. And they entered by faith into the enjoyment of their interest in his salvation, as if they had been following his steps from the hall of Pilate, and to the cross.

And what is it now, in all the venerable and sacred institutions of the church, among New Testament believers? What but the same hath been, now is,

and will be, through all the time-state of the gospel, from the days of the Son of God openly tabernacling in our nature upon earth, until the final consummation of all things in heaven? To come nearer home, to the solemn and most interesting service we have in prospect before us; what is the one professed object of the institution of the Lord's Supper? Is it not to represent, by the emblems of bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ, which He offered in the day when, by his body broken, and his blood shed, "he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself?" (Heb. ix. 26.) Do we not, when truly regenerated, and made new creatures in Christ, receive into the spiritual life, and mind, and understanding, and conscience, a communication of our oneness in Christ, and our interest in all that belongs to Christ? And when God the Holy Ghost, in his divine acts of grace upon our souls, takes of the person of Christ, and of the things of Christ, and glorifies both, in shewing to us; do not the Lord's people, as with one heart and one soul, realize and substantiate all and every part of his incarnation, obedience, blood-shedding, sufferings, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and triumphs, over death, sin, hell, and the grave, as participating in those triumphs, and feeling and knowing their personal interest in them? Yea, do they not so enter into the spiritual apprehension of them as their own, from beholding them wrought and accomplished by their glorious Head and Surety, as if they had been wrought and accomplished by themselves? Surely, if Old Testament saints, which lived and died before these mighty acts of our most glorious Christ were finished, lived and died triumphant in the faith of them; shall not we, who live in ages since the Son of God hath completed salvation work, and is returned to glory, enter into a full apprehension and enjoyment of them? Shall not faith give a

full assurance, when we are by regeneration "risen together with Christ; ascended together with Christ, and sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus?" (Ephes. ii. 5, 6.) True, we are not entered into the full possession of them in open vision; but we have them by anticipation through faith. We are in our minority while here below, as children which have not attained their full age. Nevertheless we are the heirs of the promise; and both the person of Christ, and the salvation of Christ, are as much ours now, as they will be then. Hence as the Holy Ghost taught the church by Peter, all truly regenerated believers may, and ought, to join in the same hymn as the apostle recorded they did: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter i. 8, 9.)

It is in this view, and with those well-grounded assurances of faith, the truly regenerated followers of the Lord are supposed to commemorate the holy Supper of the Lord. And under such conviction, the words of the text are addressed to them. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" The demand is put in the form of a question, not as if the things themselves are in the least doubtful, or in the smallest degree liable to any uncertainty; but, on the contrary, to establish the point by such a method of interrogation, as carrying thereby the more decided testimony, that they are unanswerable. We have similar instances of thus establishing facts, in a way of question, in the word of God. Thus, when our most glorious Christ would set forth in strong characters, the infinite value of

the soul, and the awful event, when men make barter of it, for the things of time and sense, the Lord Jesus states the subject under the same method of a question: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 36, 37.) We all know that this is an impossible case for a man to gain the whole world, or even a thousandth part of the world. But suppose the thing done: What is the man a gainer, if in the end his soul be lost? It needs no answer: the words answer themselves. And the very contemplation petrifies the mind with horror. We have another example of the same kind, which God the Holy Ghost hath adopted by Paul, in his statement of the doctrine. Having shewn the infinite and incalculable blessings of the gospel, he adds, by way of question: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii. 3.) There is no answer. Indeed there needs no answer. The very words themselves bear with them their own answer. It is impossible to escape. The language in my text hath the same bearing. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Yes, it most certainly is. And in the act of receiving, when from the Lord's blessing on both, our spiritual senses are refreshed, as our bodies are by bread and wine, we have real spiritual communion with the body and blood of Christ.

But we must not stop here. For as the institution of the holy supper, in the cup of blessing, and in the bread broken, were symbolical of a spiritual significance of setting forth Christ's death; so the receiving of them, implied a right of participation in all that those emblems figured of Christ himself and

his salvation. The body and blood of Christ, are sublime expressions, to denote both Christ's person, and the merits of Christ's death. Every regenerated partaker of the ordinance therefore, by that act, virtually declares that he considers himself as truly satisfied with it, and considers himself the partaker of it. He is as truly interested in the salvation of Christ, from his union with Christ, as if he himself had done and suffered, what Christ hath done and suffered for him. And the very institution of the ordinance, by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, was for the express purpose. For in the moment of the celebration, as the Son of God, in our nature, delivered the emblems of both to his disciples, he expressed himself to that effect: "Take eat; this is my body which is broken for you! This cup is the new testament in my blood." (1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.) And, indeed, the whole tenor of revelation is to the same effect. (John vi. 35—57.)

One word more on the text. The cup of blessing and the bread broken in the holy supper, not only represent the regenerated church having communion with Christ, and a right of participation in Christ, and what is his; but it becomes a representation no less before God in his trinity of persons, that all such are virtually in God's sight, so considered and accepted in Him. Christ is here set forth crucified not as a private person, but as the public head of his body the church. The regenerated believer, therefore, when receiving those outward tokens of bread and wine, as expressing his cordial and affectionate testimony of accepting Christ as the whole of salvation; no less receives them as convinced that God accepts the church in Christ, as part of himself; as "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Ephes. v. 30.) For as it is said of Levi, that he was "in the loins of his father Abraham, when Melchi-

zedec met him and blessed him ;” so the whole election of grace were in Christ, and virtually interested in all Christ did, and wrought, and suffered, when accomplishing their salvation. And the very cup we bless, and the bread we break, carry with them this signification. In receiving both, and presenting both, as I receive them before God, I am supposed with the church of old to say, “Behold ! O God our shield : and look upon the face of thine anointed !” (Psalm lxxxiv. 9.) And with the ear of faith I hear, and receive with holy joy and thanksgiving into my soul, the gracious answer of our most gracious God, as was once openly proclaimed at Jordan : “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased !” (Matt. iii. 17.) Well pleased in Him ; and well pleased with all that are in Him.

Let me beg your attention to another view of the sweet words of the text, before that we pass on to the improvements yet further, which arise out of them. As the whole mystical body of our most glorious Christ, are all alike interested both in Christ’s person and in Christ’s salvation ; so the communion of the body and blood of Christ is alike to all, and alike with all, precisely the same. The verse immediately following the text, very blessedly gives this statement. “For we being many, are one bread and one body : for we are all partakers of that one bread.” The humblest member of Christ is as truly a part of Christ, as the highest ; yea, and as needful to form the complete whole of Christ’s body, as those which by the Lord’s appointment, occupy a more exalted department. And what renders it yet more blessed in the view is ; that as each forms a part in Christ, to complete the whole, so each is alike equally near and dear to the glorious Head. Now this is most graciously set forth in the holy Supper. Though “many members yet but one bread and one body.”

For all are what they are, from him, and their union with him. And by their alike communion with him in the holy Supper, it is set forth, being as the scripture expresseth it; "all partakers of that one bread." And in all partaking with him, they partake also with each other, and are not only joined to their Almighty Head, but joined "in one body and one spirit, even as they are called, in one hope of their calling." (Ephes. iv. 4.) And the Holy Ghost by the apostle states this oneness of participation, by a very familiar illustration well known among the Israelites. "Behold (saith he) Israel after the flesh! Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" Yes, beyond all doubt they are. For though they were not the true *spiritual* Israel, but the followers only of *carnal* ordinances; yet even they, both priest and people, as they all alike ate of what remained of the sacrifices which the fire consumed not; they thereby declared themselves to be alike interested in the sacrifice: descendants of Abraham, and distinguished from all the other nations of the earth. How much more then, saith he, (for that is the inference which he draws from this statement) shall all the true spiritual communicants at the Lord's table, who by regeneration are united to Christ, be made partakers of Christ's salvation; all who set forth this being alike partakers of this feast upon the sacrifice.

Having thus very largely explained the words of the text, I shall have the less cause to dwell long upon the particulars connected with it. The remaining province assigned me will be only to observe, that for the purpose of this *communion*, there must be a previous *union* with Christ's person; and that by being regenerated from the Adam-fall of nature, the children of God are brought into a state of grace. This will form the *first* leading principle which I have from these words to say unto you. And *secondly*,

that this communion with Christ will be known and made manifest from the Lord's coming forth to us in a way of manifestation ; and calling forth our spiritual apprehensions towards him, in a way of faith, and love, and delight, and praise. If the Lord who hath given us this scripture, shall at this time graciously be pleased to shine upon it, and shine at the same time from it on our hearts ; we shall then be enabled to speak as decidedly in confirmation of the truth of it, as did the apostle, and say as he did : "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

Under the *first* of those particulars, namely, the necessity of a previous union with Christ's person, for the enjoyment of communion with him, in being regenerated from the Adam-fall of nature, and brought into a state of grace. And here, in confirmation of the divine doctrine itself, we have from scripture the testimony to it, of all the persons in the GODHEAD. It is God the Father who hath chosen the church in Christ before the foundation of the world. (Ephes. i. 4.) It is God the Son, who hath from everlasting and for ever betrothed the church to himself. (Isaiah liv. 5. Hosea ii. 19.) And it is God the Holy Ghost who hath anointed both the glorious Head and his members as one, and that from all eternity. (Luke i. 35. 1 John ii. 20.) And by virtue of this everlasting union it is, that the whole of Christ's person as God and man in one is united to his people : and the whole person of each individual of Christ's mystical body, is united to Christ : and this union is for ever.

And what renders this original and first cause of union, so inconceivably blessed is, that from being formed in the antient settlements of eternity, and settled for ever ; nothing arising in the time state of the church, could do away. The fall of the whole elec-

tion of grace, in the Adam-transgression, could, and did, alienate the affections of the church towards her Lord ; but could not dissolve the union, neither make any alteration in his love to them. This was, and is a cement founded in love, which many waters could not, nor ever shall quench : neither can the floods drown. (Song viii. 7.) So that union with Christ, which began before the world began, and will continue when there is no world, lies at the bottom of all our mercies, and is the source of all communion ; yea, and which in itself, surpasseth all communion, and happiness, and glory ; and all that we can propose to ourselves, in the felicity of heaven, to all eternity.

Now *communion* with Christ, which ariseth out of this *union* with Christ, and which was what I proposed to notice under the *second* particular, doth, and will manifest itself in numberless ways, always and invariably beginning on the part of God ; and thereby exciting and calling forth the spiritual apprehensions and affections, on the part of man, in a way of communion with Him. It doth not come within the limits of any description, either of men or angels, to shew what passeth and repasseth between the Lord and his people, in those hallowed seasons, when the Lord draweth nigh in manifestations of his grace, and enables them to draw nigh, in an awakened earnestness and going forth of the soul upon the person or work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But thus much we may say, from the authority of holy scripture, that the quickening of the spirit by regeneration, which before was “ dead in trespasses and sins,” now, from the principle of new life given, renders the blessed object of it capable of communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, through the divine operations of the Holy Ghost ; for they are thereby “ made partakers of the divine nature !” (2 Pet. i. 4.) So

that there is nothing in heaven itself, and all the felicities of heaven, which can go beyond this. It is indeed the source of whatever blessedness the Lord gives to his people. Made partakers of the divine nature, they are thereby qualified for the receiving and enjoying communion with the divine nature.

I anticipate an interesting question, which ariseth from this statement, and which, more or less, will involuntarily be the result of what hath been said in the heart of all the truly taught of God; namely, how is it known who are the objects and subjects of this sovereign work of God in the soul? To which I answer, or rather, to which the Word of God gives answer, and directs the heart who truly feels anxious in the enquiry, to judge of this immense transaction in the quickening operations of the Holy Ghost on the soul; as he would in the common operations of nature, in judging causes by their effects. The Lord Jesus himself sends his disciples to form their judgment of men, by what is discoverable in them. "Ye shall know them by their fruits." The new birth is the spring of a new life. Every spiritual faculty is brought forth into action; and every tendency of the renewed heart is to Christ. The *eye* is spiritually enlightened to the contemplation of Christ. The *ear* is unstopped, to know the joyful sound. The *mind* and *affections* are excited in desires after Christ. The spiritual appetite is quickened with *hungerings* and *thirstings* for Christ; and the *mouth* tasteth that "the Lord is gracious." In short, every spiritual sense is alive to the apprehension of the Lord; and as it was with the spouse in the Canticles, when she felt the preciousness of the Lord Jesus, the church feels and expresseth the same now: "Because (said she) of the *savour* of thy good ointment: thy name is as ointment poured forth." (Song i. 3.)

And now what is the result of all that I have been

saying? Who among you are spiritually taught of God, and feel spiritual desires to be partakers of the holy ordinance, which we have now in view, of the Supper of the Lord? You perceive, I hope, the indispensable necessity of the new birth, in order to a real spiritual participation of it. Until this miracle of grace hath passed on the soul, all the efforts of nature can give no relish or enjoyment for it. The great gulph spoken of in the gospel, which renders an entrance from hell to heaven impassible, (Luke xvi. 26.) becomes the same barrier to the Lord's *spiritual* banquet below. They, and they only, are welcome guests, whom God hath delivered "from the power of darkness, and hath translated into the kingdom of his dear Son!" Mistake me not. Carnal men may, yea, and carnal men will, mingle with the spiritual at this ordinance, as well as at all other ordinances; but an everlasting difference must mark the different characters, "between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." (Malachi iii. 18.) The truly regenerated child of God will easily know to which class he belongs, in putting the question of the text to his own heart, as he sits with Jesus at his table: can he say, "The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

Moreover the truly regenerated child of God, when grace is in lively exercise, will receive such blessed refreshments from the Lord, as will not only manifest the Lord being present with the guests at his table; but as will frequently constrain the soul herself, under such divine unction, to say, "It is good for me to be here." Sometimes the Lord will come in a word of power, a word of love, a promise, from his holy scripture, backed with the assurance, that God will perform what he hath promised. And not

unfrequently, the Holy Ghost will turn back the leaves of his people's history, in relation to times that are passed, and bring to remembrance numberless transactions of divine favour shewn them before, which, in the stream of time, had escaped recollection in their forgetful hearts. The patriarch Jacob found the blessedness of this when the Lord, many a year after his first manifestations to him at Bethel, put him in mind of it, and proclaimed himself to him afresh, as "the God of Bethel." (Gen. xxxi. 13.) Asaph, when under affliction, and for the moment, began to call in question divine faithfulness, roused by grace to a more becoming frame, chid himself for his unworthy thoughts of God, and said: "This is my infirmity! I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old!" (Psalm lxxvii. 1—11.) And the Lord encourageth his people to this remembrance, by telling them, that he is not forgetful of their first love and affection. "Go, saith the Lord, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee: the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." (Jerem. ii. 2.) And it is thus, in numberless instances now, in the present day of the church, the Lord comes in the medium of ordinances, as well as very frequently without ordinances, and manifests himself unto his chosen ones, "otherwise than he doth unto the world." (John xiv. 22.)

Will the regenerated child of God further ask, how he is to know when Jesus comes to visit his soul in those hallowed seasons of communion; and by what testimonies he may discover the footsteps of grace, in those sweet love tokens, when, as Jesus saith, "my Father will come, and we will make our abode with him; and the Holy Ghost shall abide

with you for ever?" (John xiv. 16—23.) I answer, Let the child of God be on the look out, as the prophet on the watch tower; and when at the table of the Lord, or the house of the Lord, he finds his soul going forth, or, as the disciples at Emmaus, "his heart burneth within him," while the word of Christ, or the work of Christ, is set forth in ordinances; and he himself simply passive, and only alive in spiritual apprehension of what is brought before him, or enjoyed in him: here is sweet communion with Christ. For it is the Father giving the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. It is Jesus himself coming on his visits of love and mercy, to make known the riches of his grace. And it is God the Holy Ghost who is thus "directing the heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Jesus Christ." Reader! are you going on the morrow to the table of the Lord? See if you can take with you, and with full assurance of faith, the words of my text, and subscribe with full consent of soul to their truth. "The cup of blessing which we bless; is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break; is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS.

VI.

CHRIST CALLING TO THE SPIRIT TO BREATHE ON HIS GARDEN, THE CHURCH, HIS SWEET INFLUENCES, AND THE CHURCH, IN CONSEQUENCE THEREOF, INVITING CHRIST TO COME INTO HIS GARDEN, AND EAT HIS PLEASANT FRUITS.

SONG IV. 16.

Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

THE Lord's table is again spread for the celebration of the Lord's Supper ; and all the Lord's family are invited to the spiritual feast. In this instance, it is with the Lord's household as it is with ours ; none should be away, and especially of the little ones before night, every one should be home at supper time.

But in order to have a real spiritual enjoyment of this divine banquet, it is most essentially necessary that each and every guest must have a spiritual appetite and relish for this spiritual food. The Lord first comes to his people in a way of grace, before that they can go to him in a way of faith and love. I can have no desire after Christ, until Christ, by his Spirit, kindles that desire in my affections. And hence the same Almighty God, who by regeneration quickens the sinner, which before was dead in trespasses and sins, into a new and spiritual life, excites the life he hath given into spiritual action ; and this in scripture, by way of distinction, is called "the renewing of the Holy Ghost shed upon us abundantly through Jesus

Christ our Saviour." (Titus iii. 5, 6.) And when the Lord is renewing the regenerated spirit by his divine power, then all the faculties of the soul are going forth in desires after Christ, and longing for communion with Christ. One of the Psalms hath expressed this, in very sweet and strong terms, of the vehement burnings of the soul, when feeling the excitings of the Spirit: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, yea, for the living God! When shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm xlii. 1, 2.)

I pause to remark, before we go further, that these sensibilities of the soul are not only the truest marks of the redeemed and regenerated child of God; but also that that child of God is then in a state of spiritual health in Christ, in hungering and thirsting for his spiritual food, which is Christ himself: as the man in the natural health of the body, craves for the bread which satisfieth the hungering, for his daily sustenance. The whole process of divine teaching is to this tendency. It is the spiritual consciousness which I have, since the Lord first wrought a work of grace in my heart, of my original distance by nature from the Lord, that now so earnestly prompts me to draw nigh to him. It is the conviction which I have of my utter inability to come to God of myself, which makes me prize his grace, in leading and drawing me. His light it is which makes me sensible of my darkness. His life, giving me life, shews me the state in which I was before, of deadness and death. So that the very best and most infallible standard of ascertaining the real health of the soul, before God in Christ, is, when all the spiritual faculties are awakened and called forth in desires after Christ. The *eye* supernaturally opened by the Lord, beholds "the king in his beauty." The *ear*, unstopped by sovereign

power, hears and knows "the joyful sound." The *feet* will then run the ways of God's commandments when "the heart is set at liberty." In short, all the spiritual affections are excited towards him, who is discovered by this divine teaching, to be the all in all to his people, and nothing can, or will, satisfy the regenerated child of God, short of Christ "in them the hope of glory."

My text is a beautiful illustration of this leading truth of our most holy faith. The words are the close of one of the love-songs of Christ, in which the gracious condescending Lord had been dwelling very largely upon the beauties of his church, as she appeared in his eyes, made comely "by the comeliness which he had put upon her;" and now desiring to bring her forth into communion with himself, he calls to the Holy Ghost to shed his influences upon her, that the graces the Lord the Spirit had wrought in her by regeneration, might be brought forth into the lively exercises of love and faith, upon the person and righteousness of her Lord. "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." And it appears, by the close of my text, that the effect instantly followed the call; for she said, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

Every part and portion of this scripture is big with importance, and, under divine teaching, cannot fail to give instruction and comfort to the whole redeemed and regenerated church of Christ. Let us go over the several branches of it, one by one.

That it is the Lord Jesus which is the speaker, in calling to the north and south wind, is evident, because he names the church as *his* garden, upon whom he desires the sweet gales of the Spirit to blow. And through grace, we can perfectly apprehend how the

church is the garden of Christ; for she was, from everlasting, given to him by the Father in the covenant of grace. And moreover, Christ had a double personal right in her beside, in betrothing her to himself before all worlds; and during the time-state redeeming her by his blood. And no less hath God the Holy Ghost testified to this right, when anointing the church in Christ, in the ancient settlements of eternity, and by regeneration in the fulness of time, raising her from the ruins of the fall, and making her willing, by a voluntary surrender of herself, to be the Lord's, "in the day of his power." I only detain you for the moment on this part of the subject, to observe, that so very precious is the church in Jesus's sight, as the Father's gift, that he calls her *his* garden, with special reference on this account. For elsewhere, speaking to the Father in relation to the church, Jesus saith: "Thou hast given me power over all flesh, that I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word." (John xvii. 2—6.) Hence it is plain, that the church was dear to the Lord Jesus, because she was, and is, the Father's, and given to him by the Father. And if Jesus loved her on this account, shall not you and I love the Father for the same? Is the church more precious in Jesus's sight, from having received her of the Father? And shall not the knowledge of this endear to us both the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for such an act of grace, in the covenant love of Jehovah towards the church, in his trinity of persons.

But we must not stop here. In the call of the Lord Jesus to the Holy Ghost, to blow upon his garden, we have a beautiful illustration by the way,

of the several acts of the Holy Three in One, in the economy of grace, to the church in Christ. As the church originated in the gift of the Father to the Son, and the Son guaranteed both to marry the church by union with our nature, and to redeem her from the Adam-fall transgression by his blood; so the Holy Ghost engaged his personal grace, in anointing, quickening, regenerating, renewing, and all those outpourings of his favour, whereby his equal love should be manifested towards the church in Christ, in common with the Father and the Son. This call of Christ to the Holy Ghost, to visit his church with his influences, is not unsimilar to what the Lord Jesus said in the days of his flesh to his Father. It is to one and the same amount; and as much a prayer in the one instance as it is in the other. We have several expressions of the kind in the same chapter, John xvii. 11. 15. 17—24. Neither is this address to the Holy Ghost, in his own personal power and GODHEAD, singular, for we find the like in the prophet Ezekiel, in which the Lord God calls to the four winds, saying, “O breath! breathe upon these slain, that they may live!” (Ezek. xxxvii. 9.) It is most blessed, therefore, when, by the Lord shining on his word, we can and do behold all the persons in the GODHEAD alike engaged in the great work of salvation; and we are enabled, in our own case and circumstances, to trace the several acts of each, manifested in love and favour to ourselves as we are in Christ.

Neither is this all. By the call to the north wind and the south wind to blow upon Christ's garden, for the express purpose that the spices may flow out, we learn both the freedom in those acts of grace, and the necessity there is, that they must be dispensed before that such effects as the Lord Jesus waited for could follow. Here again, as before, we discover

the equal grace manifested by the Holy Three in One, toward the church in Christ, by those merciful and sovereign acts of each, while they all co-operate and concur in the personal salvation of every individual of Christ's mystical body. There is not one of the church of Christ but what was given by the Father to the Son; for it is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." (Eph. iii. 14.) There is not one, in the whole election of grace, but what is married to the Son. For he it is that hath said, "I will betroth thee unto me for ever." (Hosea ii. 19.) And amidst the diversities of gifts bestowed upon the church from God the Holy Ghost, we are expressly taught, that "all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Cor. xii. 11.) I stay not to enter into an enquiry concerning the different properties of the north and south wind. I rather consider, that the Holy Ghost himself is understood under both; and that it is a comprehensive expression of our most glorious Christ, to desire for his church every thing that she then stood in need of, for causing grace to be in lively exercise. And if, as the north wind breathed a pleasant gale, and the south melted the finer affections of the soul, the effect might be, as we not unfrequently find it is, in the gardens of nature; the oily particles of the plants being dissolved, and the air blowing upon them, causeth their fragrant odour to regale our senses: so in the garden of grace, the church, under the Spirit's influence, feeling those divine operations from the Lord, might be wrought upon, in the power of the Lord, to come forth into action; and the spices of love, and joy, and faith, and delight, in the Lord Jesus Christ, might flow out; and Jesus take delight in the perfume of his own gifts to his church.

And do not fail to observe how immediate the effect which followed, from the Spirit's influence on the church; for no sooner had she felt the outpouring of his gracious operations on her soul, than she invites her Lord to come to her, for his personal enjoyment of the same: "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." It is very blessed to trace the gracious work of the Holy Ghost, in those sudden enlargements of spirit, when calling forth the graces he hath planted in his church and people into lively exercise. This the spouse expressed upon another occasion, when she said: "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." (Song vi. xii.) And it is recorded of Hezekiah and the children of Israel upon the occasion of the consecration of the house of the Lord: "and Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people; for the thing was done suddenly." (2 Chron. xxix. 36.) I believe that I may venture to appeal to the minds and experiences of many of the Lord's people which hear me, in confirmation of the same. There is, and there necessarily must be at times, from the workings of the old nature we carry about with us, great coldness and deadness to divine things. Every redeemed and regenerated child of God, when brought acquainted with the anatomy of his own heart, knows this but too often to his own cost. And indeed the chief sorrows of the soul, originate from those workings of corruption in their opposition to grace. It was this discovery of the inherency of sin, which made the apostle groan. And it is the same, which in all ages of the church, have induced similar effects among all the Lord's people. How very gracious then must it be in our most glorious Lord, when as in the instance of the spouse here described, Jesus calls upon the Spirit to pour upon his people the renewings of his grace,

and the blessed consequences immediately follow in the outgoings of the soul's desire for communion with the Lord: "let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

In the further prosecution of this subject as the Lord shall be pleased to favour: and with an eye to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the preparation for which can only be from the Lord; I purpose in the *first* place, to consider a little somewhat more particularly this call of our most glorious Christ to the Holy Ghost for the shedding his gracious influences on his church. "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south, and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow." I shall then proceed in the *second* branch of the discourse, to shew according to the statement of scripture, how blessedly those operations of the Holy Ghost, upon the regenerated nature of the Lord's people, lead to those spiritual desires of the soul, as expressed in the invitation in the text: "let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

But before I enter upon it, I would detain you at the threshold to say, that the spiritual apprehension of this, like all other matters of a spiritual nature, can only be spiritually understood. Divine teaching can only be received from divine illumination. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." (John iii. 27.) But let it be also understood at the same time, that there is nothing of merit or demerit which hath any thing to do in the receiving of it. All receivers are alike receivers, and mere vessels to receive, and no more. And yet further, let it be observed, that how many soever are made the receivers of this unspeakable gift, are *alike* made the receivers of it. For as it is said of *justification*, "by Him all that believe are justified from all things;" whether they be strong or weak, young or old; so

by *regeneration* or the *new birth*, and the consequences arising therefrom in Christ, all that are brought into the new and spiritual life, are alike brought into all the privileges of that life. The veriest babe in Christ, the new-born heir of the kingdom, is at once made as capable of enjoying communion with all the persons in the GODHEAD, as those that are advanced in years in the divine life. And I have often thought what an encouragement these considerations become to every one who is made sensible “of the plague of his own heart.” For as all men by nature are alike undeserving, and all are alike passive when receiving the first manifestations of grace from the Lord; whenever the Lord calls upon the Holy Ghost to blow upon his church, the effects cannot but follow, and the sinner is at once “made willing in the day of his power.”

