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COLIN M'IVER.

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McIVER

THE
SOUTHERN PREACHER :

A COLLECTION

OF

SERMONS,

FROM THE

MANUSCRIPTS OF SEVERAL EMINENT MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL,

RESIDING IN THE SOUTHERN STATES.

CAREFULLY SELECTED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS, WITH THE CONSENT AND
APPROBATION OF THEIR RESPECTIVE AUTHORS.

TOGETHER WITH

A FEW POSTHUMOUS SERMONS,

FROM THE

MANUSCRIPTS OF EMINENT DECEASED MINISTERS,

Who, when living, had resided in the Southern States.

CAREFULLY SELECTED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS,

WITH THE CONSENT AND APPROBATION OF THOSE IN WHOSE POSSESSION THEY WERE
FOUND.

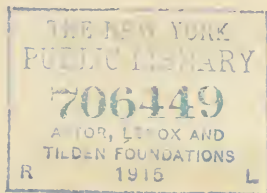
BY THE REV. COLIN M'IVER.

PHILADELPHIA:

PUBLISHED BY THE EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

William Fry, Printer.

.....
1824..



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, } DISTRICT OF CAPE-FEAR,
NORTH CAROLINA DISTRICT. } *To wit:*

BE IT REMEMBERED, that, on the 7th day of March, in the forty-eighth year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1823, the Rev. Colin M'Iver, of the said District, has deposited in this office, the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, viz:—

“The Southern Preacher: a collection of Sermons, from the Manuscripts of several eminent Ministers of the Gospel, residing in the Southern States.

“Carefully selected from the Original Manuscripts, with the consent and

“approbation of their respective authors. Together with a few Posthu-

“mous Sermons from the Manuscripts of eminent deceased Ministers,

“who, when living, had resided in the Southern States. Carefully selected

“from the Original Manuscripts, with the consent and approbation of

“those in whose possession they were found. By the Reverend Colin

“M'Iver.”

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned;” and also to an act entitled “An act, supplementary to an act, entitled an act, for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching, Historical and other prints.” Witness Carleton Walker, Clerk of the District of Cape-Fear.

CARLETON WALKER.

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THE Editor thinks it proper here to state, that, for a reason, of which, it is presumed, every reflecting reader will approve, the names of the authors of the several Sermons which this volume contains, are inserted only in the preceding table of contents. To attach them to each Sermon, was judged to be too conspicuous a display of authorship. It may not be inexpedient further to mention, that the notes inserted at the bottom of pages 168, 169, 190, and 322, were written by the authors of the several Sermons to which they are respectively attached. All the other notes were written by the Editor.

PREFACE.

WHOEVER undertakes to provide entertainment or instruction for the public, incurs a responsibility, proportionate to the importance of those subjects, on which he proposes either to entertain or instruct. This is equally true, whether what he offers be presented as the result of his own reflections, or as a selection from the works of others. Of the latter description, is the work herein offered to the public, as has been announced in the title page; and as the subjects on which this volume treats, are of the utmost importance, and have relation to an object of no less magnitude than the salvation of souls, the Editor is free to acknowledge, that his solicitude for the favourable reception of his book, is fully as great as it would have been, were he himself, not the compiler, but the author of the following volume.

It is believed, and perhaps not on slight grounds, that such a collection of Sermons as is here presented, will, by those for whose benefit it is chiefly intended, be read with more interest, than a volume of the same size would be, containing the productions of any one author; unless that author had already acquired considerable celebrity. Some of the considerations which support this opinion will here be briefly stated.

Every author has a style peculiar to himself. Two authors, whose productions, in point of style, are in all respects alike, are rarely to be met with. Novelty is generally pleasing; and with the exception already noticed, the taste for novelty is, perhaps, in general, more likely to be gratified by a judicious compilation, than by the performances of a single author. It often happens, that the same words, which convey a sentiment, very clearly, to the mind of one reader, are viewed by another as dark, obscure, or unintelligible; whilst the sentiment thus expressed, if clothed in different language, might appear to both, to be more forcibly delivered. Hence, the diversity of language which a good compilation embraces, will, it is apprehended, prove better suited to the various tastes, apprehensions, and capacities of miscellaneous readers, than that uniformity of style which is to be expected from a work, all prepared by the same hand. Moreover, as this volume will, in all probability, be principally read by the inhabitants of the Southern States, it may be fairly presumed, that this book will rarely be opened by any one, who will not find in it, the production of some Minister, with whom he is personally acquainted, and for whom, perhaps, he feels a personal attachment.

To the Editor of this volume, and doubtless also to the authors of the Sermons it contains, it is a matter of little concern, what may be said of its contents, by those who may choose to make them a subject of mere critical remark. The great objects the writers had in view, were, in the exercise of their Ministerial office, to instruct and persuade their hearers, to accept of salvation through

Jesus Christ, on the terms proposed in the Gospel; and to build up, in their most holy faith, those who had accepted of this salvation; and the Editor, in collecting the matter contained in this work, and presenting it to the public, was influenced by a desire to promote the same great objects; not by furnishing Sermons professedly better adapted to this end, by their own intrinsic excellence, than those already published; but by supplying the Southern people with a volume of discourses, calculated to interest and benefit them, from the considerations already suggested.

It is due to the authors of these Sermons to state, that, in general, they were written, not for the press, but in the ordinary course of weekly preparation for the pulpit; and, in addition to the statement of this fact, the Editor takes the freedom to remark, that, although there is reason to believe, that, had they been originally designed for the press, their style and composition would be more likely to fulfil the expectations of those who attach special importance to the nicest critical correctness; yet, it is very questionable, whether, in such a form, they would prove more acceptable to plain Christians, or more useful, than in the form in which they now appear.

In selecting from the manuscripts to which the Editor had access, it has been his aim, to contribute to the edification of his readers, by inserting only such discourses as he thought would generally be read, with pleasure and profit, by devout christians of every denomination; and, by carefully excluding every thing, which could have a tendency to give umbrage to any lover of Evangelical

truth. His sincere wishes are, that, in this object, he may not be found to have failed.

To the patrons of this volume, an apology is due, for the delay of its publication, so much beyond the time originally appointed for its appearance. On this subject, it was the sincere wish of the Editor, not to disappoint the expectation of his subscribers ; but, in executing his design, he met with difficulties which he had not anticipated ; and the delay arose, not from negligence on his own part, but, from a variety of circumstances beyond his control, which, to the bulk of his readers, it would be of no consequence to detail.

As some of the subscribers will probably recollect, that, in an early printed prospectus of this work, a list was given of the names of some of the Ministers, from whom materials for this book were expected ; it is here deemed proper to state, that, although this list was not given without the consent of the Ministers whose names appeared in the prospectus, as contemplated authors of the work ; yet, there are some of these Ministers, from whom the Editor has received no manuscripts. This fact is stated, for the single purpose, of establishing the Editor's claim to exemption from the censure of such of his subscribers as may be disappointed, in consequence of not finding here, the productions of certain authors, which they had reason to expect that this volume would contain.

To his brethren in the Ministry, who have generously aided him in the prosecution of this work, both by furnishing him with materials, and by extending their friendly counsel in the selection, he returns his grateful

acknowledgments; and, while he thus thanks them for past favours, he hopes, at the same time, that he does not apply in vain, when he solicits their earnest prayers, together with those of all God's children, that the Father of all mercies, and the God of all grace, may accompany this publication with his divine blessing, and make it effectual to the salvation of many souls.

SERMON I.

ON THE PERFECTION OF THE DIVINE LAW.

MATTHEW V. 48.

“ Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.”

IT has been sometimes thought, that the Scriptures contain a system of morals and religion, too perfect for our nature. Thence an argument has been deduced, that they could not have been derived from Heaven ; as it is said, that it would be, in a proper sense, unreasonable for us, to be expected and commanded, to do that which is impracticable. Our Lord, in his Sermon on the Mount, certainly lays down a very strict standard of duty to his disciples. And he not unfrequently refers in one way or another to the perfection of God himself, for illustration of the sense in which he would be understood, and to enforce the authority and responsibility under which we lie for its fulfilment.

It is the opinion of Bishop Sherlock, that the words of the text, “ Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect,” are to be limited in their application to the particular virtue which our Lord had just explained and inculcated. “ Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies ; bless them that curse you ; do good to them that hate you ; and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you.” And after some further illustration and

motive, he says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." That is, let your love be comprehensive of all, as that of God is; and let it not be confined to a few only.

It is probable that the text may have been intended to have a particular bearing upon the charity which he had just explained. It is remarkable, however, that Christ, through the whole of this discourse, which will be said to be far above what man ever taught, or would have considered himself safe in teaching, exhibits to us a perfection truly divine. This is seen in the beatitudes first pronounced; in such a practice and profession of the Gospel, as should be a light to the world; in the fulness and completion of the law; in the spirituality and extent of it, against murder, adultery, false witness, and revenge. The same wonderful perfection, which strikes us as soon as uttered by him, but which none else would have ventured to enforce, appears also in the precepts respecting alms, prayer, forgiveness of trespasses, fasting, and in his remarks respecting the treasures of this earth, the perverting influence of these, and of a corrupt nature upon our judgments, set forth by the sound and disordered eye; in the supreme love of God, in resignation to his will, in trusting to his goodness, and in that cheerful spirit which denies itself to anxious and disqualifying cares about future evils. Lastly, the same perfection also runs through his other directions respecting our judgments upon others and ourselves, prudence in avoiding offences, importunity and filial trust in making known our requests to God, an unyielding purpose to shun the road of death though strowed with pleasures; and to chuse truth and life though it should place us alone, or among a number that should seem as nothing in comparison with a countless throng; in the knowledge of the tree by its fruits; and finally in the principles upon which men shall sink

under condemnation, or rise to eternal life in the day of judgment. If any one will attentively read over any of these rules of righteousness, purity and love, enjoined upon those who would be his followers and subjects, he will scarcely fail to say, as Jesus himself signified on another occasion—"Truly these are the laws of a kingdom which is not of this world." The language of them all, and not that only which explains the nature and extent of charity, seems to be, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect." It is true, some of these laws relate to properties in our nature, and to objects, in respect to which we cannot be supposed to have any resemblance to the attributes or dispositions of the divine nature. But it will, probably, nay, assuredly be found upon thorough examination, with experience and undiverted reason for our guides, that there is not a precept given by Christ, which is not indispensable to the perfection and maintenance of those virtues in us, which correspond to the divine attributes. This might be shown in regard to all the particulars; but it will be sufficient to remark, with respect to the law of chastity, which may seem least of all to have a reference to any perfection in God, that the observance of it, is most intimately united with the purity, and with the worth and enjoyment of every virtue in the mind and in the heart.

Though it were supposed, then, that the text was enjoined by Christ, with immediate and primary application to our charity, to illustrate its comprehensiveness; yet, by the unqualified terms in which every command is delivered, showing us the most consummate perfection in all things, were it construed with a reference to all the other principles and doctrines he inculcates, we should only apply to them in a single expression, that which is conspicuously intended in the exposition of each. As to any argument respecting a supposed unreasonableness

in the Gospel, in demanding absolute perfection of such beings as we are, an extension of the construction to the whole of christian virtue has the same effect, as if it be confined to a single one ; since it would be as unreasonable to require of us, a divine perfectness in one, as in all, upon the principle on which such an objection proceeds.

It shall be my object in this discourse to show, that the law of our duty given us in the Scriptures, is perfect without abatement or qualification. In doing this, I shall first take notice of some apparent difficulties, which may furnish objections to the doctrine ; and then show the method of the Scriptures in removing these difficulties.

First—I am to take notice of some difficulties apparently furnishing objections to our being placed under a perfect law of righteousness.

It is objected, that if we be subject to much infirmity, and corrupt by nature, as the Scriptures declare, and as we shall acknowledge, it is implied, that we cannot fulfil a perfect law of charity, of justice, of self control, of purity from all mixture of sin, in thought, word, and action. And it cannot be rationally supposed, that God will command us to do that, which, in a strict sense, is to us impracticable. This, I believe, is the difficulty in its full force. From this, different persons would draw different conclusions. Some would say, that we are not to consider Christ, as actually intending to be understood, in the full sense of his expressions ; but only so far as our infirmity, and inevitable sinfulness, will permit us to go, in our obedience ; while others, declining this construction, would at once conclude, that the Scriptures, being thus obviously unreasonable, are not to be received as the word of God. The former of these opinions may be resorted to, by such as would still claim to be christians ; the latter is that of unbelief. Let us see whether the

difficulty be really as great, as it purports to be; and whether the conclusions to which it is supposed to lead, can be properly sustained.

That a law, or system of laws, may properly be entitled to the name, it must be explicit, and apply itself alike to all. It must give a full description of the duty to be performed, or of the action or sentiment which it forbids; for otherwise a misapprehension of it, and consequent transgression, might be chargeable to the vague sense in which the precept was delivered, and not to the intention or fault of the transgressor. But what definiteness could be given to the expression or the construction of a law, which should accommodate itself to human ability, or human weakness? If the degree of moral strength, for the fulfilment of the law, were precisely the same in all men, it might be supposed possible to frame the rules for the direction of our conduct, according to this degree. But is it not probable, may we not consider it as certain, that, diversified as the human race is, so that we might as easily find two, that were perfectly alike in their faces and their persons, as in the qualities and faculties of their minds, no law which should be fitted to one, would be proper for any other, that ever did or ever shall exist upon the earth? They, therefore, who complain of the perfection of the laws dictated to us as divine in the sacred Scriptures, and who insist that they must be accommodated to our weakness or depravity, before they can be considered as rational, ought first to show the possibility of what they approve and ask. Is it not evident, that a law must be prescribed for every individual, that it may be exactly suited to his peculiar dispositions and capacities, and become a rational law for his government and proper responsibility? Nay, must it not change continually even for each individual, since in no two successive years, might we not say months, or days, does the

moral strength of the same person continue precisely at the same standard? If a man improve in obedience and virtue, the law must advance to superior claims upon him, that his spiritual growth may not be at an end. But on the other hand, should he degenerate, and become hardened in guilt, and blinded in his moral discernment, the law too must descend with him, and abate its claims, lest it ask too much, for the depravity and moral weakness which he has contracted by the wickedness of his life. Is not all this too inconsistent, and almost too futile for our serious consideration? And yet it is the direct and necessary consequence of the plea we are so apt to hear, and which we ourselves also, are too prone to indulge in our own hearts, against the unconditional perfection of the commandment, delivered in the Gospel by Jesus Christ. The law of our duty then must be a perfect law. It must be such as the Scriptures themselves pronounce it to be, "holy, just and good." It must be the same for all; otherwise it would be subject to the charge of partiality, one of the most odious that is brought against an arbitrary and fickle government. It must be unchangeable, or it would be chargeable with caprice. Were it not both universal and immutable, it would not appear to result from the divine nature; it would indicate that God had not an essential and supreme regard for virtue, but that his attachment to it was so loose and versatile, that his justice would be without consistency; holiness would cease to be the standard of his attributes, and upon the steadiness of his government, no reliance could be placed. Whatever his creatures may become, in whatever circumstances they may be, the spirit of his laws must be the same to all, to angels, to glorified spirits, to men upon this earth, and to all rational beings in the various provinces of his creation. Should he cease to abide by this standard, the wicked would find a plea for

the extenuation of disorder and sin ; and thus an authority for them, so far as we can see, in the example and sanction, I would speak it with reverence, even of God himself.

But again, the Scriptures, as has been remarked, are disapproved, for demanding of us the practice of a law of perfect righteousness and purity ; or at least that construction is disapproved, which gives to them such a sense. But when such objections are raised, is it sufficiently considered what would be the consequence, if the Gospel were to proceed upon a different plan, and prescribe to us a virtue, which was evidently defective ; and defective it must evidently be, did it aim to be such only as we can practice ? Would not those, think you, who now find fault, some even so far as to deny the Scriptures to be the word of God, on account of their alleged unfitness, and superiority to our nature, then urge with equal earnestness, and certainly with infinitely greater advantage, that here was a law of human conduct and principle, professing to be declared from Heaven, when in the imperfection and deficiency of its provisions, and in the allowance it gave to sinfulness and corruption in us, it carried within itself, and bore upon its very face, the sentence of its own condemnation, as the result of human ignorance and depravity ? What answer could there be returned, were it asserted upon the authority of such an argument, that this also was another contrivance by its authors, to impose upon mankind, a pretended revelation, as *appears*, they would say, from the policy of consulting the passions, the prejudices, and the vices, of men ? That this is no groundless supposition, is proved by that, which actually occurred in the constructions of the Jews. John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a Devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a man glut-

tonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners ; but wisdom is justified of her children.

If this subject be dispassionately, and thoroughly examined, will it not be found, my hearers, that the difficulties, imagined to spring from the prescription of a perfect law of righteousness in the Scriptures, cannot furnish a proper reason for any other plan, implying accommodation to the weakness, the ignorance, or the sinfulness of our nature ? Is it not evident, that there is no standard, at which the corruption, and the inability of our race can be fixed, and therefore, no one system of laws can be fitted to it. If the demands of the law, were adapted to the lowest, the highest would have a moral excellence, beyond what the law of God would require. If it be proportioned to the strength of the individual, then the quantity of virtue which every one is to practice, must be left open, to his own vague and interested estimation, or else the sinner could derive no consolation or relief from such a rule, while the laws and government of God would fluctuate, with the degeneracy which his creatures might capriciously be willing to incur.

Have we not reason to apprehend, that we may not be disinterested in our feelings, towards this sacred volume, when consequences so striking result from the objections to which we eagerly and hopefully resort, against them ? Let us be willing to admit that this may be so, while in the *second* place we consider, whether the plan of the Gospel will not relieve the subject from every embarrassment. And while we consider it, let us not suppose that it is so vain an object, as the mere ascendancy in an argument, which we have in view. Were this all, my friends, to me it appears, that the time and pains employed in the discussion, would be spent to little purpose ; would

minister indeed to most unworthy purposes, instead of being fit to occupy your attention under the pretext of edification and spiritual improvement. Through the influence of the world, and the multitude of its objects, acting upon our senses, through our aversion to mingle with the succession of its instant amusements and gratifications, the serious considerations of virtue, religion, and immortality, we are apt to seize, and content ourselves with views so remarkably defective, and partial on these vast and momentous subjects, that in the first moment of their exposure, we easily take refuge in an entire levity, under the plea, that the subject is too gloomy and repulsive, to be permitted to interrupt and spoil the pleasures we are intent to enjoy ; or to call into action the sober energy of the mind, that we may avoid the inconsistencies into which we have been betrayed. But let us consent, at some times, to dwell upon the reflection, to which religion is calling us, that this life cannot continue long to wear the aspect, which it now appears, so easily, to assume in our eye.

It will probably be found, if we will consent to divest ourselves of those limited, and interested views, which are suggested by our passions, and urged upon us by the world, that the Gospel alone, explains to us the conditions of our present life, and the principles upon which God can treat us, consistently, as subjects of his government here, and as looking forward to Salvation through his grace. We have seen some of the conspicuous difficulties in which we are instantly involved by a supposition, that God may give up the perfection of his laws, to devise and adopt a system, accommodated to our sinfulness and infirmity. Christ has told us, that he came not to destroy the law, but that one jot or one tittle should not pass from it, till all be fulfilled. And from the manner in which he lays down every precept, and sets aside

every gloss, and every contrivance of men, for detracting from its fulness, or weakening its force, there is reason to think, that it was his intention, to place it before us, as a perfect rule of duty; and to impress upon us, that it called for our obedience to its utmost demands.

Is it not apparent, too, that this was the doctrine which the Apostles taught, they having derived it from Jesus himself, and having ultimately enlarged their views, to a full comprehension and admission of it, both by his express declaration, and the inspiration of his spirit? "Do we then make void the law," saith the Apostle to the Romans; "God forbid; yea, we establish the law."