I begin as I proposed, to consider somewhat more particularly the Lord’s call to the Holy Ghost, to breathe upon his church the blessed influences of his sovereign power, that the spices might flow. And while this is the special act of God the Spirit, in the economy of salvation, so is it from the joint pleasure and absolute agreement of the Holy Three in One, in the covenant of grace. For, as hath been glanced at before, every event included in the administration of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ, refers to each glorious person in the GODHEAD as equally taking part. The formation and gift of the church, as hath been already stated, carries with it a most palpable and decided testimony, that the whole persons in the GODHEAD alike, have engaged from all eternity and are engaged to all eternity in the marvellous work. And we are told the cause, namely; “that in the ages to come, God might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.” (Eph. ii. 7.)

I have already shewn you, though in a transient manner, some few of the more prominent features of the divine favour towards the church by each of the persons in the GODHEAD, which plainly testify the sovereign acts of each, in the Father's love, the Son's grace, and the Spirit's fellowship. But it was among the blessed promises of our most glorious Christ, that the latter days of the gospel after his return to glory, and the Holy Ghost coming down in a more open display of his eternal power and GODHEAD, should be marked with clearer views of the divine manifestations. "These things (said Jesus) have I spoken unto you in proverbs; but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father." (John xvi. 25.) And blessed be our promising God, for he is a performing God. We have done with parables from any knowledge to be gathered from them of the *spiritual* manifestation of Jehovah in his Trinity of Persons. We can and do, whenever the north wind and the south wind from the Holy Ghost, blow a gracious gale upon our souls, receive the divine testimony to the persons in the GODHEAD, in their *personal* manifestations to us, and "set to our seal that God is true." (John iii. 33.)

Thus in relation to the special, personal grace of God the Father; we now discover through our Lord's shewing us plainly of the Father, that as it was, from his first and original *gift* in eternity, the church was given to Christ; so is it in every instance his special, personal grace that we are *drawn* to Christ; (John vi. 44.) and that our *coming* to Christ is from the Father's *teaching*. (John vi. 45. with Isaiah liv. 13.) The Lord Jesus did indeed very beautifully set forth the union of the Son of God with our nature, under the similitude of "a certain king making a marriage for his son," (Matt. xxii. 2.) but who would have entered

into the spiritual apprehension of this parable; had not Jesus himself shewn us “plainly of the Father?” Who would have been able to trace their mercies to the Father’s inclining our hearts to *love* Christ, and to *accept* Christ; who are all by nature in a state of enmity to God; had it not been shewn us, that all that wooing and winning we feel in drawing us to Christ is by the Father? He it is that is the Almighty speaker to the church, in that precious scripture, when he saith, “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house: so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.” (Psalm xlv. 10, 11; Gen. xii. 1—3.) Secret indeed to our view, and for a long while unconscious from whence the direction came, while feeling the energy of divine disposings; yet from this intimation of Christ, we now clearly discover that the whole proceeded from the Father; and his almighty power, acting like the hidden spring of a machine, wrought most effectually when most concealed. Even as in the new birth, so in all the after principles of spiritual life, all that believe in Christ’s name, “are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John i. 13.)

And no less in relation to the special, personal acts of grace, from our most glorious Christ; every love token which can be shewn carries with it, in all its bearings, the same testimonies of his unceasing attention; yea, that his whole heart is ours. The spouse, in those very Canticles, expressed as much when she said, “I am my beloved’s, and his desire is towards me!” (Song vii. 10.) And as this desire in our Almighty lover towards his church began before all worlds; so doth it run, like a golden chain, link by link, through all the time-state of the church, and will continue when there are no worlds. I need not

particularize. Every act of the Lord Jesus becomes a confirmation ; yea, every design and purpose of his mind declares it. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord ; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jer. xxix. 11.) So that, when set up from everlasting, as "his delights were then with the sons of men ;" such have they always been ; such are they now ; and such will they be to all eternity. Neither his person nor his affection towards his church can alter ; for he is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8.)

And in relation to the love and operations of God the Holy Ghost, which are specially and personally referred to in the text ; from the first moment in eternity, (call that moment by what name soever it may be termed,) to every part, and portion, of the grace manifested to the church here below, the Lord the Spirit hath borne, and doth bear equal regard, in all the covenant transactions of Jehovah. His almighty ministry hath been shewn, when from everlasting he anointed the glorious Head of the church, and the church in him. And no less, in all those sovereign acts, which have followed in time ; and which will continue in, and through all time, until grace is consummated in glory. His is to regenerate, to teach, to lead into all truth, to glorify the person of Christ, and the work of Christ ; to take of Christ and shew unto his people ; to indite prayers in their hearts, according to the will of God ; to awaken sinners ; to comfort saints ; to confirm, to establish, to strengthen ; "to direct the heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ !" In short, to speak in the words of the text ; as the "north wind, and the south wind to blow upon Christ's garden the church, that the spices thereof may flow out !" All which are so many concurring and decided testimonies to

the comfort and joy of the church, that the whole Three Persons in the GODHEAD are alike engaged in those sovereign acts of divine favour towards her ; and in the unity of the essence of Jehovah, become the one glorious object of adoration, love, and praise, now, and to all eternity.

In proceeding now, as I proposed, to the *second* branch of my discourse, namely, of the effects wrought upon the heart of the regenerated people of the Lord ; it will be your province while I go over the *outward* ministry of the word, to enquire for the *inward* operation of the same in your spiritual minds and understandings, as testified by the church of old, when she said, " Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits ! "

If the Lord the Spirit hath been with you, and is with you, his divine breathings will be visible by the effects. As in the first act of regeneration, it is his almighty work to give spiritual life to our spiritual faculties, which were before dead in trespasses and sins ; so in every subsequent operation, his almighty agency is manifested in every going forth of the renewed soul, upon the person and salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Creating work, and renewing work, are alike his. Are we convinced of sin ? It is by his divine discoveries to us of our apostate nature in Adam, that we have this conviction ; and his pleadings in our own hearts, against our manifold transgressions to the holy law of God, become the sole cause of unfolding to our view the dreadful deformity of our fallen state. Are we enlightened in our spiritual understanding, to the scriptural apprehension of the glorious person, and the glorious salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ ; so as to behold his infinite suitableness and all sufficiency, to our circumstances ? This also is from the same Almighty Teacher. (John xvi. 14.) Are we at any time, when

depressed with a sense of sin from renewed infirmities, cast down, and afflicted, in the sad prospect of human depravity? Here again it is that the Lord the Spirit comes in his most precious and endearing character, as the "Holy Ghost the comforter;" and the soul encouraged by his divine consolations, is led not unfrequently to cry out, "When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I!" (Psalm lxi. 2.) In a word, when amidst the numberless and various ways by which, according to the statement of holy Scripture, gracious impressions are wrought upon the mind, and the souls of the regenerate are gladdened and made joyful in the house of prayer; when a divine power is felt in the word, and the cold heart is warmed, the depressed heart raised, the fettered heart set free, and the heart of stone becomes an heart of flesh; all, and every one of these divine operations, are the immediate work of God the Spirit, "dividing to every man severally as he will." (1 Cor. xii. 11.)

Have I said enough, in the statement of the doctrines in the text, to render them intelligible to the spiritual understanding of my hearers? The immediate result then will be, to enquire who among you is brought under the gracious influences which the Lord Jesus here desired for his church, from God the Holy Ghost, so as to invite Christ, as the spouse did, when she felt the divine awakenings, and said, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits!" If the Lord the Spirit hath been present with us, as we are taught both to hope and believe; the testimonies of his unction will be more or less enjoyed in every regenerated heart. Added to the *habitual* state, in which every child of God once called by sovereign grace is, in the knowledge of the Lord; there will be the *actual* enjoyment of it in the goings forth of the soul, by these renewings

in sweet communion with him. And when I call to mind that all, and every one of the manifestations of divine love are free and unmerited, as "the dew of heaven, which tarrieth not for man, neither waiteth for the sons of men;" I am on the daily look out for him, and his gracious love visits to his church, "who cometh down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth!" And while I think of these things, and look round upon the congregation of the Lord's people, as the prophet surveye'd the dry bones in the valley; I realize to my spiritual apprehension the same question as the Lord put to him; and catch a glimpse by faith of what followed in answer to the prophet's vision. When our God calls to the four winds, saying, "O breath! breathe upon these slain that they may live!" I behold them spiritually as he did, when "from the breath coming into them they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army!" (Ezekiel xxxvii. 1—10.)

Though the limits of my text do not allow me to step into the next chapter, and dwell at large on the immediate effect which is there recorded, of the Lord's gracious acceptance of the invitation of his church; yet it will not be trespassing too much on your time to observe, that his promptness to accept, was as instant as her desire: yea, as her invitation was the result of the Spirit's influence, it was in the intention of Christ to come to her, prior to her asking him, in agreement with that blessed promise; "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isaiah lxxv. 24.) And if you will only read the first verse in that chapter, you will see with what a world of tenderness the Lord Jesus expresseth himself on the occasion. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh

with my spice ; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey ; I have drunk my wine with my milk : eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved !” (Song v. 1.) Numberless are the precious intimations of our adorable Lord in this scripture. “I am come (said Jesus): I am always with you, even to the end of the world.” (Mat. xxviii. 20. Isa. xxvii. 3.) I pray the soul that is tempted at times to think as if the Lord had forsaken him, to keep this in remembrance : Jesus is never absent from his people. Though you do not see him, yet the Lord never ceaseth to see you. (Isaiah xl. 27—31.) And do not fail to observe also, by what endearing names Jesus calls his church. She is *his sister* as well as *his spouse*. For by taking our nature into union with himself, this brings his church into every relation to him. And we are told that “he is not ashamed to call us brethren.” (Heb. ii. 11.) And I do admire his matchless grace, when coming into his garden and eating his pleasant fruits, that he calls them *his* : for surely such they are. It is his grace, and not our merits ; the fruits of his blood and righteousness in which we appear before God, and not in any offering of our own ; which makes us “accepted in the beloved.” And what a generous Lord is our Lord, thus to feast his redeemed with himself, when giving such an hearty welcome ; “Eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved !”

I only add a prayer, that the same gracious Lord, which calls to the Holy Spirit, to come with his divine influences on his garden the church ; may put the earnest cry in the hearts of his people, under those influences, to invite Jesus to come to his table on the present occasion. And that every regenerated soul may be made joyful in the Lord’s assurance that he is come, and that “to eat of his pleasant fruits.” The

Lord knows all the wants of his people. He knows the special, personal need of every one. And it is the Lord that hath appointed the sweet ordinance of the Supper, on purpose for coming in the midst of them, in a way of communion, for the supply of each want, and to answer every necessity. "Let us therefore, (as we are commanded) come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS.

VII.

THE SPIRITUAL PARTICIPATION IN THE EMBLEMS AT THE LORD'S TABLE, A DECISIVE TESTIMONY OF A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE SACRIFICE ITSELF.

I COR. X. 18.

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar?

ORDINANCES, especially those of sacrifices, which were appointed of the Lord under the Jewish dispensation, are shadowy representations of the scripture blessings under the gospel, and of a spiritual nature. They are outward tokens of an inward effect. And the Lord's Supper in the emblems of bread and wine, hath its design in setting forth thereby, the body and blood of Christ. Hence it may be considered a visible gospel, proposed to the *eye*, as the preaching of the gospel is to the *ear*, both meaning one and the same, even Christ. He is the substance; they are all shadows. Hence Paul, when writing to the church of the Galatians, reproveth the people for their dulness in not apprehending divine things. "O foolish Galatians, (said he) who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth? before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you." (Gal. iii. 1.) It is more than probable that not a Galatian had been at Jerusalem, when Christ was crucified; but in the preaching of Christ and him crucified, as was Paul's way and manner, the Lord of life and glory had been so blessedly set forth in the dignity of his person, and in the completeness and fulness of his salvation, as if they had visibly been

present at the cross. And the same is everlastingly done, in all ages of the church; and when God the Holy Ghost gives grace to his servants to preach Christ, and accompanieth that preaching by his divine unction, the person and work of Christ are realized to the spiritual view, and Christ “formed in the heart the hope of glory.”

And it is very blessed when, by regeneration, the spiritual faculties are awakened, and brought forth into spiritual life, to the apprehension and enjoyment of divine things. Not only then the *eye* is spiritually enlightened to such views of Christ, and the *ear* unstopped to know the joyful sound; but the *mouth* is opened to receive and relish the sweet savour of Christ, as is the *smell* to the fragrancy of Christ’s “ointment poured forth.” Hence the Psalmist, having enjoyed those rich things, calls upon the church to partake: “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.” (Psalm xxxiv. 8.) And the prophet exults in the same: “Thy words (said he) were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of Hosts!” (Jer. xv. 16.) And the spouse in the Canticles sung her love song to the same, when, in the rapture of her soul’s enjoyment, she said, “I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” (Song ii. 3.) But all these spiritual things pre-suppose spiritual life and health; for neither can the eye see, nor the ear hear, nor the mouth taste what is divine and spiritual, with *natural* faculties. The uniform language of scripture on this subject decidedly determines that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, (it is not said that he *will not*, but that he *cannot*) because they are spiritually discerned:” for being in a state of

unrenewed nature, he hath no spiritual faculties to discern and receive them by. (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Until, therefore, by regeneration, or the new birth, we are quickened into a new and spiritual life; though we hear the gospel preached, or behold the Lord's Supper administered, yea, and partake of the *outward* signs of the bread and the wine, we have no real spiritual knowledge or enjoyment in the *inward* effect.

The Lord hath left upon record a striking representation of this, in the strong expostulation made with the church, Zech. vii. 5, 6: "Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, when ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" The people had no communion with the Lord in these mere forms of worship: "Thou art near in their mouth, (said the prophet,) and far from their reins." (Jer. xii. 2.) And to the same amount are those solemn declarations of our Lord: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity." (Matt. vii. 22, 23.) And yet, if possible, in stronger terms the Lord, in another part of his gospel, thus spake of such men: "Then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets; but he shall say, I tell you I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of iniquity." (Luke xiii. 26, 27.)

We are awfully taught from those and the like scriptures, that the mere attendance on ordinances and means of grace, by persons unawakened, unregenerated, unrenewed in the spirit of their mind, all

are nothing. And perhaps it is of all others the most portentous sign of the present day, when men under the specious name of *evangelical* profession, are earnest to the *form*, while unconscious of *the power of godliness*. Such are content with the name to live among men; but while unregenerate they are dead before God: they rest satisfied with the shadow, and and know nothing of the substance: they take the shell, but never taste the fruit. Judas was like one of those, concerning whom the Lord spake in the scriptures I just now referred to; he had both heard Christ preach, and had eaten and drunk in Christ's presence; yea, he had gone forth himself to preach, and in common with the other disciples had done many wonderful works: for had he not, the discovery would have been made of the defect, when the disciples returned to the Lord Jesus with joy at their success in his name. (Luke x. 17.) Nay more than these, the Lord had washed the feet of Judas, as we read, John xiii. for it was not until this service was over, and the Lord Jesus had taken his garments, and was sat down again, that he first brake the awful intelligence unto them, that "one of them should betray him." (ver. 21.) Still further, when the Lord Jesus celebrated for the last time the Passover, Judas was a partaker; for we read that "when the hour was come, Jesus sat down and the twelve apostles with him," consequently Judas was in the number. (Luke xxii. 14.) And as the holy Supper immediately followed the Passover, Judas here also partook; for the Lord Jesus, after having distributed the sacred elements among them, added, "But behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." (ver. 17—21.) But in the midst of all these things Judas was still Judas, and, as our Lord called him, a devil: "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John vi. 70.) And though this

example is indeed in the highest and most finished degree of awfulness, yet there is nothing singular in the hypocrisy of the thing itself; it hath been such in all ages from the first, and will continue to the last. We read that "when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan came also among them." (Job i. 6. Zech. iii. 1.) And what have the true spiritual church of Christ to do with this? Did the presence of Judas mar the divine efficacy of the holy Supper to the faithful apostles at the institution? So neither can men nor devils hurt the sweet manifestation of Jesus in the celebration of it now. The conscious presence of the Lord in the Supper, and the spiritual enjoyment of the Lord in those hallowed seasons, will raise the child of God above himself, as well as above sin and Satan, and all the enemies of his salvation. "We are (saith Paul) in all these things more than conquerors, through him that loveth us." (Rom. viii. 37.)

With these objects in view let us attend to the more immediate portion of the text, and observe what instruction, under the Lord's teaching, is to be gathered from it. The apostle calls upon the spiritual church of Christ to learn a very gracious lesson, even from the natural unrenewed Israelite, in his attending and eating of the sacrifices offered on the Jewish altar. "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices, partakers of the altar?" Most unquestionably they are; for they have all that their carnal appetites desire. And shall not then the spiritual partakers of the feast on the sacrifice of the Lord's Supper, be interested, and take part in all the blissful effects arising out of their union with Christ, their New Testament Altar?

To illustrate this doctrine yet more fully, the apostle had, in the opening of the chapter, stated a very beautiful account of the *spiritual* church of

Christ, distinguished from Israel after the flesh, in shewing that the people of God, when brought out of Egypt, were “under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.” But did not the whole body of the children of Israel follow the cloud, and pass through the sea? Yes. And were they not all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea? Yes. But here lay the vast difference, while to “the true Israel of God” the ordinances of baptism, and the spiritual meat and water of the rock became spiritual, and they truly did eye Christ in both; “Israel after the flesh” had no further enjoyment than in the carnal things themselves; and hence the apostle at the close of the statement adds, that “with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness:” and this is recorded, Numb. xxvi. 64, 65. Heb. iii. 17.

Here, then, is the picture of the spiritual church of Christ in the wilderness, drawn under the direction of the Holy Ghost, by the pencil of the apostle Paul; in which you see that *then*, as *now*, carnal, unrenewed worshippers were mingled. They had the ordinances as we have, in which both professor and profane joined; but while to the spiritual seed of Abraham they became “the savour of life unto life,” to the Israel of the flesh they became “the savour of death unto death.” And in another scripture the Holy Ghost by the same apostle explains the cause: “For they are not all Israel which are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” (Rom. ix. 6, 7.) All this is plain and clear in relation to the election of grace. Abraham had his

Ishmael, and the sons of Keturah, as well as Isaac ; and Isaac had an Esau, as well as Jacob ; and no doubt the children all engaged alike in the sacrifices of the household. The sons of Eli also, in an after age of the church, whom the Holy Ghost calls “ sons of Belial,” ministered in divine things ; for they made themselves fat with the sacrifices : “ wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord.” (1 Sam. ii. 12—17.) To what age of the church shall we look for an exemption of such awful things ?

One very interesting point I would beg to call to your attention on this subject, concerning these ordinances of being *baptised*, and *eating*, and *drinking* of spiritual food ; namely, that Israel had similar ordinances in those things to ours ; for is it not now the same in the gospel church, *baptism* and the *Lord's Supper* ? If it had not been so designed, how comes it to pass that *circumcision* and the *passover* had not been pointed at ? *Circumcision* was the most ancient of all rites in the Jewish church ; and the *passover* was the first ordinance appointed when the church was about to be formed in the Exodus, or coming forth from Egypt : and yet neither of these are mentioned. Moreover, Paul tells us, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that the church *then* had the gospel preached unto them, as well as unto us *now*. (Heb. iv. 2.) But how was it preached in ordinances, except by baptism, and the eating of the spiritual meat, and drinking of the spiritual drink ? And let me further observe in confirmation, that Christ is more than in any other service preached here in the wilderness in this service ; for it is not said that the rock, and the water issuing from the rock, was merely to *shadow* forth Christ ; but that it was Christ *himself* : for “ they drank of that rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.” Now we frequently

meet with scriptures which speak of the *word* of Christ, and the *spirit* of Christ; but this is stronger than either; for here the rock is said to be Christ *himself*, and the subject is rendered infinitely more striking thereby: for the mingling of the different characters in ordinances, only tends to discriminate "the precious from the vile." The whole body of Israel ate of the same spiritual meat, and drank of the same spiritual drink; yea, the very cattle of Israel, no doubt, drank of the water of the rock; but what of that? And what was there more than that in the participation of Israel after the flesh? The Holy Ghost by his servant Jude hath stated this, when speaking of the ungodly, "in the use of those things which they know not, but what they know naturally as brute beasts." (Jude 10.) It is a solemn thing for men unregenerated, and in a state of nature, to be found in the use of means, and then live and die in the vanity of their minds; but here is no injury hereby to the true Israel of God. To use the words of the text, if Israel after the flesh partook of the sacrifices in eating bodily of the things offered on the altar; shall not the members of Christ's mystical body as truly feed spiritually on Christ by faith? And is it not a direct acknowledgment by such acts, at every renewed celebration of the Lord's Supper, that they consider themselves as truly interested in all the efficacy of that all-sufficient sacrifice of their glorious Head, as if they themselves had offered it?

This then is the subject of our present *sacramental meditation*. In which I propose as the Lord shall be pleased to enable me, to consider, in the *first* place, the ground on which the holy Supper is founded, in the glorious person and finished salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when I have performed this service, I shall hope that from an unction from the Holy Ghost, the spiritual church of Christ will then

be led to see, and by faith enjoy, such a personal apprehension of right and inheritance, in this incommunicable salvation of Christ, as to enter into the full participation; that as Israel after the flesh, by eating of the sacrifice, became a partaker of the altar, much more as the Lord Jesus himself hath said, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." (John vi. 57.)

The subject in this point of view must be confessed to be abundantly precious and important. For on the presumption, that the regenerated child of God, in contemplating Christ, beholds him as his substituted surety and sacrifice; by virtue of this right from an union and oneness with Christ, he is to all intents and purposes implicated in all the benefits of his divine offering: and in the act of receiving, the communicant is considered as saying as much, in the service of the holy Supper.

And what endears this yet the more is, that as the substitution of Christ for his body the church, is no act of the church, but the sole appointment of God himself in his trinity of persons; so the right of participation, in all the benefits of it, is no less resulting from the free gift of God. There are no provisions, no preparations, no worth, no merit, on the part of man; the Lord that provides the mercy, prepares the heart for the mercy. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above!" The receivers are simply receivers, and no more. In themselves they are wholly passive. Salvation, as the light of heaven, or as the air we breathe, are wholly given. It is our mercy to receive the one, and live by the other. The Lord the Holy Ghost be so mercifully gracious with both speaker and hearer on this occasion, that we may "know the things which are freely given to us of God."

I begin with the *first* branch of my subject, namely,

the ground on which the holy Supper is founded. Now the very substitution of Christ in sacrifice for his people, implies a former breach between God and man; and which this glorious person became, as the prophet called him, "the repairer of the breach; the restorer of paths to dwell in." (Isa. lviii. 12.) This breach arising from sin, was wholly on the part of man; for by the Adam-fall transgression, such a desperate state of enmity took place against God in the human heart, as never on man's part could be healed. The love of God to the *persons* of his people had no abatement, being an everlasting love. (Jer. xxxi. 3.) But to their *sins* God's displeasure was manifested, by an intermission of communion. Now all the Holy Three in the GODHEAD took equal part in the reconciling of the people to the Lord: but one of the divine persons by assuming into union with himself that holy portion of our nature, became the great Surety; and by his obedience and death, accomplished the mighty work, and thereby restored perfect order among the works of God.

I stay not, on the present occasion, to shew how, and by what mysterious means, the Lord of life and glory wrought out man's deliverance: such a subject is too extensive to come within the limits that I must now observe. Let it suffice to say, that by assuming our nature, taking the names and persons of his people, standing in our law room and stead, fulfilling all righteousness, and dying "the just for the unjust, to bring his people to God;" he manifested that he, and he alone, was competent to the mighty work; and fully answered to all the prophecies concerning "the most Holy, who should seal up the vision of prophecy, finish the transgression, make an end of sin, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness." (Dan. ix. 24.)

Now these sublime truths, with all the other gra-

cious and glorious transactions in the gospel, furnished out the foundation on which the holy Supper of the Lord was instituted, and by the Lord himself. And most certain it is, that to all the redeemed and regenerated people of the Lord, who by divine teaching are enabled to realize these things in their souls; and to behold the substitution of Christ as the church's surety; to live upon Christ's person and Christ's righteousness as the efficient means of salvation, the whole of redemption is confirmed. And from being received into the soul and lived upon, the church is enabled to behold Christ, as the statement of scripture brings him home, for personal enjoyment made of God to the church, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord." (1 Cor. i. 30, 31.)

From this short but plain testimony of the ground on which the holy Supper is founded, it will be easy, under the same divine teaching to discover, in what the spiritual participation of that sacred service consists; namely, in realizing our own personal interest in this substitution of Christ in all that he wrought, and which is set forth in that divine Supper.

For the better apprehension of the subject, allow me to state it somewhat personally. I will, for the sake of illustration, suppose, that under the Lord's teaching I had received those impressions in my own mind, which I have just stated to you; namely, that the Supper of the Lord is founded on the complete and finished salvation, which the Lord Jesus Christ hath, in his own Almighty person, wrought out for his church and people: and that all the great events included in that high administration, are more or less set forth in that sweet and costly Supper. I call the service both *sweet* and *costly*; for as his name is most sweet, so are his divine works; and well may the ordinance which sets it forth be considered *costly*,

since the "precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot," is therein represented.

I will suppose myself attending this sacred service, full of those ideas. I behold him there set forth as the complete substitution for his people. All my iniquities, and all my transgressions, and all my sins, having been laid upon him; I consider myself as so wholly and completely delivered from them, as though I had never been born in sin, neither committed a single transgression; but the whole charged on him as the mighty burden-bearer of all. I behold him also, completely "putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself:" (Heb. ix. 26.) and "by that one offering of himself once offered, perfecting for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.)

But this is not all. As my sins, both original and actual, had justly subjected me to eternal death; I behold Christ in the sacred Supper, as having fathomed all the depths of pain, and suffering for those sins: taken out the sting of sin in the *first* death, and drunk up all the dregs of misery in the *second*; and by being "made both sin and a curse" for his people, hath redeemed them from the whole by the substitution of himself, and "for ever delivered them from the wrath to come!"

Neither are these all the soul comforting views which I see and participate in at the holy Supper. I go further by divine illumination into the discovery of the blessings which so graciously are set forth at the Lord's table. For as sin had made such a deadly breach by the natural enmity of my heart against God, and "my iniquities," as the Lord saith, "had separated me from my God;" (Isa. lix. 2.) here I behold my God and Saviour bringing me nigh by his blood, "even the blood of his cross," and restoring peace to my soul in being himself my peace, whom though he "knew no sin was made sin for me, that I

might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Cor. v. 21.)

And lastly, to crown all: I behold myself by the salvation of Christ set forth at his table, not only delivered from sin and all its tremendous consequences, but by regeneration I am brought into the privileges of my adoption character, and sit down among the followers of God as dear children. I take my place at the Lord's table as one of the family; and enjoy that holy familiarity of going in and out at my Father's house, and find pasture: the Spirit witnessing with my spirit that I am a child of God. These are among the distinguishing characters of what is implied in a true spiritual enjoyment of the Lord's people at the Lord's table. And as Israel after the flesh, by eating of the sacrifices, partook of all that belonged to their carnal apprehensions; how sure is it, that to all spiritual partakers of the Lord's Supper, they are receivers of all that the Lord Jesus intended for them, by this gracious institution. Such may well say, and indeed ought to say, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. x. 16.)

I must not trespass. Indeed I need not upon the present occasion go further. The death of Christ which is set forth at the Lord's table, proclaims in terms not to be mistaken, the state of sin which made that death necessary. And the infinite value and efficacy of that death, as fully proclaims the fullness and completeness of salvation, accomplished thereby in the sole person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every partaker of these holy mysteries, however short and defective in his own view of a suited frame for receiving, here finds alike preparation with all; namely, a deep sense of sin, and as

deep a sense of the suitableness and all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for redemption. With these impressions wrought by sovereign grace on the soul, there can be no prevention to the right use of the ordinance: and without them, there can be no real enjoyment. A soul unconvinced of sin, can have no more to do with the Lord's Supper, than a dead man hath with food, the deaf with sound, or the blind with colours.

I only add a prayer for the whole spiritual church of Christ; as Hezekiah besought the like blessing for the church in his day, saying: "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary."

SACRAMENTAL MEDITATIONS.

VIII.

JESUS IN HIS PRIESTLY OFFICE.

JUDGES XIII. 19, 20.

And the angel did wonderously; and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar.

EVERY circumstance which hath the smallest reference, either to the person or character of the Lord Jesus, becomes very precious in the contemplation of his people. There is not a single event, connected with a matter so infinitely interesting, which can be considered as trifling, or unimportant, to a truly awakened soul. And when we see with what a world of concern the Holy Ghost, in his scriptures of the Old Testament hath ushered in the wonderful subject, in the long train of types, and figures, and ceremonies, under the law, all shadowing the person and work of the Lord Jesus; it should seem, that nothing can more correspond to the mind of God, than following up those gracious intentions which he hath manifested in causing them to be thus recorded for the information and improvement of his church in all ages, by having frequent recourse to the sacred volume of the Old Testament, as one among the many methods of his grace, to confirm our faith in the *New*.

The text, if I mistake not, belongs to a very interesting record of this kind, in the manifestations of the Lord Jesus to a family of the house of Israel, a long series of years before his incarnation. It is said by one of the prophets, that "his goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." And elsewhere, in the same

volume, when represented under the character of Wisdom, the Son of God is introduced, as referring to the coming redemption, and saying of himself, "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; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." Hence, therefore, it is evident that the Redeemer hath been set up as the covenant God-man, from everlasting. And it is also as evident that his goings forth have been corresponding thereunto. And, indeed, what are all the appearances which are met with in the Old Testament, of God to his people, sometimes in a human form, and at others, under the character of an angel, but evidences of those precious truths? I stay not to particularize the instances; they are too numerous to be brought within the limits of a sermon. But they all serve to throw a light on those scriptures which relate such appearances. And they do somewhat more than this; for they not only confirm the fact, but they prove to us also his sweet testimony: that He, whose delights were with the sons of men, before they were called into existence, thereby anticipated the period of his manifestation in the flesh when creation work was completed; and therefore he graciously adopted such methods as those, to intimate how much he longed for that fulness of time, when by his righteousness and death he should do away the sins of his people, and "gather together in one, the children of God which were scattered abroad." (John xi. 52.)

In the particular proof of it, to which our text refers, the history, as far as is connected with my present design, is to the following purpose. Manoah and his wife had received a visit from *One*, who appeared to them in the form of a man. It is evident from the relation, that neither the man nor the woman, at the

time of his appearance, had any idea who this visitor was, for they asked his name, and were told that it was *secret*. But when, in the moment of offering sacrifice, (which at their earnest request they were permitted to do) he ascended in the flame from off the altar, they then knew who it was; that it was He whom all sacrifices were designed to represent, and by faith in whose name all were offered up; and in confirmation of it, they both fell on their faces to the ground: and the man cried out under the impression of fear, from having seen the manifestation of the *Shechinah*, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God!" Nothing can be more decisive in proof that Manoah considered the angel in this point of view, than the expression he used. For the sight of any *created* excellence, he well knew, was attended with no such danger. None of the children of Israel could be ignorant, that it is God alone of whom their scriptures declared, "Thou canst not see my face and live." (Exod. xxxiii. 20.)

I prosecute not the sequel of the history. It is this single trait of character, concerning the person and character of the Lord Jesus, here presented, to which I wish to limit your present attention. According to my conception of things, it affords a very sweet and encouraging view of our adorable Redeemer, in his *priestly* character; perhaps equal to any that can be found in the Old Testament Scripture.

The leading features of the representation seem to be these. In the first view of it, it sets forth that Christ alone is the true sacrifice, and the only unmixed offering for sin. For the text saith, that while the "angel did wonderously, (according to his name which is *wonderful*—Isaiah ix. 6.) the man and his wife looked on." Thus believers behold Jesus with an eye of faith, in the accomplishment of his finished salvation. They look on and adore, but they can do

no more. Nothing, indeed, can be mingled with the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, to procure acceptance with God. For it is not said without an express allusion to this solemn transaction, that “when he made his soul an offering for sin, he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him. His own arm brought salvation.” (Isa. lxiii. 3, 5.)

In the next view of this representation, the subject spiritually considered, affords this delightful prospect also; that as the Lord Jesus is the alone sacrifice for sin, so is he the only Intercessor for sinners: for by “ascending in the flame from off the altar,” he as plainly manifested, that he it is alone who carries up his own sacrifice as the oblation, and there ever lives to plead the efficacy of it for his people: agreeably to the language of the apostle, when, speaking of the Redeemer under both parts of his priestly office, he saith, “when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (Heb. i. 3.)

Such is the interesting doctrine which this scripture opens to our view, by way of calling up our serious meditation. It forms a subject, therefore, at all times highly interesting, but more peculiarly appropriate to the communion service. You are about to approach the ordinance of commemoration of the sacrifice and death of the Lord Jesus. What subject can I bring before you, equally suited to awaken under God the Spirit’s influence, all the devout exercises of the heart?

Perhaps I may be speaking before *some* who in the very moment of approaching the table, are labouring under a cold and languid state of soul, and complaining of heart-straitenings in prayer. And it is possible, there may be *others*, like Mary of old at the sepulchre, who, though seeking Jesus, are yet seeking a risen and ascended Saviour among dead ordinances. No doubt there are *many* present also, under various complaints, by reason of sin and corruption; the

buffetings of the enemy ; and the darkness of their own hearts. Now to these and every other state of spiritual distress, one view of the Lord Jesus, in this his glorious mediatorial character, if presented to the soul by the Holy Ghost, will go further to quicken the heart, and excite the animated affections, than any other persuasives whatever. And if but one poor, timid disciple, shall be this day refreshed, so as to look through the ordinance itself, to behold and enjoy the God of ordinances, neither your attention nor my labour will be vain in the Lord.

What I propose from the subject, as God the Holy Ghost shall be pleased to enable me, is, in the *first* place, to consider some of the more prominent features in this perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, which are represented in the text, by “the Angel’s doing wonderously ;” the man and his wife bearing no part in it, “but only looking on.” And, *secondly*, to consider some of the outlines of the Redeemer’s character as our Intercessor before God, shadowed in the latter part of the text, under these expressions, that when “the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar he ascended in the flame.” And may that God, whose office it is, “to take of the things of Jesus, and to shew them to” his people, so graciously be with us in this undertaking, that, “seeing (as the apostle says) we have such an High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, we may hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

I am, in the *first* place, according to my proposals, to consider some of the more prominent features in the perfect sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the accomplishment of this, I stay not to go over the ground of argument in quest of proofs, for the expediency of such a measure. I shall, for once, assume this for granted. Indeed, the offering of the body of the Lord Jesus upon the cross, carries with it the fullest and most satisfying testimony, both of its expediency, and of its infinite importance. The death of Christ decidedly determines the utterly lost and ruined state of nature, void of such a sacrifice: "for (as an apostle saith on the subject, and which is as much the decision of reason as of revelation,) if one died for all, then were all dead." (2 Cor. v. 14.) The death of Christ fully declares, that an adequate atonement for sin was required, both to wash away its guilt, and to stop its penal effects. Every victim slain upon every altar, from the fall of Adam to the death of Christ, loudly proclaimed that without shedding of blood there was no remission;" (Heb. ix. 22.) and common sense became the echo to the voice of the gospel, under this particular, when it is said, that "it is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin." (Heb. x. 4.) And the death of Christ, which both proclaimed the ruined state of man, and the necessity of an atonement for his recovery, as plainly taught that *that* nature could not be repaired, nor *that* atonement made by the sinner himself, either in a way of doing or of suffering. For a nature so maimed and corrupt could never be competent to the obedience of a holy law for the future, nor to the purposes of a holy sacrifice for the breaches of the past; and therefore it must follow, that without a substitute, in the person of the Lord Jesus, our fallen nature must have remained exposed to the just judgment of God to all eternity.

Upon this foundation rests that infinitely precious doctrine, which arises out of the priestly character of our Lord Jesus; and which God the Eternal Spirit

considered so truly momentous, as to cause it to be preached to the church in types and shadows, similar to the instance in the text, in all the antecedent ages, until the period of its being accomplished in reality in the person of Christ. And perhaps among the interesting subjects connected with redemption, nothing can be more satisfying to the soul of every true believer in Jesus, than to observe how exactly corresponding to all our wants in every particular, the great Author of salvation appeared for the accomplishment of this wonderful undertaking. It forms, indeed, one of our most pleasing studies, to trace the footsteps of Jesus in his goings forth to the service.

To answer the full purposes of redemption, it became necessary that the righteous law of God, which man had broken, should be repaired, and that the penalty due to the breach of it should be paid. He, therefore, and he alone, whose spotless purity might fulfil the one and satisfy the other, could be competent to this work. "Such an High Priest (saith an apostle) became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. vii. 26.) And such was the Lord Jesus Christ; for, in the union of the divine nature with the human, we discover a character adequate to this end. As *man*, he had a body properly prepared and fitted to all the purposes of *doing* and *suffering*. For assuming our nature, by the miraculous conception of the Virgin Mary, without the medium of a human father; though he took upon him the form of man, he took none of the infirmities of man: though "in all points like as we are," yet it was without sin. (Heb. iv. 15.) As *God*, the almightiness of his person gave a divine efficacy to all that he wrought in the great work of redemption. And by the junction of *both* that most essential and distinguishing part of his priestly character, as a *day's-man* or *mediator* be-

tween God and man, was provided, to accommodate the breach which sin had made. None but he, who as one with God and was God, knew the mind of God, could say what was suitable, or what was becoming the dignity of God to accept by way of reconciliation; and none but he, who as man participated in all the feelings of man, could know what a being of such weakness and inability as man had to offer. Hence, therefore, in the mysterious union of person, in which the Lord Jesus came and tabernacled among us, (little as our greatest researches can do in the discovery of this wonderful subject) we see enough to prove that He, of whom such things are said, could alone be truly competent to the great work of our redemption.

It was in this glorious character that the Lord Jesus came; for the purpose of our redemption, he appeared as our representative, and became the surety and sponsor for his people. He pledged himself in our stead to fulfil the whole law of God; and when he had accomplished this purpose, he offered himself a spotless sacrifice on the cross, to do away the penalty due to the breaches of it; and by both, "having (as an apostle speaks) obtained eternal redemption for us, he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified." (Heb. x. 14.)

I should think it a reproach to your understanding to suppose it necessary to insist on that very obvious doctrine which the text hints at; I mean, that in all this, in which the angel of the covenant hath done so *wonderously*, there is nothing of our's joined with it; we look on, as Manoah and his wife did; we admire and adore the riches of divine grace; and we do right to fall in humble silence, adoration, and praise, on our faces to the earth before him. But never forget, that it was "his own arm that brought salvation. For of the people, there was none with him." (Isaiah lxiii. 3, 5.) The flame on every altar

burnt up every sacrifice, and must have burnt for ever, as an indication of God's fiery indignation against sin, had not Jesus' blood been sprinkled on the altar to appease it. And remember also that Jesus in his ascension took nothing with him of our's for acceptance before God. Your best prayers, your best services, your richest offerings, ascend but like the smoke of the altar, and, like smoke without flame, are sullied with a thousand impurities. Happy is it for us that Jesus perfumes them with the incense of his merits, and that both our persons and our prayers are all accepted in the beloved.

But what gives the finishing view to the whole, and stamps validity upon all that Jesus did and suffered for his people, is the precious consideration, that redemption-work is the united operation of all the persons of the GODHEAD, and is as much the act of grace in the Father, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, as it is the voluntary undertaking of the Lord Jesus, for the purposes of salvation.

I know not, my brother, what your feelings may be in this view of our subject; but to me, I confess, such a conviction carries with it a testimony so precious and interesting, that I would not be without for a thousand worlds. For when the corruptions of my heart, aided by the temptations of Satan, would prompt me to fear, that however complete and satisfactory, to all the demands of God's righteous law, the merits and sufferings of the Lord Jesus may be in themselves; yet when unbelief cries out, How do I know that they are accepted before God? how delightful is it then to be assured, that in all the Lord Jesus did and suffered, he was appointed thereunto, in a covenant way, by the Father! It is God the Father which saith, "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth

judgment to the gentiles. I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the gentiles. To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." (Isaiah xlii. 1, 6, 7.) I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people: I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him." (Psalm lxxxix. 19, 20.) Hence, therefore, in all the gracious undertakings of our adored Redeemer, for the accomplishment of our salvation, he was solemnly set apart by the Father, and inaugurated to the work by the holy anointing of the blessed Spirit, and all confirmed by the solemnity of an oath. "The Lord sware and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedech." (Psalm cx. 4.) And that the apostle Paul considered this as a matter of the highest moment to the peace and security of the believer, is evident from his observations upon it in his Epistle to the Hebrews: "No man (saith the apostle) taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself, to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." (Heb. v. 4, 5.)

And when the Lord Jesus is introduced by the spirit of prophecy, in the church of old, as coming in this character, he is represented as entering upon the work of redemption by the express appointment of the Father. "Wherefore (saith the sacred writer) when he cometh into the world he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure: then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." (Heb. x. 5.) Hence we have full

authority to draw this conclusion: that the great work of salvation is as much the Father's will, as it is the Son's pleasure; and that the believer, at the same time, may not overlook the gracious part which God the Holy Ghost took in the concurring operation, the apostle is careful to tell the church, that when the Lord Jesus offered himself an offering for sin to purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God, he "did it through the Eternal Spirit." (Heb. ix. 14.)

Never lose sight, then, I beseech you, of the Father's appointment and the Holy Ghost's anointing, when you behold the Lord Jesus in the character of our Redeemer. But as often as you look up to him in this precious point of view, call to mind that unanswerable plea for acceptance before God, when drawing nigh the mercy-seat, that while you seek his favour, it is in the very way God himself hath appointed. And when at any time you hear with the ear of faith, that voice, which while pointing to the Lamb of God, saith, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him," (Matt. xvii. 5.) do you echo to the divine teaching that prayer which God the Holy Ghost hath left upon record, for the use of the church in all ages, and say, as you are there taught: "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed." (Psalm lxxxiv. 9.)

But the subject suggested to us in the text doth not end with prefiguring the Redeemer in his complete and finished sacrifice; another delightful view of his priestly work opens beyond it, when ascending in the flame from off the altar; and affords this doctrine also, that it is one and the same person who completes redemption work upon earth, and carries up with him into heaven his own blood and righteousness, as our all-prevailing Intercessor, to plead the merits of both for the acceptance of his people

before God. This was the *second* branch of discourse which I proposed from this subject; and to this let us now direct our attention.

So infinitely interesting is this part of the priestly work in the Redeemer's character, that God the Holy Ghost was pleased, by the ministry of his servants in the early church, to cause this leading doctrine to be prefigured, in various shadowy representations.

Under the law, the high priest, on the great day of atonement, was enjoined to enter into the holy of holies (which was well understood by the people to be a figure of heaven) not without blood, "which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." (Heb. ix. 7.) And, that an object of so much importance might not be left to the mere conjecture of human interpretation, an apostle had it in command from the same Almighty Teacher, to tell the church, that "The Holy Ghost thus signified, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was yet standing. 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, entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. ix. 8, 11, 12.) And, as it is expressed in another Scripture, "he is entered into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us." (Heb. ix. 24.)

Still carrying on the interesting subject of redemption, by so many separate and distinct views of the Redeemer's character in his priestly work, the Holy Ghost was further pleased, by the ministry of his servants in the early church, to cause to be prefigured, by other shadowy representations, the interest which Jesus always takes in the concerns of his

people. Hence the high priest was enjoined to go in unto the holy place for a memorial continually before the Lord, with the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart. And Aaron (it is said) "shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place; for a memorial before the Lord continually." (Exod. xxviii. 29.) Hereby manifesting that the Lord Jesus carries in the names of his people continually, and sets them as a "seal upon his heart, and as a seal upon his arm," when presenting himself before the Father, saying, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." (Heb. ii. 13.) And in order to convey the clearest testimony, that both the persons and the offerings of the people depended for acceptance on the incense of the Redeemer's merits, the high priest was further enjoined "to take a censor full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense, beaten small, and bring it within the vail." (Levit. xvi. 12.)

We never can sufficiently express our thankfulness to God the Holy Ghost, in that he hath graciously condescended to explain to us himself, by the ministry of his servant John the apostle, the direct reference of these typical representations to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. From him we learn, that all pointed to Jesus, as so many rays of light converging into one centre. For when the Redeemer appeared to the apostle many years after his ascension, he appeared to him in his *priestly garments*, thereby intimating that he wore the priesthood still, and in that character always appears for his people before God. He saw him also standing at the altar with his golden censor, and offering much incense, with the prayers of all saints, to testify that it

was He whom the high priest under the law prefigured, and that the acceptance both of the person and offerings of his people are found in the incense of his merits. And in order that the church might never lose sight of the everlasting efficacy of his finished sacrifice, while contemplating the Lord Jesus in his unchangeable priesthood, John saw him also, "as a Lamb as it had been slain, in the midst of the throne : " (Rev. v. 6.) thus testifying, that the blood of Jesus, which Paul calls a "speaking blood," (Heb. xii. 24,) still pleads, and ever will plead, until grace is consummated in glory, for the salvation of his church and people.

How very sweet and encouraging are these illustrations of the Redeemer's priestly work, in addition to all the other parts of his character, for the mind to lean upon in its hopes of acceptance, when approaching God !

Neither must it for a moment be forgotten, that in the whole of those services of the Lord Jesus, both the right by which he pleads, and the covenant engagements by which the Father is pledged to answer ; both the everlasting love of the *one*, in which redemption work is founded, and the eternal merits of the *other*, by which the redemption itself is purchased ; all unite to give virtue and efficacy to what the Lord Jesus hath done, and is doing for his people.

And let me beg of you, while contemplating this subject, always to connect in one view the Father's love and the Redeemer's merit, as the united sources of your salvation. Remember what Jesus hath said upon the occasion : " I say not unto you (says Christ) that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you because you have loved me." (John xvi. 26, 27.) What Jesus demands as a right by redemption, is in one and the same moment the

Father's gift from rich mercy. For while we are fully taught, that "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins," we are no less taught, that "it is to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Ephes. i. 6.)

Largely as I have trespassed, in following up the illustration of this important doctrine, I must not dismiss it without desiring that you will take with you some at least of those highly interesting reflections which arise out of it.

In the infinite merits of the sacrifice and everlasting priesthood of the Lord Jesus, are founded all the hopes of the acceptance of every poor sinner before God. Whether we approach the mercy-seat in ordinances in this life, or when we come to stand before the throne of judgment in another, these become the only possible medium of divine favour, for "there is salvation in no other, neither is there any other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.)

Light and inconsiderate persons may rush into God's presence, in the engagement of holy ordinances, as the unthinking horse rusheth into the battle; but this is what Solomon calls the "sacrifice of fools, who know not that they do evil." (Eccles. viii. 1.) It is possible I may be speaking before one of this description; if so, shall I beg of you, my unthinking brother, to pause over the subject we have been contemplating, if it be but a moment only, and ask your own heart whether you have ever seriously considered the subject as you ought, and with that reverence it demands. We read in holy scripture, that "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity:" that he "requireth truth in the inward parts:" that he "searcheth the heart and trieth the reins:" and that "he will be sanctified in all them

that draw nigh to him." Are you prepared for this inspection from any righteousness in yourself? Can you venture to say, "Try me, O God, and search the ground of my heart, for thou shalt find no wickedness in me?" Is it possible that any man can be so great a stranger to what passes within, as to fancy that he has any thing of his own to offer before God? If the sons of Aaron, under the Levitical priesthood, were devoured, when offering "strange fire before the Lord," (Levit. x. 1, 2.) can you think that under the gospel, the presumption of seeking acceptance in any way contrary to the divine appointment will be less dangerous? And is it not seeking it contrary to the divine appointment, when, instead of wholly resting on the merits and intercession of the Lord Jesus, we bring somewhat of our own for justification; or, what is much the same thing, seek to mingle it for acceptance with the righteousness of Christ? What is this short of what the apostle calls, "treading under foot the Son of God, counting the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace?" (Heb. x. 29.)

While I very earnestly recommend these solemn considerations to the congregation at large, and more particularly to that part of it, who may not have begun as yet to reflect seriously upon the subject at all, I beg leave to drop a word of encouragement and consolation to those true believers in Jesus, who are seeking acceptance with God through this only medium in which it can be found, the finished salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How animating, my brother, ought this view of Jesus, in his priestly character, to be to your heart! Convinced as you are, that in yourself you have nothing to bring and nothing to offer before God, by way of propitiation, is it not sweet, with the eye of

faith, to see Jesus, having completed redemption work upon earth, now going in as the priest, and sacrifice, and intercessor also, before the Father in heaven? That the apostle Paul thought this enough to encourage every heart, is evident hence, for he makes this the foundation of all our hopes, and the sure means of all our acceptance. "Seeing (says he) we have such an high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." And as if aware, in the moment of recommending it, some poor, self-condemned sinner might still be distressed and kept back through fear, the apostle sweetly adds, "For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.) As if he had said, Forget not that your great intercessor knows what your feelings are from his own. He commiserates your state under trial, from having passed through every possible instance of it himself. He hath largely experienced what temptations are, and therefore, "knoweth how to succour them that are tempted. Let us come boldly, therefore, to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help, in time of need."

Make application of this precious consideration of the apostle's to every case, as it may be necessary among you, and see how unanswerable it is in its appeal to the hearts of all the faithful. Are you mourning from a coldness of affection and indisposition to divine things? Are you in darkness, and the hidings of God's countenance, and crying out with one of old, "Why standest thou so far off, O Lord, and hidest thy face, in the needful time of trouble?" Is there a trembling sinner present, groaning under the burthen of fresh contracted guilt, and saying with David, "My sins have taken such hold upon me,

that I am not able to look up; yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me?" Have any of you lost your former tokens of the renewed life, and are tempted by the enemy to believe that you have no interest in the covenant? Do you complain, my brother, of a dead silence at the mercy seat, and that God refuseth to hear and answer prayer? What shall give consolation to cases of such peculiar distress as these, and the like, but the view of Jesus as the high priest of our holy calling, going in before the throne of God, and presenting himself and his finished righteousness for the acceptance of his people! Doth not the Holy Ghost graciously hold him up to our view, through all the Scriptures, for this express end? Did not the Redeemer himself appear to the beloved John, in his priestly vestments, on purpose to teach the church these precious truths? And was it not in effect saying to him, and to all believers through him, 'See, I wear the priesthood still. I ever live to make intercession for you.'

How great, how very great, the relief which the troubled soul feels from this assurance! And do I not know, that by virtue of this act of the Lord Jesus, even in the very moment I am speaking of it, his blood is speaking for every one of his people before the throne in heaven!

What shall I add, unless it be an earnest prayer to God, that while under these impressions of his grace, we may enter into the full meaning of the apostle's precept: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus; by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith."

MISERICORDIA ;

OR,

Compassion to the Sorrows of the Heart,

INTENDED ORIGINALLY FOR THE

PATIENTS OF THE MISERICORDIA IN PLYMOUTH ;

BUT NOW PUBLISHED FOR THE USE OF THE SICK AND
SORROWFUL OF EVERY DESCRIPTION,

AND FORMING A SUITABLE

COMPANION FOR EVERY SICK ROOM.

I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me.

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO

THE FOURTH EDITION.

It is with all humility of soul and thankfulness to God, in Christ Jesus, through the Spirit, that I desire to send forth this *fourth* edition into the world; trusting that the same divine teachings, which in several instances have already blessed the former publications of this little work, will graciously continue to accompany it, to the reader's improvement, and the Redeemer's glory.

And I feel a particular pleasure, at the same time, in the introduction of this *new* edition, in that it enables me to recommend with it the charity (for whose benefit the profits of it are solely to be applied) of the *Female Friendly Society for Aged Poor Women*. It is always to be considered a circumstance of peculiar felicity, when godliness and charity are so happily blended, that the great object of both may be promoted together; and while the pressing demands of the body are attended to, the more pressing care of the soul is not forgotten.

Plymouth, Charles Vicarage,

July, 1801.

R. HAWKER.

P R E F A C E.

THE *Misericordia* (from whence this little Pamphlet borrowed its name), is an institution which was first formed by me in the town of Plymouth, in the close of the year 1794. About that time, I was called upon daily to perform the last office in burying the dead, chiefly of soldiers, and to such numbers, that my mind was more than ordinarily arrested to enquire into the cause of such great mortality. I found that several transports laden with troops for foreign service had put into *Catwater* by distress of weather, and a pestilential fever breaking out among the soldiery they were constrained to bring them on shore, and a large barn, afterwards and therefrom called *Friary Hospital*, in my parish, received them. Within the space of *three months*, more than *a thousand died* : and the wives and children of many belonging to them took refuge in garrets and cellars in the town. Their distresses excited no small commiseration. I availed myself of this general feeling and instituted this Charity, which, I am pleased to say, hath been kept up by annual subscription to this hour, now nearly *thirty years*, and I hope through the divine blessing, will long continue amidst the other charities of Plymouth. Then it was I wrote the Pamphlet here following, and which hath been rendered useful under the Lord's grace to others beside the soldiery.

Misery is not local. In every large town there may be found numbers of this description. And not merely among such as come forward to public notice by knocking at the door to ask alms : but much more so, in those retired places where, from peculiar considerations, either in the feelings of the mind, or through fear of offending the law, and incurring the displeasure and punishment of a parish ; modest poverty too often secretes itself, preferring rather to suffer all the accumulated horrors of solitude in want and misery, than to make its case known.

In such abodes of human woe are sometimes discoverable beings of more real wretchedness, than the imagination can well conceive ; at once contending, amidst all the pressing necessities of nature, accompanied very often with sickness and pain, against every sorrow to which the heart of man is accessible ; without a friend to console, and not unfrequently without all sense of religion, to soften the severity of the gloom around !

(My christian brother ! if you are one whom the bounty of an indulgent Lord in his providence hath placed above a situation of this kind ; did you but recollect, in the moment of purchasing an idle gratification, what misery is then going on in the world, and how much the suppression of unnecessary indulgences would enable to the relief of it ; you would blush in the recollection of the smallest unnecessary enjoyment.—And what would perhaps be even an higher improvement of the reflection, you would be led to conclude that there must have been some more particular intention in the divine appointment of the very great inequalities of human life, than you have allowed yourself hitherto to consider !)

To explore such haunts of wretchedness, and to extend the friendly hand towards characters so truly meriting commiseration, in administering to their wants both in body and mind, by blending religion with humanity ; these are the professed objects of the *Misericordia*. And to the honour of the institution it should be said, that there are many generous minds who have cheerfully taken upon them the friendly office of going daily in quest of such children of sorrow, in order to scatter among them the blessings their situation so loudly calls for.