The law of God, then, is unchangeable in its obligation. No inability incurred by his creatures through transgression, can exempt us from its conditions. Have we all considered, how much is implied, in such a view as this? Is there one of us, who will lay claim to innocence, by a perfect fidelity and adherence to every principle of holiness and righteousness? Have our love, our fear, our faith, towards God, as our Creator, and Benefactor, been ever alive in our bosoms? Have we expressed them promptly, and piously, and fervently in our words and actions, upon all proper occasions, both private and public? Is there any sense, in which our allegiance to him has been cultivated and sustained, as to our Creator, our Preserver and our rightful Sovereign? Have we made it our object to find out his will, by all such means as might aid us, in arriving at it, putting them to a faithful proof, on account of the incomparable value of that knowledge? When in our dispassionate moments, we were convinced of the truth respecting his will, have we treasured up the wisdom in our hearts, and faithfully and cheerfully fallen in with its dictates? In discovering at any time, that we have evidently broken the law of our duty, have deserted the path of innocence, have with indifference or

enmity set ourselves to do evil, with a determined rejection of all prudent regard to the state of our own hearts, the influence of our example, the rights of others, or the authority of God, have we mourned in secret, and with a reforming contrition, over these evidences of our depravity, besought God, with heaviness of heart, a deep humility, and trust in his mercy, that he would pardon our offences and aid us effectually in our endeavours after a restoration to his favour? Have we never violated the dictates of our conscience, of reason, of the divine command, calling us to the habitual feeling, and practice of mildness, meekness, forbearance, and a forgiving disposition? And what shall we say respecting that unqualified perfection, in principle and practice, unfolded to us by Christ in his Sermon upon the Mount? Can we deny that here is a law of righteousness, which is strictly unimpeachable, not only calculated to make us better, but setting before us an indefinite improvement for our nature; showing us every virtue as it really is, properly binding upon us as intelligent beings, and worthy of God, who would purify us from our corruptions, raise us from the ruins of our fallen state; would fit us for the glories of his immediate presence, for solid enjoyment and prosperity here, and for the happiness of Heaven? When we look at these holy and unexceptionable rules of thought and conduct, can we endure the contrast between such perfection, and the picture of our life, which, our knowledge of ourselves, and of our fellow creatures, sets before our view? “When thou doest thine alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” Whosoever has had a lustful desire, is guilty before God. “Forgive us our trespasses, *as we forgive them* who trespass against us. If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave thy gift, first go and be reconciled

“to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift.” Not an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but “love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that use you despitefully and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven. For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them who love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Heathens the same? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect.” Must we not exclaim, in the contemplation of this sinless rectitude, this elevated and boundless charity, this goodness, beaming with the glories of the Godhead, “If thou Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Enter not into judgment with thy servant. For in thy sight shall no man living be justified.”

For the difficulties which occur from the perfection of the divine law, and the weakness and sinfulness of our nature, disqualifying us for a conformity with such a standard, the Gospel furnishes the only satisfactory solution. He sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but have everlasting life. Through the light of this mercy we see the consistency of retaining the law in all the perfection of its principles and demands, with a deliverance from the consequences of its transgressions, which are inevitable by us. While God adheres to the holiness of his nature, and speaks to us in the presence of the universe, in the same language of requirement as he does to the most exalted beings who have never disobeyed his will, he may now remit the sentence of our condemnation, and offer us repentance, and restoration to his favour: If it be asked, can he do this, without relinquishing his claims upon our universal obedience, and incurring that

desertion of his justice, which is implied in bending his laws to our inability? the answer is, that all this is fully and gloriously attained in the redemption through Christ. If this be rightly understood, it furnishes no encouragement to sin, by a previous proffer of indulgence; while the guilt we contract through our incapacity for the fulfilment of a perfect righteousness, may still have an animating assurance of pardon, because it has proceeded from a degeneracy incurable by us, exposing us justly, and but for such a method of recovery, inevitably too, to final depravity and its hopeless miseries.

Now, if we ask for the privilege of repentance, it may be granted, without detracting from the perfection of God's justice, or placing his precepts at the caprice of the transgressor, or encouraging such of his creatures to a trial of disobedience, as have never failed in their truth to his will. In the Gospel alone, such a dispensation as this is unfolded to our view. These, fellow Christians, are not mere words of course, proceeding from professional interests and prejudices. They invite and challenge your most serious, and scrutinizing, and experienced consideration. You see men rejecting them long, with the same sentiments of disregard, which you may possibly feel, and yet at last acknowledging them in all the force which this sacred volume ascribes to them, in the explication of our condition as sinful creatures, and as hoping for reconciliation and acceptance with God. God forbid, that such may not be the result with you. But why should I speak of future time? Is not the whole system of ideas which the Gospel combines and presents to us more free from difficulty than any elsewhere derived, respecting such abatements of the divine law, as shall proportion its demands to so indefinite a standard, as our ability and our affections, and the force which temptation may be supposed to exert upon us? If Christ in the

Gospel calls upon us to fulfil the law of God in its perfection, we do not understand him aright, if this appear to us a hard or unreasonable demand, or if it seem calculated to drive us to despair. He sets before us the perfect nature, and the immutable principles of the divine government, only to make us acquainted with our true condition, by the light of that perfection to which we must be brought, if we ever be qualified for the favour of God, and the happiness of Heaven. The law of God is thus displayed, that we may be prepared to understand and acknowledge the value of that unspeakable mercy which is unfolded, in the plan of redemption, through the Son of God. Can we not fulfil the righteousness of the law? What then shall be the result of this conviction? Shall it be to make us deny the reasonableness of that authority which imposes it, and thus to make us revolt even against God, or reject all the evidences of his revealed will? Or, shall not the result rather be such as accords with the conviction, the humility, and the repentance which he expressly declares to be essential to our salvation, and to which he encourages and urges us by the blessing he pronounces upon them? "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." How, then, are the blessings here declared to be understood, except through the condemnation under which we lie, by the law of God, a deep sense of our moral guilt, and a conviction, that without the mercy of God extended to us, through Jesus Christ, we are without hope? The atonement which Christ was to make for sin upon the Cross, the obedience he was to pay in our stead, furnish the true solution of the mystery which appears in his pronouncing precepts, which imply no relinquishment in God, of the full perfection of his laws. Not indeed, that this relinquishment, could have been

consistently admitted by him, had no such method of satisfaction to his broken law been adopted by him ; but that without this satisfaction, we must have been forever excluded from the hopes of restoration, from the effects of sin ; must have continued forever under the righteous anger of God.

Consider then the true object for which the law is now revealed and enforced, both moral and ceremonial. It must, as the Apostle tells us, be now considered, not as a means of Salvation, as though we could, by our obedience, lay claim to its rewards ; but as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

If the law cannot consistently abate its requirements ; if we can have no pretensions to fulfil its conditions, what remains, but to admit the truth respecting our ruined and helpless state, to consider the vast distance at which we stand from the wisdom of the Gospel, from perfect rectitude, from fitness for Heaven ? Is it not evident that if we be left to our own strength alone, this distance is as impassable, as the gulph which divides Heaven from Hell ? What prospect is there, except through the mercy of God, combined with the resources of his wisdom, that we can be renewed to the capacities of obedience, or delivered from the condemnation necessarily connected with the inherent corruption of our nature, and the practical depravity of our lives ?

The pride of human nature objects to the Gospel, because it magnifies the wickedness of the human heart. This it appears to do by presenting to us a perfect law of righteousness, and shewing us the contrast of our degeneracy. It does this, by setting before our view, the holy character of God, and his justice in requiring the penalty due to the violation of every duty. It does this also in exhibiting the incarnation, the sufferings, the perfect obedience, and the great mysterious sacrifice of Jesus

Christ, the Son of God, which he offered in his own body for sin upon the Cross. If all this be true, who shall say that the evil of our transgressions is not great, and no longer to be palliated or denied? If in all this the Scriptures declare no more, than what has actually occurred, then indeed, without repentance, and faith, and renovation of heart, we can have no hope towards God; but we must resign all our pretensions to the virtues in which we fondly repose our confidence; and the complete humiliation which the Gospel claims from us, under a sense of our unworthiness of any thing, but God's righteous anger, must be the first act by which we can look for pardon and acceptance.

If, my hearers, we claim the privilege of being imperfect, with a plea, that a blameless obedience is impracticable to us, consider, and say, might not I, or you, or any other mortal, like ourselves, venture to promise the ratification of the privilege, provided you will define, with a precision not to be mistaken, the limit at which the plea shall stop, and be no further urged? If God were to offer you this day, in explicit terms, to be fulfilled with the unfailing fidelity of his truth, the privilege of tracing out the extent of obedience, within which you should finally be an heir of Heaven, and without which you should be an heir of Misery, do you think, while you were thus choosing for yourself, you could possibly feel safe, while you retained one principle of moral rectitude, as prescribed by the law of God, to be a ground, on which you could with safety be finally judged? Were God to offer exemption from the consequences of all the sins you ever committed, upon the condition that you should be able to select one action unexceptionably good, from all the actions of your past life, consider and say, would you have any assured trust, that you would be saved from the final misery which should await your

failure to fulfil such terms, liberal as they would be? What, then, shall be the limit, I repeat, to which we, thankless, and inconsiderate, and presumptuous mortals shall confine our demands of indulgence in sin?

Were I to address a few words to the young upon this occasion, the subject is not without sentiments peculiarly appropriate to you. You, my young friends, are professedly, and conspicuously engaged in the pursuit of all that may give perfection to your character. To give you perfection? you may ask. Yes, it is the object of education to impart every qualification, which may fit you to act your part with the utmost efficacy, with a view to usefulness, and true honour, and dignity, and consistency among your fellow men. It is its object to present you to your friends, to society, to your country, and to the world, as good relations, good neighbours, good patriots; and every talent, and all knowledge, and all skill, are but little understood, if this be not considered their end. But how shall the endowments of the mind, and all personal qualifications, have the greatest assurance, and the most essential aids given them for the accomplishment of these purposes, but through the influence of an unfailing principle of rectitude? If you have not yet laid it down as a certain truth, you have yet to learn, and the world will practically teach it to you, that the only basis upon which you can efficiently build up a structure of merit, and excellence, and happiness, in personal qualities, that shall recommend you to God and man, is the reformation of the heart, with an understanding enlightened and directed by a moral system, that will never be the advocate of sin, in whatever captivating or imposing form it may offer itself. Such a system is to be found, I know not where, if it be not exhibited to us in the life and the discourses of Jesus Christ, and in the doctrines and principles of his kingdom.

It is not to be imagined that Christians lay claim, God forbid that they should be so ignorant and presumptuous as to do it, to an actual attainment of the perfection to which they are called.

Hear what one of the greatest models which Christianity ever produced in our nature, has said of himself. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. But this one thing I do, forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things, which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

This is the great scope of the Gospel; in this is its superior excellency. It gives us the perfect system of moral principles; it calls us to the persevering pursuit of this in the present life; it alone furnishes us the means by which we can successfully advance; it provides for our deliverance from the consequences of sin, and it raises us, at length, to the glory and perfection of Heaven.

It is only in the correct views of the Gospel, in repentance of sin, in habitual converse with God, and in a life habitually governed by the precepts and maxims of God's holy word, that the perfection to which Christians are called, consists; at this perfection, we should be continually aiming; and if we are Christians indeed, then it will follow, that, "*whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, 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,*" we will "*think of these things and do them.*"

SERMON II.

ON THE GUILT AND DANGER OF DELAYING TO KEEP GOD'S
COMMANDMENTS.

PSALM CXIX. 60.

“I made haste and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.”

AMONG the moral phenomena observable in the character of man, no one is more remarkable, than his propensity to put off the consideration and the performance of his religious duties. When St. Paul reasoned before Felix, “of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” that wicked and worldly minded man, conscience-struck and trembling, bade the Apostle go his way for that time, promising to send for him when he found it convenient. But we are not told that he ever found it convenient to hear him again on those subjects. And the conduct of Felix is but too true a specimen—too faithful a picture, of the conduct of a large portion of the human race. Some, when young, flattering themselves with long life, find it an easy matter to persuade themselves, for they think it self evident, that they have time enough to become religious. After they are advancing from full maturity in the journey of life, much the same opinion obtains. And even when age and infirmities proclaim their approach to the tomb, death appears to them but in distant prospective, and religion a consideration of secondary importance. The subject which, one would think, would be nearest their hearts, seems to be least capable of engaging their attention; and the longer they

live, the less they appear to think of dying. While their bodies are on the very point of entering the harbour of Eternity, their thoughts and affections are still tost about on the wide ocean of life: and nothing but the visible advent of the King of terrors, can awake them from their guilty slumbers.

Others again have never made religion the subject of a moment's reflection. Gay, thoughtless, full of business, full of cares, eager in their chace after the pleasures of life, or engaged in the pursuits of ambition, the interests of eternity are always kept out of view. To serious religious thoughts they are utter strangers: and if the subject should occur or be mentioned to them, it will be received, as Felix received the observations of St. Paul. The truths of God will pass through their ears, without leaving a trace behind—they will glance from their hearts, as does a ray of light from a block of marble. Or if they should occasion the least uneasiness, it is immediately removed, by the resolution, I will consider this matter as soon as I can get time. But they manage so as never to get time for this purpose.

Now, *this delay, and procrastination, in matters of religion, is most absurd, iniquitous, and fatal.* When God commands, who could think, it would ever enter the heart of man, to disobey? Whence could so impious a thought proceed? One would suppose that a reasonable being would, as soon, armed with a fire-brand, leap into a magazine of gunpowder, as to dare, in any instance, to run counter to Jehovah's orders. What! not attend to the directions of the dread Sovereign of the skies, whose frown is death? Had you not much better bare your bosom to the vollied lightning? Had you not much better sink, through the yawning earth, to her very centre?

And yet, it is to be feared, there are some of you, who have paid no more attention to the *commands of the great*

God, than you have paid to the mandates of the emperor of China. You have heard Ministers of the Gospel talk about them; but you have perhaps never reflected, that they were *addressed to you in particular*—and that *you*, are as much interested in them, as though they were intended for you alone. You have been told that, with respect to religion, you would have no right to the title of a *reasonable* creature, unless you sometimes called your own heart to a strict account, and seriously reflected, upon some of those awful subjects, that form the groundwork of religion. But is there not reason to believe, that some of you, have never spent *one serious heart-devoted hour*, in the sober contemplation of religious subjects? Have you not either thought it unimportant—or that you had time enough—or prevented yourself from thinking about it, altogether? And how can you reconcile such conduct to your conscience? Do you not feel yourself a most guilty and *ungrateful* being? The mighty God sends forth his word, and you pay no attention! Your Creator, your Father, your Benefactor, your Friend, speaks to you, and you deign him no notice! Can we easily conceive of more consummate *impiety*? Has not God the greatest reason to call Heaven and earth to witness the perverseness of man? “Hear Oh Heavens! and give ear Oh Earth! I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.” Have you reason to find fault, or to consider yourself unjustly degraded, when he places, even the ox and the ass above you, on account of your thoughtlessness and ingratitude? “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib, but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider!” Oh how far must your heart be gone from original rectitude, if God is not in all your thoughts!

But the habitual sinner is not only guilty of ingratitude, and of the most unnatural and impious disobe-

dience to Almighty God ; but he is, of all reasonable creatures, *most unreasonable*. Your own reason, my sinful fellow-mortal, to which some so often resort for protection against the word of God, your own reason agrees with revelation, in laying it down, as a maxim, that *matters of the greatest moment, ought to receive your first and greatest attention* ; and that, at any event, they ought never to be forgotten, or neglected ; though you may find it necessary, at the same time with them, to attend to matters of subordinate importance. Though, for the sake of relaxation and enjoyment, you might think it necessary, and therefore a duty, to devote some time to innocent amusement ; yet, would you not get out of all patience with the man, who should plead this duty, as an exemption from all the more laborious and more necessary duties of life ? Of two duties, when both cannot be performed at once, that which is most important should first be discharged. If both cannot be consistently attended to at the same time, as is the case with our religious and our worldly duties, the most important ought surely not to be neglected. If either of them must be left undone, the less ought to give way to the greater. “ *Seek first the kingdom of Heaven.* ” “ Labour for the meat that endureth to everlasting life.”

If the question were now put to you, whether you would lose the happiness of this world, or the happiness of a future life, it would be an insult to common sense, to suppose, that you could hesitate, a moment, in making your choice. And the supposition might, perhaps, excite not a little of your indignation. But let me ask : If you have, all your lifetime, been so immersed in business, or in pleasure, as to neglect the “ *one thing needful* ; ” or, if you have never thought of it ; or, if you have kept putting it off, till a more convenient season ; have you not dropped the substance, and been grasping at the shadow ?

Have you not been busily engaged with trifles, while matters of everlasting moment have been kept out of view? Have you not been sacrificing your real interests, to your pleasure? Have you not been neglecting the first, and the most important of your duties, while you have been labouring, in the performance of those, which, comparatively, are no duties, with as much assiduity and earnestness, as though you had been climbing up the steep ascent to Heaven? as though you had been toiling for immortal life? Surely, this is more than “labour in vain.”
This is folly in the abstract!

But this is not all. To delay repentance and reformation—to put off the consideration, and the practice of religion, is not only unnatural, ungrateful, and unreasonable; it is also *extremely dangerous*.

First—Because time is not our own.

Secondly—Because the worth of salvation is great, and cannot be properly done in a short time.

Thirdly—Because it becomes more difficult, the longer it is put off.

Fourthly—Because, amid the infirmities of age, the pressure of calamities, or the terrors of a dying bed, if done at all, it will be done very imperfectly.

Fifthly—Because the more imperfectly it is done, the less will be our happiness in the world to come.

Lastly—Because God may withdraw from us, the assistance of his grace, and render it impossible for us to repent: and then everlasting, and irremediable ruin, must be the consequence. The consideration of these points will, I hope, be sufficient to convince you, of the danger, the folly, and the guilt of delay in religion; and will induce you to imitate the conduct of the Psalmist, who “made haste and delayed not to keep God’s commandments.”

First—Delay is dangerous, because time is not our own—is short—and is precarious. It is a truth, which ought to be forever on our minds, that time is Heaven's gift, or rather Heaven's *loan*; and that Heaven grants us this loan, not as a means of enjoyment, in this world, but as a means of procuring the enjoyment of the world to come. Now if we spent our time as God wishes us to spend it, in preparing for eternity, we might hope, that he would continue his loan, until we were prepared: but we can have no such hope, if we abuse it, and use it for a purpose, for which He never intended it. If a child abuse what the parent lent him for useful purposes, the child has nothing to expect, but that the parent will deprive him of it. For if the goodness of the parent gave it, the same goodness may take it away, to prevent him from turning it to his own destruction. Time is not our own; but is a talent put out upon interest. And it is a dangerous thing to neglect, or to misapply it. *The unprofitable servant was cast into outer darkness.*

Moreover, life is short, at the longest: and it is a species of property, extremely precarious. In prospective, it seems as if it could never end; but when it is past, it is like a dream of the last night. And our thinking it so much longer than it really is, gives rise to some very dangerous, and fatal errors. The foolish Virgins, thinking they had time enough to furnish and trim their lamps, were called upon unexpectedly, and unprepared; and the consequence was, they were shut out from the Bridegroom's presence. Thus death often surprises those who delay their repentance, and reformation: and they must expect, with the foolish Virgins, to be shut out from Jesus, the great Bridegroom, and head of his Church.

After all, short as time is, delay would not be so dangerous, if we could always know the time of our visita-

tion. But Heaven has, for wise purposes, rendered life not only short, but uncertain. We are never secure from the arrest of death. We can never call to-morrow our own. The duty that is put off till to-morrow, may remain for ever undone. If our everlasting happiness depends upon what is to be done to-morrow, that happiness may be irreparably lost. Procrastination is a moral vice, which has been the bane of thousands. If all those who have been deprived of their salvation by delay, could be piled up on the surface of the earth, they would make a column high as Heaven. Multitudes are constantly crowding the gates of death, who have been carried away, in the midst of their security, crying peace, peace; “when I have a convenient season, I will hear you again on this matter.” It is indeed, a most dangerous thing, to put off the business of religion, to a future day. When the rich fool, in the Gospel, had laid plans to enlarge his barns and store-houses; and in the prospect of peace and plenty, for many years to come, had determined to eat, drink, and be merry, alas! poor wretch, he had not twenty-four hours to live! You, my dear fellow-mortal, may perhaps have no more religion than this rich fool. What if you should have no longer to live! Oh be wise, and consider your latter end—make haste, with David, and “delay not to keep God’s commands.” When Heaven or Hell must turn up, be not so unconcerned about the cast of the die. “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” “To day while you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

Delaying our repentance, then, is dangerous, because time is a loan—because it is short—because it is uncertain. This danger is, *Secondly*, vastly increased, by the *importance, and the greatness of the work of Salvation*. Was there but little to gain or lose, men might be excused, for their indifference. To a man who was satisfied with his present wealth, one hundred pounds gained or

lost might be a trifle:—and to a worldling, delighted with his earthly gratifications, the hope or fear of a few years' happiness or misery hereafter, might be too inconsiderable, to make him change his course of life. But when we reflect, that everlasting ages of happiness or misery depend upon our conduct, the subject swells into dimensions, too vast for the human mind to conceive. To subject ourselves, to a whole year of pain, for a single hour's gratification, would be dreadful. Much more dreadful would it be, to suffer seventy years, for one hour's enjoyment. No one would be mad enough, to purchase pleasure, at so dear a market. And every thing that might possibly lead to these dreadful consequences, would be thought extremely hazardous. How much more dangerous then is delay in religion; where the consequences are important, beyond calculation. For one hour's enjoyment, in comparison of seventy years of misery, is much more, than seventy years of happiness are, in comparison of eternal ages of woe. Were each individual of the human race to be happy or miserable, for ninety-nine hundred thousand millions of years, and were we, in order to find the *whole sum* of happiness or misery, during that period, to add together the sufferings or enjoyments, of every one that has been born into the world, since the creation, the sum total of this happiness or misery of the whole human race, during the period of ninety-nine hundred thousand millions of years, would be inconceivably less, than the aggregate happiness or misery of *one single soul*, which enjoys or suffers through all eternity. Because the above period is limited, but eternity has no limits. And if such an eternity of happiness may, through the mercy of God in Christ, be purchased by a life of piety, is not a life of piety of incalculable importance? If all this happiness may be lost, and an eternity of suffering ensue, in consequence of delaying our repent-

ance and reformation, is not such delay dangerous beyond conception?