The very name of the charity manifests at once the intention of it : that it is formed to help the wretched ; and the wretched of every description. In dispensing its comforts, it knows no restriction of sect, or party, or persuasion ; but folds within its benevolent arms, the distressed stranger of every country. That the person discovered is a human being ; and that he is in misery and want : as these are sufficient reasons to claim compassion, so are they the only recommendation required. For though the finances of the *Misericordia* may oblige to the proportioning the relief given, according to its ability ; its good wishes to relieve are circumscribed within no limits, and even where its power cannot extend, it still feels for all.

The first design of the *Misericordia* is directed to supply the

wants of the body. The next is, to attend to the concerns of the soul. This plan however is adopted, not because the relief of the body is considered to be of greater, or even of equal consequence with the care of the soul, (this is well known to be the reverse) but because its wants are more immediately pressing and clamorous. And because also, it is reasonably supposed, that when the wants of body are supplied, the mind will be left to more freedom, and be better disposed also, it is presumed, to attend to *the one thing needful*. And if any additional consideration be needed, it may be said, that the heart cannot but be conciliated by this method of treatment to regard our endeavours in the best of causes ; for we certainly take the most effectual means hereby to convince the distressed stranger, that we can mean nothing but good to the soul, when we have given such substantial proofs of regard to the body.

Though no doubt it becomes the more immediate duty of the clergy who minister in holy things, to attend to this department of the *Misericordia* ; (and what is here offered, as an humble help in the service, will not, it is humbly presumed, be considered as intruding into the sacred office ; or carrying with it the most distant idea of any deficiency in the clergy in attending to this branch of their duty) yet as it is impossible from the nature of things, that every distressed stranger, who may receive help from the alms of this charity, shall be able to receive also the personal services of a minister ; it cannot surely be offensive to supply every deficiency of the kind by a work of this nature ; which is intended to act only in that humble province unoccupied by a better instrument, in merely sketching the outlines of the leading principles of our holy faith, and such as may be supposed are generally made use of by the clergy in their charitable attendance upon the sick ; that the laymen who kindly visit such abodes of misery and ignorance, may become assistants in so divine a cause, without infringing upon the sacred office ; and be the better qualified to administer instruction and consolation to the soul, while they afford ease and comfort to the body.

It is with this view this little tract is written and published. And it is hoped, that humble and feeble as it is, yet through the divine blessing resting upon it, (which the author very earnestly implores from God) it may be rendered profitable to the purpose intended.

The reader is desired to observe, that the division of the book is into several parts, under the titles of *conversations*. And this appel-

lation is adopted with a view to promote suitable discourse between the visitor and the friend who is visited. It is supposed that the one will occasionally intersperse the reading with his own remarks : and that the other may be prompted to propose questions for further information. These considerations seemed to render the title of *conversation* to each chapter, as the most proper.

The reader is further requested to take notice before he enters upon the perusal of the work, that the divisions of it are so arranged and methodised, that while nothing is knowingly omitted in the information of such points as are essential to salvation, the whole is brought within the narrowest compass possible ; and the very plainest words made use of, not only that the weak and uninformed might be led to believe that the important truths of God are not beyond his grasp of knowledge to attain, and therefore that the excuse of ignorance, which is but too commonly a plea, might no longer satisfy his mind for the neglect of them ; but also, that from seeing how few and simple the grand points of our holy faith are, which men are concerned to know for their eternal happiness, he might gladly bend his ear to the instruction offered, which may make him wise to salvation “ through the faith which is in Christ Jesus, the Lord.”

It is very obvious, that the whole of what is here offered might with great ease be perused within the compass of a single evening. But this would not correspond with the design of the author. The division he hath made, intimates, that it is intended not for the subject of one evening's conversation, but for many. And if each part be read deliberately, and with the close attention the solemn nature of the matter contained in it demands, the contents of each chapter will be found enough for the mind to receive and digest at once. And it can require no reason to shew, why the memory of those for whom it is particularly written, should not be overburthened.

The prayer with which each conversation closes, is framed as nearly as possible, upon the subject of the preceding discourse, in order to carry on the great object intended from the work itself. Not however that this form is inserted with any intention to preclude any other, or to fetter the spirit of prayer. It is not meant for those who need no helps in devotion, but merely to assist those who do. To offer any arguments in justification of prayer upon those occasions would be superfluous. This certainly

is a point in which all must agree. Highly unsuitable and ill qualified must that man be for the friendly office of visiting the sick who goes about it in a prayerless manner. How can such an one expect to receive in his labours any blessing from the Lord ?

There is but one thing more necessary to be added by way of preface, and that is, to observe, that though this humble work, agreeably to its title, is principally designed for that province of misery where it is addressed, (and indeed there are some passages in it which are altogether inapplicable to any other persons, unless in similar circumstances) yet, as the sacred subject of which it treats is not of a private nature, or confined to any class or description of people whatever, but equally concerns all, and universally demands every one's attention ; the perusal of it, it is hoped, may be made through the divine blessing generally useful. Should it therefore accidentally fall into the hands of the gay, or the prosperous, the man of business, or the man of pleasure ; it may not be improper in this place to inform either of those characters, that he may probably find somewhat in it not altogether undeserving his regard, Reader ! are you at present in a situation of this kind ? recollect how very speedily sometimes the transition is, from the house of joy, to the house of sorrow. Would you therefore be prepared against the hour of trouble, which sooner or later comes to all, be entreated to the perusal of this modest and unassuming tract. The very few pages of its contents surely might operate as an inducement to the perusal of it, when volumes on the subject would not perhaps procure regard.

The title of the book indeed, it must be confessed, is but a poor recommendation with such characters. You may be prompted therefrom to conclude that it can have no relation to *you*. But remember, there is a *misery of the heart* to which all are alike exposed, and which nothing but the balm of religion can heal ; and it is very possible that in this instance the most affluent of men in this world's goods, may stand in need of the aids of the *Misericordia*, equal to the humblest being for whom it is designed.

Reader ! whoever you are, whether high or low, rich or poor, join the writer in a devout supplication to the God of all grace, that a divine blessing may rest, both upon the work itself, and your attention to it ! And oh ! thou gracious and all-sufficient God,

who hast the hearts of all men at thy disposal ; if it be but one soul only, even the person whose eyes are now upon it, or he whose ears are hearing it from another's perusal, shall find thy Holy Spirit accompanying the word to his furtherance in the truth ; the mercy shall be again acknowledged from the united lips of both writer and reader in that day, when they come *to receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.*

I beg permission to relate an anecdote of no small feeling. During the continuance of the soldiers, which survived the pestilence at Friar's Hospital, one of them, by name Patrick O'Connor, had sold (perhaps to provide for some pressing occasion) a book of his ; and it was laying on an old book-stall, which lay in my way when going to the burying-ground. On the back of the title page the poor man had written his name, and the state of his then misery, thus :—" Patrick O'Connor, once of the famous city of Limerick, in the County of Kilkenny, in the kingdom of Ireland ; but now dying of a broken heart in Friar's Hospital, Plymouth."

Charles Vicarage, January 11, 1827.

MISERICORDIA.

I WILL suppose that the man of religion and humanity hath discovered in one of those haunts of woe, where misery hides itself, the Poor Stranger, who is the more immediate object of this little work; and having made himself acquainted with all the circumstances of his wants, and provided for them, according to the rules of the *Misericordia*, and as his own discretion shall have directed him; assuming now the privilege and freedom of a real friend, is seated by his bed-side, (if misery hath not laid him lower) and endeavours to attract his attention to the important concerns of religion and the care of the soul, in a discourse to the following purport:

MY CHRISTIAN BROTHER,

As the gracious condescension and goodness of Almighty God hath in his providence led me to discover you in this place of sorrow; and through the bounty of a few friends, to whom he hath given the disposition to be charitable, hath enabled me to supply the more pressing necessities of nature, under which your body is languishing; suffer me now to call your attention to a matter yet infinitely more interesting, and with great tenderness to ask you, *What is the present state of your soul?*

You will perceive by the question, that I speak to you under the presumption that you are conscious you have a soul. I imagine that this is a truth you cannot be insensible of.—For in this happy land of knowledge to which we belong, it is hardly possible that any man can be so totally ignorant of all religious information, as not to know the first principles of it: such, I mean, as of the being of a God; the certainty of the existence of the soul of man; and of another life which is to succeed the present, into which the soul enters, upon its departure from the body. I say, I cannot suppose that you are altogether a stranger to these great truths; though it is very possible, that with respect to the practical effects of living up to such a persuasion, you may be as void of understanding as multitudes are in the world, who profess to believe God, but in works deny him.

I shall, however, take for granted, that *you* have at least acquired so much knowledge by the hearing of the ear, as to be perfectly convinced in your mind of the certainty of those leading points of religion. And under this impression, permit me to repeat the question which I before proposed, and ask you once again, with great tenderness: ‘What is the present state of your soul in relation to those important concerns?’

Have you ever, my brother, so far entered into the subject as to examine your own heart, on what grounds your hopes of eternal happiness are placed? Supposing the day of your departure out of life to be near at hand, (as from the common circumstances of nature may, for aught you know, be the case; or at most cannot be far remote) are you prepared for that solemn event? Have you attended to this greatest of all enquiries with the seriousness it evidently demands? and has it been the frequent subject of a retired hour? Perhaps it hath never occupied your

thoughts! It may indeed occasionally have crossed your mind, when any circumstances of human instability have occurred. Your own sickness, or the death of a friend or neighbour, may have awakened the momentary reflection. But has it been sufficient to make a lasting impression? Have your hopes and your fears been so wrought upon by the apprehension, as to lead you to an earnest enquiry what you must do to be saved?

Alas! my brother! your silence, and that dejected countenance afford an ample answer, that thoughts of this solemn nature have never occupied your concern equal to their vast importance. Perhaps you would tell me (for I know it is but too common an argument, by way of apology for the neglect) that extreme poverty, and the cares of the world, have taken up all your thoughts and attention. The poor-ness of your apparel hath kept you from the house of God on the Lord's day; and your constant labour hath engaged all your time through the week.—But how very insufficient are those excuses in the sight of God! As if the humblest garments were too poor to appear in before the divine presence, who hath appointed the different situations of life what they are, and who is the Maker of all, as well poor as rich! And as if the honest and laudable attention to the things of this world, were to be so pursued, as not to leave time and space for a proper regard to the things of a better! Oh! my brother, surely the weakness of such pretences must appear to you in their just light!

But will you suffer me *now* to hope, that your mind is awakened to an earnest desire after the knowledge of “the things that make for your everlasting peace, before they are forever hid from your eyes?”

Shall I venture to persuade myself that you will

regard what I have to offer upon these topics now, when neither poverty becomes any prevention, and the cares of the world no longer break in upon you? The subject, you cannot but confess, is, of all others, most interesting, and demands your immediate regard. And you must be very conscious, that I can have no interested views on *my* part to answer, but that the whole is intended for *your* welfare.

Presuming then on your consent and approbation, I shall endeavour, in the plainest and most familiar manner I am able, to lead you into such a view of yourself, and the objects which solicit your regard, as I trust in God, through the divine blessing accompanying what I have to offer, may make you wise unto salvation, through the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

But I dare not enter upon the subject, nor hope the least success from it, before I have desired you to look up with me to the Great Giver of all grace, that while I am endeavouring to inform your understanding by the *outward* ministry of his word; he will be pleased to induce an *inward* application by his Holy Spirit in the heart; that your faith may be founded, “not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God.”

In order to impress on your mind suitable apprehensions of the great importance of the subject which is to engage your attention;—and that you may, under grace, be awakened to a full conviction in what an awful manner it interests you; I shall first desire to point out to you, the infinite value and dignity of your immortal soul. For in the certain conviction of this great truth, the foundation of all my hopes and expectations of animating you to an anxious attention to what I have to offer, must be placed. And if I am happy enough, through the grace of God, to stamp this conviction on your

mind in strong characters, I shall have taken the best and most effectual method of convincing you at the same time, how highly it concerns you to provide for its everlasting welfare.

I begin then with observing, that the human soul is a principle in itself of such infinite estimation, that there is nothing in this lower world capable of expressing the value of it.—I cannot by any form of words convey to you adequate notions concerning its immense consequence. Indeed I have not myself any full ideas which may enable me to conceive what it is in point of excellence and dignity; much less to represent it to another. To know the real value of an *immortal* Being, that is, a being which is not subject to death, it is first necessary to know what immortality is. And this you are sensible can never be attained in the present mortal state of existence. But you will be best able to apprehend somewhat of the infinite importance of the soul of man, and therefrom, I trust in God, be awakened to an immediate determination to seek the interest of your own; if you will only attend to the following particulars, by which we are qualified to form some idea concerning it.

In the first place, observe the account which is given in holy scripture of the *creation* of the human soul. It is said that “God made man in his own image.” That is, we apprehend, in reference to his *spiritual* nature. For while the body, and indeed all the works of creation, which we behold every where around us, are all subject to death, the soul of man must live for ever. Pause one moment, and calculate, if you are able, what it is *to live for ever*. Never to die; never to decay, or cease to be! But after

millions of ages are passed away, the soul will be as far from the period of its dissolution, as it is now in the present moment.—Contemplate this, my brother, and learn from hence the inexpressible value of your immortal soul.

When you have duly pondered the subject in this first point of view, go on and regard it under another consideration: I mean with respect to its faculties and powers. See how wonderfully distinguished the soul is from the body, in all its desires, and pursuits, and gratifications. While the body, which is intended to continue in this world for a little while only, before it returns to its original earth, hath appetites suited to its momentary state of duration, and is easily satisfied: the soul hath faculties so great and capacious, as nothing below the heavens can fully fill: and is restless and continually aspiring to that somewhat unpossessed, which lies beyond the grave, to afford complete satisfaction.

And as the soul is thus eminently distinguished from the body, both in respect to its duration and its faculties; so it must strike you, my brother, that those faculties are capable of possessing either an abundant degree of happiness or of misery, and that through an endless eternity. Here it is, indeed, the infinite and inexpressible value of the soul appears most important. You see, therefore, that God not only made man “in his own image,” and in a state to last for ever, but with a capacity to experience the enjoyment of extreme joy, or of feeling extreme misery, for ever!

If you are sensible of the meaning of these terms; and if I have expressed myself in words sufficiently plain upon the occasion, you will have a more perfect notion of the infinite value of the soul, than by any other method I could have chosen. For while you stand properly impressed with this most certain con-

viction, that your soul must live for ever, and in a state which admits of no medium between the greatest felicity and the greatest sorrow; whether your mind is animated with the pleasing hopes that your portion may be in supreme happiness; or whether you are alarmed with the dread that it may be in superlative misery; in either case, one object is very certain; nothing can more decidedly shew you the grandeur of the human soul, which is so formed by its great Creator as to be capable of sustaining such mighty things.

And if you would behold additional evidence of the dignity of the soul of man, see it in every instance, when by death it separates from the body. Every funeral you may see, and every dead body of your fellow creatures which you may behold, is a renewed testimony of the truth of all that I have been saying. For why is it, think you, that the bodies of men are rendered by death food only for the worms, and return to their original dust; but because all that made them valuable before hath left them, and is departed. The soul is the life and spring of the body. And as long as she continues in it, she animates and gives vigour to all the powers of the body. But no sooner hath that immortal principle quitted her earthly tabernacle, than the body becomes loathsome and offensive, and is fit only to return to the dust from whence it came. And hence it is that the tenderest hearted parent, or the kindest friend, which, while life continues, will hang with inexpressible affection on the dying lips of the child, or the brother; and by every endearing testimony will manifest the agony they feel in the prospect of their dissolution; yet no sooner is the beloved object become a breathless corpse, by the departure of the soul, than the dearest surviving friends begin to feel the same sentiments and desire as the affectionate patriarch: "Give me

the possession of a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." (Gen. xxiii. 4.)

Behold then, my brother, from hence, under this point of view, in respect to its *creation*, the infinite value of your immortal soul !

But in order to see its importance, yet if possible more highly, from creation we must pass on to the great subject of *redemption*, and then contemplate what an astonishing proof God hath there manifested of the dignity of the human soul !

You may have read perhaps, my brother, or if not, it is possible you may have heard, that the first man, Adam, by violating the commands of God forfeited all the blessings which his bountiful maker had bestowed upon him, and became exposed to death, the just consequence of his disobedience. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men, because all have sinned."

I stay not at present to explain to you the circumstances connected with this great event. Neither shall I, in this place, enter into an account of the gracious scheme which divine grace had before provided, and in due time executed for his recovery.

These interesting events will more properly meet us by and by, under another part of our discourse. In the mean time it will be sufficient to all the purposes intended from the object I have now in view, in giving you the most convincing testimony of the infinite value of the human soul, as well in *redemption* as in *creation*; to inform you, that for the recovery of his fallen and disobedient creature, God interposed in a wonderful way, and "sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world." And by a process the most astonishing and awful, the only Son of his bosom, assuming the nature of man, and submitting to all the wants and weaknesses of it, for us and our salvation, proceeded in the gracious humiliation until he

had descended to the lowest possible instance, and “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” What event could have so decidedly manifested the vast importance of the soul of man, as it must have been considered in the sight of God, when for its redemption from sin and death so rich a ransom was given! As we can only form a proper notion of the value of any thing by the cost with which it is purchased; when we see a price so infinitely exceeding all calculation, given for the salvation of the soul, as the sacrifice of the Son of God: what shall give you, my brother, equal ideas to this, of its immense value? That single line of scripture contains volumes upon the subject, in testimony of its high dignity and importance: “He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all!”

Nay, yet more: as if all was not sufficient to convey to the minds of men an awful apprehension of the infinite value of their never-dying souls, the work in which the Holy Ghost is said to be unremittingly employed, in *regenerating*, or creating the faculties of the soul anew, from that state in which the fall hath involved them, “being dead in trespasses and sins;” this sums up the wonderful relation, and shews the vast consequence of the soul in the scale of being. As if it was not enough that Christ should die to redeem the soul from destruction, the blessed Spirit also must sanctify it from its pollutions by the energies of his grace. And his divine power must be exercised in carrying on and completing the merciful design, in applying the great Redeemer’s merits to the sinner’s necessities, and converting the soul of every individual, who is the happy partaker of such rich mercy, from the death of sin to a life of righteousness, and from the power of Satan unto God.

Such a chain of evidences, in proof of the soul’s

dignity and excellence, give it a consequence which words are unable to express !

And if, after attestations of such a divine nature, in proof of the soul's importance, lesser considerations need be added, in confirmation of the same doctrine, how great a body of evidences might be brought from the several means of grace which God hath mercifully appointed in his church, in ministering unto them "who are the heirs of salvation !" From the first moment of man's fall to the coming of Christ, and from that period to the final consummation of all things, what a plentiful profusion of services and ordinances hath God established, leading to this one end. All creation indeed seems interested in the event. The great prize, for which both heaven and hell contend, is the human soul. Angels of light minister to the promotion of its happiness, and the powers of darkness struggle for its everlasting ruin. And so solicitous (if I may so say) appears its Almighty Author and Redeemer for its salvation, that, not content with proposing the most glorious rewards to those servants who act as instruments in his divine hand, to save a soul from death ; and denouncing the heaviest wrath upon them by whose neglect any one is apparently in danger of perishing for whom Christ died : we are assured also that "there is more joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance !" What can equal such testimonies as these, in shewing the benignity of heaven, or in giving a more decisive evidence of what infinite importance the human soul is in the sight of God, however thoughtless and inconsiderate man himself may be in prizing the immortal treasure !

From all these considerations, which you may perceive I do but just glance at, (the full review of them

indeed would form almost an endless subject,) I hope, my brother, you are in some measure better qualified than when I first began to speak to you upon it, to form a proper conception of the inestimable treasure you possess in your immortal soul. You see that it was *created* by God in his own image ; then *redeemed* by the Son of God from the miseries sustained by the fall ; and now *sanctified* by the Holy Ghost to a new and spiritual life ; and all the powers of heaven and earth employed in forwarding its everlasting salvation.

If then the divine goodness hath been mercifully pleased to accompany these outward truths with his inward grace in your heart ; and hath given you a saving apprehension of them in your mind, by opening the eyes of your understanding to “ a knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ; ” I persuade myself few arguments will be wanting to lead you to what may be considered our next step in the subject : I mean, how infinitely pressing the considerations are upon you, to regard the everlasting interest of your immortal soul, thus declared to be invaluable, by every method in which the gracious truth could be conveyed to the apprehensions of the human mind.

It is very possible, my brother, that in consequence of the extreme poverty of your situation in life, you may have been tempted to consider yourself as of no value in the world, and have felt similar sentiments to what an ancient sufferer experienced in his adversity : “ As for me, I am a worm, and no man ; a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people ! ”

But let me earnestly entreat you, henceforth to entertain no such despairing ideas. Endeavour to feel the importance which the Lord hath given you in the rank of creation. And since God hath distinguished you so highly, learn to set that value upon

yourself which your bountiful Creator hath set upon you.

It might have seemed a mockery, and an insult rather than a matter of respect, had I assumed this language upon my first entrance into your humble apartment, and talked of dignity and consequence to one in your deplorable circumstances. But after explaining to you, in the manner which I have done, the situation you hold in creation, I trust that neither the poverty with which you are surrounded, nor the wretchedness of your apparel, nor the wants with which you contend, will any longer prevent you from considering yourself as important as you really are. Never forget that these are all *outward* concerns, connected only with the body, and to perish with the body. But, in the midst of all, you possess *that*, which empires cannot purchase, and which in point of value transcends the whole world. For the world with all that is in it, is daily hastening to decay; and the time is approaching when all the empires of the universe must be dissolved. But the period which puts an end to *their* existence, will be but the birthday of *your* eternal life. And when the proudest monuments, with all this world holds dear, shall be no more, your soul which now lives, shall live for ever.

Shall not these truths affect you, my brother, with an holy joy and peace in believing? Will you not suffer your afflicted heart to feel comfort in the glorious assurance of that immortality for which God in mercy hath designed you? Lift up, I beseech you, your dejected head, and cease to consider yourself the forlorn and miserable creature you once imagined. Pass but a few years, (perhaps indeed to *you* in your present languishing condition it may be but a few days,) and you will have done with earth and all earthly concerns. When you drop the body, you will drop together with it, all its sorrows, all its pains,

and all its cares. And if in the present season of grace which the Lord now mercifully affords you to prepare for eternity, "you have your fruit unto holiness, the end will be everlasting life." The soul once secured in the Redeemer's merits, is happy for ever; and even your present suffering will only serve to heighten your future joy. The sad garment you now wear, will then be exchanged for the bright robes of salvation and glory. And like the poor man mentioned in the parable, the being taken from misery and suffering here below, will tend but the more to add to your joys above. For it is said of him, that when he was in heaven, though he felt all the happiness of the place, yet he felt it the more for his former sorrow. Having received the evil things of this world, he now experienced the more felicity from the good things of the other: and having once known what it was to be wretched, he now the better knew what it was to be happy.

Let me again repeat then, that if the divine goodness hath mercifully enabled me so to speak, and you so to hear, that your understanding is properly impressed with a just apprehension of the infinite value of the soul; and your mind thoroughly awakened to an earnest enquiry after the means of salvation; the great object intended from my present conversation with you, through the divine blessing, is happily answered: and all the remaining office I shall have to perform, will be to point you to the means of safety, and earnestly persuade you to pursue them. For when once the mind is convinced of the high dignity and importance of the soul, in the eternal happiness for which it is designed, and the eternal misery to which it is exposed, religion hath no plainer nor stronger arguments to offer.

Presuming then upon the assurance that these truths are sufficiently convincing and satisfactory, I should

hope it would be unnecessary to add any thing by way of heightening the argument from the insufficiency of all earthly pursuits to bring comfort to the soul of man. For if the soul be a principle of such inconceivable importance in itself, that there is nothing in this world capable of expressing its infinite value; how extremely foolish, to speak the best of it, must be the prosecution of any thing which hath not the everlasting welfare of the soul for its ultimate object!—Our blessed Lord hath expressed this great truth, according to his unequalled manner, in such awakening characters, that it is hardly possible but that it must command the approbation of every person before whom it is brought.

“What shall it profit a man” (says that divine teacher) if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” No method could be more happily adopted to express a positive truth than the one our Redeemer hath here chosen. For when Christ proposes it by way of question, in order more fully to point out the perverseness of men’s choice in preferring the things of this world to the great objects of another, the terms he makes use of amount to the same as an absolute denial. As if our Lord had said, “It shall profit him nothing;” or rather the solemn truth is expressed in a stronger manner. Christ allows in idea what we know in fact to be impossible, that a man may gain even the whole world; riches, honour, grandeur, fame; in short, all that the utmost imagination can fancy or desire of this world’s goods, for which men are daily hazarding, if not losing, their immortal souls. Our Lord suffers you to suppose yourself in the full possession of the whole, and then appeals to your own heart to determine, whether the enjoyment of it bears any kind of comparison to the value of the soul. For what proportion can there be

between the pleasures of time and eternity? What recompence can a few days of happiness make, for the remorse and pains of everlasting despair? And if the soul be lost! If while a man is engaged either in the pursuit or enjoyment of the trifles of the world, the soul be left desolate, unprovided for, and disregarded; daily hastening to another state, and yet every thought, every affection centered here; unconscious of the wants of the soul, unconscious of the sins and pollutions of it; ignorant of God, ignorant of all the means of grace, and a stranger to the Redeemer's merits and salvation! Gracious Lord! with what a melancholy prospect must the soul quit the body, and enter upon a future and invisible state!

You will take notice, my dear brother, that I am now considering the subject upon the supposition in which the Redeemer states it; that a man were actually in possession of the whole world, during his continuance in the body: that the present life was a state of real happiness and pleasure; all gaiety, and joy, and complete satisfaction; without sickness, without misery; no heart aches, nor head aches, nor sorrow, nor sighing, nor pain. Yet even then, with all these advantages, which no human being ever experienced, what dear-bought enjoyments would they prove, if for the gratifications of a few days a man had so dreadful an opening of eternity in view!

But when you descend from these flights of fancy, and behold the world as it really is, at the very best but a mixed condition of joy and sorrow; and where (without being unjust in the calculation) the evil in general far exceeds the good; because from the necessary consequences connected with our fallen nature a state of trial must be made up of more pain than pleasure: I say, when we daily contemplate the sicknesses and sorrows which all men, more or less, are doomed to feel in their passage through life, the

dissatisfaction in ourselves, from our friends, and in the world; even the happiest character the sun ever shone on, still wanting that something unpossessed to complete his joy: could we believe it possible, did not daily experience confirm the fact, that any man, much less multitudes of men, for the short and unsatisfying gratification of time, should forego the prospect of eternal felicity?

You, my brother, in your large acquaintance with human misery, have had but a few of these allurements to tempt you to neglect "the one thing needful." But, alas! your temptations have arisen from the opposite state. The sorrows and difficulties of life have proved equally dangerous foes unto your soul's happiness, as the blandishments of sense and appetite have to others in an higher station. And you have now the painful consideration, in looking back on the hard and difficult path you have trodden, in earning the food for the body by the sweat of your brow, to perceive no instances of labour for that meat of the soul which endureth to everlasting life. And that poverty, which was perhaps graciously designed by the benignity of God, to lead to the knowledge of himself, in an humble dependance upon his mercy, have proved, by your abuse of it, the very means of driving your heart further from him. So that the distresses which you have already so largely experienced, and at present still endure, are rendered the more insupportable from this bitter reflection, that they are likely to be succeeded, unless now prevented, by far greater sufferings, in that state which is opening before you in the world to come.