Add to this, that the *work of salvation is so great*, that it cannot be duly performed, in a short time. We have so many passions and propensities to subdue, so many temptations and evil habits to overcome, so many trials and self-denials to undergo, so many virtues to cultivate, so many duties to practice, and so many graces to establish in our hearts and lives, that our religious character is the work of years. And, strange to tell, some nevertheless keep putting it off, and putting it off, and putting it off, till the very last hour of their lives. Is not this acting the fool on the very borders of eternity? Do these persons not seem to try, whether they cannot ruin themselves? What should we think of the man, who put off the whole business of the year, to the very last day of that year, particularly, if the happiness of the next year depended upon it? Should we not think that he was trying a very dangerous experiment? Nay, should we not think him deranged in his intellects? And what then shall we think of him, who puts off the *whole business of life*, to the very last period of life—when for what he knows, death may surprise him, the very next moment, and deprive him of everlasting happiness, nay, sink him into everlasting perdition? Oh, from hardness of heart—from blindness of eyes—from security in sin—and from delaying our repentance and reformation, Good Lord deliver us!

If nothing more could be said, of the danger of delay, this would be enough. But this danger is increased, *Thirdly*—Because the longer the work of salvation is put off, *the more difficult it will become*. For through increased cares, and established habits, we become less and less disposed, and less and less able to undertake and perform it. That our cares grow less, as we grow older,

is generally the reverse of the truth. Our cares increase with our age ; and if we have no time, to remember our Creator, in the days of our youth, the chances will be ten to one against us, afterwards. Moreover, after the habit of neglecting or delaying the concerns of religion, is once formed, it is extremely difficult to alter it : and the longer we act, according to that habit, the more completely will it be established, and the greater is the probability against a reformation. For the difficulty is prodigiously increased : and the greater the difficulty, the less willing flesh and blood are, to undertake it—the less able they are to perform it. Daily experience and observation prove, what reluctance and difficulty, men manifest, and encounter, in entering upon even the slightest reformation. That to which our affections are wedded, we cannot give up without pain, and struggles. It is not in our nature, to turn and direct our course up the steep and arduous hill of religion, while we are comfortably travelling down, the broad and easy road to ruin. And what is worse, we find it so easy, and we feel it so safe, that we will not be persuaded it is dangerous—we dread the idea of being convinced of its danger, and we overlook, or shut our eyes upon that dreadful gulph, which yawns to receive us, at the end of our course.

The danger of delay then, is greatly increased, because it renders a religious life much more difficult. He who delays to keep Gods' commands, is like a traveller, who, having already a considerable load upon his back, is nevertheless daily adding a little to it—the longer he continues, the heavier will be his burden. Moreover, as he is travelling directly from Heaven, the longer he delays, the greater must be his distance from that blessed place, and if he undertake to return, the more tedious will be his journey back again. And as the path of religion is narrow, straight and steep, he will find the work most

arduous and painful; and he will be convinced, that those who delay their repentance, act as though they were out of their senses. For they are only raising mountains over which they will be obliged to climb—multiplying the difficulties and struggles which they will be obliged to encounter—increasing the number and strength of those enemies which they must subdue, and exasperating the sufferings they must undergo, in their return towards Heaven. If such be the consequences of delay, who would not make haste to keep God's commandments ?

But *Fourthly*—Should our life be prolonged, (which is a matter of great uncertainty,) and we put off the keeping of God's commandments, till we are driven to it, by the infirmities of age, the pressure of calamities, or the terrors of a dying bed ; if it be possible, at that time, to “turn unto the Lord,” which is very seldom the case, our duty, if done at all then, will be done very imperfectly. Thousands under the hand of affliction, and at the approach of danger or of death, have expressed great penitence, and have resolved, ever after, to live a religious life ; when nevertheless, after their escape, it was with them, as with the brute which returns to his “wallowing.” They were so attached to their former course of life, and they saw so many difficulties, in repentance and reformation, that they again put off the evil hour—bade conscience hush, and lived on as before, promising themselves, with Felix, a more convenient season; or deluding themselves into the belief, that the eleventh hour, as it is termed, would be time enough ; when alas, perhaps, the eleventh hour left them not a moment's time to prepare for eternity ! Thousands again, alarmed at their danger, overwhelmed with a sense of their guilt, and discovering that they had the work of a whole life, to complete in a few days, or perhaps a few hours, have despaired of suc-

cess, and died in sullen or agonizing impenitence. Some, till their last moment, have flattered themselves with the hopes of a recovery, and of longer life ; and therefore continued to delay ; and others during their last illness, have experienced such depression of spirits—such langour of intellect—such pains, distresses or deprivations of understanding—that repentance was impossible. In these and many other cases, and these comprise nineteen cases out of twenty, delay renders the work of salvation impossible. *Oh sinner, as you value your salvation trust not to a death-bed repentance.*

But even when it is attended to, it must be in a very imperfect manner. Sometimes there is barely room, for that *inward religious change of mind, and heart*, which constitutes repentance ; without having time to prove it, by a subsequent holy life. Sometimes a change of life can just be begun ; and though a few perchance may live to finish it, yet in general, those who begin their reformation late in the day of life, commonly finish their mortal career before their work is half completed—before they have done half as much good, and grown half as much in grace and holiness, as they might and ought to have done. And lastly, it is to be observed, that of those who have lived a tolerably moral life, and who have delayed to attend to the concerns of religion, scarcely any can, in the last years of their life, be brought to observe the duties of the Christian. Habit is so great a tyrant, and the human heart is so insidious, in persuading men into error, that this last mentioned class, almost always die as they have lived, mere mortal men, or at best nominal Christians, whose hope must perish. Moreover it is not to be forgotten, that there are many moral and religious duties, which late repentance renders it impossible to discharge. So that delaying to keep God's commands, till the decline of life, is a most hazardous, nay fatal experiment ;

and at best, must leave unfinished the business of religion, that very work for which we were brought into existence.

Let this subject, however, not be misunderstood. All whose hearts, even upon a death-bed, are *really changed*, from an irreligious to a religious state—all who, through the assistance of divine grace, are brought to a *living and influential faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to a *deep and fruitful repentance*, for all their sins—such a faith and repentance as manifest themselves *immediately*, by the anxious inquiry, “what must I do to be saved?” By a hungering and thirsting after righteousness—by an ardent desire and endeavour to learn and do God’s will—and by all those *present fruits* of righteousness and holiness, which the nature of the case admits; such as, the forgiveness of enemies, and reconciliation with them, restitution to those whom they have injured or defrauded, and the earnest, heartfelt, persevering performance of the duties, of hearing or reading the Scriptures, self-examination, devout meditation, confession of sins, thanksgiving for mercies, and prayer for all needed blessings—all who are brought to, and who die in this state—all whose principles, whose heart and whose conduct are thus changed, will be justified, have their sins forgiven, and be counted righteous before God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. *But as most sick bed repentances, turn out to be fallacious, and unfruitful, and are therefore, apparent only, and not real; so also there is great reason to fear, that a death-bed repentance, is seldom, very seldom a “repentance unto Salvation.”* O, as you value everlasting happiness, and as you dread everlasting suffering, delay not, but make haste to keep God’s commandments! To-day, while you hear his voice, harden not your hearts: but “repent, and turn from all your transgressions, that iniquity may not be your ruin.”

Fifthly—After all, setting aside the extreme danger, and uncertainty, of a death-bed repentance; if all who go to Heaven, were to be equally happy, the danger of delay would not be quite so great. But it is reasonable to suppose, and Scripture teaches us to believe, that there are prepared for us, rewards and punishments, of all possible degrees, from the most exalted happiness, down to extreme misery; according to the different degrees of sin and holiness, that are found in the human character. So that a thorough and Evangelical repentance, in the last stages of life, though it lifts you above Hell, will leave you among the lowest grades in Heaven. For God says, “he that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and “he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.” And immense as is the distance between the lowest in Heaven, and the highest in Hell—great as is the difference between those in glory, that are made rulers “over one city,” and those in misery, that are “beaten with few stripes”—the distance may be equally immense, the difference may be equally great, between the lowest and the highest, “the least,” and “the greatest,” in the kingdom of God. O sinner, if you are ever brought to repentance, before death, you know not how much you will lose, by your present delay! O ye lukewarm professors, who are satisfied with the bare possession of spiritual life; and who seek not to have it “abundantly,” you know not how much you will lose, throughout eternity, for not growing more in grace, abounding more in the work of the Lord, and bringing forth more fruit to the glory of his name.

All indeed that are admitted to Heaven, will have their “joys full.” But those who can, from this consideration, suffer themselves to sink into comparative inactivity, have great reason to fear, that while they have “the name to live,” they are really *dead*. But even if it be otherwise,

Shame ! Ineffable shame ! is it to you Christian, that you are so sluggish, and take so little interest, in a cause that ought to call forth all your zeal, all your activity, and all your energies. O, forget not, that you are “bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Son of God :” and that you ought therefore to “glorify God both with your body and your spirit which are his.” “I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

From what has been said, it appears that the longer you delay to keep God’s commandments, the further you are departing from happiness—the deeper you are sinking into ruin. By every individual sin, by every hour’s delay, you are “heaping up wrath against the day of wrath.” Like a man building a pile, on which to burn himself to death, every time you commit a sin, you are bringing another faggot, to enlarge the heap, and increase the flame—you are only multiplying the arrows, with which divine justice will transfix your heart ! Whereas, the sooner you begin to keep God’s commandments, the farther you may rise towards that perfection of happiness, which Jesus, in mercy, reserves for his saints.

If this be the case, how dangerous, nay how fatal, is delay ! And will you still postpone your religious duties to a more convenient season ? Do you talk of *convenience*, and *by and by*, when the question is, whether you will rise into the happiness of Heaven, or sink into the misery of Hell ? When life is so short and uncertain—when the work of salvation is so great—when it only becomes more and more difficult, the longer you put it off—when it is scarcely ever well done, or even half done, if delayed to the last years of life—when every day’s delay, removes us farther and farther from God and happiness—and when *almost all*, who do thus delay, die *without having*

it in their power to repent—how can you, dying immortals! how can you, children of reason! how can you, lovers of happiness! how can you continue to trifle and procrastinate? When will you be wise—when will you consider your latter end? Will it be time enough at what you call the eleventh hour, on the bed of death? O consider, *Lastly*, what will you do, if at, or before that time, God withdraws his grace—ends your day of trial—and gives you over to destruction? His spirit will “not always strive” with rebellious man: and you may, by your obstinacy, provoke him, to give you over to your “own devices.” And should he cast you off as reprobate, alas! alas! “*Hell will be a refuge, if it hide you from his frown.*”

Oh! then, be wise in time, and “*give all diligence,*” to work out your salvation. “*Make haste and delay not to keep God’s commandments.*” Trust me, there is not a glorified Saint in Heaven, who, while on earth, did not *labour* to make his “calling and election sure.” And could we put the question to those miserable exiles from happiness, who dwell among the Apostate damned; could you ask them, what brought them to that state of misery; millions of voices, from the infernal pit, would rise in peals of thunder, roaring out delay! delay! delay!

SERMON III.

ON KEEPING THE HEART.

PROVERBS IV. 23.

“Keep thy Heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of Life.”

BY the heart, in the language of the sacred Scriptures, is very commonly to be understood not only the affections, according to the sense of the term, as it is usually received with us, but the whole mind, with all its faculties, its thoughts, emotions, inclinations, and desires. When it is said of the Gentiles, “They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened,” the import evidently is, that their understanding was obscured and misguided. They used their reason amiss, wandered from the truth, and became involved in ignorance and error. When we read in the epistle to the Hebrews, “Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, to-day “if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in “the provocation, in the day of temptation in the Wilderness,” it is manifest that St. Paul speaks not with immediate reference, as before, to the understanding, but to the frowardness of the will, prompting the Israelites to disobedience. Yet the Apostle, who well understood the language of the Spirit, and of the people also to whom he wrote, presently afterwards uses the same term with a view to their reason and their knowledge perversely misapplied. “Wherefore I was greived with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and

“they have not known my ways.” The same word is used by St. John, speaking of the conscience. “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” With reference to the memory it is said by Luke, “He went down with them and came to Nazareth. But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.” Nor will it probably fail to occur, that this sense is still retained in an idiom of our own, when to signify that our remembrance of sentences is so perfect that we can repeat them without hesitation, it is said that we have them by heart.

When it is enjoined upon us then in the text, to keep the heart with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life, the usage of the Scriptures teaches us to have reference, not only to the affections and emotions, in all their variety, and in regard to their objects and degrees of intenseness, but to the whole mind as the source of thought and conduct. The understanding, imagination, conscience, memory, will, the influence of the mind and body upon one another, are at once set before our view in the comprehension of the heart. When we reflect upon this complication of our nature; when we consider that upon its present state in respect to all these, depends our true character in the sight of God, and of our fellow men too; in short all our prospects of prosperity here, and of happiness hereafter; the precept of the wise man must appear worthy of our regard.

It is almost unnecessary to remark to Christians, that a proper virtue of character must commence within us. In every individual the mind is the fountain of good and evil. “Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt.” This is the first and distinguishing precept of Christ, and it is explanatory of the effect produced upon his hearers, marked by the Evangelist when he tells us, that “He

“taught them as one having authority, and not as the “Scribes.” It was in the same spirit, derived from him, that John the Baptist tells the Jews, that “Now the axe is laid at the root of the trees.” Others it is true, have admitted and even strenuously asserted that virtue and a claim to its rewards in every one, must commence within, and must depend for success in subduing himself to correct principles. But how shall a man be able to obtain a conquest over himself? If his pride be conquered, he will frankly acknowledge that it is impossible. This is a perfection in truth and moral goodness, which the wisdom of this world never thoroughly taught. He who discovers this, and who abides continually in the result of his discovery, must either sink into despair, or he must find his hope in God alone, and in his communication of spiritual strength, renewing grace, and pardoning mercy. Men may persevere in avoiding the outward exhibition of their failure, but this prevents not the failure from being real and continual within.

I mention this now, that while we are engaged in the prosecution of the discourse, should a difficulty occur from the perfection of the precept in its import and application, we may see the mercy in Christ which provides for our necessities. If we cannot fulfil the precept in its perfection, through the corruption or the infirmity of our fallen nature, the remedy is not in God’s surrender or abatement of the command, but in the provision which himself in his mercy has made at an infinite expense in favour of our repentance and faith, and our improvement of the light and strength which he graciously bestows.

Let us consider in what the keeping of the heart consists, what are its obligations and advantages, and what are the means of success: first when ourselves are alone, or principally concerned; and secondly, when we are connected with others; and then conclude the discourse.

First—I am to consider the nature, the importance, and the means of keeping the heart, where ourselves are alone or principally concerned.

To be ever in possession of complacent and placid feelings, has been generally praised under the head of contentment. I speak not of a stagnation of the faculties, but of that exertion of them, which is free from disorder or excess. There is a state of the affections and emotions, which fits them for all the purposes of true enjoyment, and for the successful exercise of good sense with alacrity. The mind in such a state, is not blinded or misled by feelings wrought up into passion, nor does it fall short of its greatest efficacy, for want of a sufficient interest exciting it into action.

We know what is meant, when a person is described to us as forever suffering under the uneasiness, perhaps the miseries of some agitating passion, or discontent. Though it is true, that he is apt to become an annoyance to others, through sudden outward exhibitions of an unregulated temper, yet were the truth considered, he is properly an object of commiseration, rather than of resentment, for that want of discretion and inward virtue, which inflicts sufferings upon himself, far greater than those which it produces in others. Some fear of imagined evil perhaps disturbs and renders him unhappy; or possibly, some wish for enjoyments and privileges beyond his present condition. Some apprehension may be stirred up, of an injury received, or of a treatment which may be supposed by others intended for injury, and which may make him appear tame and contemptible, because he scarcely perceived it at the moment, and failed to meet it with a just resentment. It may be that some mistake has been committed by him, in his intercourse with society, or in the exposition of an opinion; and this preys upon his peace, as though the estimation of his

skill, his address, his feelings, or his understanding must be depreciated by it, below their proper merits. And what shall we say of those, who permit malice or envy to intrude into their bosoms, not only to lurk for a moment, and then to be ejected, but to be retained as permanent inmates. But I forbear to enlarge on the numerous and various passions which may corrupt the heart; and spread clouds of darkness and distraction over the mind. To enlarge on such a subject, might expose the weakness, the sins, and the miseries of our fallen nature; and did we yield to the evidence, without an attempt to palliate or evade its force, it would show us our need of some mighty remedies for these moral diseases.

I have spoken of such minds as, on account of the magnitude and variety of their disorders, may possibly be supposed to furnish no standard of judgment for ourselves. If there be opportunity of comparison in our own favour, how prone are we to imagine, that the evils which reign conspicuously in other men's bosoms, are so far from furnishing a proof of our own, or of the common depravity of our nature, that we convert them to a different use, and rather exult in their indications in favour of our own excellence, and superiority in virtue. The religion of the Gospel teaches us, that if sin and its miseries be exhibited to us prominently in a fellow creature, though we may differ in degree, we are of one species, and that it is only an arrogant claim, which would assert a total exemption from the sinfulness, which in some of our fellow mortals, may seem to have already driven all goodness and happiness out of the heart. Unenlightened by the Gospel, our pride is nourished and sustained by the conspicuous vices, and follies, and self-inflicted sufferings of our fellow men. But when we throw open our hearts to the reception of the truth, and consent to look steadily on all that is within ourselves,

by the light of that heavenly torch which she holds in her hand, the disclosures are painful to the eye of the transgressor, but with conviction and humiliation he acknowledges the delusions, which have prevented him from estimating and practising, the only means by which he may rationally hope for a conquest, over those inward enemies of his virtue and his peace.

It is thus that we may learn what is meant by the precept, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." If there be hours, or even moments, when wealth rises up to our view, captivating our imagination, and fixing the highest value upon that which promises its most easy, and certain, and infallible attainment, we are in danger of setting our hearts upon an object, which is unworthy of them, except as it may be the means of justice, of a reasonable competency in our provisions and our prospects, of benevolence, and of usefulness. Let us ask what it is which renders property valuable? Is it that we may display a splendour and equipage before the world? There is something more solid than this, which if brought into comparison with it, we must feel and admit to be infinitely superior. It consists in those qualifications for business and utility, which place competency, nay even abundance within our power. Of this the certainty is so complete, that aside from any special difficulty which may instantly press upon us, the anxiety that is indulged in regard to the precariousness of the future, may be confidently pronounced to be so much gratuitous suffering. To an instant perplexity we may become liable; but the circumstances of every embarrassment, will ever suggest to our diligence and integrity, the course which we may adopt to disengage ourselves consistently with its urgency and its restrictions. Set not thy affections, then, upon wealth; as though every thing was to be estimated and

chosen by its instrumentality for securing this. Let the occupation assigned to us by Providence, be prosecuted with uprightness, and with fidelity to the correct principles which God approves, and which he has taught us in his word; and we have the utmost assurance, that our prosperity will at once be the most extensive, and continue the most unshaken. It is this which is to be understood when our Saviour tells us, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." It scarcely needs the faith of a Christian to be convinced of this. But if we believe and distinctly understand the principles and laws which the Scriptures give us for our direction; if we have a settled confidence in the providential presence of God our Heavenly Father, controlling all events for the protection of his children, and for their improvement in wisdom, and happiness, and a stable prosperity, we are prepared to see the pernicious consequences, of permitting the world to engross our affections, to actuate us as the primary object which we shall ever immediately consult, and as determining the value of human life.

Would we shun the temptations which may put our virtue to trials ever perilous; sometimes too severe to be sustained? Would we deprecate the consequence which so often befalls those who are in love with riches, seen in the diminution of confidence, and the character of a sordid mind? Would we prefer the happiness that springs from the love of goodness and of pure affection, above all that the earth can give? Would we secure peace of mind in a sense of integrity, of utility, of honourable abundance, of God's approbation, of human confidence, and of treasures laid up in the Heavens, let all these be made habitually the fruit and most valued objects of our pursuit, and let us keep our hearts with all diligence from that love of gain, by which the eager and ever

anxious world, pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

Another point on which it is material to be explicit on the subject of guarding our hearts, occurs in the indolence of mind or body, which blights the enjoyments, the virtues, and the prospects of multitudes. There are some of whom it is to be said with truth, that to be idle is to be unhappy. But there are others with whom exertion is ever renewed with reluctance, and continued with a sense of oppression. How shall this distinction be understood, or upon what principles does it exist? Most of the difficulties we encounter, or of the distresses we sustain, were they faithfully and intelligently examined, would doubtless be found to have their origin from ourselves. It is not to be denied that events may not unfrequently occur, attended with inconvenience or disaster, which no skill, and no adherence to our duty, may be able to prevent. But their number will be greatly reduced, when we reflect that most of the occurrences of life, though they may appear to proceed from instant circumstances, are in reality the result of a series of causes, which have long been concurring for the evolution of the present difficulty. There is perhaps nothing on which our exemption from misfortune, and our uninterrupted success more essentially depend, than a proper degree of interest, and vigilance, and perseverance in business. Remissness in the seasonable application of our time and diligence, to that which properly belong to them, may easily entail upon us consequences, which it will be impossible to prevent, by the utmost efforts of industry or diversity of resource. It is this species of embarrassment which becomes a source of trouble, and danger and perplexity to those who contend not sufficiently against the temptations of indolence. The maxims which have been embodied by the experimental wisdom

of those who have gone before us, it might seem almost trivial to repeat, enforcing the improvement of the present hour, if we would not expose ourselves to bitter repentance, for neglected opportunity.

“ Time in advance, behind him hides his wings,
 “ And seems to creep decrepit with his age.
 “ Behold him when past by ! What then is seen,
 “ But his broad pinions swifter than the winds :
 “ And all mankind in contradiction strong,
 “ Rueful, aghast, cry out on his career.”

What is suggested by all this, but that we yield to the importance of habitual industry ? If we can look back upon past periods, when by listening to every incidental plea for the relaxation of our exertions, hours, and days, and weeks not to be counted, have been surrendered almost without a struggle, perhaps even with an opinion that we were redeeming so much happiness from tyrant industry ; let us open our eyes to the misconceptions, which prompted us thus to fix reproach upon that, on which all true happiness and prosperity must depend.

It is in the heart that the motives are to be found, from which the evil springs. If we have authorities in the example of others, whom we have esteemed ; if we have been captivated by the apparent enjoyment of life, in those who appeared to be happy, while their days passed in a habitual, or at least a frequent unconcern, about the business of their profession whatever it might be ; if the possession of property has suggested, that it is unnecessary for us to give up the enjoyment of leisure and ease, to oppress ourselves with the toils of the mind or the body ; if the obstructions and difficulties we meet in the renewal of our exertions, have a deterring effect upon our fainting purpose ; these are the occasions, and these the moments, when the inward movements of the heart must be watched with a jealous eye, and when its pleas

for indulgence, must be rejected without a compromise. Must it be, that we are to fail in the conflict with these propensities to relaxation and imaginary pleasure? Then let us remember that our conclusion must be, to give up all that is efficient and valuable in life; that for the prospect of ease, we consign ourselves to a perpetual conflict between emergency and the love of pastime, between the agitation of conscious guilt and weakness in the years that are running to waste, and the aversion that sinks and desponds, and dwindles into contempt, through the dread of exertion. Such a spirit as this, is no less fatal to the prospects of the future, than of the present life. Let us remember, Christian hearers, the awful import of the parable respecting the talents. It leaves no hope for the encouragement of that indolence, which puts on the appearance of modesty, from an ostensible plea of inability, in him who is ruined by it. Every one may find it easy to extract excuses from his peculiar circumstances, for a life of indolence and neglect. He to whom five talents were entrusted might have said, "Lord I knew thee that thou wast good, not looking for toil when there is no necessity; and regarding with complacency and delight, the enjoyments of thy servants in the abundance thou dost bestow. I therefore applied it to the purposes of that happiness, for which I seemed to be intended, both by the dispositions and appetites of my nature, and by the liberality of thy provisions. I have nothing, it is true, to return. All is gone, and I have nothing to show. But thy riches are so great, that by the little that has disappeared, thou canst not be impoverished." Behold the delusions with which we mortals impose upon ourselves, while God warns us in his providence, by our own consciences, by his Spirit, and his word, "Keep thy heart with all diligence." Open not thine ears to the solicitations of ease. Suppress

the rising disposition that would tempt thee to procrastinate the business of the present hour. Let thy mind fix itself upon that which instantly calls thee to occupation. Thus shall we convert that which is now perhaps a terror, into a source of satisfactions and rewards. Above all, let us commence with wisdom, let us dig deep, and lay the foundation of our house upon a rock. Let the materials we employ, and the labour with which we use them, be ever consistent with such a beginning, and we shall assuredly find that the fabrick shall remain unshaken.

To keep our minds habitually free from passions that are ever threatening to corrupt, and degrade, and mislead us; to maintain in our bosoms submission under a sense of the Divine Providence; to contend against the fears, the jealousies, the transports, and the resentments which may suddenly kindle in the heart; to act towards all men on the principles of an unfailing charity, meekness, gentleness, sustained by an intelligent consistency, and a constancy that shuns offence, while it utterly refuses to retain resentments, much more to cherish hatred or revenge; this it is to keep the heart with a view to our own purity, inward peace, and our greatest perfection and happiness. And when we have taken these views of the inward exercises of our minds, do they not terminate with the force of a complete evidence upon the truth, that out of a heart thus enlightened with practical wisdom, and regulated by its principles, are the issues of our life? It is thus that through the aids of God's Holy Spirit, the sinfulness of our nature will be subdued; our views of its aggravation, and of the means of greater success, will be enlightened, and grow into superior perfection, and we shall advance to higher attainments in that love and peace, and joy and hope, which shall qualify us to be ranked and associated with the spirits of the just, in the Heavenly state.

I have spoken of these virtues, as they have a bearing upon our own improvement and essential happiness. Let us, in the *second* place, consider the precept more directly, as it may relate to our connexions and intercourse with our fellow men. The subject is a copious one, but I shall treat it with brevity.

It is doubtless impossible, that any one can ever practice with perfection, the precept which forbids anger towards others. Perfection in the fulfilment of any duty belongs not to any of our sinful race. But how amiable is that constancy in charity and forgiveness, which with a presence of mind ever alive to the inestimable value of these virtues, can overlook provocation, and continue to feel with kindness towards the unreflecting offender. I speak not now of the difficulty of doing this. Let us waive for a moment this consideration, while we ask whether the gentle virtues of the Gospel successfully maintained in the heart, promise not to make him who practices them with discrimination and good sense, the object of our confidence and love? Could we really feel and act with kindness towards others, and a predominant disposition to think favourably in respect to them; could we truly succeed in withdrawing from their injustice, or their violence, with an enlightened and virtuous determination, that our hearts should not be prevented from maintaining their equable flow of benevolent and just feeling in our social intercourse; could we do this with the settled conviction that, though in yielding to the irritations of passion and asperity, we might come to enjoy a temporary pleasure in the sufferings we might inflict, yet that the happiness alone can be durable and substantial, which results from the affections of kindness, generosity, forbearance, and charity, persevering in an unbroken tenor in our bosoms, can we doubt that our conduct would be marked with the highest wisdom, that

our virtues would be of the richest quality, and that our enjoyments would be attended with a confidence and permanency, infinitely superior in value to all the gratifications of tumultuous feeling. We may be ready to say, and perhaps it may be our belief, that all this is impossible, and that inasmuch as a profession to act upon the principles of a virtue so perfect, would expose us to the reproach of affectation, and insincerity, we ought to prefer the open exhibition of the passion that agitates our breasts. In such a statement there might be some weight, my brethren, were it not true, that the heart is capable of improvement, that to indulge the passions is to augment their force, and that to control and suppress them in outward action, with a determined purpose, as far as we shall be enabled to prosper in it by the assistance of Almighty God, is to advance with the greatest speed to a conquest and extermination of the greatest evils we have to dread, the enemies that have a lodgement in our own breasts. Surely we mistake, when we imagine that our most dangerous adversaries, are our fellow beings around us. With reference to the heart it may be eminently said, that a man's foes are they of his own household. And shall we be prevented from contending with them by the only means which can gain us the victory, through fear of a charge, that we are not acting out all the iniquity that is within us?

Let us rather be watchful of the emotions that have the appearance of involving us in anger, in heated controversy, in severity of opinion, resentful treatment, or even intemperate expressions of the tongue towards our fellow men. Let us be assured that whatever advantages we propose to gain over them, or whatever pleasures to enjoy in the possession of these advantages, when they shall be afterwards weighed against the losses to our peace, our virtue, and the superior satisfactions which

would have been secured by a successful mastery over ourselves, the preponderancy of evil will be unequivocally against us.

If these remarks be just, and of avail to show, that it is our true wisdom to prevent the stirring of angry passions in our bosoms, even when we become objects of attack without provocation on our own part, much more will they plead with us, to guard against such motives and excitements, as would impel us to be guilty of offending others in word or deed, while their conduct towards us is that of gentleness, forbearance, and equity.

On this subject of charitable feeling in our intercourse with others, and its uninterrupted maintenance in circumstances calculated to put it to trial, we shall essentially misapprehend the nature of the precept, if we imagine it to be satisfied, provided we merely prevent the outward expression of a violence, which is permitted to rage within. To preserve the external conduct unchanged, when passion has already gained ascendancy, is but the first step in the great duty which we have to accomplish. If we content ourselves with this, it is not the virtue which the Scriptures command that we are attempting to practice, for their precept is directed upon the heart. This is the fountain from which are the issues of our life; on the purity of which depends all that is exterior, all our hopes of reality in goodness, and all our prospects of that approbation, which shall be the security of a complete and lasting success.

The control of the angry passions, in our intercourse with others, is the subject to which I have specially directed your attention, but it is one which is exceedingly comprehensive. It relates to all that variety of evil and untempered feelings, that occur under the names of provocation, resentment, suspicion, irritability, jealousy, hatred, malice, revenge, contempt, petulance, and contrariety of

temper. Alas, my hearers, what a host of enemies stand prepared to assail the virtue of the mind, and through this, the rich satisfactions of confidential intercourse among relations and associates, neighbours and communities, societies and unconnected individuals, and the peaceful commerce of states and nations. When we behold so much misery and distraction, spread through the world, by uncharitable violence, shall we not utterly refuse to lend ourselves to the propagation of the evil, and reject the solicitations that would entangle us in its snares?

Your time will not permit me to enlarge on the mischiefs proceeding from the passions that are engendered in the heart. Our attention might be specially turned upon each of these in its peculiarity, to show the necessity of guarding ourselves against the intrusions of evil. It was the more important to speak in a special manner upon those which have chiefly employed our attention, because the direct tendency of them all, is to produce warfare among men. "From within," saith the Saviour, "out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness."

Must not the very enumeration of these various modes in which our nature is liable to become depraved, and to fall into condemnation, impress on us the unspeakable importance of diligently keeping the heart from their corruptions, and from the guilt, degradation, and suffering, which are their instant concomitants, and which constitute the ruin in which they finally conclude?

Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. If we acknowledge the principles of a true virtue, they must be found, not in outward action first, but in the interior of the heart.

We would profess to disregard, nay to despise the goodness, which was only an outward exhibition, not having its proper origin in the pure principles of the mind. And have we fully considered, my hearers, what is implied in this, and how we are affected by it? The perfections of internal virtue are worthy of the highest valuation we can put upon them. They are worthy of our secret meditation, and of our most assiduous efforts to attain them. They will infallibly raise us to the highest estimation in the sight of men, and of God. Let us set our eyes upon them with indissoluble attachment. Let every failure and every disappointment in the essential practice of them, only renew our determination never to remit, till through Divine Grace we have secured the establishment of them within ourselves, and an assurance of those riches of excellence and happiness, which God will bestow upon all those who have attained to the purity of the heart, according to the promises which he has revealed.

SERMON IV.

ON THE ATONEMENT.*

II. COR. V. 21.

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

IN these words, we are called upon, to direct our thoughts to the great atonement of the Cross. In this, we peculiarly behold the work of our redemption: a work, by which the Scriptures give us to understand, that a crown is placed upon the Divine wisdom, and mercy, and justice; in the creation of this world, and in the Providential government and final disposal of it. It is a subject, which furnishes to our minds, meditations of the deepest interest. They will indeed be interesting, in proportion as our faith is strong, and in lively exercise. It is the proper fruit of all the duties we fulfil, and the privileges we enjoy as Christians, that our faith should become more animated and established. And then also, we have the satisfaction to know, that our growing confidence and trust in our Redeemer, and in his righteousness, will give us increasing alacrity and success, in a life of obedience to every command of God, by the reforming and improving influence of his Spirit. “Whom having not seen, ye love;” saith an Apostle, speaking of Christ: “In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of

* Delivered, preparatory to the administration of the Lord's Supper.

“glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

I shall invite you to attend me, in considering, of whom it is said in the text, that he knew no sin, and what the Scriptures authorise and call upon us to understand by that expression as it is applied to him: likewise in what sense he was made sin for us in general, and especially how this becomes appropriate to us as individuals, and we are made the righteousness of God in him.

First—I am to consider of whom it is said, that he knew no sin; and what the Scriptures authorise and call upon us to understand by that expression, as it is here applied.

It is common to say, that the Scriptures assert this of one, and of one only, who has appeared in our nature. Let us see, if they be particular upon this subject. You find a direct declaration to this effect, made by Peter, in his first Epistle. “Because,” says he, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”

Judas was a witness, on the testimony of whom, as an enemy, and as having been with him as a disciple, in his retired and unguarded hours, as well as in public, we cannot but lay much stress. Admit, that Judas had been impelled to betray him without a sufficient cause, into the power of his enemies; yet, in the extremity of his compunction for such unworthy conduct, could he have recurred in his mind to any one or more instances of inconsistency, or sinful conduct, or expression, or sentiment, in our Lord, he would, undoubtedly, have adduced them; to extenuate his guilt, and appease his conscience. But how does he act? And, what is his language?

“Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver, to the Chief Priests and Elders, saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself.”

Never, in all probability, did one live upon the earth, upon whom so watchful an eye was directed, to implicate him, if possible, in irreligion, in indiscretion, or in crime. The Priests, the Scribes, the Pharisees, could not be supposed deficient in subtlety to compass their object. They were perfectly conversant with the law, moral as well as ceremonial. They digested their plans for making him commit himself, so that they thought it impossible to fail. They framed dilemmas, so that in evading one difficulty, it seemed necessary that he must fall into another. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians, who, by their different doctrines, and principles, occupied all the ground which it seemed possible to take, hostile as they were in their feelings towards one another, thought it so much an object, that they consented together in the snares they laid for him; so that the party against whom he might be hurried into conflict, might criminate him. But, when he was, at last, brought to a trial before the priesthood, what were the charges laid against him? After searching to the utmost among the people, both friends and enemies, and not stopping at the subornation of false testimony, in which men have seldom failed to succeed when they have determined to resort to it, what was the accusation that was brought? It was, that he had said, “I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.” With respect to his claim to be the Messiah, it was what he did not deny, but firmly asserted. This, he had established by his miracles, his doctrines, and his conduct;

nor could they properly charge him, as being guilty of wrong in this, but by showing, that his doctrines and his conduct were such as to be subversive of his claims. When, afterwards, he was brought before Pilate, the Roman Governor, and opportunity had been fully given, to state every thing against him, Pilate said, "Whether
 "of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They
 "said Barabbas. The governor then said, what shall I
 "do then with Jesus, who is called the Christ? They all
 "say unto him, let him be crucified. And he said, Why?
 "what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more,
 "saying, LET HIM BE CRUCIFIED."

This, it is true, may be said to mean only, that Jesus, as far as Pilate could discover from the accusations of the Jews, was guilty of no crime against the laws of his government. But the emphasis with which he pronounces him innocent, with the peculiar circumstances of the case, in concurrence with the whole tenor of the Scriptures, implies more than such a solution will satisfy. "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but
 "rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed
 "his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent
 "of the blood of this just person; see ye to it. Then
 "answered all the people and said, HIS BLOOD BE ON
 "US, AND ON OUR CHILDREN."

It is evidently the intention of all the Apostles, who have left their writings in the New Testament, to be understood, that he was spotless, and without blame, in his conduct, and in all his character. This was clearly the conviction of Paul; who says to the Hebrews, "For
 "such a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless,
 "undefiled, separate from sinners." That he is so to be understood, appears, from his reference, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to the Lamb without spot, which they were required to offer as a sacrifice for sin.

When the Jews were most earnestly intent upon finding some occasion against him, that they might have some excuse for executing their design of putting him to death, he challenges them to state one fault which he had committed. "Which of you convinceth me of sin? "And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" And on another occasion, in accordance with this, he says to his disciples, "Hereafter I will not talk much "with you;" for, alluding to his approaching death, and the power of darkness, "The prince of this world cometh, "and hath nothing in me."

I have already mentioned, that the Scriptures represent him as becoming an offering for our sins. They distinctly convey to us the idea, that, to be qualified to be such a sacrifice, he must himself, be free from all sin; otherwise, his life could not be an atonement for the sins of others, even of the whole world; since it must be forfeited for his own. "Who did no sin, neither was guile "found in his mouth. Who, his ownself, bare our sins, "in his own body, upon the tree, that we, being dead to "sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes "ye were healed." It was ordained by the Jewish law, that the High Priest must be first purified, and offer sacrifice for his own sins, before he could be prepared to sacrifice for others. The Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, states it as a contrast to this, that Christ had no need to make an offering for himself. "For if the "blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer "sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of "the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, "who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself, with- "out spot, to God, purge your conscience from dead "works, to serve the living God?"

The same view is taken, and the same representation is given by the ancient Prophets, in their character of the

Messiah. "For the transgression of my people was he "stricken," saith the inspiring Spirit, by Isaiah: "because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit "in his mouth." In the language of this Prophet, it is evidently to be understood, that he was himself, free from sin, in his own nature; and that it was wholly for others, that he suffered. "All we like sheep, have gone astray. "We have turned every one to his own way; and the "Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. We did "esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was "bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our "peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are "healed."

You see then, my hearers, that it is not without reason, that Jesus Christ is held by us, to be exhibited in the Scriptures, as in himself, a sinless character. But, by their authority, this is certainly to be said of none other, who ever lived in our nature. We know how common it is, for him to be spoken of, under the figure of a Lamb. This is not only because that animal was a type of him as an atonement for sin; but on account of his perfect innocence; of which no animal could be so striking an emblem. And in strict conformity with all that has been said, was the significant annunciation of him, by John the Baptist, who came, expressly by a Divine commission, to prepare his way; and to point him out, as the one in whom the promises, the types, and prophecies from the beginning, were to meet their accomplishment. "Behold the Lamb "of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

I was, in the *second* place, to show, how he was made sin for us.

It is an obvious doctrine of the Scriptures, that human nature is in a fallen and degenerate state. It is the experience of all, that they are subject to evil, in different

forms. Men continually feel their happiness affected by it, both externally, and in their minds. Is any thing, my hearers, more evident, than that if men yielded to the impulses and suggestions of their appetites and dispositions, unrestrained by a consideration of the consequences, their manners would become universally corrupt; and disorder and iniquity would prevail? It is only by the habitual exercise of what we call prudence, and self-control, that a sound state, both of the mind and the body, in individuals, and in society, can be preserved. And, after all this regulation is maintained, men find, through the revolting of their passions, and thoughts, and wishes, that, in themselves, they are subject to much unhappiness; and the wrongs and inconveniences which they meet with from others, prove the occasions of evils, that appear inevitable, and ever to be renewed. These things are attended with a sense of guilt in the mind; of irreconcilable opposition to God; and of exposure to his anger; from the holiness of his nature, and the perfection of his law. All this, though proved in experience, is unexplained, until revelation unfolds to us its origin, its nature, its consequences, and its remedies. The perfect law of righteousness is there made known; the sinful condition of the human heart, its incapacity through evil dispositions, to fulfil the precepts of charity, and justice, and purity; its helplessness, therefore, under its miseries; and its continual exposure to a sentence of eternal death; when we shall be finally placed where there is no intermediate state between happiness and misery.

Being thus depraved, and obnoxious to the Divine displeasure, we are without power, and without hope; we must be irremediably lost through sin. We may strive to suppress the motions of a troubled conscience, and to silence the voice within, that warns us of the total ruin into which we must ultimately fall; but the evil is

ever growing, while we are advancing in our course ; and we have daily to learn, that, instead of attaining to a state of peace and quietness, the disease of sin becomes more alarming ; and a sense of danger more pressing.