Are not these your sentiments, my brother? Has the Lord been pleased to awaken in your mind reflections of this solemn nature? And may I venture to hope, that the awful and important truths, which I have been labouring to impress on your conscience,

have tended under God's grace to this end? Do I now hear you, or is it my heart prompting me to imagine that I hear you, crying out, like the poor awakened sinner mentioned in scripture, "What must I do to be saved?" Oh! that God may have induced this effect in your heart, and with an earnestness suitable to its importance, for then might I reasonably hope, that he, who alone can excite the *concern*, will supply the *means*, (for both are his gift,) and lead the soul to him, who alone can say, "I am thy salvation." It is he, and he only, which must first dispose the heart to pray, and give the power of utterance in prayer, and finally be the rewarder of them which diligently seek him. "From him alone cometh every good and every perfect gift." May the Lord be graciously disposed to make these humble and feeble endeavours instrumental to this purpose! Suffer me to hope, that you are thoroughly awakened to an earnest apprehension of the thing itself; and that your whole soul is now arising into a fervour of true devotion before him; and my object is accomplished. For never, surely, will the Lord pour forth "a spirit of grace and supplication" upon any humble soul, but he will grant an energy of prayer also, which must prevail through the great Redeemer's name, and come up with an assurance of success, in his divine merits and intercession, before the throne of grace.

Under an humble dependance upon the Lord, for this great and unspeakable mercy, I shall now withdraw for the present, my dear brother, that I may leave you to the full possession of your own reflections on what hath been said: earnestly beseeching the great Father of Spirits, so to dispose your heart by his Almighty grace, to draw nigh unto God, that he may draw nigh unto you. To this purpose, however, before we part, let us unite once more in humble

supplication, that these sacred truths may have an abiding influence upon your mind, until they shall have wrought, through his divine power, their desired effect in your heart.

P R A Y E R.

OH ! thou that hearest the prayer of the poor destitute, and despisest not their desire ! Thou who inhabitest that light which no eye can approach, and yet condescendest to dwell with them that are of an humble and contrite spirit : look from thy throne of glory upon us poor creatures of the dust, and hear those prayers which we desire to present before thee, through the great and only prevailing name and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which sinners can approach a being of such infinite purity and holiness.

Thou hast made us after thine own likeness ; designed us for immortality ; and framed our souls with faculties and powers calculated for adoring thy divine majesty, and living to thy honour and glory. And when, through the sin of our first parents, we lost this divine resemblance, and in their transgression became subject to eternal death and everlasting woe ; in mercy to our fallen race, thou didst send the only Son of thy bosom to redeem our souls from sin and destruction ; that by his precious death he might overcome death, and open again the kingdom of heaven to all believers. By this new and living way which thou hast opened in the blood of Jesus, we are permitted to approach thee ; and through that precious offering of the body of Jesus once for all upon the cross, we rejoice that he hath obtained eternal redemption for us. And, in order to render the whole effectual to the gracious purposes intended, of so

much mercy, thou hast promised the aids of thy blessed Spirit to awaken our souls by his divine power, to a proper apprehension of our misery; in applying the Saviour's merits to the sinner's necessities, and creating anew our corrupt nature, from the death of sin unto a life of righteousness, and converting us from the power of Satan unto God.

Hear and regard the humble prayers of this my poor brother, and me thy unworthy servant, which we now present before thy divine majesty; and after such evidences of thy love, after such repeated acts of thy favour, Lord, help us to seek those means of grace, by which our souls may partake of such rich mercy, and be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Add one blessing more to the number thou hast already bestowed upon us; and since we yet live the unworthy objects of thy long-suffering and forbearance, grant that we may live the monuments of thy grace and love to all eternity.

To this blessed purpose impress our hearts, O Lord, we pray thee, with a due sense of the infinite value of our never-dying souls. And let the consciousness of thy mercy, manifested in all the acts of our creation, redemption, and sanctification, teach us of how much importance in thy sight our souls must have been, which have occasioned so great a profusion of goodness towards them.

Open the eyes of this my humble and afflicted brother to a perfect apprehension, that the different stations of the body in the transitory situations of this world, have no effect to lessen the importance and dignity of the soul: that these are only *outward* circumstances in the appointments of thy divine providence, to carry on the gracious purposes of thy will, and to answer the various duties of life: and that in the midst of all, the soul of the poorest beggar is of infinitely greater value than all the world. Awaken

him, by thy almighty grace, both to a perfect conviction of this great truth, and to an anxious desire to improve it to thy glory, and his own immortal happiness. Grant that neither the poverty of his situation on the one hand, nor the temptations of the world on the other, may any longer operate to the neglect of the means of salvation. But impress on his mind, in lively characters, that awful and awakening sentence of the blessed Redeemer: "What shall it profit a man if he could gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

And now, blessed Lord, under these affecting impressions, we recommend him to thy rich mercies in Christ. Do thou, in thine infinite compassion, pour out upon his precious soul a spirit of grace and of supplication: convince him of sin, of righteousness and judgment: and do thou, who art exalted as a prince and Saviour to bestow repentance and remission of sins, vouchsafe those blessed effects upon his heart, that feeling a thorough sense of his fallen and corrupt nature, and being awakened to an earnest desire of salvation, he may be led "to behold," with an eye of faith, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." And oh! thou gracious and all-sufficient Saviour, who "ever livest to make intercession for sinners, and art able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by thee," and hast mercifully declared that "all that come to God by thee, thou wilt in no wise cast out;" hear and regard the earnest supplication of sinners, unworthy to pray for themselves, much less to pray for others; and grant to us all those blessings which our souls stand in need of, and which we can only obtain through thy atoning merits and death.

Our Father, &c. The grace of our Lord, &c.

It is presumed and understood, that *the visitation of the sick*, is always accompanied with the reading of some portion, at least, of the Holy Scriptures, "which are able to make men wise unto salvation, through the faith which is in Christ Jesus." Both the precepts and promises of God to this effect, and the divine blessings consequent thereon, are in themselves sufficient recommendations to induce every serious mind to a frequent and diligent perusal; that "the book of the law of the Lord may not depart out of his mouth, but that he meditate therein day and night."

As an help to this work, see "The Christian's Pocket Companion, or An Help to Prayer;" with a "Diary of the Lord's gracious promises."

THE

CONVERSATION AT THE SECOND VISIT.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I WOULD fain persuade myself, that through the blessing of God upon my endeavours, some serious impressions were made, and are now remaining upon your mind, from the effect of our last conversation; I trust that you are roused in consequence thereof, both to a sense of the infinite value of your immortal soul, and to a proper apprehension of the rank you hold in creation; and that I find you no less prompted to enquire, and with an ardour suited to the importance of the occasion, after the means of grace, which may promote your eternal welfare.

The very low and dejected state, which appeared at our last interview in your whole deportment, was such as might reasonably be expected from one in your deplorable circumstances, unconscious of his own worth, and surrounded with misfortune. What from the wretchedness of your situation, and the slights of an unfeeling world, it would have been strange indeed to have found you otherwise.

But if the gracious teachings of our God have disposed your mind to attend with a becoming earnestness to those great truths, which were then made

the subject of our discourse, I persuade myself that the Lord hath given you both to see matters in a different point of view to what you did before, and also to enquire yet further and with increasing earnestness, "what the Lord will again say to your soul."

Under these impressions, I am come, my brother, to offer to you, what may well be considered the truest *Misericordia*; in the consolations of religion to the sorrows of the heart; in comparison of which the assistance we afford to soften the miseries of the body, becomes trifling and unimportant. And I only very earnestly hope, that he whose gracious influence can alone direct the will, or incline the understanding aright, may grant you "the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, that you may know the things which are freely given you of God."

In order that we may pursue the interesting subject which is to engage your regard in a regular manner, and for your better apprehension therein, it will be proper to take it up where it naturally begins; I mean in enabling you to form just conceptions of God and of ourselves; because from hence alone it is, that the corresponding duties becoming in man towards his Almighty Creator, can appear clear and evident. My first exertions, therefore, will be called forth, to lead your understanding into such an apprehension of the nature of God, and the condition of man, as may best answer this purpose.

With respect to the nature of God, (which is the first grand principle in point of order to be regarded) though the greatness of his attributes must ever preclude an intimate knowledge of him, and indeed taken altogether it forms a subject beyond the grasp of human understanding, yet in that part of the divine character, in which he hath graciously been pleased to reveal himself to mankind, we find enough to employ our noblest faculties, and to reward our

closest diligence, in investigating his adorable perfections. And in this contemplation of God, undoubtedly lies the province of human enquiry, particularly when we explore the subject, as in the present instance, with a view to the knowledge of the corresponding duty. For as it is impossible to have any proper conceptions of the duty we owe God, without having some previous apprehension of his infinite character; it certainly becomes of the highest consequence in religion, to begin with humble researches (as far at least as the light of revelation will guide) what God is, before we can be sensible in what sense we are to honour and obey him. For it is a maxim as strongly supported by reason as by scripture; "He that cometh to God must believe that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Now the word of God, which is our only instructor in this divine science, when revealing the nature of the Almighty, represents him under every possible attribute which can awaken our highest admiration, our obedience, and our love, in the contemplation of his wonderful perfections.

He is described as the universal Creator of all existence, "the God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." So infinite and eternal in his nature, that he is "from everlasting to everlasting." With whom "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." So intimately *present* at all times, and in all places, that "he filleth all space." So intimately *conscious* of every transaction in the universe, that "not a sparrow is forgotten before him; and even the very hairs of the head are all numbered." So great and omnipotent, that "all things are possible unto him, and he upholdeth all things by the word of his power." So holy, that "he looketh to the moon and it shineth

not, and the stars are not pure in his sight :—even his angels he chargeth with folly.” And so unchangeable, that while “all things perish he remaineth : the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” These are *some* among the distinguishing excellencies of this great and Almighty Being !

But the divine word, in mercifully giving this information of the nature and perfections of God, did not think it enough to stop here, but hath graciously added to it, what becomes if possible yet more interesting ; I mean in what an awful sense these perfections concern us. Hence with this view, in wonderful condescension to our limited capacities, and in order to afford the human mind the better apprehension of God, so as to induce a right worship of him, the holy scriptures have next proceeded to give mankind some nearer insights into the divine character, in respect to his mode or manner of existence. And because that manner of existence highly concerns man, in his dearest and best interests, God hath been pleased to reveal of himself, (what without a revelation never could have been conceived, much less known) and declared, that he exists in a way perfectly different and distinguished from all his creatures, “in a trinity of persons by an unity of essence ;” that is to say, that there are three persons existing in God. And for the clearer apprehension of this great truth, these persons are further revealed and made known, by their respective names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; and even distinct acts, in reference to our nature ascribed to each, in order to afford the most perfect sense the mysterious doctrine will admit of, to the mind of man. But at the same time that the divine unity might not for a moment be overlooked, or forgotten, holy scripture reminds us of this first principle, that “the Lord our God is one Lord.”

I do not expect, my brother, that you should understand, in a full and perfect manner, this wonderful truth. Indeed it is not possible that the human mind should be able ; neither is it proposed to us for the understanding to explain, but for the exercise of our faith. For if the infinite nature of God were capable of being apprehended in all his perfections by the finite capacity of man, the Almighty would no longer be infinite ; that is, in other words, God would not be God. But as all that we can know of God must be derived from the word that he hath given us, and as this is what he hath been pleased to make known of himself, concerning the manner of his existence, and confirmed as it is still more by the respective acts in which the sacred persons have been, and still are, engaged in respect to our nature, nothing can be more plain than that it is our duty thus to regard him. And indeed, my brother, I think the reason of our own minds is not without some evidence of this great truth. For surely, it is but just to suppose, that the Almighty Maker of all things must have an existence different and distinct from all the creatures which he hath made. When, therefore, we see through all creation, that every being is known and distinguished by an individuality of character of one person *only*, can any thing more highly distinguish the infinite Creator from his works, than the mysterious manner of existence of three in one, in which he hath revealed himself as living? And why may not this trinity of persons subsisting in one essence be the very mode, in respect to mere existence, which separates and distinguishes the infinite Creator from all his creatures ! I hope I express myself in terms capable of being understood, though the doctrine itself, as I said before, cannot be brought down to a level with the clear apprehension of man.

But though we are not suffered to possess such a

knowledge of this mystery, as may enable us to account for the manner of it, (for it was not for this purpose the sacred truth was revealed,) yet to imagine, that it is a subject too much involved in difficulty for man to apprehend, and therefore not to be regarded by him, is childish in the extreme. If God hath condescended to reveal himself in this august character, shall man presume to think lightly of it, or neglect to bend his enquiries after it? And if certain duties of a peculiar kind arise out of this view of the Almighty, will man neglect the very means of information, by which alone these duties can be properly performed, under the pretence that they are above his apprehensions? Surely the great Author of our faculties must best know what these faculties, properly exercised, are capable of attaining; and if he hath proposed himself to our understandings under this exalted view, in order to afford as much insight into his adorable perfections and character, as our present state and the duties arising out of it require; must we not suppose that the information given is equal to all the purposes intended; and that if we do but exert ourselves in an humble enquiry after needful information, God will render that enquiry effectual to all the purposes of salvation?

Let me then earnestly exhort you, my brother, that as it is of the first consequence to your everlasting welfare to know God, and to worship him, according to the gracious revelations he hath condescended to make of himself; in all your contemplations of the Almighty, and in all your seasons of devotion, never lose sight of considering him under this great character, as *one God existing in three persons*. Whenever you meditate on his adorable excellencies, or whenever you approach him in acts of immediate prayer; beg of God that your soul may be at all times impressed with the apprehension of this infinite

perfection. And as in all his dispensations to mankind, under the different characters by which he is known in scripture, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whether instanced in our *creation, redemption, or sanctification*, as these are all but so many acts of grace resulting from the same Almighty Being, however wrought by the peculiar acts of each of the sacred persons in the GODHEAD, forget not in what sense he is to be regarded; and that you are permitted to approach by means of a gracious Redeemer, that Almighty God whose existence is distinguished by a trinity of persons.

We shall have clearer views of these glorious truths, and they will appear with a brighter and fuller evidence, when we come hereafter to illustrate the manifestations which God hath made of himself under those different characters in his dispensations to mankind. But for the present, I hope I have said enough to give you a general idea of the sense in which you are to regard God.

Let us now proceed to enquire somewhat concerning the nature and condition of man.

Probably, my brother, you may not be altogether uninformed that neither this world, nor the circumstances of mankind in it, are the same now they once were. But through some sad event, man hath lost that state both of innocence and happiness in which he was at first created. I say, it is probable you may have learnt so much of the human state as this. But for your better apprehension of this important truth, it may not be improper that I should enter upon the consideration of the interesting subject somewhat more particularly, because it must be, from the perfect conviction of the *fall of man*, that we can alone derive clear conceptions of the necessity of his *redemption*; and from seeing how the whole race of man is involved in the sin and condemnation of our

first parent's apostacy, be awakened to discover the importance, and through divine grace, to seek an interest in the deliverance from both, through that plan of salvation which is in Jesus Christ.

To trace the subject therefore, from the beginning, we must look into the Bible, and behold the account there given of the original formation of man, in the state of innocence and happiness in which he was first placed:—from thence we shall learn the sad truth of his departure from duty, together with the condemnation and misery which immediately followed the loss of his innocence and happiness, by which “death entered into the world, and all our woe.”

The relation which scripture hath given of this affecting subject, is but short; but it is abundantly sufficient to shew what man once was, and the sad cause for which he became what he now is. We read in the divine word, that “God made man upright;” that he created him in a state of innocence; after his own likeness: endowed him with faculties suited to such a state, and surrounded him with every possible blessing: and to crown all, both his existence and his happiness were designed for immortality. But, alas! all that we know of this happiness arises only from the sad reverse of it. For surely I need not tell you, that none of the human race is in a state of innocence, or happiness, or immortality. The corruption of all flesh, the misery of the world, and the death to which all men are subject, loudly proclaim that our nature is not what it was when it first came out of the hands of our gracious Creator. But through some unhappy means a dreadful taint of evil hath maimed our best powers, and we are all evidently born in a state corrupt and fallen.

To discover both the cause of this ruin, together with the means of recovery, became an act of especial favour in God, and which could only result from his

bounty and goodness. Holy scripture therefore condescends to give the information. We are there taught that it was man's disobedience to the command of his Maker, for which he himself, and all his posterity, were doomed "to eat bread by the sweat of the brow; and in sorrow to eat of it all the days of their life." That when man fell from his integrity, God withdrew his blessings of happiness and immortality from him; and pronounced that awful sentence which ever since hath been fulfilling, and still continues to be fulfilled upon the whole human race: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Hence therefore you perceive, my brother, that man is not the creature he was originally created. By his apostacy from God, he hath forfeited his happiness; and the sole reason for which the world is now the region of sorrow and misery we find is, because, "sin hath entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, because all have sinned."

This view of things, short as it is, becomes sufficient to explain the nature of man in respect to his original state, and to afford a satisfactory reason for the alteration which hath taken place in the condition and circumstances of his life. And if enough hath been said, to enable you to form just conceptions both of God and yourself; the corresponding duties arising out of the relationship (if I may presume to call it so) will appear in some measure included in the same observations.

It must have struck you, I think, my brother, with full conviction, even if nothing more had been said to you upon the subject, that when God created man in a state of perfection and happiness, and endowed him with such faculties and powers; this was with a view

that he should glorify the bountiful Giver. Surely the great Creator of our nature was entitled to some acknowledgments for such distinguished mercies ! When therefore we read, that man revolted from his duty, and broke through the divine laws, in an act of disobedience and ingratitude ; this implies that there was a law given as a mark and test of his duty. For as one of the sacred writers justly observes, “ where there is no law, there can be no transgression.” Man could not have been placed in any possible situation to transgress, unless we first suppose him under the subjection of some government. Here then is an account of the first revealed law of God. And which our unhappy father by breaking, hath involved our nature and the world all around us in the misery and ruin we behold. And the reason of this is very plain. For had the first man continued in his state of integrity and innocence, his whole race must have partaken of the same. He was the parent, and the stock from whence all mankind sprung.—So that as his nature was, so would have been his posterity. When therefore he fell, he involved his whole race in the same sin and condemnation. And hence it is, we read in scripture, that after the fall, when the first transgressor begat a son, it is said, “ it was a son in his own likeness.” Observe I beseech you the expression, “ in his own likeness.” Not in the likeness of God, in which he had been made : not in that moral and spiritual resemblance of his Maker, from which by sin he had fallen, but in his own likeness. A faded, fallen, sinful likeness, as might be reasonably expected. For “ who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? Not one.” The fountain being corrupt, the streams flowing from it cannot but be impure. And hence sin being in the whole race, it is explained why *condemnation* is upon it also. “ For by this offence judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” And in confirmation of it,

we find even infants and little children, before they have arrived to an age sufficient to commit any actual transgression themselves, yet deriving from their parents a sinful nature, they are included in the same condemnation, and become subject to the same misery and death. They frequently manifest this, by their agonies of pain and suffering, and by that death which they are equally exposed to. Universal is the decree of God—"The wages of sin is death."

From this statement you not only perceive, I hope, the whole cause of moral evil, arising from man's breach of the law of God; but also his total inability now of living up to it. For if the first man, when created in a state of innocence, and with powers suited to preserve his integrity, yet shamefully fell, and transgressed the precept of his bountiful Creator; how can it be possible that any of his race, in their present maimed and sinful state, shall be competent to the faithful discharge of the divine law? If our nature, when in its full vigour of purity and perfection, was tempted to swerve from the path of obedience; surely a departure from duty must more or less mark the steps of every man now, when sin has weakened all his powers, and left him an easy prey to every temptation. Wisely indeed are we taught that certainly true, but humiliating doctrine of scripture, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps: for we are not sufficient of ourselves to *think*, (much less *do*) any thing as of ourselves; but all our sufficiency is of God."

Let me then desire you to attend to this one circumstance, as a leading point in religion, and of the utmost consequence to be regarded, in forming your opinion of human life. For from the clear conviction of it, must arise the perfect apprehension of man's misery, and the necessity of salvation. Believe me, my christian brother, it is from slight views of sin,

and man's total ignorance of himself, and his corrupt heart, that the continual breaches of the divine laws sit so easy upon the mind, and pass away from our recollection in the great stream of forgetfulness. It is from the same fatal darkness of the understanding, that we are kept insensible of our necessities; and that infinitely precious plan of redemption by which alone man can be saved, is hidden from our view. Learn then here, I beseech you, by the way, this grand truth, which is the foundation of all true religion; that man by nature is so frail and fallen, he cannot possibly please God: for "by the deeds of the law no flesh can be saved." In the transgression of Adam we all die. The conviction of this, will best prepare the heart, under divine grace, to enquire after that only scheme of mercy and salvation, by which "in Christ we may all be made alive."

Having now, I hope, sufficiently answered the purpose I proposed, from our present conversation, (which is designed by a gradual enquiry to explore the sure means of salvation and happiness) in giving you just notions of God and of man; and having endeavoured to account to you for all the miseries of the present world, by tracing them up to their source in man's original transgression; and having shewn you from hence, how utterly incapable man now is, considered as to himself, of living up to the faithful discharge of his duty; I shall leave you for the present to the consideration of what hath been said, with only desiring you to carry your thoughts abroad into the wide universe of God, and in the innumerable heart-aches and sorrows of the world, behold what an additional and unanswerable evidence they all bring, to the confirmation of the same sure doctrine. The

numberless sins of life give birth to as many sorrows. And whether we attend to the experience of the world, or regard the testimony of scripture upon the subject, they only mutually tend to prove and illustrate each other. The whole earth considered under the article of misery and suffering, in consequence of its departure from God, is but a large hospital of human woe.

Pause one moment, my brother, and reflect on the sad nature of sin, which hath induced all this evil! Conceive, if it be possible, what a dreadful unknown malignity must be contained in it! How highly offensive must it be in the divine eye! And let your soul be impressed with this solemn consideration, that however unthinking persons may treat the commission of it with indifference, yet it is not so with God. "He setteth our iniquities (we are told) before him, and our secret sins in the light of his countenance." And in the dreadful judgments going on continually throughout the earth in consequence thereof, we see his most decided determination to punish it.—Were he to speak to mankind from the clouds, he could not surely speak more awfully than he now does, in the daily visitations of his providence, which fall both on private individuals and on public bodies, by sickness, by pestilence, by the sword, and by death. Though it is now near six thousand years since the Lord pronounced that solemn declaration on our first parents, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" yet the sentence is not yet reversed: "the Lord's anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

Are you affected with this melancholy account of things, my brother? I pray God you may. For (as I said before) your prospect of eternal peace, through the mercy of God and the merits of his Son, can only arise from the consciousness of your present fallen state, prompting you to seek the means of salvation

which are in Christ Jesus our Lord. And the ardour of your pursuit for redemption will be in proportion to the apprehension you now feel of the burden of sin, and the necessity of "fleeing from the wrath to come."

Let me then close our present conversation with the hope, that these weighty concerns will be faithfully impressed upon your heart. And in the recollection of the very interesting subject also, which engaged your attention in our last interview, of the infinite value of the soul, which gives additional strength to all that I have now said, you will gather increasing arguments to lead you to the means of salvation. Convinced, my brother, by such powerful and awakening considerations, that the time is hastening fast upon you, when you must be everlastingly fixed in an unalterable state, either of extreme happiness or extreme misery; that the whole season of providing for such an awful alternative is bounded within the narrow limits of a few years, perhaps a few days; and that if you go out of life with your sins unpardoned through the mercy of God, your soul unwashed in the blood of Christ, and your whole nature unchanged by the Holy Spirit, you will be lost beyond the possibility of redemption: will not such alarming considerations animate you to an immediate and diligent enquiry after the means of salvation? Will you not say, 'And doth a matter of such infinite moment depend upon my improvement of the opportunity of grace afforded? and is the awful event of my eternal happiness or eternal misery hanging upon so slender a thread as my continuance in this world, which, for ought I know, may end this hour? Tell me then, I beseech you, "what must I do to be saved?" What plan must I pursue to propitiate the favour of heaven, and incline God to be merciful to me a miserable sinner?'

God grant, my brother, that you may feel an in-

creasing interest in proposing this most important of all questions ; and an increasing importunity in your desires for obtaining a satisfactory reply to it ; and then I may venture to adopt the same language which was used by the patriarch Joseph to the Egyptian monarch, when advising him on the great affairs of his kingdom : “ God will give you an answer of peace.” (Gen. xli. 16.)

In an humble dependance of this divine gift, let us now, my brother, unite in our application to the throne of grace, and ask for this wisdom from him “ who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not :” and according to the apostle’s rule, “ by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God.” For in the faithful performance of this great duty we are taught to expect, that we shall find that peace of mind, and that peace of God which passeth knowledge, keeping the heart and mind through Jesus Christ.

P R A Y E R.

ALMIGHTY Father, who, of thine infinite mercy and compassion, hast permitted the fallen creatures of thy providence to approach thy divine presence, and for our encouragement to draw nigh, hast provided a sure channel of grace through the endearing person and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ ; we desire to prostrate our souls in the very dust before thee, and conscious of our great unworthiness, to plead the Redeemer’s name as the sole mean of acceptance.

Impressed with the fullest conviction that our souls are immortal, and must for ever exist in a state of endless happiness or of endless misery, when this transitory life is over ; behold, Lord, we knock at

thy gate of mercy!—We lie before the throne of thy grace! And by all the interesting arguments of the Redeemer's name, and merits, and intercession, we plead for pity and compassion. Hear and regard the fervent prayers of this my afflicted brother, and of me, the unworthiest of thy people; and pour out upon both, that spirit of grace and supplication by which alone our devotions can be offered with any energy, or have power to prevail through the mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are truly sensible that the mercies our souls stand in need of, and without which they must languish in everlasting darkness and despair, can only be attained by the knowledge of thee, and thy righteous dispensations towards mankind: help us, therefore, O God, as the foundation of all our hopes, to be enabled to form suitable apprehensions of thine unspeakable excellencies; that from being acquainted with God, we may next learn how to acquire that invaluable blessing, "to be at peace with him."

With what grateful acknowledgments ought we to adore the riches of thy grace, that thou hast granted to our darkened view such a glimpse of thine infinite perfections, as may lead to every necessary knowledge of God, "in the face of Jesus Christ."

We are now enabled to look up and contemplate thine infinite Majesty, under all those great and eternal characters, which for ever draw the line of separation between thee and the creatures of thy power. Thou art the God and Father of all, "who art above all, and through all, and in all. In whom we live and move and have our being." So bountiful in thy blessings, that "thou openest thine hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness." So gracious in thy dispensations, that thy *providence* is over all thy works; and so full of mercy to a lost world, that thy *grace* hath been manifested in the

most wonderful instance of it, in "giving thine only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And in order to bring us to still nearer views of thine infinite nature, by revealing thyself under the endearing characters of our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; and teaching us to look up to thee under those different characters as existing in a trinity of persons, to whom we might always approach through the gracious Mediator; we are blessed with the clearest manifestation of thine inexpressible greatness, which our souls are capable of sustaining in the present unripe state of our faculties.