This is the deplorable condition of our race ; and it undoubtedly is, or will be evinced, to the actual experience of every individual. God alone is able to supply a remedy : and, as it is mercy alone which can prompt him to it, for his justice calls only for our condemnation, he has actually extended his mercy to us, by a plan which at once displays the true greatness of the evil, and the unsearchable riches of his grace. “ He made him to be “ sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made “ the righteousness of God in him.” In doing this, a mystery in his being has been unfolded, showing us how the most hidden peculiarities of his nature may be unexpectedly made to display his glories. He, who, in the language of revelation, was the Son of God, being the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person, was made flesh, and dwelt among us. “ And we beheld,” saith John, “ his glory ; the glory of “ the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and “ truth.” He assumed our nature that he might mediate between God and men. This he did by rendering for us a perfect obedience to the broken law, and honouring it, by a spotless moral excellence, in our stead : by humiliation, and temptation, and suffering, enduring the curse to which we are subject, in this life, through sin ; by agonizing, with the pains that were due to our guilt ; and by offering himself a sacrifice upon the Cross, that the anger of God might be appeased ; his justice vindicated, in the pardon extended by his mercy ; and that, through the merits of his death, we might be delivered from the demerits of sin. Jesus Christ the righteous, assumed upon himself willingly, the whole responsi-

bility ; and all the consequences of transgression, committed by us, in rebellion against God. And God was pleased to accept the offered substitution. He saw that it was consistent with all his perfections ; and, not only so, but that it would clothe them with lustre before the universe. This agrees with the clear and distinct representations of Scripture ; as you had some occasion to see, in passages adduced before, to show who it was that was himself without sin. For in the close connexion which it had with that part of our subject, it was said, that “ he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree : he was wounded for our transgressions ; he was bruised for our iniquities.” Further, to this effect, it is said, “ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many : and unto them that look for him, shall he appear a second time, without sin, unto salvation.” “ Surely,” saith Isaiah, “ he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”

You see, my hearers, I set before you the plain language of Scripture ; and by no means call upon you to consider any far sought and possible meanings of which it may be supposed susceptible, to try and show you that it may not be inconsistent with a preconceived opinion of my own. Were I to pursue a different method, you would have reason to think, that I consented to admit the Scriptures as a standard, for no other reason, but because you would listen upon no other terms ; and, that having thus gained your confidence, I was endeavouring to bring you into sentiments, and doctrines, entirely at variance with their spirit, and with all that they tell us in the plainest terms. Such is the manner of some, who are ever engaged in wresting the Scriptures ; “ privily bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon

“themselves swift destruction. For Christ also hath once
 “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might
 “bring us to God.” To the same effect, Paul says to the
 Romans, “All have sinned and come short of the glory
 “of God: being justified freely by his grace, through
 “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God
 “hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his
 “blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of
 “sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to
 “declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he
 “might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in
 “Jesus.”

You see, then, my hearers, that as Jesus our Saviour was free from all sin, and as a Lamb without spot, even with God who is infinitely holy, he was fitted to become a sacrifice for the sins of others; and that his perfect righteousness presented to God in our behalf, was accepted by him as an obedience which we could not pay. The whole weight of our guilt was laid upon him, as an atoning sacrifice. “He was made sin for us, who knew no sin.” The word here translated “sin,” may be properly rendered, “a sin-offering”—a sacrifice to which the sin was imputed. The same word is used by the LXX., to signify a sin-offering in different places. In Leviticus iv. 21, it is said, “He shall carry forth the
 “bullock out of the camp; it is a sin-offering for the
 “congregation.” The term is the same in the LXX., as is used in the text. In the 25th verse, the priest is directed to take of the blood of the sin-offering, and put it upon the horns of the altar. “The same manner of expression,” says Parkhurst, with the authority of Whitby, “exactly corresponds to the Hebrew in these passages, where both the sin and the sin-offering is denoted
 “by the same word.” It is obvious, then, that Paul, who was perfectly conversant with all the peculiarities of the

Jewish religion, having been a most learned Pharisee, would be understood by the Jews, and others in Rome, to whom he wrote, not in a vague, but in a strict and limited sense. It is the same as that which has been here explained ; for with them it was certainly considered, that the sins of the people were removed from themselves, and laid upon the head of the victim, whose blood was poured out at the bottom of the altar.

Consider, then, my hearers, the unspeakable mercy of God, in the redemption of the world, “ who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” “ Herein is love ; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” This is he who is declared to us in the Gospel, with such circumstances in his life, of goodness, and wisdom, as are calculated to attach our affections, and convince our understandings.

But let us inquire, in the *third* place, how the benefits become appropriated to us as individuals. This inestimable gift will indeed be in vain to us, if we be not led by it to a consideration of our wretched and helpless state by nature ; so as to repent of the enmity and ingratitude that reign in our hearts, which cease not to manifest themselves, in our indifference and unbelief. God, in mercy, offers to save us, from the corruption of our nature, and from the miseries in which it must speedily issue ; and he has, at an expense inconceivably great, provided for our salvation. Need it be said, that it must have our concurrence, that it may be efficient for our personal advantage ? We shall not be saved against our will. If we continue in our enmity, it will be worse than to no purpose, that Christ has fulfilled all righteousness, and died upon the Cross. We shall not only be in opposition to God, but we shall wilfully, and with contumacy, reject the offers of reconciliation, and

that too when the angels themselves stand in astonishment, at the means produced by infinite mercy for our recovery. Nothing but repentance of your sin, and turning unto God, will make it possible for you to escape from the horrors that shall overwhelm his enemies. God cannot change his nature to become like us, to have complacency in our wickedness, or to treat it with indifference, or to let it pass with impunity. He has done all that you can expect, and ten thousand times more than was to be expected, to effect a reconciliation. What then is to be done? Are you so unreasonable as to insist that God shall no longer act as the wise, the good, the equitable ruler of the universe, and that he shall renounce himself, that you may be allowed to take your own course, and gratify the appetites of a sinful nature? This can never be; and nothing but repentance can save you from the power of his anger, which shall be ever present to you in the appointed place of misery, and be felt through the horrors of a guilty conscience.

Have you, then, been a subject of this repentance? Does it manifest itself in you by a deepfelt conviction of your sins, both of heart and life? By sincere endeavours to bring under subjection to the law of God, the passions and disorders that would hurry you into transgression? And by faithful and earnest prayer, that he will make you a child of God, by the regeneration of your nature, by imparting the strength that is necessary for obedience, and by cancelling your sins through the blood of atonement? It is in such a true repentance, discovering the holiness of God, the malignity of our nature, and the virtue and value of redemption as wrought out by Christ, and offered in the Gospel, that we see the primary method of having applied to ourselves the benefits resulting from his being made sin for us, who knew no sin. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be

“blotted out;” is the first direction with which the Gospel meets us.

This repentance becomes genuine, and produces permanent fruits, as being united with faith. This must be understood in its peculiarity as a virtue of the Gospel. It unites feeling with reflection, upon our being subject to death, through sin, upon our being helpless in ourselves, upon the miseries of our guilty nature, upon the necessity and the renewing virtue of that divine influence which is promised in the Gospel, and purchased by the merits of Christ, and applied by his Spirit, operating a change in our affections, and through them in the decisions of our reason.

This is what the Scriptures call “being renewed in the spirit of our minds.” It is not to be imagined, that he who has been the subject of this change, is already perfect; as being no longer subject to the commission of sin, or as fulfilling all righteousness. God has ordained, that the manner of our recovering from the death of sin, shall be by a progressive growth, from the first beginning of a regenerate life, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth. The discipline of Providence, accompanied with the instruction of the holy Scriptures, is made instrumental, by the divine wisdom, in improving our virtues, enlightening our minds, bringing us to a proper estimate of the world, and attaching us to God, and to correct principles. “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

The spirit of reformation ever reigns in the heart of the Christian. “That we henceforth,” saith the Apostle, “be no more children, tossed to and fro; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” The repentance and

faith which commence such a life as this, and manifest their reality and force by the fruits of a pure, and humble, and teachable disposition, are the first principles in us, by which we are brought into acceptance with him. But now, recollecting, as has been stated, that we do not fulfil a perfect righteousness, how shall we be objects of God's favour, or have our consciences freed from the guilt, from which, though the followers of Christ, we cannot plead that we are exempt? To this the text furnishes the answer. As the Saviour, when clothed in our nature, became our representative, and wrought out for us a perfect righteousness, it is through the merits of this, that God consistently pardons our guilt; and accepts our imperfect services. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." As there is a defect in all our virtues, it is the faith in us with which our deeds are performed, that he regards as a principle of obedience, which considers, in itself, with acknowledgment and contrition, the sinfulness of our best works, and the remaining corruptions adhering to our nature. "Abraham was strong in faith giving glory to God; and therefore it was imputed to him, for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead." Thus the Scriptures explain, how it is, that "God is in Christ, reconciling the word unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

Nor is this a method of proceeding in God toward us, which, when correctly understood, is properly subject to the unfavourable sentiments which some have entertained of it; or to the abuses to which it has been perverted; inducing some to deny that it can be a doctrine of the

Scriptures. I hope it has sufficiently appeared to be taught by them, that it is through the complacency which God finds in the perfect obedience, the spotless character, and the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that he forgives our sins, committed before we become his children by regeneration, and those also which we still commit, after this change has been wrought in us. This is that imputation itself of which we have been speaking.

Were it imagined, then, in consequence of a disposition in us to substitute faith for works, that the one was sufficient without the other, in building up our hopes of acceptance with God, such an apprehension, or such a misapplication of the divine mercy, is sufficiently chastened and exposed, by the Scriptures themselves. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" This is said expressly to correct the error of some, who had corrupted the Scriptures, that they might be countenanced in sin. Not that we are to suppose that our works are the true ground upon which our salvation rests; for what Christian is there, who will hold to this? But that the faith which looks for salvation, while it has no influence upon the conduct, or while, through its imaginary virtue, in recommending us to God, it encourages itself in sin, is evinced, by these very circumstances, not to be the faith which the Gospel requires.

A faith which professes to believe, and which consists in this only, without love to God, and to his will, as a vital principle of action, is merely a shadow without the substance. Even the works which a true faith produces, though they have no merit to earn our salvation, are made the means by which it is cultivated and increased in the heart. "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works in the example of Abraham, and by works was faith made perfect. And the Scripture was fulfilled which

“ saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed
 “ unto him for righteousness. For as the body without
 “ the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

You see, then, Christian friends, the plan of that mercy, which God proposes to us, in the Gospel; and which it is your profession, to have accepted, by faith, in the righteousness of your Redeemer. Clear views upon this subject, are ever necessary to us; that we may know the true basis on which we stand; and the gratitude we owe for this unspeakable gift. In the institution of the Lord’s Supper, in the solemnities of which you are proposing to engage, an evidence and an exhibition is given, of that great sacrifice, which was offered in himself, by the Son of God; who was made sin for us, though even in assuming our nature, he “ knew no sin; “ that we might be made the righteousness of God in “ him.”

While we comply with his dying command, “ Do “ this in remembrance of me,” not only do we perform a duty, which our love should prompt us to fulfil; but it is of the last moment, that our lives and our hearts should be right in the sight of God. With faith, and repentance of our transgressions, with sorrow and abasement for our unworthiness, we here declare, that we accept of the proffered grace, and place ourselves in covenant with God; that we may be the heirs of redemption, by the provided merits of an all-sufficient righteousness. Let us examine ourselves, with an eye of scrutiny, as before God. Let us entreat him, now, and habitually, while we are endeavouring to be faithful unto death, that he will search us, and try us, and see if there be any evil way in us, and that he will lead us in the way that is everlasting.

SERMON V.*

ON THE DECEITFULNESS AND WICKEDNESS OF THE HEART.

JEREMIAH XVII. 9.

“The Heart is deceitful above all things; and desperately wicked.”

THIS is a mortifying doctrine; but one, capable of as clear demonstration from matters of fact, as from Scripture. It is a doctrine, too highly necessary to be known and reflected on by us, to be passed over in silence. It is bitter medicine; but it is medicine that is essential to our health.

Those who deny the natural corruption of the heart, whenever they are pointed to the wickedness prevalent in the world, take refuge in the argument, that evil is propagated by example; that one generation corrupts another. We might answer such persons, by proposing to them such questions as these: How comes it, that evil example is always predominant in the world? Who corrupted the first generation? Why is not *good* example as *infectious* as *bad* example? But we will leave this broad field of discussion; and come home to each family's

* The modesty of the author of this and the subsequent Sermon, has induced him to furnish a Preface to them, containing an apology for their imperfections; but, as the same apology is included in the Preface to this volume, (page xi.) it was deemed unnecessary to repeat here, what, on a careful inspection of all the Sermons contained in this book, is seriously believed, not to be more applicable to these two Sermons, than to the bulk of those that both precede, and follow them.

domestic circle. We will appeal to parents, who will not be apt to pass too severe a judgment on their own children. Do not your own children early exhibit marks of depravity, to which even your fond and partial eye cannot be blind? Do you not detect malice, revenge, deceit, and cunning, perverseness, and obstinacy, at a very tender age? Who taught your child these evil dispositions? Has he learned them, by example? He has not been beyond your own walls; and has seen only the good example of his parents. If they had not sprung up in his own native heart, you never would have seen them. Were his dispositions naturally good, he would always be affectionate, and obedient; because he has every reason to love you. You treat him kindly, particularly when he behaves well; and therefore, he has every inducement to good conduct. But you know that indulgence spoils him; and punishment is often necessary. In short, I have no hesitation in saying, that all candid and judicious parents will acknowledge, that the task of education is an extremely difficult one; that it is a constant struggle with the bad humours of the young; and that, if children are allowed to take their natural course, they become a torment to their parents, a pest to others, and burdens to themselves. Now, why is this? If the heart were not naturally evil, indulgence would have no tendency to spoil a child. We should rather suppose, that the more kindly and tenderly it were treated, the more fervently would it love, and the more promptly would it obey.

When a child is old enough to attend school, or go into the streets, the fears of the parent betray his conviction of the child's proneness to evil. The mother knows, that all her good advice, and affectionate entreaties, are not sufficient to secure him against vice. She is afraid he will learn to swear, to fight, to speak indecent language,

to tell lies, and to be idle. Why? He has been warned against these things, again and again; and that too, from the lips of those whom he most loves and respects. Why should one bad boy have so much power over him, as to destroy the effect of these parental instructions? Ah! Brethren, it must be confessed, that so slight a cause would not counteract the painful work of many years, if it did not fall in with the natural inclinations of the child. A slight impulse will set a large stone to rolling *down a hill*; but, if it were on *level ground*, and *besides*, if it were held back by cords attached to it, it would require great exertion to snap asunder these cords, and urge it forward. So I argue with respect to children: if they had no bias to evil, and besides, if they were fortified against it by the instructions of their parents, they would not be so easily led into vice as they now are. Watch the parent, when his son is old enough to be sent abroad, to school, or college: How many precautions must be taken to secure his virtue! How many letters must be written, praying for inspection and guardianship over the young man! Tell me, ye anxious parents, who, with heavy hearts, and swimming eyes, are just dismissing the dear son of your hopes from his home, in search of a liberal education, what is the meaning of all your trembling apprehensions, and boding fears? Why your earnest exhortations to good conduct? Why your great anxiety, that he should have, at the seminary where he is to be placed, some guardian eye to overlook him, and some guardian hand to control him? It is because you know that your son has propensities to evil, which must be watched, and checked. It is because you know how frail is that structure of virtue which you have been so diligently rearing within him; and how easily temptations and vicious examples can overturn and demolish it. You send your son to college, with the same

trepidation that would attend you, when you would trust gunpowder near the fire. It is not merely the power of fire you dread, but the extreme combustibility of the material you place near it.

But I need not enlarge, on the evidence of a proneness to evil in the young. Most persons are too well convinced of it, by painful experience, to deny it. However few have a proper sense of the depth and extent of that depravity whose out-breakings they deplore, they do not take notice of that native aversion to God, and religion, and that proud contempt of the humble doctrines of the Gospel, which mark the character of most young people. Indeed, most parents are so insensible of the criminality of these dispositions in themselves, that it is no wonder they do not *mark* and *mourn* them in their offspring. In their view, a person may have reached the age of fifty or sixty years, and all that time have lived as negligent of his Maker as if he had none; and yet, be a very good man! No wonder, then, that, provided their children show smartness, and spirit, and *not very bad* dispositions towards their fellow-creatures, such parents should be very little disquieted, when they discover in their children a total dislike to every thing serious; and a determined bent towards frivolous and pernicious amusements. But, my brethren, blind and dead as we may be, to the criminality of an aversion to religion, it is a most awful symptom of a depraved heart. With every reason to love and be grateful to their Creator—in the morning of life, with elastic health, with cheerful spirits, with warm hearts, with imaginations easily kindled by every thing grand, beautiful, and amiable, youth show a universal distaste to religious duties—a universal sentiment, that the service of God has in it, something melancholy, joyless, and even loathsome, and contemptible. Were not the heart deplorably warped from rectitude,

there would be, in religion, something irresistibly attractive, to the youthful mind. The grandeur of the Being who is the object of it; the nobleness and expansion of those affections which nothing but Heaven and Infinity can satisfy; the purity of heart, and innocence of life, which aim at the approbation of that eye which sees every thing, and can distinguish the real from the false, the precious from the vile;—such qualities, have in them, something to inflame youthful admiration; and would inevitably provoke their love and their emulation, if the carnal mind were not enmity to God.

Nor is this disinclination to religion, by any means, confined to the young. As the tree takes deeper root in the ground, the older it grows; so, man clings more closely to the world, the longer he continues in it. If persons show somewhat more tendency to pay respect to their duties to God, after the giddiness of youth is over, it is usually the effect of *trouble*: they learn how uncertain life is, and how full of cares: they want something better than the world to lean upon. It is *selfishness*, at last, which brings them to their senses. It is not *inclination*, or *taste*, which draws them to God. It is fear, and previous disappointment.

The strength of this natural antipathy to godliness will more evidently appear, by considering the strength of the motives which it overcomes. “It is evident,” says an able writer, “that the motives to love God and holiness, are, in themselves, incomparably greater than any motives to love any other object whatever. Indeed, all the just grounds to love in *other* objects, are just grounds of love to God; because he is the source of all that is amiable and desirable in his creatures. All his works praise him, and excite us to bless him; to love, to honour, and obey him. All the good in the world, should convince us how *good* it is to draw near to God;

“and all the evil in the world, what an evil and bitter
 “thing it is to depart from him. These considerations
 “may give us some sense of the great power of that in-
 “ward depravity, which resists such inducements to
 “piety; and which hinders the natural heart from yield-
 “ing to them. They prove a strong and obstinate insen-
 “sibility to infinite obligations. They prove an inex-
 “cusable stupidity of the natural heart, to what consti-
 “tutes its true felicity. The favour of God is incom-
 “parably more desirable, than those things to which our
 “grovelling hearts give the preference. When things
 “that are in themselves the most absolutely necessary,
 “which are infinitely desirable and glorious, are the ob-
 “jects, either of the heart’s indifference, or only of weak,
 “confused, and transient desires; while other things,
 “which bear no proportion to them, and which are com-
 “paratively less than nothing, and vanity, inflame the
 “heart with ardent desires; and are objects of its most
 “vigorous and its most steady affections; this proves
 “such an enormous disproportion, between men’s affec-
 “tions, and the worth of their objects; such a powerful
 “perverseness of disposition, as is a very proper object
 “of amazement, as well as the deepest regret.”*

If the disinclination to the duties of religion shown by
 unregenerate men, strongly exhibits the depravity of the
 heart, the difficulty which even Christians find, in con-
 tinuing devout, and faithful, is a further demonstration
 of the strength of depravity in the human heart. It might
 be supposed, that men who had had their eyes opened, to
 see the vileness of sin, and the emptiness of the world,
 would be in no danger of relapsing into the same sins,
 and into the same love of that empty world. It might be
 supposed, that those who had tasted of the Heavenly gift,

* M'Laurin.

and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, would always have too high a relish for these exalted enjoyments, to be entrapped again by the vanities of time ; and that they would always be full of gratitude for such distinguished favours. But, such is the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, even in those who are partly renewed, that they often fall into sin ; and that they sometimes grow cold and lifeless in their religious duties ; so that they fall very far short of that fervency of love, and that faithfulness of obedience, to which they are bound by the strongest and the tenderest obligations. Inspect the diaries of the most pious men ; and there you will find, the deepest confessions of inward depravity, the most humble sense of their own imperfections, the bitterest lamentations over their hard, deceitful, barren hearts. Nor will you find these expressions of self-abasement only at the beginning of their religious history : they seem to have a quicker perception of their depravity, and to groan more deeply under a sense of it, in proportion as they advance in holiness. This, indeed, is to be expected. It is natural, that they should more easily detect, and more strongly hate, the remains of corruption in themselves, as they become more watchful, more enlightened, and tender in their consciences, and more alive to the infinite beauty and desirableness of divine things. But then it shows, in a strong light, the depth and malignity of that depravity, which can *exist*, and sometimes *grow*, in the heart, under every disadvantage, and where every precaution is taken, to mortify and exterminate it. It is a serpent, which is neither destroyed by cold, nor by hunger, nor by deep wounds. When it is starved, in the soul of a Christian, by prayer, and watchfulness, and circumspection, and holiness, and pureness of living, it appears to lie numbed,

and powerless, and dead ; and the Christian, rejoicing to think his enemy is slain, perhaps relaxes in his watchfulness :—But lo ! ere he is aware, he receives a venomous blow, from the resuscitated monster ! Then, he may arm himself against it ; he may look by faith unto Him who was ordained to bruise the serpent's head, and to beat down Satan under our feet ; he may, by strength, and by weapons derived from this source, wound, and disable, and mutilate the enemy ; and not leave him, till he thinks there is not a spark of life left : but it will not be many days, before he will feel the serpent again moving within him, and threatening to recover from all its wounds !—What a powerful principle of life *that* animal must have, which will not die under such treatment !—Oh ! how deadly, how subtle must have been the poison, infused into the veins of our first parents, by that primeval serpent ; since it has infected the blood of all their posterity ; since no distance of time, no foreign intermarriages, no change of place, no care of education, no force of medicine, no air, no water, no diet, can root out the seeds of this disease from our constitution !

These things prove the heart of man to be, what the text asserts, “deceitful above all things, and desperately “wicked.” And if it is so, the inference is evident ; we must have a new heart. Such a heart, as the unrenewed sinner possesses, cannot be fit for the society of the pure and blessed God ; for, into his kingdom shall in no wise enter, “any thing that defileth.” In proportion to the greatness of our native depravity, must be the greatness of that change, which must pass upon us. The ruin is total ; the restoration must be radical, and entire. It is no slight change, which makes “the new man” out of the “old man.” The foundation must be laid anew ; not one stone of the old wall, must be left upon another. Hence, we can readily account for the strong expressions

on this subject, we every where meet with in Scripture. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away ; behold, all things have become new." "Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Cast away from you all your transgression, and *make you a new heart*, and a new *spirit* ; for why will ye die ?" "Be not conformed to this world ; but be ye *transformed by the renewing* of your mind." "Put off, concerning the former conversation, *the old man* which is *corrupt* according to the *deceitful lusts*, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the *new man*, which, after God, is created in righteousness, and true holiness." All these strong expressions prove, that Grace does make a very great and important change in the heart. Such a change, we should previously suppose to be necessary, if "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ;" and accordingly, such a change, the Scriptures declare, *must*, and actually *does* take place, in all the children of God.

The great and important question, then, with all of us, my brethren, is this : Have we the *old, natural* heart, or have we the *new, spiritual* heart ? It surely ought to be a source of anxiety and alarm, to find we have such deceitful and wicked hearts within us. While we *have* such hearts, we shall never be happy here ; and we shall assuredly never be allowed, with such hearts, to enter Heaven. The first thing incumbent upon us, then, is to get acquainted with our own hearts. Until we know the malignity of our disease, and the danger of our case, we shall never be induced to take the pains requisite for our salvation ; we shall never submit to the pain, of crossing our inclinations, of rousing ourselves from our indolence, or of mortifying our appetites, and worldly expectations. Religion is not a palatable thing to the natural

man. It is a medicine, which he will not take, till he finds his life is in danger.

But, how shall we know our hearts? That very deceitfulness of them which is spoken of in the text, stands in the way of our self-knowledge. It can only be done, by prayer, and constant self-examination. We must search our hearts diligently; and study an intimate acquaintance with them. We must not judge of ourselves by what others think of us. They see us only at a distance: they know nothing of that invisible world within us. If we wished to know another person's character thoroughly, we should not be satisfied with his public conduct; or with the report of the world concerning him. We should wish to be in his family; we should wish to observe him near at hand, in his private hours, at all times, and in all humours. Then, when we had observed him, for many years, in these circumstances, we might say, that we had a good knowledge of his real character. This is the way in which we must become intimate with our own hearts. We must keep a watch upon them; we must notice all that passes within them; and we must compare these hearts with what they *ought* to be, under the advantages and motives to goodness we have enjoyed. We must inquire whether we love God with all our powers and affections, and our neighbours as ourselves. Such a self-examination, constantly maintained, will go far to let us into the secrets of that deceit, and desperate wickedness, which the prophet Jeremiah ascribes to the heart of man. But to our own searching, we should never trust. We should desire an eye, more penetrating, and less partial than our own, to engage in this bosom-search. The prayer of the Psalmist well becomes us all: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; "try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any "wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlast-

“ing.” Authors, before they give their works to the public, often show them to their friends for correction; being aware that many an error may have eluded their own criticism; and that self-love may deceive them much, as to the merits of their productions. They wish, therefore, to have the opinion of others, previously to their coming forward, before that tribunal from which there is no retreat; and which shows no indulgence. So should we desire assistance from Heaven, to know our hearts, while those hearts may be changed; lest their unknown and unsuspected deceits and corruptions, start up before us, at the tribunal of judgment; when it is too late for amendment; and when the season of mercy is past forever.

And, when we know our hearts to be radically corrupt, we should never rest, till they are changed. It is in vain, to hope to mend the old heart. “The old heart won’t bear mending.” Men are generally, very unwilling to believe their hearts so bad, as the Prophet, in our text, declares them to be. When first convinced of sin, they try to make something of the old heart. They set about a reformation; they do many things; they avoid many vices; but the heart, unchanged, will not long support this. It sinks, under the effort of maintaining a course of life, which is contrary to its tastes, its habits, and its propensities. Hence, at some unguarded moment, all the fabrick of good works, which it has been erecting, tumbles to the ground. Duty is too arduous, and sin too alluring, for any thing but love, to maintain the combat; and of that love, the unrenewed heart is destitute. It is, with the sinner, when he sets about to reform his life, as it happens sometimes to a man, who is about to repair his house. He wishes to avoid expense as much as possible. He designs to repair only the exterior, hoping that the inner timbers are sound; but, upon examination, he findsthat the inner timbers are rotten; that they will not

bear a new covering ; that, if he builds upon them, the whole will fall down ; that, in short, he must build a new house. So it fares with us, when we are first awakened to a sense of our danger. We are loth to throw away our old hearts. We try to make something of them. It seems too great an undertaking, to get a new heart ; and it is not till after repeated abortive attempts to lead a new life, without a change of heart, that we learn to give up all dependence on our own strength ; and to cast ourselves at the feet of Jesus ; exclaiming with Peter, sinking in the waves, “ Lord save me, or I perish ;” or with the kneeling leper : “ Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make “ me clean.” We must be united to Christ, before we can do any thing good. He is the vine ; there is no life, nor fruit, in any branch, which is separate from him. Trust not, then, my brethren, I beseech you, to your own power of leading a regular and moral life. The heart, the heart, is what God regards ; and that will not produce a life of obedience, until it is renewed. The stream will be bitter, if the fountain is bitter. The fruit will be corrupt, if the tree is corrupt. Seek, then, a new heart. Let not the deceitfulness or desperate wickedness of your heart drive you to despair. There is One who is greater than our hearts, that has promised to “ give a new “ heart, and to put a new spirit within us.”

SERMON VI.

ON THE WAY OF ACCEPTANCE, AS ANNOUNCED IN THE GOSPEL.

ROMANS VIII. 3, 4.

“For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the
“flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh,
“and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness
“of the law, might be fulfilled in us, who walk, not after the
“flesh but after the Spirit.”

MY object in this discourse, will be, to show, that the Gospel is the grand remedy, which God, in his infinite wisdom, has devised for the necessities of man.

That something is wrong in man, that the world is not as it should be, that it is in disorder, and needs rectification, I suppose, none will deny. There is certainly some want of harmony, between the heart of man, and his circumstances in this world. Other things, we find exactly adapted to each other. Whatever is the effect, simply of the divine agency, needs no amendment. The vegetables, and the inferior animals, are all possessed of properties suited to their circumstances. We find there a beautiful correspondence and adaptation of one part of nature to another. The structure of the bird is just such as fits it to fly in the air; the formation of the fish is just such as fits it best to live and move in water. In like manner, the plants are most wonderfully and wisely adapted to the earth, the air, and the water, which are requisite to their life and growth. It is in man alone, we behold disorder and confusion. Strange, that in the noblest terrestrial creature, there should appear, that want of

harmony and correspondence between his character and his situation, which is discoverable in none of the inferior creatures ! And even in man, it is only in one part of his nature, that we discover this disorder. That part is the one which could be influenced by his free agency.

Whatever God has done, is well done. Whatever depends upon God's appointment and fixed laws, bears the stamp of his wisdom ; and goes on smoothly, and happily. It is only where man's free agency has room to militate with the wise appointments of Heaven, that the traces of disorder and discord are seen. Thus man's physical structure, appears admirably adapted to his circumstances in the world. His lungs, as the anatomist will tell you, are contrived, in the best possible manner, to inhale and exhale the air, he was destined to breathe ; his eye, is formed with exquisite mechanism, to receive the light and to enjoy the variety of colours, with which the earth is profusely painted ; and his ear is exactly constructed, so as to relish the concord of sweet sounds. So far, all is right : Why ? Because man's moral nature cannot alter these laws of his physical constitution. The beating of his pulse, the colours painted on the bottom of his eye, and the unison of sounds conveyed to his ear, do not at all depend on his will or inclination. These things, God hath fixed by unalterable laws. What, then, is wrong in man ? Why, his soul. That part of him which is capable of happiness, is not adapted to the objects around it ; it does not harmonize with its circumstances. Give the lungs sufficient pure air, and they are perfectly satisfied, and play with healthful ease ; give the stomach enough of wholesome food, and its appetite is perfectly gratified ; give the ear good music, and its entertainment is complete, without any alloy. But give the soul the whole world, and it will not be satisfied ! Is not this phenomenon, a strong evidence, that man's

moral part, is not as his Creator originally formed it;— that it has undergone some sad alteration? Else, why do we not see the same harmony, the same wise and beautiful correspondence between his character, and his worldly circumstances, that we discover in all other parts of the works of God? Man is certainly the noblest of God's terrestrial works. But what gives him this superiority? Not surely, his bodily powers; for he is surpassed, in strength and swiftness, by many inferior creatures. His true superiority, then, consists in possessing a rational and immortal soul. This is the noble work of God. Now, is it not remarkable, that the defect and disorder we have been noticing, should be detected in the very master-piece of God's workmanship on earth? In looking at the works of a skilful artist, we do not mind it, if we see imperfections in his common, every-day performances, which he tosses off from his hand in carelessness and haste; but when he undertakes a work which is to be a lasting specimen of his talents, then, if ever, we expect to see a display of skill and exactness. What should we say, if, upon examining a statue, we should find the limbs all fashioned and turned with perfect truth and beauty, but, upon coming to the face, we should find it very rudely carved, or horridly distorted? Should we not say, this face was not carved by the same hand which formed the other parts; or some mischievous and malignant person has altered and marred the original countenance? This is just the conclusion we ought to draw, from the examination of our own moral character. In scrutinizing all the various works of the Deity, from the meanest insect up to our own bodies, every thing bears the impress of divine skill and goodness; but when we come to God's chief and noblest earthly work, here something is wrong; here are evident marks of distortion and error. What is the irresistible inference?

God did not produce this soul in this situation ; some one has marred the beauty of the divine workmanship— “an enemy hath done this.” These are the natural suggestions of the mind, in reflecting on the moral state of mankind. How remarkably the declarations of Scripture, correspond with this reasoning ! There, we are told, that man was made in God’s image, but, that, abusing his free will, he fell into sin ; and introduced death into his soul. This fact, we have not only detailed by Moses in history, but explicitly asserted by Solomon, who says, “ God made man upright ; but they “ have sought out many inventions.”

Man’s disordered state, then, being acknowledged, some remedy must be devised. He is found to possess a conscience, telling him what is right, and yet passions and propensities, urging him to violate his conscience. What then ? Must moral obligation cease ? Must man be left to follow his depraved inclinations ? Must God’s law be abolished, because his creature has become unwilling and unable to obey it ? By no means. This propensity to evil must be restrained by rigid laws, and deterred by penalties. Thus, accordingly, hath God dealt with man. He wrote his law upon his heart. He gave him a conscience, to excuse him when he did right ; and to accuse him when he did wrong. What was the effect ? Did the law restrain man from sin ? No. It was weak through the flesh. The fleshly lusts, the evil inclinations of the heart, were found too powerful, to be checked by law, or terrified by penalties. The world became altogether abandoned to wickedness ; so that its Creator was provoked, to drown it with a deluge. Nor did this cure the evil. The seeds of disease were preserved in the Ark ; and from Noah’s family, were again propagated over the earth. The faint remains of the divine law, not quite obliterated from the heart of man,

instead of drawing him nearer to his Maker, only drive him further from him: instead of inclining him to love, only excite his fear and aversion. His conscience tells him, that he is a transgressor; and that God is the avenger of all such. This does not wean him from his sins; it does not, at all, diminish the power of his evil propensities. They continue in unabated vigour. Hence, an enmity is excited in his heart, against that law, which forbids his beloved practices, and shakes over him the lash of justice. This slavish dread is the origin of all his attempts at religious duties; and gives to them their peculiar character. Although he hates God, he sees he cannot set him at defiance; but must try some way to pacify and propitiate him. Hence, he spills the blood of victims in profusion; he even sometimes immolates his own children, to expiate his crimes. And although these horrid expedients give a temporary and delusive opiate to his conscience; yet, his sinful nature, hurrying him again into transgressions, new sacrifices are wanting, again to appease his guilty conscience. You all know, my brethren, that the history of the Heathen world, furnished formerly, and still furnishes, melancholy evidences of the truth of these remarks. Thus, we see, that the light of nature, the law of God written on the heart, had not the effect of preventing wickedness, of meliorating the disposition, and producing love to its Divine Author; but on the contrary, clashing with the favourite lusts of nature, it served to enkindle the enmity of man to his Maker; and to increase the distance and alienation between them.

“What shall we say, then?” said the Apostle. “Is the law sin? God forbid—Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law.” “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good—but sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me, by that

“ which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”*

But, perhaps it may be said, that this effect was owing to the dimness of their knowledge, to the faintness of the lines, in which the law was inscribed on their hearts. Let us, then, pass from the Heathen, to the Jew. He shall have, in addition to the law written on his heart, a law written on tables of stone. He shall have a clear revelation of his duty, alluring promises, and most tremendous threatenings. We shall see whether the result will be different. Consult the history of God’s chosen people. Is it not a record of rebellions and apostacies? What is the prevailing language of all the ambassadors who were sent to instruct and reclaim them? Do we not find the burden of the complaint of all the Prophets to be, the perverseness, the folly, the hardness of heart, and base ingratitude of Israel? The law was still weak, through the flesh. The Israelites found their God too pure and holy for them; and showed a constant inclination to prefer the gods of the neighbouring nations. We are apt to impute this readiness to revolt, this proneness to idolatry, to the uncommon wickedness of that people. But, it was owing to no national depravity. The fault was in human nature. It was attributable to that very aversion of which we have been speaking, which is stirred up in the natural heart of man, against a law that opposes his inclinations, and denounces punishment upon his sins. Such is the operation of the law of God *now* upon a sinner, when his conscience is awakened to feel its binding force. The awakened sinner knows, that he is a transgressor; and deserves punishment. He is, therefore, afraid to fall into God’s hands. He secretly considers God as his enemy; and his only refuge from

* Rom. VII. 7, 12, 13.

uneasiness is, to banish all thoughts of Him from his mind. He tries to stifle his convictions. Perhaps he betakes himself to amusement, to gay company, to intoxication, and, as a last resort, to infidelity. If he succeeds in silencing the clamours of conscience, he plunges deeper into sin than before; but if not, if the sword of the Spirit still pursues him, and will not let him rest quietly in his sins, he is set upon *doing something*, to escape the wrath to come; he resolves to exert his utmost power to avoid his besetting sins. Temptation assails him; his heart leans towards it, and pleads for accustomed indulgence; but alarmed conscience is more than a match for appetite; and keeps him from relapsing. This strife goes on, perhaps, for some time. The love of sin has not been taken away:—the strength of vicious inclinations has not at all abated. The reason why these inclinations do not show themselves in the same career of sin as before, is because fear controls them. They are kept in check by the apprehension of a day of judgment. When a lion is caged, his power of doing mischief is taken away; but his strength and his ferocity are the same. Just so, is our lion-nature. While it is under the fear of God's wrath, it is quiet and dormant; but, remove that fear, let conscience be deceived by false doctrine, or be hardened and blinded in any way, and the lion is let loose; corruption takes its course; and hurries man forward to his ruin. However, as long confinement reduces even the lion's strength, so, long restraint from open sin, cripples the force of evil habit; and gives good principles a better opportunity of operating on the heart. This is an important benefit, which a sinner may derive from being for a considerable time under the apprehension of punishment. But we are speaking now of the effects produced upon a sinner, when he *first* feels his obligations to obey the divine law. We said, that his

outward sins were restrained, but that his inward propensities, were the same. The consequence is, that, by and by, his terrors begin to subside ; his convictions begin to be obliterated ; temptation now comes ; he yields to it ; and again brings upon himself a load of guilt. This rouses conscience :—his convictions return ;—he trembles ; he grieves ; and resolves to renew his endeavours. He perseveres for a little while ; and then falls again. Thus, resolutions of amendment, and relapses into sin, succeed each other continually ; until the poor captive is “driven to his wits’ end,” and knows not what to do. No wonder he finds such a situation uncomfortable. No wonder you see a man, in whom conscience and passion are maintaining this deadly strife, more miserable than the most abandoned sinner. His bosom is rent, and lacerated, by these conflicting principles ; like a mountain torn by hidden fires.

This may appear, to some, extravagant language. But, if mind be more important than matter, if the perdition of one immortal spirit be a more terrible calamity than the annihilation of an inanimate world, then, I contend, that the struggle which takes place in the soul of a sinner, when he is revolving within himself the conflicting claims of this world and the next, when he is balancing between God and Satan, between Heaven and Hell ; the conflict, which, at that moment, is going on in the human bosom, is a more sublime and stupendous convulsion, than an earthquake, which agitates a continent. It is a spectacle, on which the hosts of Heaven gaze with tremulous anxiety ; and as they know and rejoice whenever the struggle terminates on the side of righteousness, so may we suppose, that, if they be capable of pity or grief, tears, such as angels weep, drop from their eyes, when they witness an opposite decision ; when they see an imperishable soul yield itself a prey to the arts of the

grand seducer, and let go all the glorious hopes of Heaven, for the short-lived vanities of time. And surely, when we consider the consequences of the choice which God commits to every human being, yea, to every one of us, my dear brethren, none can deny, that, in that critical moment, when the scale turns for God in our hearts, when long harassed and rent with opposite principles, we resolve, in the strength of the Almighty, to give ourselves to the service of our Creator, and take him for our portion; none can deny, that, then is achieved a victory, which, in point of sublimity and vastness of importance, exceeds any that was ever won, by embattled myriads, on any earthly plain.

But, should the convinced sinner not have been addicted to vicious habits, and therefore, be able to avoid gross sins, this will not satisfy his conscience. He soon reflects, that the divine law reaches to the heart; and requires *that* to be brought into subjection, as well as the life. He reflects, that, to fulfil the law, all his dispositions must be loyal, and holy. He is conscious that his are not so; and therefore, he is still guilty, still obnoxious to punishment. He cannot deny, that, even the partial obedience which he renders, proceeds from fear; and that constrained service cannot be acceptable to God. He knows, that he himself, is angry with a servant, who, though he executes his commands, does it with a sullen countenance, and a grudging heart. Hence, he has no hope, that such service as this, will gain him the favour of his offended Creator. He therefore tries to make his heart better; he labours after a broken heart; he reads his bible; he prays; and he tries to love God and duty; but all in vain. His heart remains hard; it will not love God; and prayer is a dry and uninteresting duty, or a heavy task. Now he begins to murmur. God appears to him to be a hard master:—his law seems to him to be too

strict. His dislike to it increases, the more he finds how hard it is to obey. Sometimes, this dislike rises to malignant and violent enmity. Then his conscience is loaded with new troubles, to find such rebellious dispositions rising within him. These disclose to him deeper gulphs of wickedness in his heart than he knew of before; and induce him to believe, that he grows worse as he tries to grow better; and that he is farther from the kingdom of Heaven now, than when he set out. The law still rolls its thunders over his head; and damnation yawns under his feet. Now, will a sinner be inclined to love a law, which causes him so much misery? Will not his hatred of it be rather increased than diminished? Yes, surely: this is what the Apostle means, when he says, "the Law was weak through the flesh." It was inadequate to restrain the sins, and reform the hearts of men; on account of their depraved inclinations. It rather roused into greater rage, that corruption, which it attempted to repress; and drove it to greater extremes of disobedience. Thus, the Apostle Paul, in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, says, "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence; for without the law, sin was dead." Thus does the law of God, which is, in itself, holy and good, acting upon a depraved heart, inflame its corruptions; as the rays of the sun, falling on a mass of filth, draws forth noxious exhalations.