Impress upon our souls, we pray thee, the fullest sense of thine infinite greatness, and of our fallen nature; and though our highest conceptions cannot possibly frame equal notions of the great evil of sin, as it must appear to the eye of an holy and pure God; and never shall we thoroughly know the baleful malignity of it until we enter upon our new being; yet let the eyes of our understanding be enlightened daily to a more perfect apprehension of it, that we may seek with increasing earnestness a deliverance from its guilt and its power, in the means which thou hast appointed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Give us to see the state of condemnation we are in by nature, that we may the more earnestly implore to be received into a state of grace. And from a thorough conviction that our souls are spotted all over with the leprosy of sin, may we more highly prize "that fountain which is open for sin, and for all uncleanness," in the great Redeemer's blood.

Sanctify to us all thy providences, O God, whether of affliction or prosperity. Particularly to this my brother, let this fatherly visitation in his present circumstances become a messenger of sanctification, and wisdom.—Teach him to form a proper estimate

of human life in the sorrows and trials of it, and convince him by the blessed operations of thy Holy Spirit, that all the afflictions of the world, whether of sickness or of suffering, are the sad effects of our corrupt hearts. That had there been no sin, there would have been no sorrow, no sighing, nor pain. But, "when sin entered into the world, death came by sin." And every groan throughout the earth, every tear that falls, becomes a renewed evidence of the sad truth of man's corruption.

May the awful conviction of this important doctrine, which can alone lay the foundation for my brother's hope of eternal happiness, through the Redeemer's merits, be sent home to his heart, by the gracious operations of the Holy Ghost. Lord, it is thou alone that canst open the blind eye, and unstop the deaf ear. Give him to see his own unworthiness before thee, that the infinitely rich redemption of the Saviour's death may be precious in his sight. Accompany, Lord, what hath been now proposed to his consideration, with thy grace. Let our prayers plead for the same, and come up with prevailing efficacy through the name and mediation of Jesus Christ. Bless all the means and ordinances of worship to this gracious purpose. We use them in an entire dependance upon thy aid, and an humble hope of thy blessing. Like the poor cripples round the cloisters of Bethesda, we wait to be healed. Like the *beggars* blind by the way-side, we sit imploring thy mercy. And like the *leper* at the foot of the mountain, we would seek a spiritual cleansing from the leprosy of the soul, and say as he did: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make us clean." Put forth, then, O blessed Lord, not thine hand only, but apply the precious balsam of thy blood to our diseases, and cleanse our polluted souls from their guilt. And may we never cease our application at

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the footstool of thy grace, until the blessed effects we implore are vouchsafed from thy mercy. Until, "by repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," we possess an interest in the Redeemer's name, and can apply with the ear of faith that whisper of divine comfort and encouragement to each of our souls: "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee!"

Hear, Lord, and accept our feeble and unworthy petitions, for the sake and through the merits and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, we desire to ascribe all praise and glory, and honour, now and for ever. Our Father, &c.

THE

CONVERSATION AT THE THIRD VISIT.

MY CHRISTIAN FRIEND,

THERE is a certain cheerfulness discovered in your countenance upon my entering your apartment, so very different from that gloom which overspread every feature of your face at our first interview, that it highly gratifies me. For it seems to say, that you are not only pleased to see me, but it encourages me to hope also, that you are anxious to renew the conversation on the interesting subject, which hath already in part engaged your attention. If I interpret your looks aright, and if the gracious pre-disposing mercy of our God hath awakened you to an earnest apprehension of the great truths which have been brought before you, I consider it as a pleasing presage that your application to the important business

for which I visit you, will terminate in the most beneficial consequences. Without going over the ground, therefore, which we have already traversed, I shall enter upon the field of conversation, where we had arrived at our last parting, and re-assume the subject from thence. When I then left you, it was under the impression of man's fallen state, and his condemnation before God, which hath induced all the misery of the present life: and awakened with a desire to escape all the sorrows of the future, you asked me, and seemingly with great concern, "What you must do to be saved?" Now, in order to answer this point satisfactorily and truly, I must previously propose to you another question, and enquire, What you have already done, with a view to this important purpose?

Believe me, my dear brother, there is no one point so needful to be continually insisted upon, with respect to a knowledge of the path of salvation, as a clear apprehension of what man hath done, or can do, of himself, in order to the attainment of it. The world hath ever been grossly deceiving itself upon this matter. Fancying that human power, and human ability, are of themselves competent to the work; "ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish his own righteousness," proud, haughty, self-sufficient man, cannot submit "to the righteousness which is by faith." And hence the great variety of means which have been sought after, according to the different dispositions of mankind, to quiet the conscience, and to soothe the soul, in the last hours of her departure from the body. But human reason, untaught by God's word, and unaided by his grace, in the present state of being, is absolutely incapable of discovering the path of peace. And as there is but one method which the word of God hath revealed, and which divine grace can alone qualify a man to

pursue ; it will necessarily follow, that every other is a false and mistaken way, unknown in scripture, and therefore attended with a certain ruin to follow. God grant, my dear brother, that neither you, nor I, in the end, may be found under that delusion !

I have already endeavoured to convince you, that if man, when in his state of innocence, with his powers in full vigour, was unable to stand in the day of temptation ; it must be a very improbable circumstance to suppose, that *now*, when all his faculties are maimed by sin, he should be able to prosecute the path of duty, so as to procure his own salvation. But that you may not depend on what I say, or take any thing for granted, but upon the fullest and clearest conviction ; I would wish you to examine the matter yet more closely, and judge for yourself. Look, I beseech, you, into your own heart. Trace back the subject of enquiry respecting the actions of your life, as far as your memory can furnish. And let conscience do her office, in this review of your conduct, and say, how stands your hope of acceptance with God, in reference to your future and eternal state !

Suffer me, my brother, to assist you in this serious enquiry, by bringing before you *some* of these leading questions on which the subject turns. From whence you will perceive, the various plans by which mankind hath been deluded on this grand point ; and from whence that false confidence hath arisen among men, “ in speaking peace to themselves when there hath been no peace.” And may the God of all grace cause them to be as mirrors to your view, that from beholding as in a glass the total corruption and deformity of nature, as it is in itself ; you may be the more prompted to look up to him, who can alone cleanse it : “ and that God who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, may shine in your

heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.”

One of the first and most powerful deceptions by which the world is generally blinded, in seeking the means of acceptance with God, ariseth from that thoughtless and inconsiderate notion, that a supposed harmless and inoffensive behaviour is all that is required in life:—and that if our conduct be not injurious towards men, there is nothing more necessary in our conduct towards God.

Be not offended with me, my dear brother, if, for the sake of exposing more fully the extreme folly and danger of this error, I consider for a moment, that you, like many others, may be sheltering yourself under this delusion; and which hath, I fear, ruined thousands. For in the daily province of duty to which I am called, in visiting sick, and death beds, I am but too much in the habit of meeting with persons of this description. It is with great pain, indeed, that I often hear that senseless answer returned to my anxious question:—What provision have you made for a time of sickness, and a death-bed?—‘Thank God, I have done no harm. I have injured nobody. I am at peace with all men.’ And thus, in direct opposition to all the solemn declarations of the divine word, which awfully assert, “That the thoughts of man’s heart are only evil continually; and that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” what multitudes are there, who live and die in the vanity of their mind, and, like the idolatrous Israelite, mentioned by Moses, comfort themselves in the assurance, “I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart.” (Deut. xxix. 19.)

Should this be *your* case, my brother, and if, in the moment I am speaking, your hopes of eternity

are suspended on this frail thread, which is infinitely more slender than the spider's web ; I want words to point out to you the extreme danger over which you hang !—May the Lord open your eyes to see in the proper light, from the effect of these truths, what I shall propose to your consideration !

And here, that I may bring the matter to the shortest issue possible, I will admit every thing that the vainest imagination shall plead for ; I will suppose that your conduct hath been uniformly irreproachable among men, and that in every point of view in your duty towards your neighbour, you have been regulated by that golden rule, of “ doing unto all men as you would they should do unto you.” But before you take confidence in this, (which, after all, is but a negative kind of duty, in abstaining from evil, and not the discharge of positive good,) you must first prove the fact. Can you produce evidences that the intentions of the heart as well as the actions of the body have never meditated evil ? Can you put your hand to your bosom, and appeal to the great Searcher of hearts, that never, in thought, word, nor deed, you have done wrong to your neighbour ? What ! have you never in any one moment of your life *spoken* unadvisedly with your lips ? Was you never *angry* without a cause ? Did you never *think* an unkind thing of any man ? Where is that character among mankind, that can stand forward, and presume to justify himself in the sight of God, under these and the like particulars ? And remember, a single breach under any one of the rules of duty takes away all pleas of innocence. The word of God positively declares, that “ whosoever keepeth the whole law, and yet offendeth but in one point, is guilty of all.” And the reason is plain. That single breach is as much in violation of the authority of the great Law-giver as many : because the moment any law is broken ;

that authority is despised. If we then construe the law we owe our neighbour, by this comprehensive standard as extending to all the principles of conduct, as well in thought and word, as deed, (as undoubtedly we must do, to estimate the law rightly,) who can plead not guilty? Who is he that hath never offended with his tongue, nor thought evil in his heart? Surely the best and most upright of men must stand self-condemned before God. And, consequently, the vain and inconsiderate pretence of multitudes, that they have done no harm, nor injured any body, will be found false and presumptuous at the judgment-seat of Christ; and instead of justifying them before God, must expose them to his displeasure.

But let us proceed further in the argument, and in opposition to this very evident conclusion, let us suppose, that it was possible a man had never in a single instance broken the law of duty he owes his neighbour; yet even then what justification would this be, if he be found a transgressor of the higher obligation he owes to God? Would a general inoffensiveness of behaviour towards our fellow-creatures, atone for the breach of duty towards the infinite Creator? Is it possible that any one can be so perverse, or so ignorant, as to imagine, that the performance of a *lesser* obligation can compensate for deficiency in an *higher*? What! did God make man the rational creature he is, and frame him with such eminent faculties and powers, for glorifying and serving him; and will he be considered neither ungrateful nor disobedient in the omission of such evident duties? Is the *tongue* never to be employed in praising God, nor the *heart* engaged in acknowledging his mercies; and yet all the while, shall man, unthinking, ungrate-

ful man, be perfectly excusable, provided he be but kind and good-natured to his fellow-creatures? Is it possible, my brother, that *you* can think so? How sadly would this reverse the order of things. In this case *the love of God*, which our blessed Lord taught to be the first, and great commandment, would be the last and least. And man might sin indeed with impunity, and make light of the highest duties of life, when God was thus shut out of all remembrance by his creatures.

Shall I then desire you, my brother, to examine your heart once more, concerning this grand object also? Have you ever considered the extent of this your obligation towards God? Have you made him the first and great object of your affection? Hath the understanding he hath given you, and the faculties with which you are endowed; your time, your talents, your abilities, in short, every disposition, been dedicated to the service of the Almighty Giver? The love of God, when it is pure, and what it should be, must supersede every other principle. So that if the least measure of love be wanting; if the tender child or the affectionate parent become a rival in the heart with God; the brother, or the friend, which is as a man's own soul, divide the affection with our Maker; here is at once a breach of this great law of duty. One departure totally precludes all claim to the reward of a perfect obedience, and, consequently, puts an end to the pretensions of innocence.

Pause then, my brother! and let your own heart determine, (for to that decision I appeal,) how stands your account towards God under this first branch of our enquiry, the supposed innocency of life? Will you not acknowledge, or must the declaration come from an higher authority, that "the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified?"

May the conviction of this unquestionable truth be impressed upon your conscience in characters never to be effaced! And if the Lord hath mercifully led you into this important part of self-knowledge; never, I beseech you, never more be tempted to place any confidence in human merit. But tremble in the prospect of those light and unthinking persons, who in the false and mistaken conclusion of moral excellence, venture to embark into the world of spirits, ignorant of their own unworthiness before God, and unconscious of their want of salvation. Gracious Lord! with what confusion of face must all such appear in that awful day, when "God will bring every secret thought into judgment, whether it be good or bad!"

Driven from this false security, but yet unwilling to subscribe to the belief that he is without *some* pretensions to goodness, and the divine favour; proud man seeks another resource as a means of justification before God, and fancies that though he cannot plead a *perfect innocence* before his Maker, yet he can at least boast a *general sincerity of intention*; and concluding that the law of God is not so strict as hath been represented, he takes refuge under this covering, and reposes in security against all the apprehensions of the great day of account.

One might have thought it impossible indeed, had not matter of fact clearly proved it, that any man could have imposed upon himself with such a deception. It might have been reasonably expected, that when the tongue was brought to confess, that "in many things we have all offended, and come short of the glory of God," the mouth would have been stopped of every plea of self-righteousness. But no! Such is the deceitfulness of the heart of man in an

unconverted state, that there are multitudes, and even with the book of God in their hand, who will perceive it not; nay, what is yet more, will attend the house of God every Lord's day, and join in the prayers of the church, confess themselves in those prayers be to *miserable sinners*, in whom there is no health or goodness? and then rise from their knees, with the complacency of the Pharisee mentioned in scripture, "thanking God that they are not as other men are!"

To expose the extreme weakness and folly of such conduct, surely can require but little attention. But that I may omit nothing upon the subject, where there is a possibility of any man's deceiving himself, let us, my brother, add an observation or two concerning this pretence also.

The law of God, which is the only standard to estimate moral goodness, and our pretensions arising therefrom to the divine favour, proposes the most ample rewards to a life of undeviating rectitude: "the just shall live by faith." And speaking of the rewards of goodness, it is said, "the man that doeth them shall live in them." So that if there be a man upon earth which could challenge infinite justice to give him the reward of his deeds, "having done nothing amiss;" this man would find his services sure of divine favour.

But to deter the presumptuous heart from so daring a demand, the same authority which promises blessings to the faithful, threatens punishments to the ungodly, and holds forth the heaviest denunciations to every failure in duty. "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." This is the unalterable decision of the law. Mark, I beseech you, the comprehensiveness of the expression; "all things." Not a partial, defective, and incomplete

obedience: not ten, nor ten thousand instances of steady duty, but *all* and every one without exception. So that, if you had faithfully obeyed every precept but one; if you had lived all your days in an undeviating conformity to the laws of God; and only in a single moment of your life broken the divine command, but once profaned the sabbath, or taken the Lord's name in vain; nay, even conceived in thought an irreverent imagination: from that moment you cease all claim to the rewards of obedience, and evidently become a transgressor. Will you say, "This is an hard saying, who can hear it?" For under this idea, not one of the human race but must be found guilty before God! You say just what scripture hath said before you: "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And, consequently, "by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified in his sight."

Would you wish that the law should be less strict; and that some allowance ought to be made for human infirmity, and human imperfection? Consider before you covet such an alteration, what it is you require. Suppose, that in compliance with the weakness, or with the perversity of man, that God departed from the strictness of his divine precepts, and condescended to relax in his demands. What is the wished-for alteration to be? If God were to relax in one precept, why not in two? And if in two, why not in ten? And if in ten, why not in a thousand? Do you not perceive that if once the positive and unaccommodating law of God be broken, to comply with the corrupt and presumptuous wishes of the heart of man, that it is impossible to draw any line to the increasing demand, or to say where it ought to stop. The boundary broken down, the limits of duty could never be ascertained, neither could it be possible to mark what might be considered

sins of infirmity, and what might not. And what would even yet render the alteration still more fatal; by bringing down the standard of the divine laws to the mere fancy of the human mind, the great and unchangeable God would be reduced, in our apprehensions, to a poor capricious being, like ourselves, and we should clothe God with human passions.

Surely, my brother, you cannot but see, (even little as we are at present capable of seeing into the ways and means of God,) how infinitely more suitable, according to all our ideas of a just and holy God, it must be, that the divine law should be what it is; perfect, and admitting of no variation, like its great Author. And though it universally condemns the whole race of men, because no man descended from Adam can be equal to the full discharge of it; yet when that condemnation of the law becomes the only means of leading the soul to the gospel of Christ, (as by and by I trust I shall, in due order, make appear to you,) the plan of infinite goodness in the redemption of sinners must appear, not only abundantly gracious and beneficent, but founded in perfect righteousness and the highest wisdom.

Have I said enough under this particular also, to convince you, that nothing short of a complete and undeviating obedience, to the law of God, can be sufficient as a mean of justification in man, considered as to himself before God? Never more then, I adjure you, be heard complaining of the strictness of God's righteous law as the rule of duty; nor venture the welfare of your immortal soul on the sincerity of your conduct and good intentions. Dare not to charge God with such duplicity, as revealing a law, and yet not requiring perfect obedience to it. And cast not so great a reflection on the scheme of mercy revealed in the gospel of Christ, as to suppose that all that is there manifested of divine love towards sinners, in

the sufferings and death of Jesus, was accomplished for no better purpose, but that, after all, man might be accepted by his heavenly Father in his own righteousness, and his *sincerity* be admitted in the place of unsinning obedience. Oh! may God open the eyes of every man that is under this dreadful delusion, to see what an indignity is hereby offered to the Son of God, and how lost to all gratitude must be the heart, which can contemplate with such a coldness of affection, the agonies, and cross, passion, of the great Redeemer of the world!

Hitherto, my brother, I have been considering the weaknesses of those pretences by which some men, who seek the means of justification before God, but seek it in a wrong way, deceive themselves on this important point. But there is one class of mankind, and it is to be feared they form a very large part among the bulk of the world, who, without troubling themselves much upon the subject, repose their whole hopes on the unbounded goodness of God. They make no reserve in acknowledging themselves to be sinners before him, but presuming on that unwarranted conclusion that God made no man to be miserable, they sit down in a thoughtless, improvident manner, and are perfectly regardless of all consequences.

I know not, my brother, whether *you* are among the number who have taken up with this persuasion; but it will be my business to expose the extreme folly of it, and the dangerous situation in which every man stands who makes it the prop of his future expectation of happiness.

The goodness of God is, indeed, as boundless, as his nature is infinite; neither can our highest conceptions frame equal ideas of its immensity. For after

we have exalted our thoughts to the fullest stretch the imagination will admit of, the human mind must still fall infinitely short in its apprehension of this unlimited perfection of God. Scripture expresses more in three words, in describing what it is, when it says that "God is love," than the wisdom of men could define in as many volumes. But though it be impossible to conceive sufficiently honourably of this great attribute; yet it is both a senseless, and a mistaken notion to imagine, that under the graciousness of God may be found a shelter to all the daring wickedness and ungodliness of men. What an abuse of goodness would this be! In this consideration the very perfection itself would lose its name; and instead of being a principle, moving in one uniform, steady, and invariable line of the most consummate wisdom and holiness; it would float in a loose and irregular manner, like the changeable tempers of men. Every idea of reason forbids surely, such notions of the almighty!

Allowing, then, the utmost which the mind can conceive of infinite goodness; the only question with which we are interested in the application of it is, whether the doctrine of future punishments in respect to unreclaimed sinners, is not reconcilable with this divine perfection? That the goodness of God is not impeached by the sufferings of mankind in *this world*, no one, I presume, will venture to deny. And the thousand, and ten thousand sorrows of life which frail flesh is heir to, in its passage through this state of existence, these are all so many evidences, that much evil may exist, consistent with the divine goodness. If then, it be attended with no difficulty, to reconcile the multitude of sorrows, under which the human state now groans, with the mercy of God! why should it be more so, in relation to the miseries of futurity? If you will allow that God is good, and yet that much evil attends man in this life; tell me, if you

can, why the same may not in another? Of one thing we may assure ourselves, that "God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." Neither will he want the justification of his creatures, when the whole scheme of his government comes to be unfolded before the universe, in the great day of account. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

It is indeed the unbounded goodness of God which hath proclaimed a plan of mercy, by which sinners may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus; and in the gospel of his blessed Son hath revealed a scheme of salvation, which exalts his benignity, while it satisfies his justice. But if men contemptuously despise this offer of peace, and in defiance of all intreaty, will venture to enter the divine presence, presuming on his goodness, contrary to the way he hath appointed; can they reasonably complain, or will they dare to charge a deficiency in the divine goodness, because that goodness will not extend to the pardon of their obstinacy? Is it not perfectly consistent with all the notions we can frame of infinite benevolence, when "men despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, which should lead them to repentance; if their hardness and impenitent hearts treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath?" Can this be any impeachment of God's goodness? or is the event justly chargeable on the divine mercy?

But not to rest on the mere reasoning of the human mind upon this important point, it may be worth our while to turn to the word of God, and see what is the fact concerning it.—In the testimony which is there given, of what the divine conduct towards mankind hath been, we are enabled to form an accurate opinion of what it always may be; for here we are not left to probabilities or conjectures; and particularly in reference to the events which will follow the present life,

we are at once put into the full possession of the most decisive declarations concerning them.

In order to throw down as it were every presuming thought in which the light and unthinking heart might entrench itself, from mistaken notions of divine goodness, the great Saviour of the world hath expressed in a single sentence the infinite danger to which sinners are exposed, and the awful apprehension which ought to possess their minds, in the prospect of offended Omnipotence. "I will forwarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea," (says the Son of God, repeating the expression as a matter of the highest concern to regard,) "I say unto you, fear him!" And what that fear is, and the motive of it, may be gathered from every part of scripture, which relates the awful providences of God on the guilty. You may see it exemplified in the punishment of mankind upon a great variety of occasions.

In the deluge;—in the destruction of Sodom;—in the matter of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram;—in the memorable siege of Jerusalem;—in the numerous examples of sudden visitation, both upon individuals and nations;—in the sorrow in which man eats bread by the sweat of his brow,—the miseries he sustains by reason of transgression, and that death we all die, because all have sinned. Are not these instances enough to convince, that the existence of mighty evils is no impeachment of God's goodness? They may, and do take place in the moral government he exercises now, and consequently there cannot be the shadow of a reason shewn why they may not hereafter. And if the displeasure of God manifested on fallen man needs any additional heightening to prove the danger of presuming on divine goodness unqualified by divine wisdom, behold it in the account which is given of the fallen angels. Their case, we

are told, is absolutely hopeless. They were the first who dared to burst the bounds of duty, and break through the hedge of the divine law; and God hath made them ever since the sad monuments of his wrath. Having once left their habitation, they have never been permitted to return, but “are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day!”

Nay, what is infinitely more awful in proof that the severest punishments are reconcileable with infinite goodness, we have an instance more astonishing than the destruction of a thousand worlds, or the everlasting misery of all created beings:—God “spared not his own Son;” this implies more than the imagination can conceive. And is it possible, in the face of these palpable and incontrovertible truths, for men to think they are complimenting God’s goodness, at the expense of his truth, and that the future punishments of sin are inconsistent with his mercy? “Hath he said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and will he not make it good?” Oh! my brother, hazard not, I beseech you, the everlasting welfare of your immortal soul upon such presumptuous reasonings of the human mind, in defiance of all the alarming truths of holy scripture; nor trust yourself on so rotten a plank, to embark all your prospects of eternity upon. Your security is not of God’s allowance, but a delusion and a dream. “Oh! consider this,” (says the Psalmist,) “all ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you.”

And now to what other resource will you fly? Will you fancy, my brother, (as too many have done) that charity to the poor will compensate for the neglect of duty towards God; and that alms-giving will atone for the sin of the soul? Alas! if this were the case, *your* poverty of circumstances would even then put it out of your power to purchase a pardon

upon such terms. And, if God, by making you poor, hath deprived you of all the attempts of this nature, can you suppose that by making others rich he hath furnished them with an ability for such a purpose? Would not this be charging God with what he solemnly disavows, that the Lord's ways are not equal? The want of power therefore in a *single* instance, independent of all other proofs, becomes at once a most decisive evidence to convince any man that will be convinced, that alms-giving, considered as an oblation for sin, can never be among the appointments of that God, who hath made the different stations of life what they are, and hath expressly revealed himself under that sacred character, as "no respecter of persons."

God hath consulted indeed the happiness of mankind, from appointing the inequalities of life to be what they are; and hath opened a source of pleasure among all the relative situations of it, from the faithful discharge of the respective duties arising out of them, which would otherwise have been unknown. It may be said of alms-giving, as it hath been said of mercy, 'it is twice blest; blesses both the giver and receiver.' And if any difference be found in the enjoyment, we have authority to conclude, the superiority is on the side of the giver: "it is more blessed to give than to receive." But what an impudent idea must it be in any man, to hope that he can bribe God with his own gifts; or to fancy that the rich man may buy a pardon, which the poor man cannot. Such notions are founded in the highest ignorance and ungodliness, and tend no less to insult the poverty of our humbler brother, than they become offensive towards God.

What hath tempted the human heart to this delusion, hath been most probably the perversion of those passages of scripture, which express the divine complacency in acts of beneficence. Hence when it is

said, that "charity covereth the multitude of sins," this hath been a favourite argument in the mouth of such characters; who congratulate themselves that they have found out an happy expedient to reconcile present transgression with the hopes of future happiness; and since a covering can be so easily purchased, they will certainly wrap themselves all over with it, to blind the eye of God. Whereas had they but regarded with the smallest attention this very passage of scripture, they would have discovered, that the charity here spoken of is not the mere act of alms-giving, which is but one branch of it, but the complete virtue of christian love itself, which is "fulfilling the whole law." And also that it is not God from whose sight the mantle of charity is to cover the multitude of sins, but man, whose partial view of things is rendered still more obscure by a kindness which blinds the eyes. As if the sacred writer had said, Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity possesses so persuasive an influence over the mind of the person who is the object of it, that it shall make your neighbour blind to your imperfection, and shall cover a multitude of your sins from his sight. But what has this to do in relation to that Divine Eye of perpetual observation, who sees us in every point of view, and knows us much better than we do ourselves? Who would be senseless enough to suppose that any thing can be concealed from him 'unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid?' Surely no one can coolly and seriously believe that the same kind of reasoning holds good in this instance, with reference to the Almighty, as it does in relation to man; or that because the charity we at any time shew our brother makes him so partial to us as even to hide our infirmities from his view, the same may be applied to God? Will he be blinded not to perceive,

or warped in his judgment not to discern good and evil? Suffer not, I beseech you, my dear brother, such disparaging notions of God to be for a moment only received into the mind; nor imagine that the sins of life may be atoned for by such oblations. It costs more to redeem souls. This cannot be the way to come before God; neither when he riseth in judgment, the method of answering him. "Thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil; the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul," must all be ineffectual to put away transgression. And if these be the only expedient to obtain mercy and favour, the question again recurs with increasing anxiety: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?"

And now to what substitution else will you fly in order to conciliate the divine favour?—Will you have recourse to *repentance*, and seek to appease God for the *past*, by the contrition of the *future*? *Repentance* certainly is a scripture doctrine, which, though not to be regarded as the means, yet is indispensably necessary in the attainment of the end towards salvation. It is by "repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," that pardon is proclaimed to the world, through the Redeemer's name and merits. But before you place any stress upon this principle, as the condition of obtaining the favour of God, it becomes an object of vast moment, rightly to consider what that repentance is, and how it is to be induced.