But, "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

Here is the grand remedy, provided by God himself, to win the obedience, and reconcile the heart of man. He who made man, and understood his frame, did, in his infinite wisdom, devise this, as a plan perfectly adapted to

his necessities. In vain, therefore, do we expect to make men better by any other means than the Gospel. It is impeaching the wisdom of Heaven. It is as much as saying, we know better than God, how our nature's evils can be remedied. There must, then, be some wonderful secret in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; some potent charm, that can cure a heart, which was proof against all other medicines. I will attempt to show you, briefly, my brethren, in what that charm consists.

In the first place, the Gospel of Christ, exhibits to the sinner, another, performing, in his stead, that obedience to which he was utterly incompetent; and enduring that penalty, to which he was obnoxious. It announces to him, a new covenant of grace, in place of the old covenant of works; the maxim of which is, not "do this, and thou shalt live," but, "believe, and thou shalt be saved." He is assured of free pardon for Christ's sake; or, in the words of Scripture, "he is justified freely, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Now, the sinner can see, that the law is holy, just and good; he can love it, and approve of it; because he is not to be condemned for failing in every tittle of obedience. Though he will grieve for violating it; deeply grieve, for not conforming, in every respect, to a system of laws, so good and so reasonable; yet, the fear of wrath, on account of transgression, does not now kindle his hatred, and drive him to desperation.

In the second place, the costly love of his Saviour wins the sinner's heart. Where he views by faith, Jesus, the glorious Son of God, hanging on the Cross, for sins not his own; enduring woes unutterable, for worthless, provoking, unthankful sinners; such amazing condescension, such mighty compassion, makes its way directly to the citadel of his heart, and takes it captive. His weapons of rebellion drop from his hands; and he becomes a

willing, devoted servant of Him, who bought him with his precious blood. Now, the relenting sinner does, from love, what all the terrors of the law could not induce him to do before ; and an obedience, more constant, more exact, more faithful, is produced, from the gentle spirit of the Gospel, while, at the same time, the heart is free from bondage, and is joyful in its duty ; as the earth, which remained locked up in hardness, during the rude storms of winter, opens her relenting bosom to the mild beams of the vernal sun.

This simple system of religion, this plain doctrine of Christ crucified, when applied by the power of the Holy Ghost, can do, and has done more, towards transforming the character of man, and the aspect of the world, than any thing else which was ever tried.

To many, it appears foolishness ; but it is that “ foolishness of God which is wiser than men.” To many, it appears weakness, destitute of any suitableness to change the lives of men ; but it is that “ weakness of God, which is stronger than men.” With this weapon, the Apostles encountered, and overcame, the gigantic might of the Roman empire. They were not ashamed of the Cross of Christ, but gloried in it ; and, wherever Missionaries have kept back this doctrine, from the fear of throwing a stumbling block in the way of their success, there they have failed ; and laboured for nought. But, wherever they have boldly preached it, in the face of scoffs and derision, there men have been converted and made happy by the Gospel.

How different this plan of reforming mankind, from any that would have been conceived, or adopted by human wisdom ! And this is one strong proof that the Christian religion is from above ; being at once so singular, that the human mind never could have invented it ; and so exactly adapted to the moral nature of man, as to

point out its author to be Him, who fashioned our frame. God saw fit to let the world have a long experiment, even for a space of four thousand years, to see if any of their own devices would answer for their restoration to virtue and happiness. But, after all had failed—"after that in
 " the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not
 " God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching,
 " to save them that believe."

This is the doctrine, my brethren, by preaching which alone, we hope, under the blessed influences of God's Spirit, to save your souls. Were it our design to entertain your fancies, or exercise your intellects, with curious moral speculations, we might take a different course. But what is committed to us, is entitled in Scripture, the "ministry of reconciliation," i. e. the message which announces, how God is reconciled to man; and we are to proclaim this, as the chief means of reconciling man to God. This being the case, God forbid, that we should pretend to be wiser than he; and adopt any other means than those which he has appointed, under the influences of his blessed Spirit, for the renewal of fallen man, to holiness of heart and life.

The text tells us, that "God sending his own Son in
 " the flesh and for sin, (or a sin offering, as it would
 " more properly be rendered) condemned sin in the flesh,
 " that the righteousness of the law, might be fulfilled in
 " us, who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." You see, then, what effect the coming of God's Son in the flesh, ought to have: it ought to "condemn or cru-
 " cify sin, in the flesh; and cause us to walk, not after
 " the flesh, but after the Spirit." If it has not had this effect upon us, depend upon it, brethren, we have not received it into our hearts, by faith. If sin still reigns in our flesh, we have never yet put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of the Gospel, when cordially embraced, will not be ineffectual.

Has it, then, my hearer, wrought this salutary change in thee? Has it condemned sin in thy flesh; and dost thou now walk after the Spirit? Or hast thou heard the preaching of the Cross in vain? Does that doctrine appear absurd to thine understanding, and uninteresting to thy heart? Ah! then, thou hast no part nor lot in the matter. Pray fervently to the Father of lights, to “shine into thy heart, to give thee the light of the knowledge, of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.” Never rest satisfied, till the love of a crucified Saviour has won your affections, dissolved the power of sin, and enabled you to bring forth the fruits of righteousness.

SERMON VII.*

ON THE DOCTRINE OF A PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE.

PSALM XCVII. 1.

“The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoice.”

THE belief of a Supreme and intelligent Being, as the Creator of the world, has been universally entertained. This truth is demonstrated by the works of creation. When we contemplate the firmament and all its starry hosts, or survey the earth and gaze on that rich attire with which its surface is clad; when we attend to the perfect adaptation of each part, for the promotion of the general end of the whole system, or inspect the wisdom which appears in the organization, both of animate and inanimate nature; when we listen to the roaring storm, behold the glittering lightning, and look on the billows of the ocean; when we turn to the consideration of ourselves, and watch the operations of our own minds; when we examine the structure of our bodies, and see how fearfully and wonderfully they are made—we are convinced of the existence of God, and also that he is a Being of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. The Deity is seen in every object around us. Creation exhibits in every direction, evidence, which reason is unable to resist, that there is a God, whose tender mercies are

* Delivered on Thursday, Nov. 7th, 1822, being a day set apart, by the Civil Authority, for public Thanksgiving, Humiliation, and Prayer.

over all his works. God spake ; and from chaos creation arose. At his voice, the Heavenly orbs appeared, and this ponderous globe, on which we dwell, was formed. He said, " let there be light, and there was light." In the space of six days he erected the magnificent temple of the universe, and furnished it with that varied order of beings which we behold. In this temple he placed man, made in his own likeness, who, as the priest of nature, should declare in still more exalted strains than the other works of his hand, his glory and goodness. But after having created the world, and placed man in it, did the Almighty withdraw from the work of his hands, and leave this stupendous machinery with all its complicated parts to continue in motion, from that impetus which he at first impressed on it ? And is the divinity now shrouded in the eternity of his nature, to be regarded only as the spectator of those changes which take place in the inanimate parts of his works ; and also of that happiness and misery, which the being whom he has made after his own image, daily experiences ? Against a supposition so cheerless as this, the sympathies of our nature revolt, the voice of reason pleads, and the declarations of Holy Writ stand opposed. No : " The Lord reigneth, let the earth "rejoice."

The importance of the declaration here made, we have now assembled, agreeably to the wise and judicious regulation of the council of our city, to consider. The doctrine of the text is one which every event in the history of our lives is calculated to teach us ; for in " him we "live, and move, and have our being." But there are seasons, in which we have experienced, in a peculiar manner, the displays of Almighty goodness and mercy, that imperiously call for public expressions of gratitude. Calamities have been experienced, from the annihilating effects of which we have been preserved by the interpo-

sition of God, that not only justify, but urgently demand those grateful returns, humiliating acknowledgments, and prayerful desires, which we have assembled this day to express, and render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us. Such is the present season.

In discoursing further from the words of our text, we shall, in the first place, endeavour to establish the doctrine of a Particular Providence. Secondly, we shall enumerate some of those consolations which the belief of this doctrine imparts ; and in the last place, we shall make such an application of the remarks, offered, as the object of the present meeting requires.

In the *first* place, let us endeavour to establish the doctrine of a Particular Providence. "The Lord reigneth." This truth has been denied, and by many who profess the Christian religion. The system of a General Providence has been set up in opposition to the one which we are now to consider, viz. the immediate agency of the Divine Being, in the production of every event in the world. In illustration of the truth of the text, let us, in the first place, examine the system of a General Providence.

The belief of those who reject the doctrine of a Particular Providence, but yet maintain the system of a General Providence, is this : that when God created the world, he infused into every department of it certain energies, or principles, or powers, which were of themselves sufficient, after the original impetus impressed by the Almighty on universal nature, to produce all those changes which we see ; and regulate the movements of the world : or, in other words, the advocates of this system, compare the world to an ingenious piece of mechanism, which is made up of various parts, but the regular exercise of all, necessary to the accomplishment of the final end designed. Now, as the constant interposition

of the human artist is not required after the machine has been set in motion, so neither, say the supporters of the doctrine against which we contend, does the machinery of the world, stand in need of the unremitted agency of that infinite Being who made it.

The Divine Architect is supposed, from the very beginning, to have withdrawn from the government of the world, and to have left the performance of the revolutions which we behold, to the laws which he enacted. Such is a brief view of the system of a General Providence. Now we maintain with those who have defended the doctrine of our text, and to whom we are indebted for the leading ideas on this division of our discourse, that this view is fallacious, inasmuch as it does not accomplish the end for which it was introduced, viz. to exclude from the mind the idea of the present agency of the Divine Being. In the first place, this mode of reasoning is drawn from analogy, and therefore objectionable. Analogical arguments can only be consistently used, when the object in view is the establishment of facts; but they are inadmissible for supporting abstract truth. But secondly, I would ask what are those general laws, which, it is asserted, exclude the interposition of the Divine Being? Can it be pretended that these laws are self-active beings, or that they are any other than immediate determinations of the infinite will? Is not the system of general laws, but an exhibition of the mind of the Omnipotent? Can these laws reflect, contrive, and execute? Does not every operation of a law imply an agent? Unless we consider the laws of nature in this point of view, they are but unintelligible, and their terms unmeaning. If it be admitted, then, that the world be governed by general laws; and also, that these laws are but the pleasure of the Sovereign Mind, the doctrine of our text is established; for agreeably to the remarks made, in what-

ever place these laws operate, there does God operate. The operation of these laws is universal. The agency of the Divine Being is therefore universal. Thus, in the system of a General Providence, as it has been stated, is contained the doctrine of a Particular Providence.

But *secondly*—The doctrine of a Particular Providence will appear, if we consider the omnipresence of God. This perfection of the Deity, must be admitted by every reflecting mind. We see the Divinity in every object around us. We behold him in those successive changes which occur on this globe; in the growth of every blade of grass, and in that variety of colour which the earth's surface presents. We view him in the revolutions of the celestial orbs, and in the splendour of those celestial lights, which rule by day and by night. His presence is felt in the gloom of Winter, the ethereal mildness of Spring, the genial warmth of Summer, and the decay which marks Autumn. He appears about us in the roaring storm, the glittering lightning, and the angry sky. His presence is also experienced by us, in those moral changes through which we pass, in our intellectual reflections, and in our pious meditations. But is God thus every where present, and yet will it be affirmed that he does not exercise an instant agency in the production of every event? That the general laws, already considered, account in a satisfactory manner for the production of these changes; and therefore exclude his immediate interposition? In reply to this, we would again ask: Can these laws think or act? Have they any existence by themselves? Do these laws form a class of agents, inferior to the Infinite Being? Is a law of nature different from the God of nature? But rather, are not the expressions of these general laws, mere terms denoting the pleasure of the Divine Being, which our ignorance of his nature, and the poverty of language have forced us to adopt.

God is omnipresent ; and these laws are but applications of the omnipresent will. Each event which takes place is a particular expression of the will of God. All the events which occur constitute the system of a General Providence, which is made up of particular applications of the pleasure of Him who is every where present, beholding the good and the evil. Hence from the omnipresence of the Diety, we learn the truth of the doctrine, contained in these words : “ The Lord reigneth.”

In the *third* place, the truth of the doctrine of a Particular Providence will appear, if we consider the nature of those desires and sympathies which have been implanted within us. Human life has been beautifully compared to a journey. We enter on the path over which we are to travel this journey, with hopes and expectations, which soon prove delusive. In the world sorrow and care exist. The morning of life may be calm and bright, but before its rays increase, and shine in noon-day splendour, clouds and darkness may have gathered ; the gale of adversity may blow, and the storm of misfortune howl around us. All of us are exposed to the shafts of misfortune. Our feelings are often wounded, and unreasonable prejudices entertained against us. We are deceived in those upon whose friendship we relied. The tongue of calumny is raised against us, our reputation, for a season, is obscured, and our usefulness diminished. We are tossed on the billows of affliction, and have often to drink to the dregs of the cup of sorrow. Besides these, there is a sorrow which the soul alone feels, and there are pangs, that are known only to that bosom which experiences them. There are moments when the voice of friendship is unable to soothe, when the honours of the world become the objects of unconscious gaze, when trouble has invaded the mind, and a pensive train of reflections is induced, that not only produces the belief of a Particular

Providence, but also renders this truth the only foundation of support and consolation. To what living testimony can I turn in confirmation of these declarations?

Aged follower of Jesus, whose wrinkled brow and head silvered over with age, indicate but a few more revolving suns on earth—of you, I ask, has not the belief of this truth imparted, in the days that are past, the richest consolation? In the season of affliction, on the couch of disease, and at the loss of friends, have you not fled to that ark of safety, which the doctrine of a Particular Providence affords; and under the influence of this truth, been comforted? Daughter of affliction, thou who hast been brought to mourn over the grave of him who was dear as thy own self—of you, I ask: Have you not retreated to that shelter, which a superintending Providence affords? To that friend who sticketh closer than a brother? To that God whose arm is at all times stretched out for your deliverance? Disconsolate parent! whose child now lies in the tomb, and over whose remains you have but recently been mourning; of you, I ask: Have you not experienced the consolation, which the Particular Providence of God imparts? What comfort, what peace, did not that Being, whose kingdom ruleth over all, administer unto you, in the season of your affliction. Every feeling of the heart which trouble elicits, tells us, in the words of the text: “The Lord reigneth.” Every sigh which escapes from the cell of the penitent criminal, wafts with it this truth: “The Lord reigneth.” Every groan which affliction utters, confirms the words of the text: “The Lord reigneth.” These feelings were implanted within us by God. They have “grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength.” They are to be considered as the oracles of God, set up within us; by consulting which, we are taught, that the infinitely wise and benevolent Mind, would not have formed us with

feelings that can only be gratified by the belief of the doctrine of his constant and immediate agency, if he had withdrawn from the government of the world, when he created it.

But in the *last* place, the doctrine of a Particular Providence is declared in explicit terms in the Scriptures. What is the history of the world to the days of Moses, the conduct of God to the Israelites in all their journey through the wilderness, their settlement in the land of Canaan, their future prosperity and adversity; and the mission of the Prophets, but the truth of a Particular Providence? The language of the New Testament is so conclusive that I shall only adduce the following passages: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered; "not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your "Heavenly Father." "Wherefore, if God so clothe the "grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast "into the oven; shall he not much more clothe you, oh, ye "of little faith." These declarations of the Saviour prove to demonstration the truth of a Particular Providence, as recorded in the sacred volume, and now stated. Upon the belief of this doctrine, the whole of religion is founded. Every act of public and private devotion is an ostensive evidence of the declaration: "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." The interposition of a Divine Being, has formed a fundamental principle, in all the various systems of religion, which exist in the world.

This truth is so clearly revealed in the sacred volume, that I shall not dwell on it longer. "The Lord reigneth." God is the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe. Nothing occurs but by his immediate agency. He works around us, about us, and within us. He controls the wanderings of the smallest insect, and directs the motions of the worm on which we tread. He guides the planets in their course. He holds the stars in their place. He orders and

brings to pass the revolutions of those systems, which fill the unseen realms of immensity.

The doctrine of a Particular Providence, we have endeavoured to point out, in the first place, from the very statement of those who reject this truth, but yet who believe in a General Providence. In the second place, from the omnipresence of the Deity ; thirdly, from the character of our feelings ; and in the last place, from the Word of God.

This leads me in the *second* place, to make some general observations on that joy and consolation, which the belief of this truth imparts. Every idea connected with fate and necessity is gloomy. The belief that we live in a fatherless world, that we have no Almighty Parent who careth for us, whose government over us is constantly exercised for our good, and whose arm is ever extended to supply our wants, remove our fears, mitigate our pains, and avert from us surrounding dangers, is a view, so contrary to the sympathies of our nature, as to fill the mind with melancholy gloom. The thought that we are deserted by God, and left to ourselves, excites the most desponding emotions.

That we are insufficient of ourselves, unable to avoid those numerous temptations which beset our path, or to direct our steps ; exposed to so many dangers, the sport of every wayward desire and passion ; incapable of resisting the influence of prosperity, or of always bearing up against the frowns of adversity ; liable to disease, sorrow and death, and at the same time, deprived of the consolatory belief, that we are under the guidance of unerring wisdom, and unbounded goodness, is a proposition over which the darkest clouds of scepticism have settled. The nature of man revolts at the idea that God has withdrawn from the government of the world, and sits beyond the elements which he hath made, an unconcerned

spectator of all their commotions. No, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice."

The doctrine of a Particular Providence, in the first place, imparts joy and consolation, by furnishing us with just views of the nature and character of God. The perfections of the Divine Being claim, at all times, our warmest admiration and love. His wisdom calls into exercise our adoring wonder. His power awes us into humble submission. The eternity of his Being engrosses every thought of the mind; but his goodness and mercy invite the exercise of our love, expand our generous affections, and harmonise those discordant emotions which the incomprehensibility of his existence produced. Now this mercy and goodness are principally exhibited in the truth that he reigneth—that we are under his constant superintendence—that he is not unmindful of us—that he daily supports us. The works of creation present to our view, in the adaptation which we behold in every thing around us, the most exalted ideas of infinite wisdom and power, and thus furnish us with some conception of the goodness of the Divine Being. But what comfort can the consideration of the works of nature afford? What hope can the idea of this system of power and wisdom, left to the operation of a necessity which is blind and irresistible, impart? But let us change this scene. In addition to the wonders of creative energy which we behold, let us think of the hand which preserves, of the goodness and mercy which are so profusely scattered around, and the character of God is contemplated under a more just and consolatory aspect. He is revealed to us as the Father of Mercies, and the guardian of our lives. The hairs of our head are all numbered by him, the fowls of the air are all fed by him, and the lilies of the field all clothed by his bountiful hand. That his Providence is merciful, and also minutely exercised over

every step of our lives. The doctrine of a Particular Providence, in the first place, imparts joy and consolation, by furnishing us with just views of the nature and character of God, by representing him, not only as wise and powerful, but also, as actively engaged in ministering to our daily preservation and comfort, and thus inspiring the most unlimited confidence, awakening the most filial love, and leading the grateful mind to the cultivation and practice of pious hopes and desires.

In the second place, the doctrine of a Particular Providence imparts to the Christian, joy and consolation, because, upon the exercise of this Providence, depends the fulfilment of all the predictions and promises recorded in the Scriptures. Believers in Christ—to you I more particularly address myself; you know in whom you have believed, and that he is able to keep that which you have committed to him until the great day, because he reigneth. You are assured that his grace will be given unto you, and that none of you will perish, nor shall any be able to pluck you out of his hand, because he reigneth. You know that against his Church the gates of Hell shall not prevail; and from its sacred fount the streams of spiritual life continue to flow, because he reigneth. You know his kingdom will come, his glory cover the earth as the waters do the sea, and at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, because he reigneth. You see by faith the doctrines of the Cross preached with success to the Jew and Gentile, the Scythian, and Barbarian, the bond and free; and the rays of the Sun of Righteousness illuminating every Heathen altar in the universe, because he reigneth. And finally, you hear the last trump sound, witness the dead rising from their graves, the judgment seat erected, Heaven opened for the admission of the righteous, and Hell become the receptacle of the ungodly, because he

reigneth. To the children of God, then, the doctrine of a Particular Providence imparts consolation and joy, for they are assured that the predictions and promises of the Word of God, will receive their accomplishment by the exercise of this agency. But in the last place, the doctrine of the text imparts consolation and joy under the trials of life, and in the hour of death.