True repentance is the gift of God, and must come from him. As soon might you change the colour of your hair, or the features of your countenance, as convert your own heart by any effect of sorrow

wrought in the mind by yourself. Sorrow indeed may spring up in the heart from the recollection of iniquity, and the apprehension of the divine punishment which may follow the sins of life. And the most ungodly wretch, if he thinks at all, cannot but feel compunction and sorrow of heart, when his guilty conscience is alarmed in the prospect of the wrath to come. Hence, the dying bed of sinners will sometimes be distinguished with such distress as shall seem to carry with it all the marks of unfeigned repentance, when perhaps the whole is the consequence only of an awakened conscience;—and if the alarm could wear off, the effect would cease. Whereas the soul, whose sorrow for sin is excited by that spirit of grace and supplication poured out upon him from the Lord, will experience that godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of, and which manifests itself in a newness of life. Hence therefore the true and genuine repentance, which is of God's gift, differs as widely from the false and spurious kind of it, which men take up with of themselves, as the east is from the west, and is as opposite in all its effects and consequences.

But desirable as this divine principle is, as an evidence of a true spiritual life begun in the soul; and essential as it is to qualify for partaking of the rich mercies of salvation;—yet repentance itself cannot in the very nature of things be considered as the means of justification before God, or even entitling the sinner to pardon and acceptance. The sorrow induced in the heart by divine grace, is God's gift, and consequently not our merit. Neither if it were the merit of man, could it compensate and atone for a breach of the law of God. It might tend to a remission of punishment, but never to the attainment of a reward; and the reward of eternal life to be given to a sinful, disobedient, and ungrateful

creature, merely because, after many years transgression, the close of his existence had been marked with sorrow; how absurd would this be to all principles of common sense and reason. No! my brother, beg of God to give thee this blessed gift "of repentance and remission of sins;" but never fancy that the highest attainments in it are the efficient means of salvation. Our deepest sorrow, properly speaking, can never wash away our guilt, or entitle us to divine favour. Neither faith, nor repentance, nor any thing we possess, have aught in them to give us a claim before God; but all our hopes must arise from a security not our own. In a word "we are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God."

Stripped then of all the false pleas by which the unhumiliated pride of fallen man seeks justification before God; I trust, my brother, that the divine goodness hath now fully prepared your mind to receive with more earnest conviction, and to seek with more awakened solicitude, the means of mercy, through him "who is the way, and the truth, and the life." No man cometh to the Father but by him. So that, hemmed in, and surrounded on every side, as were the Israelites of old in the wilderness, when brought to the borders of the sea, and no way left for them to escape from the pursuing enemy by means merely human, (which was a beautiful figure of the church, and clearly representing the state of every individual of it,) may the Lord do by you as he did by them; shew you the salvation of God: and in "that new and living way, which he hath opened for his people, in the blood of Jesus," (which their passage through the Red Sea to the promised land typified,) guide you to the possession of the heavenly kingdom, discovered and obtained for man, through the labours, and sufferings, and death of the Son of God.

That these important truths may be fully impressed upon your mind, and the consent of the understanding (which I have endeavoured to obtain) may be blessed through divine grace with the conviction of the heart, (which God only can bestow) bend with me once more, I beseech you, my brother, before the mercy-seat of heaven, and let us ask in prayer that gift which can alone make us wise unto salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYER.

BEHOLD! O Lord, the unworthy objects of thy mercy, again presenting ourselves at the footstool of thy divine Majesty, pleading the Redeemer's name, and depending upon his merits for our acceptance before thee. Awakened to the most perfect conviction that man cannot be profitable unto God, neither he that is born of a woman appear pure in thy sight, we desire to renounce all dependance in ourselves, no longer to presume on any self-righteousness, or to build up our hopes of justification before God by any of those false and mistaken ways which the unhumiliated pride of fallen man only could suggest, and by which multitudes endeavour to secure themselves, to their ruin. Lord, we adore the riches of thy grace, that thou hast opened our eyes to a sense of these awful truths before it be too late; that thou hast spared us to this hour, and not suffered us to go down to the grave ignorant of our own wants, and of the Redeemer's precious salvation. If then, where "sin hath so much abounded;" as in our unworthy and unprofitable lives too plainly appears, "grace hath much more abounded:" encourage us to hope that there is yet mercy in store, and our souls may

be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.—Shew us, Lord, the way to thee, that we may fly as doves to their windows, and may find thee an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

And oh! merciful God, suffer not these serious impressions, which we humbly trust are now wrought by thy grace in our hearts, to be for a moment effaced, till they have accomplished their blessed work of repentance in the soul, and until “Christ is formed in us the hope of glory.” Guard us from that fatal delusion and belief that repentance is in our own power to attain, when and how we please; and so we become tempted to put it off to that night of sickness and of death when “no man can work:” but now “to-day, while it is called day” enable us to lay hold of “the accepted time, and the day of salvation,” and let our hearts be no longer “hardened with the deceitfulness of sin.” Every blessing, grace, and mercy, we implore in the name and for the alone sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour, to whom with the Father and the ever-blessed Spirit we humbly offer all our cold hearts can offer, of praise and thanksgiving, now and for ever.

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

THE

CONVERSATION AT THE FOURTH VISIT.

HITHERTO, my dear brother, all that I have said to you hath been only preparatory to the great subject, which I have all along had in view, and which I come now to speak of.—Every step we have taken hath

been leading but to this. And if I have dwelt longer than could have been wished on the unpleasant topic of man's unworthiness before God, it hath been only in order to awaken a more earnest attention to the divine goodness manifested towards him; that from seeing with the clearest conviction how in the transgression of Adam *we all die*, your heart might be prompted to embrace with increased ardour and thankfulness that scheme of salvation in Christ, by which *all may be made alive*.

If then the blessed Spirit of our God hath mercifully accompanied my labours, by impressing an awful sense of the great truths which have been brought before you on your mind; if you are sensible of the infinite value of your immortal soul, and awakened to an earnest desire of salvation; if you are brought to see that by sin and transgression you are departed from God, and have no power in yourself, unassisted by his divine grace to return to him; that every door of hope of human contrivance is shut, by which man might escape the punishment threatened to transgression, and "flee from the wrath to come:"—surely, my brother, if these things are suitably impressed upon your mind, you will lend an attentive ear to what I am now to relate of those "glad tidings of good things which are indeed to all people," proclaiming salvation to a lost world from the mercies of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And oh! for a thousand tongues to sound abroad the glorious truth, and to prevail, if it were possible, with every graceless mind to receive it and be happy. But neither the tongues of men or angels are equal to the power of persuasion; God alone can effect this by his divine grace in the heart. And therefore, my brother, I charge you to look up once more, and with all the earnestness the importance of the object demands, beg of God to impart to thee this blessing. Send,

Lord, we pray thee, at this time, the mercy we so much stand in need of, and without which our souls must for ever remain in darkness and ignorance! "Our eyes are unto thee." Our hearts are before thee. Our souls wait for the refreshments of thy grace.—"Let not thy word return void, but let it accomplish that with which thou art pleased, and let it prosper in the thing whereto thou hast sent it."

The scheme of salvation through Christ opens from the very fall of man, and runs like a golden thread through every page of scripture. For no sooner had man transgressed the commands of his Maker, and rendered himself incapable of immortal happiness by his own obedience, than the redemption through Christ was pointed out, by which the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was proposed, as the only means of propitiation for sin; and his perfect obedience in fulfilling all righteousness, substituted as the only reparation which could be made to the broken law of God for man's transgression. This plan of mercy at once proved that salvation was all of grace; and that the work was not of man, but of God. But in order to reveal more fully the infinite importance of the thing itself, and to impress upon the human mind the fullest conviction of the sad injury sustained by the fall, that "sin might appear yet more sinful," since nothing but the blood of Christ could expiate the effects of it; God was pleased in the intermediate ages from the fall of Adam to the coming of Christ, to reveal yet more fully the sacred purposes of his will, and by the promulgation of his law, on Mount Sinai, amidst thunderings, and lightnings, and a loud voice (which they who heard desired that they might hear no more) to demonstrate the infinite holiness of God, the

dreadful consequences of sin, and to what a deplorable state fallen man was reduced, by the breach of his Maker's commandments. In this awful revelation of the law, we find the same alarming truth proclaimed, and the same dreadful consequence denounced, as in the former. "The soul that sinneth it shall die." The first precept God gave at the creation, was the same in its nature and tendency as the second, which was promulgated on Mount Sinai. It proclaimed "glory, and honour, and immortality" to the faithful discharge of well-doing; "and indignation, and wrath, tribulation, and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil."

If you ask why this renewal of the law, when it was so melancholy a certainty that no man who sprung from Adam was competent to the discharge of it; and as a Redeemer had been promised, who alone could repair the injuries sustained by the fall? I answer, It was to convince man, by an evidence yet more decisive, of the truth of it. For our nature since the fall is blind to this knowledge. It was to shew him, therefore, as in a glass, his own deformity. And by bringing before him such awful views of the holiness and purity of God, as appear in the transcript of his righteous laws; to demonstrate from what a state of rectitude he had fallen, and to what misery by sin he was reduced; that thence he might awfully learn his own inability to procure the divine favour, and be led therefrom, with more awakened desires, to seek and accept that means of salvation which is in Christ Jesus.

These were the grand purposes all along had in view in every dispensation, from the fall of Adam to the advent of Christ. And with these objects before him, the great Saviour of the world was at length manifested 'in the fulness of time, to repair the desolations of many generations, and to restore order

among the works of God. *He came* in all the fulness of grace and truth, *he* left that glory which he had with the Father before all worlds. He took upon him our nature.' And in that nature condescended to the lowest offices in life, and to the most painful agonies of death, for us and our salvation.

But to describe to you either the person or the character of him by whom the great work of our redemption hath been accomplished, surpasses all human powers.

But though language sinks under the dignity of the subject, and it is impossible to speak in suitable terms, either of his person or character, by whom the salvation of the world is accomplished; that I may not leave you wholly uninformed in a matter which, of all others, concerns you most to know, I shall venture to sketch the outlines of the sinner's Saviour for your meditation: first desiring you, above all things, to supply my deficiency, by reading, or getting some christian friend to perform the office of reading it to you, the larger representation which the evangelists have drawn of him under divine inspiration, in their unequalled manner, in the New Testament. And may he reveal himself to your heart, as he did to the disciples of old, while "talking of him by the way, and while opening the scriptures!"

I have before observed that Jesus, our ever-adored Redeemer, "who was one with the Father, God over all, blessed for ever," moved with the most unbounded compassion to us, and our fallen nature, and pitying the human race, in that misery to which by sin we were sunk, left that glory which he possessed with his Father before all worlds, and by a miraculous incarnation was born of a woman; assumed our nature, came and dwelt and tabernacled among us, in order to effect the grand purposes of human redemption.

Beginning at that point where our nature had failed, and that the law of his Father might be repaired, which man had broken ; when the Redeemer came, he first became obedient to the law for man, and submitted to every ordinance of it, in order that "he might fulfil all righteousness." He lived it over therefore in his own spotless person, an uniform example of the most perfect obedience. He discharged every duty—fulfilled every obligation. And having thus satisfied the law by the most scrupulous observance of all its righteous demands, at length he finally accomplished the only remaining purpose of his mission, in becoming a sacrifice for sin.

And what infinitely endeared the Redeemer under this divine character to mankind, and made the attribute of mercy to our souls still more recommending, was the gracious condescension of humbleness which he displayed in every deportment of his life, when he came and dwelt among us. Not taking, as he might have done, a rich or an exalted situation, to glide through the world ; but choosing the lowest lot of poverty, and the humblest fare of the world, when he came upon this beneficent purpose ; and to such an extreme indeed, as frequently not "to have where to lay his sacred head !" Oh ! my brother, how does the Redeemer's poverty, when properly considered, tend to reconcile the poor and afflicted of the Lord's people to their humble state ! Who would wish to walk through the world in perpetual ease and fulness of the good things of life, when they behold the Redeemer passing on before, fainting beneath his cross, and where every print of his sacred feet may be traced, amidst the thorns and briars of the way ?

These are the outlines of the Redeemer's history, from his birth to the cross. They are however, but the mere outlines only. For to fill up the picture, in a finishing representation of all the traits in his divine

character, surpasses all ability. For whether we regard him in his immaculate purity as he is in himself; or whether he be beheld in the patient enduring all manner of cruelties inflicted upon his sacred person, by the wretched and unfeeling world he came to redeem; in either, and in every point of view, the portrait is too difficult to execute. His whole life, indeed, was a series of unequalled suffering, as it was of unequalled goodness. The evils of poverty and want were not more oppressive upon him, than were the unprovoked malice of those he studied to make happy. Whatever he did, or said, with an unwearied design to bless the world, was sure to bring upon him anger and persecution in return. In a word, the rancour of his foes became not less bearable, than the desertion of his friends, in a moment the most critical; when all the powers of darkness conspired to afflict his soul, and to fulfil what had been so mournfully predicted of him many ages before his birth; that "he should be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; who should give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off his hair; and hide not his face from shame and spitting."

But to exemplify these general traits by an enumeration of particulars, or to enter into a minute description of the wonderful actions of the Redeemer, either in his life or death, this is a task from which I shrink. The history of Jesus may be, as it is indeed, the everlasting subject of contemplation and delight, to all his faithful people. It may be studied by the divine. It may be admired by the philosopher. It may be adored by the believer. But never can it be represented by any man in equal terms to its sublimity and grandeur. The experienced christian only, in whose heart Christ is revealed by the Spirit that dwelleth in him, will conceive, what language fails to

express of this divine subject. May the Lord give you, my brother, to feel this knowledge of your Redeemer in the heart, which they only who are taught of God experience.

But it was not enough in the accomplishment of the great purposes of salvation, for Jesus to be delivered for our offences ; it became expedient also, that he should be raised again for our justification. Hence, therefore, from the Redeemer's cross and passion, we take up the wonderful relation, and go on in his history, till we see him risen from the dead, and ascended up to glory : and then with the eye of faith we contemplate him under all those characters in which he is now at this moment engaged, and will be occupied till the final consummation of all things, for the completing his divine work of mercy.

Now we look up and contemplate our ascended Saviour under all those exalted characters in which he is represented in scripture, as fulfilling his merciful design of bringing the objects of his redemption to his eternal glory. We adore him as our Lord. We regard him as the great prophet, and priest, and king of his people. We rejoice in him as our prevailing mediator and intercessor with the Father. And we expect him finally under the high character of our judge, when he shall return "to judge the world in righteousness, and to minister true judgment unto the people."

These different views of the Redeemer's character, are all included in his divine history, and form their respective parts in the merciful plan of salvation. And altogether they represent him to our hearts in terms so infinitely endearing, as are enough to call up the warmest gratitude, and veneration, and love, in this world ; and will be the everlasting topic of joy and delight to our souls in the world to come.

Neither do we stop here in speaking of the love of

God in the scheme of grace and salvation to a lost world. For where the *personal* ministry of Jesus ceases, that of the Holy Ghost begins, in carrying on and completing the gracious designs. The Redeemer had said to his disciples while upon earth, and before his return to his Father, that he would send the Holy Ghost to comfort and instruct them in all the great truths of salvation; and hence the finishing work of grace in the heart of men, by convincing the soul *of sin*, and then of the righteousness of the Redeemer, was reserved to his divine ministry.

I have before endeavoured to give you some ideas of the great doctrine of *three* persons existing in one God;* and you will have now clearer notions of this glorious truth, from seeing the representations which God hath made of himself under the different characters in which he hath been employed in the accomplishment of our salvation. Hence you see that the Father is represented in scripture under the more immediate character of our Creator; the Son as our Redeemer; and the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier. Not that from hence it is intended to say, that either of these characters is so immediately exercised by the one, to the exclusion of the others; because, in consequence of the unity of essence, the acts of the one, are no less the acts of the other: and both in the plan of creation, as well as in redemption and sanctification, the scheme of mercy resulted from the whole GODHEAD. The council of love manifested in creation, when God said, "Let us make man" as well as "the council of peace" in redemption, which is said "is between them," (Zech. vi. 13.) evidently proves this. And perhaps, had we the faculties to have understood how this distinction of *three persons* exists in one essence; we should have known that our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, being different characters

* See the second Conversation, from page 561 to 572.

in relation to our nature, of one and the same God ; we should have looked up to God, and always preserved in our minds a sense of this mysterious distinction of his great and incomparable character, by those gracious names.

Concerning then the great scheme of redemption, which is what I have now chiefly in view, I have shewn you the part which the Son of God hath wrought, and is now, in consequence of the high work he yet performs in heaven for us, still pursuing in the accomplishment thereof.

Let us now attend to the operations of the Holy Ghost, in carrying on, and completing his gracious designs in the heart of man, which was reserved to his divine ministry, agreeably to our Lord's promise before his departure.

The Redeemer had promised his disciples this descent of the blessed Spirit soon after his return to his Father, and commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, until "they were endued with this power from on high." Accordingly we read that a short time after his ascension on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost came, *first* upon the apostles, and *then* upon those who were awakened by the instrumentality of their preaching ; and induced those effects which are related in scripture : "three thousand souls" were converted to the belief of a crucified Saviour, that ever memorable day, upon the spot ; and confessing their sins, and being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, they openly and solemnly avowed their dependance for eternal happiness upon the sole merits, and sufferings, and death of the Son of God.

These were the first fruits of the descent of the Holy Ghost. An emblem and pledge as it were of the great harvest of souls which should follow in the church of Christ, from his divine ministry, in all the

subsequent ages of it! So that from that hour to the present, and so on to the end of time, it is he, and he only, which must render the whole of the Redeemer's salvation effectual to the purpose intended. It is he which must "convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." He must take of the Saviour's merits, and apply them to the sinner's necessities. He must breathe upon the dry bones of the human estate, and awaken our souls from "the death of sin to a life of righteousness." For so blind are we all by nature; so lost and insensible to our corrupt and fallen state; and so much disposed to speak peace to our hearts when "there is no peace;" that not a man alive, no not *one* among the whole race of men, can of himself, be even sensible of his sinfulness before God, until the Holy Ghost hath opened his heart to impressions of this nature. So that the grand efficacy of the Redeemer's salvation, applied to every sinner's necessities, is the peculiar work of the blessed Spirit, and reserved solely to his efficient ministry to perform. And we have the fullest authority to conclude, that in every single instance of it, wherever the name of Jesus is become dear to the soul, it is because the Holy Ghost, by his grace in the heart, hath rendered it so. "The good that is thus done upon earth he doeth it himself." The most perfect conviction of this unquestionable truth may serve to explain to you, my dear brother, by the way, why in all our conversations I have desired you to look up, and implore that grace, without which all our endeavours are nothing worth; and it may now more solemnly convince you, with what increasing earnestness *you* must continue to implore his gracious aid, without which, all the purposes of salvation, with respect to *your* soul, must fail of their end!

The practical inferences arising out of these great points, will, however, meet us more properly by and

by, when we come to sum up the whole in an application of them to the heart. But in the mean time, I persuade myself, that I have said enough (merely considered as the outlines of so grand a subject) to give you clear ideas, both of the plan of salvation, the manner in which it is wrought, and the high interest in which it involves you. May that blessed Spirit, of whose divine operations we have presumed to speak, shed abroad his influence upon your soul, "to give you the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

And now, my brother, without going over again the interesting particulars, which have engaged your attention in the visits I have made to you, suffer me only to collect, into one point of view, the sum and substance of the whole. You have seen the sad cause for which man is not now the happy being he was at first created ; but by the introduction of sin, sorrow hath also followed, into all the circumstances of the human state: and that soul of man which was once holy, pure, and undefiled, and created in the spiritual and moral image of his Maker, is now corrupt and fallen, and full of pollution.

You have seen also, that notwithstanding our present sinful condition, God hath not left his unworthy creatures to perish for ever, but by a process the most awful, and even at an expense of tenderness, surpassing all conception, hath provided a remedy for sin in the death of his divine Son: thereby giving the most convincing evidence of what infinite value the human soul is in his sight, which Christ hath died to redeem, and which the Holy Ghost hath descended to purify.

Moreover, I have endeavoured to lead you into such views of the present life, as might shew you the in-

tention of God in the appointment : and you might clearly perceive, that notwithstanding the numberless sorrows and evils with which it now abounds, they become not the smallest impeachments of the goodness of God, but rather afford additional evidences of the fall of man. Evil and sorrow formed no part in that beautiful order of things, when God first called into existence the present world. But when the divine architect had finished all his works, he saw that they were "all very good." Hence, therefore, the human state is not such as God originally made it;—neither is it such as shall remain for ever.—Through the merciful undertaking of the Son of God, our nature is brought again into the means of recovery ; and a plan of grace opened in his gospel, by which we may obtain a better inheritance than our first unhappy father lost. And in the mean time God hath graciously converted the sorrows and sufferings we undergo in our passage through this world, into means of grace and improvement, in our preparation for a better. Hence they act like furnaces to the human mind, to purge off the dross, and the reprobate silver (as scripture expresses it) of the human ore, and to refine and purify our nature. By which process good is extracted from evil, and "our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." What happy creatures we should have been, had our first father never by his disobedience forfeited paradise, remains not to be known. But for creatures such as we are now, so corrupt and sinful ; with such passions and prejudices, and the thoughts of our hearts only evil continually ; sufferings and trials seem to be no other than the necessary and unavoidable effects of a fallen state. But think, my brother, I charge you, think, how gracious it is in God, to overrule even the just punishments we here

undergo for the consequence of our sin, into means of advantage hereafter. And not only to make such a rich provision for our final recovery from its effects, by the meritorious sacrifice of his dearly beloved Son; but also to convert our very sorrows into joy, through the sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit!

Hence we feelingly learn, what never can be sufficiently deplored, the sad evil of sin, and the melancholy consequence to which it must for ever expose the unreclaimed subjects of it, in an endless separation from God!—Hence we also gather the highest proofs we can possibly obtain of it in the present life, of the unbounded goodness of God in the appointment of such a scheme of redemption, as is discovered by Jesus Christ. And hence, and above all, we are most solemnly taught, with what earnestness, and with an anxiety which nothing less than the attainment of the great object in pursuit of can satisfy, we ought to be daily seeking an interest in this mighty salvation. Like creatures groaning under a disease, absolutely incurable by all other means, how ought we to apply to that Almighty physician, who came into the world “to bind up the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captive, and to give sight to the blind!” And one should conceive indeed, that a conscious sense of sin and misery would of itself induce this desired effect. That the numberless head-aches, and heart-aches, and the multitude of sorrows which man is doomed to endure in his passage through the world, would all become what they are designed by God, the means of weaning our affections from every thing here below, and from which we must shortly part; and carrying them forward to that better world, where we hope one day to dwell. And if the afflictions of life were productive but of this end; did men but receive them as the necessary correctives of evil; they would soon

learn to extract the sweet from the bitter, and discover many a kind and salutary mercy under a seemingly harsh and afflictive providence. Like the angel to Peter in the prison, becoming the minister of sanctification and joy: smiting perhaps, somewhat roughly on the side, but knocking off at the same time with the stroke, the chains of captivity, and bringing life and liberty together.

If I have been happy enough, my brother, to accomplish what I originally designed, in explaining to you both the cause of evil, and the means of redemption; and by leading you, in a progressive manner, through the several leading points of the interesting subject, have shewn you what man is by nature, and how alone he can be recovered through grace; I shall have fulfilled one of the kindest offices of the *Misericordia*, in directing you to a remedy for the sorrows of the heart; in comparison with which, the help afforded to the wants of the body, becomes trifling and insignificant.

And if I have, though ever so imperfectly, accomplished my intention, if it be but enough to arouse you to a sense, in what an awful manner you are involved in the event of it; I flatter myself, you will not dismiss the awakening concern, until you have fully satisfied your own mind, on those grand points, which unavoidably arise out of it.

Are you really convinced, my brother, of the infinite value of your immortal soul? Have you duly pondered the vast consequence of living for ever, in a state of endless happiness, or of endless misery? Are you most solemnly assured that your soul by nature is exposed to the latter, and that if you go out of life with your sins unpardoned, and your soul unwashed in the blood of Christ, you are lost for ever? Has the Lord given you to see the fallen condition of man by sin, and the only plan of redemption provided

for sinners by Jesus Christ? If these solemn, awful, and awakening considerations are but faithfully impressed upon your mind, what further arguments can be wanting, or what additional motives shall I have need to have recourse to, in order to prevail upon you to lay hold of the means of grace, and to be wise unto salvation? Convinced that your whole nature is corrupt and fallen; that not only in particular instances “you have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” but that you were altogether born in sin, and universally tainted with evil; you must be convinced also, I think, that nothing short of a thorough change of heart, and a perfect renovation of nature, can be sufficient to the purposes of salvation. Wash the Ethiopian for ever in the river, his tawny complexion must remain the same; for it is his nature, and art cannot change it. Equally impossible must it be in the sinner to alter the complexion of a corrupt mind, and to give a new direction to the thoughts and inclinations of the heart. But suppose only what scripture says, to take place, that “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and created us anew in Christ Jesus;” and the whole is accounted for, and explained in a way perfectly reasonable. We now perceive by what process it is of sovereign grace and power, the change is effected on the human mind, in converting from sin unto righteousness, and from the power of Satan unto God. And how clearly the proposition of the apostle is proved, when means so powerful are made use of in the accomplishment, that “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”

And if these truths carry with them to *your* mind the conviction they possess, I think it impossible but you must immediately perceive the very great absurdity of seeking salvation in any other way. Surely

you cannot suppose that the reformation of a few immoralities, or the putting on a little *outside* piety, which leave the heart just in the state it was by nature, can answer the purpose? Will a few forms of prayer, or an attendance upon a few ceremonies of religion, accomplish the end? Is not an undertaking of this kind (to use our Lord's own words) somewhat like the Pharisees of old, whitening sepulchres; making them appear beautiful without, while within "they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness?" Will it not strike you, my brother, with a full conviction, that this is only aiming at a *partial* amendment of the evil of our corrupt nature, and not cleansing it altogether: lopping off the branches of the deadly tree, but not digging up the root? And can any thing short of a radical cure answer the purpose? From hence, then, do you not perceive both the absolute necessity of what Christ hath declared concerning the means of restoration, as well as the justness and propriety of it, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God?" That is, in other words, except there be a complete renovation of the whole man; and the soul, which by nature lies in a state of lifeless insensibility to all goodness, and is even "dead in trespasses and sins," becomes quickened to a new and spiritual life, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, (which from the mighty change wrought upon it, may well be called a new birth,) except this be really accomplished on the soul of man, "he cannot see the kingdom of God."

If then these be truths (which are so palpably clear, I trust, as not to be disputed,) the practical inferences from the whole doctrine are not far to be gathered. They may be all summed up, indeed, in one grand conclusion, as they relate to the particular interest in which they involve every individual, and be brought

to this single point: Are *you* born again? Are *you* awakened to a new and spiritual life? And have *you* those plain and unequivocal marks about you, by which *your* hopes of an entrance into God's kingdom may be clearly known? This is the great subject of inquiry, in which every man is interested for himself, and on the event of which, all his high hopes of heaven and happiness depend. And therefore, I would charge it upon your heart and conscience, my brother, to propose it to your enquiry, not with lightness and indifference, but with all the solemnity and seriousness so important a point demands, and with a jealousy and strictness which nothing but the clearest and most decisive answer can satisfy. And remember, I beseech you, that the evidences by which this great matter may be known, are so plain, that they cannot be mistaken. Indeed, after all that I have said to you upon the subject, in tracing up the evils of life, and the sins and sorrows of our fallen nature to their source, I should hope, you cannot need any further helps, to direct you in the enquiry. For if man by nature is corrupt before God, and he must be born again before a new and spiritual life can be begun in the soul, it is certain that this change can never be accomplished in his nature, and he remain unconscious of it. This is impossible. And hence, therefore, unless you have experienced this divine operation of the Holy Spirit in your nature; unless you can trace some marks, some intimations at least of a spiritual life begun in the heart; you cannot need my telling you, that you are yet a stranger to religion, and have yet to learn what Christ is to the soul. Let me, therefore, again charge it upon your conscience, my dear brother, to examine your heart frequently and seriously upon this most important of all subjects. Look, I beseech you, diligently *there* for the evidences of a spiritual life. If you are really

convinced that you are a sinner before God, that conviction, if it be of God's gift, will be followed with hearty and sincere repentance. No man can have his eyes opened to a sense of sin, but will feel his heart awakened also, to implore a deliverance from it. And if the Spirit of God hath convinced the soul of sin, he will pour out also upon it a spirit of grace and supplication to deplore the great evil of it, and to repent in dust and ashes. Do you find these effects in your nature? Have you been brought to the humiliating situation of the apostle Paul, when under the sense of it, and to cry out as he did, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

Evidences of this kind are unanswerably conclusive and satisfactory; especially when they are followed (as they always will be, when true and genuine,) with all the marks of a regenerated spirit. The pardoning mercy of our God will be ever accompanied with his purifying grace. And if the soul be really dead unto sin, it will be truly alive unto righteousness. Hence, therefore, if the Spirit of the Lord hath opened the eye of your understanding to see the sad corruption of nature; to lament over it with sincere and unfeigned repentance; to behold the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world by the sacrifice of himself; and hath enabled you to rely on him for salvation, as an all-sufficient Saviour: the same divine author and finisher of all good, will carry on and complete the work in your heart, under all the remaining evidences of a real conversion towards God: in putting off the *old man*, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and putting on the *new man*, which is created in righteousness and true holiness: in weaning the heart from all the vanities and pursuits of this lower world, and making it pant after the enjoyment of that state which is above. In

a word, by "repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," with sincere "love and charity towards all men," you will have your conversation in the world: "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

If then, these, and the like testimonies of the new life, appear upon examination in your heart; you may, my dear brother, comfort yourself before God, and rest in that animating assurance, that "he which hath begun this good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

But if none of these evidences be found; if the whole of what hath been said to you upon the important topic of redemption hath ended in the "hearing of the ear;" what forms of persuasion shall I adopt to induce you to an instant attention to the things that make for your everlasting peace, before they are for ever hid from your eyes? Consider, my dear brother, how utterly inconsistent to all our ideas of heaven and happiness, must be the prospect of a soul's dwelling for ever in glory above, which has never experienced a change from its corruptions by grace here below! Surely, if there be nothing divine and holy begun in the present life, must it not be a folly to expect happiness in another? Can the carnal mind, which is declared in scripture to be enmity with God," be so changed by death, that it shall arise with new appetites and affections of love towards him? Shall the man, who falls a martyr to his sins,

and the gratifications of the flesh ; shortens perhaps his day of grace by his intemperance ; tumbles into the grave, and almost pollutes the very earth which covers him : shall he arise with dispositions the very reverse of the habits he contracted in life ? Is it possible that any one can suppose this ?

Look, I beseech you, into the world, and steadily contemplate any one of the characters you know, who lives in a regardless inattention to the importance of the awful truths I have been speaking of ! Behold him, while life is continually stealing from him, living in a thoughtless indifference, and making no provision for that solemn event, towards which he is hastening. At length, the soul is summoned to depart. He now enters upon a new state of things, naked, disconsolate, and unprovided. A stranger to all the employments of the place, and with a mind only stored with images, the very reverse of what occupy the pure inhabitants of it. Pause, one moment, my brother, and ask your own heart whether, according to all your notions of things, (and independent of the divine declaration concerning it,) it be possible for such a character to enter the kingdom of God ? With what a melancholy prospect, then, must all such characters drop into the grave, and arise to the expectation of their future eternal state !

But perhaps you may say, if the change of heart can only be effected by the power of God, and repentance and faith are both his gifts, and incapable of being performed without his divine operation ; what are the duties on the part of man, so as to procure this blessing, and what method must be taken in order to the attainment ? I answer, By the diligent use of all the several means of grace afforded : in reading the scriptures : in hearing the word : in retirement and abstraction, as much as possible, from the world : in religious society : above all, in prayer

to God, as well by acts of private devotion, as in public and family worship. These are the methods which God himself hath appointed and enjoined; and by the blessing which he hath in all ages graciously permitted to follow the serious use of them, he hath abundantly recommended and enforced their observance to every heart. And though these, after all, are no other than the *means*, and not the *end*, by which the heart is brought unto God; and the whole without this divine effect following it, is nothing worth; yet so far is this from becoming an argument against the use of the means, it strengthens it by the most awakening of all considerations. For if the greatest efforts of man are ineffectual without the blessing of God, and in the event of that blessing all our eternal interests are suspended; with what an earnestness might we suppose those would place themselves in the way of grace who have a concern for their souls, lest the day of grace should pass away, before they have found an interest in "the one thing needful." Now as the several means of grace are God's own appointment, here it is, while men are employed in the serious use of them, it may be expected that he will come and bless his people. While, therefore, we are thus found waiting upon the Lord in the appointments of his grace, we are like those poor blind men who sat by the way-side begging when Jesus passed by, and in that favourable moment received their sight: and like them we may hope also, that as the Lord passeth by, in the ordinances of our duty, he will be found of them that seek him. If we ask, (it is expressly promised,) we shall receive: if we seek, we shall find: if we knock at the gate of mercy, that gate shall be opened. Nay so earnest is God to bestow what our souls stand in need of, and without which they must for ever perish, that Christ compares it to the solicitude of an earthly

parent in providing for the wants of his children. "What man, (says the Redeemer,) is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone; or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? if ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Do you, therefore, wait only upon God, and you will assuredly receive the blessing. "Though it tarry long, yet wait for it. It will surely come, (says the prophet,) it will not tarry." The cripple at the pool of Bethesda, had watched the favourable moment for thirty and eight years ineffectually, but yet he still attended, and at length obtained the blessing. The poor woman, whom Jesus healed in the synagogue, had been bound by Satan for eighteen years; but by waiting still upon God, at last the hour of her deliverance came, and she was loosed from her infirmity. Hence, therefore, you see, that a close, and earnest, and diligent attendance on the means of grace; an humble, holy, sacred importunity in prayer, like that which the patriarch Jacob used with God, when he wrestled with him, and said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," must succeed. Whoever pleads the name and merits of the Redeemer, at the throne of grace, and comes there in the aids of the blessed Spirit, will be certain never to plead in vain. The soul that thus imitates the struggling Jacob, will finally become the prevailing Israel.

And now, my brother, what shall I say more to you upon this important subject?—There is no argument that I know of, and which I have not used, to prevail upon you to be wise unto salvation. Let me only remind you, that if the motives which have been urged are pressing, they are infinitely so. The truths which have been brought before you, in the course of our conversation, increase in their demand

every hour. They call louder and louder, and become more and more clamorous. Even since we first entered upon the subject, the grand and awful objects of eternity have drawn nearer to us both, and are increased in magnitude to our view. Had we our senses properly exercised, we might behold the gates of the New Jerusalem enlarging to the eye; and hear the voices of its inhabitants striking louder upon the ear!

And if any thing can add weight to those solemn considerations, your present sickness perhaps may have an effect. What the event of it may be, I know not. But one thing is certain, (be this as it may,) death is hastening fast upon us both; and he which shall live the longest, will have but little to boast in this particular. He will, perhaps, have just time to look round, and take another momentary view of the objects about him, before he will also drop into the grave. What language of persuasion then shall I make use of at parting, so as to leave the whole with a divine and lasting power of impression upon your heart. I exhort you, my dear brother, as one dying creature entreating another, by all the arguments in which the awful interests of eternity involves both; by the love of God; by the compassion of Jesus Christ; and by the powerful influences of his Holy Spirit; that "you receive not the grace of God in vain: but now in the accepted time, and in the day of salvation, call upon the Lord while he may be found, and draw nigh unto God, that he may draw nigh unto you." And oh! thou great Head of thy church and people! without whose blessing, all human endeavours are alike vain and insufficient, be graciously pleased to commission the feeble efforts of all that hath now been proposed, to the consideration of this my brother, (as far as it is consistent with thy most sacred word) with thy powerful grace accompanying it, and

give it a divine and lasting efficacy in his soul ; that he may be a monument raised to the honour of thy grace in this life, and an everlasting trophy to the Redeemer's glory in another. Now, to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed an endless tribute of praise to all eternity. Amen.

P R A Y E R.

WITH what acknowledgment of praise and thanksgiving, shall we come before thy glorious presence, O bountiful Lord, when we desire to express our utmost sense of thy mercies revealed to us in the person, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ ! In that gracious scheme of salvation for sinners, which thou hast made known in his gospel, thou hast indeed abundantly confirmed the early revelations of thyself, and thy adorable perfections ; when thou passedst by, and proclaimedst “ the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” Oh ! how fully hath this been manifested in the recovery of fallen man, by all the endearing instances of thy love, in the person of Jesus Christ ! Under devout impressions of thy grace, we would bow down our souls to the very dust before thee, and cry out in the words of the apostle, “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from

the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Encouraged thus to approach the throne of thy grace, after so rich a provision of mercy, Lord, grant that the full influence of thy goodness may be felt upon our souls. Let the sense of our own utter depravity teach us to prize yet more the infinite value of the Redeemer's justifying merits and blood. And let the consciousness of our vile affections by nature convince our hearts, that nothing less than the Spirit's influence is equal to subdue them. And may thy grace so strongly impress these sacred truths upon our minds, that we may daily apply to the atoning blood of Jesus, for the daily pardon of sin; and beg of thee for a renewal of the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit, as we beg for daily bread. Mortify and subdue every remaining corruption. Take away the heart of *stone*, and give us an heart of *flesh*. Enable us to trace the evidences of true repentance of the soul, and let the proofs of a lively faith be manifested in our hearts. And let nothing short of those infallible testimonies, which distinguish thy faithful people, satisfy our souls in our preparation for eternity, that we are passed from death unto life, and converted from the power of Satan unto God; and that by a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, we have our fruit unto holiness, that the end may be everlasting life.

In an humble dependance upon thy gracious mercy, Lord, that thou wilt carry on, and complete this blessed work in the soul, until the day of Jesus Christ, we now recommend our dear brother to thy peculiar favour; most earnestly beseeching thee, O God, that whatever the event of his present sickness may be, it may ultimately terminate in thy glory, and his own eternal happiness. If it be thy blessed will to raise him up, and to grant him a longer continuance in the

body, sanctify this thy fatherly visitation to the gracious purposes intended: and let the life that is lengthened by thy grace, be dedicated to thy glory.— Or if it be thy sacred pleasure to take him to thyself, by the progress of this disorder, prepare him, Lord, for the awful change; that as the trying and solemn moment draws near, his soul may be refreshed with the consolations which are in Christ Jesus; and especially that he may then know in whom he hath believed, and be enabled to commit his soul into the hands of Jesus as a faithful Creator. Amen.

The following may be added, as occasion shall require, here, or at the conclusion of either of the former prayers, when there are any friends of the sick present.

BEFORE we withdraw from the footstool of thy grace, we would humbly beg to improve the present occasion to the benefit of all that are now before thee, and to implore thy mercy that our brother's sickness may be a messenger of sanctification and wisdom to all around. Teach us, Lord, to be admonished by it, and by all the other instances of sickness and death in every neighbourhood, what an uncertain world this is through which we are passing: how soon the situation of either of us may be changed; and our health may be converted into a bed of sickness, or of death: and grant that we may "so number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom;" that no one present may be so thoughtless, or so imprudent, as to put off the care of the soul to the last

hour ; but that we may be wise unto salvation, to-day, while it is called to-day, and before the night cometh, when no man can work. May our brother's sickness in this manner, through thy blessing resting upon it, minister to our advantage, and we who are now met together to unite our prayers with him for his salvation, may depart with more earnest resolutions to provide for our own. Finally, blessed Lord, keep us all in a constant preparation for the moment of our departure hence ; that when the master's call shall come, our souls may be found in an act of devotion, and the last words which fall from our dying lips may correspond with our heavenly song : " Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and glory, and honour, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb that was slain, for ever and ever. Amen."

It was the design of the author of this little tract to have followed up the subject of which it treats, with a few forms of prayer ; such as might have been suitable to the *general* cases and circumstances which attend sick and death beds. But finding that it would swell the bulk of the book, to a much greater size than was originally intended ; and necessarily increase the price, beyond the pocket of that class of readers for whom it was principally written, the design has been laid aside. And, indeed, upon second thoughts, had the plan been practicable in

itself, it would still have been attended with considerable difficulty in the execution of it, to have framed the subjects of devotion on such general principles as to have included every thing necessary; and yet no less have answered the various wants of men in those interesting seasons. For so different are the circumstances and conditions of mankind, that the author can very safely assert, from the personal experience of *some*, contrasted with the total ignorance of *others*; the cold and unawakened manner with which too many attend to divine things; and the fears and alarms, visible among minds of extreme sensibility; to say nothing of the *temporal* necessities which press with peculiar heaviness upon certain situations of life, and come in for a proportionable regard in an application to the throne of grace: these things render it extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible, to form such a complete and unexceptionable model of prayers, as to become answerable to every demand, and at the same time to express every thing the devout soul wishes to express, in its approaches to God.

It is true, indeed, that the *general* wants and necessities of mankind may be comprehended in general terms; and hence, in *public* worship, religious services must be formed for the most part on this plan. And if it be not going out of the way in the remark to observe, the author of this little work hopes it will not be thought censurable in him, when he adds, that unless an excess of partiality hath blinded him to behold objects through a false medium, the *liturgy of the Church of England* furnishes as noble a form of worship, and as truly scriptural, to answer the *general* purposes of devotion, as ever human wisdom devised. But though thus much may be said in favour of the established form of worship as it relates to *public* prayer; and an application may very ad-

vantageously be made to it to supply the occasional wants of *private*; yet he cannot suppress his apprehensions, that there are situations perpetually occurring in the world, and particularly in the experience of every christian, which no stated form of prayer can fully express.

In the dispensations both of providence and grace, the circumstances of mankind are perpetually changing. There will be seasons of health, and times of sickness; the prosperous and adverse changes of life; the manifestations of the divine goodness, and those solitary hours, in which the sorrowful soul supposeth the hiding of God's countenance: all these, and numberless other situations, perfectly undescribable, with which the soul is exercised in her passage through the world, will certainly require some more than ordinary expressions in those solemn moments, when the soul draws nigh the throne of grace to have communion with God, and which the best digested forms of prayer can never fully comprehend, nor come up to. It is impossible but that every truly awakened soul must be compelled to regard the divine hand in all the ordinations of the world, and particularly in the circumstances of his own life: and from a consciousness that God's dealings are all conducted by unerring wisdom and goodness, in the review of the various events, with which the day of trial is chequered, he cannot but find, at times, some more peculiar mercies to acknowledge, and some more than ordinary blessings to implore. Renewed wants, and renewed transgressions, daily temptations, and daily infirmities, will all make a respective part in his prayers. And if what Solomon says, be fully experienced in the life of every individual, namely, that "the heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy;" it will follow, that no one can fully express for another, in any form of prayer

all that the soul feels, either of sorrow or happiness, and wishes to pour forth in those solemn transactions between God and himself, when engaged in actual devotion: and consequently, therefore, the man that is tied up to the use of form, will not only find himself cramped in the fervour and spirit of godliness, but will sometimes be in danger of using expressions in which the heart is necessarily unconcerned and unaffected.

For these reasons, added to what was before observed, the author of this humble treatise, doth not feel so much regret, that his original design, of subjoining a few forms of prayer in this place, has been frustrated. And highly as he approves of that most excellent form of service in the established church, for the purposes of *public* worship, (because *general* wants are certainly best expressed in *general* forms,) yet he cannot dissemble his opinion, that they do not answer the purposes of *private* devotion, nor are calculated to say all that arises out of the particular circumstances of every man's *own* experience. And he very earnestly wishes, that the christian friend, who undertakes the charitable office of visiting sick rooms, from the noblest motives, and will condescend to accept of this feeble work as a guide in the service, would supply his deficiency in forms of prayer for those occasions, by the use of such as shall arise from the exigency of the case before him, and are adapted to the *particular* situation and circumstances of the sick persons visited, rather than by any other mode whatever. That "Spirit of grace and supplication which is" promised to be "poured out from the Lord," will certainly be equal to all the purposes required in the aid of human infirmities, and therefore may with safety be depended upon, when in humbleness of soul, the devout worshipper draws nigh unto God, through a divine Redeemer.

But, after all, if any godly believer should fancy himself unequal to the faithful discharge of this important duty, unassisted by a form of prayer, let him have recourse to the Bible, which will not only supply him with ample materials for the purpose, but also with terms of peculiar and prevailing efficacy to present before the throne of grace, in the Redeemer's name and merits; being dictated not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

FRAGMENT.

AMONG the many interesting subjects with which the mind is exercised in the present life, there are few which attach themselves to our tenderest feelings more acutely, than the anxious enquiry concerning the everlasting welfare of our friends and acquaintances, at their departure from the body. It must be confessed, indeed, that it forms an object of infinite concern. Neither is it in the least a blameable curiosity, but rather laudable and praiseworthy, when the question interests the mind so far, as to explore under all the information of scripture, and the aids of divine grace, the awakening consideration, with a view to our own spiritual improvement, and the humble resignation of friends to the will of God. And although in a multitude of instances, the subject is too much

bounded in shade and obscurity to speak decidedly upon it, so as to pronounce with any confidence the departed soul happy or miserable ; (because it must depend altogether upon such circumstances as are, perhaps, to all but the eye of Omniscience, unknown ;) yet, blessed be God, dark as the close of human life frequently is, there are divine lights sometimes shining in the way, which cast such illuminations around the valley of death, as not only brighten the prospect to the departing spirit itself, but enable the standers by to discover somewhat of the heavenly manifestation upon the soul, affording the most gratifying presage of its future happiness.

As the subject is so highly interesting in itself, and at the same time no less useful must be every help, however small and inconsiderable, which can be obtained to throw any light or information upon it, especially for the comfort of those who undertake the kind office of the *Misericordia*, in visiting sick-rooms and death-beds ; I would very humbly offer, by way of *Fragment*, an observation or two upon it ; which, if I mistake not, will enable any serious mind, under the aids of divine grace, to form an opinion with tolerable accuracy upon this grand point. Having been long in the habit of following duties of this nature, I venture to persuade myself, that the remarks which I shall propose are the result of many years' experience. And though the whole of our attainments in this world serve only to convince a man more and more, " that if he thinketh he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know ;" yet it is our duty to be thankful for the smallest insights of any knowledge we possess, and particularly in the divine science of religion ; and to be ready to communicate to each other any of the consolations " wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

With respect to the departure of what we fear to be graceless souls, whose dying testimony affords no certain evidences of good, and of whose future state, therefore, we are restrained from speaking decidedly, from the contemplation of the unbounded goodness which surrounds the throne of God, I shall say nothing. The only thing to be recommended here, and, indeed, in all questionable cases, is the exercise of prayer and faith. These certainly afford the best relief to the mind. And when the soul of a truly awakened believer hath been long painfully tried, by reason of distressing apprehensions concerning the everlasting welfare of some departed friend or relation, whom the ties of nature or affection have rivetted to the heart; and yet for whom no pleasing assurance of salvation can with any certainty be entertained; I believe it will be found, that in the resources of prayer and faith must be the only consolation. The remembrance "in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways;" the powerful impression that the great Redeemer *can* have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; that he *can* and *will* save to the uttermost all that come to God by him; that "he ever liveth to make intercession for sinners, and all that come to God by him he will in no wise cast out;" that in that gracious channel of acceptance, which is open to the last hour, it is possible for a communication to take place by an *inward* manifestation of divine love to the soul, awakening repentance and faith in the sinner's heart, when all *outward* appearances have indicated nothing of the change: these and the like circumstances may serve to minister comfort over the brooding evil, and lead the friendly soul to hope, that the last day will bring forward, to the admiring view of applauding worlds, numberless examples of salvation, where divine grace has gloriously triumphed

in the conversion of sinners in their dying moments, when the whole life has been spent before in hardness and impenitency ! The possibility of the thing itself, when considered in conjunction with the sovereignty of his Almighty goodness and compassion, "whose thoughts are not our thoughts, but whose ways as far exceed our ways as the heavens are higher than the earth," may serve at least to reconcile the soul under this affliction ; and therefore a close, depending, and abiding sense of God's mercy, through Christ, will bring relief to the mind, when all abstract argument and reasoning upon the subject will lose its effect.

But leaving this point as a subject we are less competent than all others to speak of, it is concerning the dying testimony in the professors of religion, on which I would wish to make an observation, by way of guide, to form an idea with respect to their probable happiness at death.

It will, I believe, be readily admitted, by every one who is at all acquainted with the true principles of our holy religion, that the only evidences to be depended upon, in proof of a renewed nature, are faith and repentance. When the apostles went forth declaring salvation to a lost world, through the sole name and merits of the Redeemer, the gracious proclamation of mercy ran in these encouraging terms ; "Repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." And most unquestionably, wherever clear and evident marks of these properties are discoverable in the conduct of men, they carry with them the fullest testimony that the divine life is begun in the soul. Because, as such principles can never be induced from any thing merely human, but must come from Him, "who is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, (purposely) to give repentance and remission of sins ;" wherever such testimonies of his grace ap-

pear, they plainly indicate the design of God in "granting repentance unto eternal life," and the assurance therefrom is well founded in scripture, that "He who hath begun the good work, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." But the grand question is, how are they to be distinguished? It is well known that much deception hath taken place in life concerning it. I have seen such cases in my attendance on sick beds, where all the marks of the most unfeigned repentance have appeared, and where such circumstances of sorrow have attended, that to have questioned, or doubted the sincerity of it, would have been thought highly uncharitable; and yet experience hath shewn, in the unexpected recovery of such characters, that they have returned again to their sinful course like the dog to his vomit. Hence, therefore, I never depend upon any *outward* marks, however strong they may be, as certain proofs of an *inward* change. When indeed they are accompanied with other symptoms of grace, (which when true and genuine, will ever be the consequence,) then, and not before, can they be considered as an evidence of a new and spiritual life. If, therefore, you hear the sinner condemning himself with an unreserved freedom; not only lamenting his former course of life, from the sad effects of it, but also from the consideration of the great evil of sin; expressing his irreconcilable hatred of it; and deploring his utter unworthiness before God: and if you perceive that the detestation of his past conduct is expressed in such terms that though God, through the Redeemer's merits, may forgive him, yet he cannot forgive himself: these are promising circumstances to induce the hope that his repentance is the gift of God.

But with respect to this testimony, if this were all we had to form our opinion by, matters would be still

equivocal. Happily there is another, which comes into our aid, and which is not liable to so much deception and ambiguity : and that is, what the apostle distinguishes, by " faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." It is possible for the false and spurious kind of repentance, to the eye of human observation, to resemble so nearly the true, as not to be discovered from it; but I defy any man, to look up stedfastly, with a *firm* a *constant* and *abiding* faith to God's mercy through Christ, and to take confidence in the Redeemer's merits for salvation, while confessing himself to be a sinner before God, unless that grace has been implanted in his heart by the operation of the Holy Ghost. For as no man can say that " Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost;" so it is impossible that all the mighty prejudices of the *natural* man, against the method of salvation, which God hath appointed in the gospel, should be removed, and the soul possess the most heart-felt convictions of sin, and the most lively belief of divine mercy through Christ, so as to seek justification to eternal life *wholly* in this method of redemption, but from the operation of the same Author and giver of all good.

A man may indeed assume a bold and presumptuous confidence in the divine goodness, and cherish hopes of receiving divine mercy, without feeling any real sorrow for sin, or any concern for the commission of it, but what arises from the punishment (for men of no religion will do as much); but this is more the effect of an hardened and unfeeling heart, insensible of its corruption before God, than the result of an awakened mind, through the Spirit of grace in the soul, leading to the hopes of pardon from the divine benignity through Christ. The well-grounded confidence, therefore, which I am now speaking of, as an evidence of a true spiritual life, is that humble confidence which the blessed Spirit hath begotten in

the heart, when having first convinced the sinner of sin, he hath convinced him also of the righteousness of a Redeemer as sufficient to the forgiveness of it ; when a firm faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is preceded by a true and genuine repentance towards God, and while the soul is comforted in the hopes of divine mercy, there is a continual and abiding consciousness of sin and unworthiness : here the inference becomes just, and is agreeable to all the declarations of Scripture.

Hence, therefore, wherever we see all the marks of a real and unfeigned repentance, accompanied with a firm, a steady, and unshaken faith in the Lord Jesus Christ ; there is every reason to believe, that this is the sole work of God, and consequently we have the strongest inducements to presage the happy departure of the soul in the hour of death, to a glorious eternity. Such cases I have more than once seen, and have been led to draw very comfortable assurances from them.

As a further help, by way of insight in this interesting subject, it should be observed moreover, that these standards of character which I have mentioned as so many evidences of a renewed life, are not in all instances of the same clearness ; neither do they appear always equally bright and shining. They may, and certainly will, vary according to the different degrees of grace given, and according to the particular constitution and frame of the mind by whom that grace is received. The spiritual formation of the soul, like the natural structure of the body, is not in all instances of equal age, maturity, and vigour. We read in scripture of *babes* in Christ, as well as *young men* and *fathers*. Of some it is said, that "their faith groweth exceedingly," whilst in others it is weak, languid, and "ready to die." But then it is always to be understood, that in every

state the grace itself is still the same in its nature and principles, being of divine origin, and coming from the gift of God. It may differ in degree, and in the quantity imparted, according to the pleasure of the great Giver, like the talents mentioned in the gospel, which were distributed in various proportions to the servants of the householder ; but, notwithstanding, they were still talents of one and the same quality. The soul of every one begotten by God, to a new and spiritual life, “ is born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, which liveth and abideth for ever.” And to carry on the same beautiful figure, though the heavenly seed may be as small as the grain of mustard, yet it contains in embryo (as much as if matured to ripeness) no less than the largest shrub, all the future foliage, and the fruit. The child of grace, like the child of nature, is perfect in all its parts, though it may come into being in a state of weakness and imbecility ; for this only corresponds to its tender age and faculties. It may not be able to *do*, or to *apprehend* much, but if it cannot yet exercise the powers of one full grown, still it may be able to *walk* in the spiritual life ; or if not competent to this, it may *move* in it. Nay, if it *breathes* only, this is a sufficient indication that it *lives* ; and if it be “ but alive through Jesus Christ our Lord,” we have the apostle’s authority for it, that “ it is made free from sin, and become a servant unto God, the fruit thereof is unto holiness, and the end ” must be “ everlasting life.” The growth and expansion of its powers will be certain, though progressive ; going on from strength to strength, and from one degree of improvement to another, “ till it comes in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

If I have been happy enough to express myself in

proper terms on the subject, I should hope enough hath been said to throw a light upon this interesting point.

May the Lord forgive all that is amiss and defective in this feeble attempt to promote the Redeemer's interests in the earth, and graciously accept and bless all that is agreeable to his holy word. that "God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ!"

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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