The pious man experiences comfort even in affliction, from the remembrance that God has sent it. Affliction, he is assured, cometh not from the dust. He regards it as that rod with which his Heavenly Father chastises his disobedience, and also, as the mean, which, under the sanctifying influence of grace, is to work out for him an exceedingly great and eternal weight of glory. Believing that the Judge of all the earth, will do that which is right, he is led to exclaim, with Eli, "It is the Lord! let him do what seemeth him good." And who, my brethren, that reflects on the trials of the present life, would wish to discard from his creed the belief of a Particular Providence? When misfortune overwhelms you, when troubles follow in close succession, when the voice of friendship is rendered mute, and the lispings of filial love forever hushed, when poverty succeeds affluence, when the finger of contempt is pointed against you, when the furious elements are in commotion above you and around you, and bursting on your defenceless habitations with all their violence—what anchor have you in this tempestuous sea, by which the vessel of existence can ride in safety, but that which is provided in the words of our text, "The Lord reigneth?" The doctrine of a Particular Providence imparts consolation under the trials of life, because it assures us that we are under the guidance of our Heavenly Father, who careth for us. But there is another hour still more awful, than that to which we have alluded; there is another scene, in gazing on which,

fancy trembles : this is the hour and the scene of death. And who can pass through the dark valley and shadow of death, an avowed unbeliever of the Providence of God. When the progress of disease, and the sorrow of friends indicate the approaching moment ; “ when the curtain is “ about to fall, the door to be shut, and the lamp forever “ extinguished,” what hold can dissolving nature embrace but that which is furnished in the words of our text. Eternity about to be entered, and life relinquished, the friends of our youth, and the relatives of our bosom given up. Oh, God ! whither can the soul go but to thee, and on what arm can it rely but that of him, who is over all, God blessed forevermore ? Upon this rock does the pious man rest, for the everlasting arm of Jehovah is under him, and his rod and staff comfort and support him. Such are the comforts and consolations which the doctrine of a Particular Providence imparts.

Let us now make an application of this doctrine to the object of our present meeting. With what sentiments of gratitude should our hearts glow on this occasion ! This day is, as it were, the anniversary of grateful praise. On this altar arises the incense of thankfulness. We have met, my brethren, for the purpose of rendering unto the Lord, the homage of our hearts, for that goodness and mercy, with which he has visited us, during the past season.

In reviewing the period which has recently passed away, do we not behold displays of the Divine goodness, and forbearance, which lead us to adopt the language of the Psalmist ? “ Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that “ is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, “ oh my soul, and forget not all his benefits ; who forgiveth “ all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who re- “ deemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee “ with loving kindness and tender mercies.” The appoint-

ment and observance of this day, is a living evidence of the doctrine of the text—"The Lord reigneth." Those blessings which we have enjoyed, have been rich and numerous. The past Summer has been indeed eventful. During its revolution, we were called to witness scenes, which excited alternately our hopes and fears, and upon which the eyes of the most aged inhabitant in our community never before gazed. The first display of the Particular Providence of God which we are required this day to recognise, is that which led to the detection of a privy conspiracy. The view I am to take of this civil commotion, must be exclusively of a religious kind. To the interposition of God we are to look for the disclosure of this atrocious combination. His Providence, you have seen, brethren, is particular. He brings to pass every event. And on this occasion, when the storm which had been long gathering, was about to burst upon our unconscious community, the vengeance of God against these workers of iniquity was no longer restrained; and by the occurrence of an event, in itself trivial, but highly important, when viewed with regard to its results, he made us acquainted with our situation, and suppressed this savage enterprise by our own instrumentality. Yes! The Lord of Hosts was with us; the God of Jacob was our defence. He interposed, and by the use of those means which were within our control, this barbarous design—this projected attempt, in which an impious disregard to the laws of God, to every feeling of gratitude, and every principle of humanity, appeared—was overthrown. But there are none in whose bosoms the emotions of gratitude should beat more intensely, than that class of our population to which the chiefs in this conspiracy belonged. It becomes them in a very peculiar manner, on the present occasion, to render thanksgivings unto the Lord for his interposing goodness, and, by the instru-

mentality of man, preventing a scheme which must have ended in their own extermination. It becomes us all, my brethren, to sing unto the Lord this day with thanksgiving, to sing praise on the harp unto our God, for his mercy endureth forever.

Secondly—We are called upon this day to thank the Lord for that portion of health, which, as a community, we have enjoyed. The enjoyment of life depends much on the possession of health. Health is the most valuable temporal gift which God has conferred on man. Without it, existence is in danger of becoming burdensome, riches palling, talents useless, social intercourse disagreeable and unprofitable. This blessing, then, from its being the most important of those which we have, demands the most animated songs of grateful praise. And need I observe, that on this day we are called upon in the loudest strains to exalt and magnify the goodness of God. During the past summer we have enjoyed an uninterrupted portion of health; and, indeed, so great has been the health of our city, that during the month, usually regarded the most sickly, the weekly bill of mortality was so small, as to have become the subject of general observation. To strangers, it had been incident, to become the victims of disease, in a climate to which they were not enured, and their remains had been often followed to the grave before the return of winter. But during the season that is past, residents from abroad, have been exempt from danger, and even from its apprehensions. And while we deeply sympathize in that distress and desolation which have visited the largest and most populous city in our Union, and fervently pray that this dispensation of Providence may be sanctified to that community, let us render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards us, the tribute of grateful praise. Let us thank God for his providential goodness in preserving our lives, in averting from our

community the seeds of disease, and in permitting us this day to enter his holy temple.

In the *third* place, we are called upon in a very peculiar manner this day, to render thanksgivings unto the Lord, for the preservation of our lives, during the late storm which visited our city. The scenes of that night were appalling, but the disclosures of subsequent days truly heart-rending. We cannot but revert in a particular manner, to the helpless condition of our community, on that occasion. The night was dark, the wind howled as if bearing on it the most extensive desolation. Dangers gathered thick around us. And was there no shelter to which, in this hour of alarm, we could retreat? Was there no human voice which could soothe our fears, or arm that might be extended for our deliverance? No. To escape was impossible. What picture more affecting than that which the population of our city, then exhibited? Family separated from family—friend unable to minister to the relief of friend—heart vibrating in unison with heart—and all waiting, unconscious of what the coming morn would disclose, concerning themselves, relatives and friends. The tempest raged! and the most extensive desolation followed! But notwithstanding the violence of the storm, and the imminent danger in which we ourselves stood, where was the heart, in the midst of us, that did not move with compassion at the remembrance of Sullivan's Island? In this annual retreat of health, in this salubrious asylum, were collected our friends and fellow-citizens. The danger of their situation, past experience enabled us in some degree to realize. And no day ever dawned before upon our city, with more melancholy disclosures than the twenty-eighth of September. The ravages of the storm, met us in every direction; and after having ascertained the mournful intelligence of the almost, I may say total loss

of a family in the vicinity of our city, who had been crushed by the falling roof, we turned with anxious solicitude to know what was the situation of those who resided on the Island. The general character of the intelligence received was more favourable than had been anticipated, but circumstances occurred, and scenes were exhibited, over which the heart of sensibility then wept, and now sighs. Yes. The tears of grief were profusely shed, for the ornaments of social intercourse were withdrawn, and the ties of connubial and parental affection broken. The scenes of the following morning, when the emblems of departed worth and beauty passed along, were truly mournful. But over this picture, and the still more dismal scenes of North Inlet, your feelings and time force me to draw a veil.*

To-day, then, let us render thanksgiving unto God, for his goodness in arresting the elements of the natural world, and bringing us deliverance. Let each one of us adopt the words of the Psalmist: "Bless the Lord, oh, my soul." Nor can I, when enumerating the various causes of thankfulness this day, overlook the goodness of God in preserving us for so long a period from the destructive element of fire.

Brethren, in reviewing those mercies we have received, during the past year, are we not forced to exclaim—"How precious, oh, God, have thy thoughts been towards us! how great the sum of thy loving kindness!" But while we render unto God the thanksgivings of our hearts, for his manifold temporal blessings, let us in a still more exalted strain, adore his name for the gift of Christ, for the Gospel of peace, and all its privileges. Let us be humbled on account of our past sins, which are numerous and aggravated; and, finally, let us fervently pray

* For a more particular account of the ravages of this storm, see Sermon X.

for that grace which shall enable us to evince those grateful sentiments, which we this day cherish, by a godly conversation and life ; and let the grateful language of our hearts be : “ Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is
“ within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my
“ soul, and forget not all his benefits : who forgiveth all
“ thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who re-
“ deemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee
“ with loving kindness and tender mercies ; who satis-
“ fieth thy mouth with good things ; so that thy youth is
“ renewed like the eagle’s.” *Amen.*

SERMON VIII.

ON THE CHARACTER AND DOOM OF THE WICKED.

EZEKIEL XXXIII. 8.

“O wicked man, thou shalt surely die.”

MEN do not like to be told that they are wicked. The very idea implies so much censure, and is so derogatory to the character of a reasonable creature, that even those who acknowledge their wickedness, are displeased and hurt, if others remind them of it. It is a fact of which we cannot feel conscious, without feeling ourselves degraded. And it is a subject that will not bear reflection. Present the sinner with a true picture of himself, and he starts back from it, with precipitation and alarm. Its lineaments are too frightful and disgusting to be viewed with composure. Hence, some Gospel truths are so unwelcome, that the wicked cannot bear to think about them. As soon as their thoughts glance upon them, they fly off, as though they had approached something extremely disagreeable or noxious. Or, instead of applying them to themselves, they look about among their acquaintances, for some one to whose character they may be suitable.

It would therefore be much more agreeable to many, if the Minister of the Gospel could spend his time in delivering discourses, that would please, flatter, and entertain them. No doubt, if the pulpit always furnished a literary feast, the Philosopher and the man of Science, would be more uniform in his attendance at Church; and if we could always tickle the ears, gratify the curi-

osity, and flatter the vanity of our hearers, we should never have reason to complain, with Nehemiah, "Why is the House of God forsaken?" We should never have occasion to lament, that some of our hearers were asleep, and others were inattentive, while the "word of God," was sounding in their ears. We should not hear of Christians so soon *forgetting* the words of the Preacher. Nor would the instructions of the pulpit be passed over, in *dead silence*, without ever becoming the subjects of conversation, in the course of the week.

But, my fellow mortals, though the "*terrors of the Lord*," be an appalling theme, we *must* present them to your consciences. Though it be disagreeable to you, to sit and listen to a detail of your faults, and your sins; and though it be far from our wish, to excite your displeasure—nay, though it be painful to us, to be constantly denouncing sin and sinners, yet we *must* sound in your ears, the censures and the denunciations of the Gospel. We are charged with instructions from Almighty God, and we *must* deliver them. And I have ascended this pulpit to-day, to proclaim, in the words of my divine Master, "Woe to the wicked! it shall be ill with him, saith the Lord. O wicked man, thou shalt surely die."

I trust there are, at least, some who wish to hear the truth. All are interested in our text. Attend, then, while we proclaim a *few truths concerning the wicked, and concerning death*. Nay, I entreat your attention, as you value your everlasting peace. Hear with reverence, for it is the truth of the great God. Hear as for Eternity—for you must oneday give account. Hear and obey, for "blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it." You cannot need any other inducements, for I am *pleading your own cause*. I am pointing out to you, the way of happiness; and it will be "more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment," than

for those who refuse to hear the Gospel call. Hear, therefore, and “your soul shall live.”

The first inquiry, in which our text would interest us, is, Who are the wicked? As there can be no medium, all, except the true servants of God, must come under the denomination of “the wicked:” and among these, we may discover three distinct classes. First—Gross Sinners. Secondly—Those, who, leading a regular life, nevertheless, knowingly, deliberately, and habitually, transgress God’s laws, or neglect their duty, in some one instance. Lastly—Those, who, though moral in their conduct, and outwardly religious, are, *nevertheless*, still in their natural unconverted state.

The *First* class of the wicked consists of *gross transgressors*—Among these, the Bible includes, all those who are habitually unjust in their dealings with mankind; all liars, thieves, swindlers, and knaves—all persons notoriously avaricious, and miserly—all those who are cruel, and hard hearted, towards their children, servants, or dependents—all those who are habitually guilty of anger, envy, hatred, malice, and revenge—all who are flagrantly given to censoriousness, backbiting, strife and quarrelling—all rebels, oppressors, tyrants, duellists, and murderers.

Under this class, the word of God includes, also, all who live in habits of impurity and lust, of intemperance and luxury—all drunkards, rioters, and friends of the brothel—all epicures, gamblers, and those emphatically called “men of pleasure.”

It includes, likewise, all those who are habitually impious, and profane, who live in open violation of the Sabbath, and the ordinances of religion; and who disbelieve, condemn, and vilify, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It includes, lastly, all those, who live manifestly regardless of God and of religion—all those who are commonly

denominated worldlings, or men of the world, and whose chief business is the pursuit of honour, profit, pleasure, and ambition, without any scruples of conscience about the means, ordinarily used for effecting these purposes.

That all these must be classed with gross transgressors, is evident, at first view, to those that are acquainted with God's word; and though some of these moral lepers appear fair in the eyes of some, yet the Scriptures, in the plainest language, sanction this classification, and declare that none of these flagrant sinners shall enter Heaven. Hear the Apostle on this point. "No whoremonger, nor
 "unclean person, nor covetous man, hath any inheritance
 "in the kingdom of Christ and of God." "Now the
 "works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adul-
 "tery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, hatred,
 "variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
 "envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such
 "like; of the which, I tell you before, as I have also
 "told you in time past, that they who do such things,
 "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." "Indignation
 "and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every
 "soul of man that doeth evil."

Are any of you unfortunate enough to be included under the above description? You have then already heard your doom. *Unless you repent and amend your life*, you must hereafter be swept away, by that fearful sentence, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, pre-
 "pared for the Devil and his angels." "O wicked man,
 "thou shalt surely die."

Be persuaded, then, my dear fellow mortal, to "consider your ways," and to "turn from all your transgressions, that iniquity may not be your ruin." Do not object and say, you cannot be forced into your duty: and that ministers had better use reason and affectionate

remonstrance, than to be kindling the flames of Hell before your eyes, and thundering the denunciations of wrath into your ears. When we proclaim “the terrors of the Lord,” it is according to the Apostle’s rule; and for the reason, which St. Paul states, “By the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men.” Those terrors are *real*, and will most assuredly overwhelm you, if you do not, by repentance and reformation “flee from the wrath to come.” And shall we see you on the highway to ruin, without endeavouring, by all the means in our power, to warn you of your danger, and pluck you as a “brand from the burning”? Shall we hold our peace—shall we prophesy smooth things—shall we speak and act as though we cared not, and as though nothing were the matter, when your *souls are in danger*, and you stand upon the brink of the bottomless pit? Let not a spirit of opposition, then, conceal the light of truth from your eyes. Make haste and delay no longer to keep God’s commandments. From this day forward, “Cease to do evil, and learn to do well.”

The *Second* class of the wicked, consists of those who, *leading a regular life, nevertheless, knowingly, deliberately, and habitually*, transgress God’s laws, or neglect their duty, in *some one* instance or more.

You may, my fellow mortal, be an inoffensive, and upright man, kind, tender hearted, and hospitable, agreeable, good-natured, and accommodating, full of the milk of human kindness, and much given to acts of charity. You may, in consequence of this, be the idol of your acquaintances, and held up to others, as the pattern of moral perfection. And yet, *with all these good and amiable qualities, and notwithstanding the good opinion you may have of yourself, you may be wicked in the sight of God.*

I know the ground upon which I am standing. I

know the world thinks, with Pope, that "an honest man is the noblest work of God." I know it is a very common thing, for men, who know not, or care not about the meaning of the Apostle and of Jesus Christ, to say that "Charity covereth a multitude of sins," and that Jesus Christ, will, in the day of judgment, admit us into Heaven, because we have been kind, affectionate, and bountiful to the poor, the afflicted, and the destitute. I know that the man of integrity, honour, and patriotism, who is an agreeable companion, a kind neighbour, a good father and husband, and a useful citizen—I know that this man is, as it were, shielded and consecrated, by public opinion. The world never doubts of his salvation: and they think it an outrage upon common sense, to make it a question. They take it for granted that he *must* go to Heaven.

But remember, the opinion of the world is not the tribunal to which the Minister of the Gospel must appeal; because it is not the tribunal, by which your destinies will be decided, in the day of judgment. Nothing but the word of God, is to be consulted on this subject; and that word, not in detached pieces, but as a whole—*as a system*. By comparing one part of Scripture with another, you will find that the Apostle, when he says, that, "Charity covereth a multitude of sins," is speaking of man, and not of God: and means the faults which *man's* charity will hide, and not the sins which God's mercy will pardon. That their charitable acts, will, in the sight of God, cover the multitude of sins, of which those are guilty, who have not the "fear of God before their eyes," nor the love of God in their hearts, is an error too glaring to be admitted for a moment. But we speak familiarly, of throwing the mantle of charity, over the faults of our brethren; and thus covering, or hiding them from the censures of the world. All who are in-

fluenced by the charity of the Gospel, will thus, indulgently, overlook those errors and failings of their fellow-mortals, which others, who are borne away, by their malignant passions, are prone to exaggerate and proclaim abroad. And thus the charity of the Christian covers a multitude of sins—not his own sins indeed, but the *sins of others*—not from the view, and knowledge, and condemnation of God, but from the view, knowledge, and condemnation of man.

But if we want *our* sins covered, we must repent of them—we must forsake them—we must earnestly seek an interest in Christ's atoning blood, that "cleanseth from all sin." Without this, in spite of all our charities, iniquity will be our ruin.

By comparing one part of Scripture with another, you will find, likewise, that Jesus Christ, in representing the process of the final judgment, admits into Heaven, those that have been distinguished for their charity, not because charity *alone* will carry a man to Heaven; but because it is a leading and indispensable trait, in the Christian character. Thus, Scripture says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Shall we therefore conclude, that that faith, which produces no good works, will carry us to Heaven? No—all those passages of Scripture, which attach salvation to any particular virtue, must be taken in connexion, with the *holy principles* from which they spring, and with those *other passages*, which require universal obedience, and holiness of heart. Charity will, *through God's mercy in Christ*, exalt us, in the regions of bliss, if, besides being charitable *in act*, we are likewise charitable *in heart*, and endeavour to love God, and keep all his commands. Faith will save us, through grace, if our faith be of the same kind, with that holy faith, described in the Scriptures; if it "works by love, purifies the heart," and "overcomes

“the world.” Without these fruits of holiness and of the Spirit, our charity is a “tinkling cymbal”—our faith is a dead and useless quality. Works indeed cannot save us. But they are the natural and unavoidable consequences of a saving faith. And if you profess to believe, without producing the “fruits of righteousness and true holiness,” we need not hesitate in affirming, that your faith is not that faith, which, through Christ, justifies and saves the sinner. For God declares, “faith without works is dead.”

I repeat it, therefore, my fellow mortal: you may be an inoffensive and upright man, kind, tender-hearted and hospitable, agreeable, good-natured, and accommodating, full of the milk of human kindness, and much given to acts of charity. You may, in consequence of this, be the idol of your acquaintances, and held up to others as the pattern of moral perfection. And yet with all these good and amiable qualities, and notwithstanding the good opinion you may have of yourself, you may be *wicked in the sight of God*. For no matter what your other good qualities may be, you are wicked in the sight of God, if you *knowingly, deliberately, and habitually*, neglect but one duty, or practice but one sin. Scripture says, “He that offendeth in *one point*, is guilty of all.” This passage will be sufficiently explained, when we inform you, that the word translated offendeth, signifies to *continue wilfully in the practice of any thing that is wrong*. If therefore you continue, deliberately, in the practice of any thing which you know to be wrong, you may class yourselves among the wicked doers.

And that you may not be mistaken, on this point, permit me to remark further, that you may be said to continue in the practice of what is wrong, when you knowingly, deliberately, and habitually, *neglect a duty*, as well as when you knowingly, deliberately, and habitually, practise a sin. Secret and frequent prayer is a duty—reli-

gious self-examination is a duty; the reading of the Scriptures is a duty. And if you continue to neglect any of these duties, when you know that you ought not, you are offending in one point, for which Scripture says you are guilty of all—you are wicked.

Some, without doubt, think this a hard doctrine: and probably, others are inclined, in their minds, to question its truth. It is expedient, therefore, to pursue this point a little further.

Some of the leading traits, in the pious man's character, are, that he is afraid, and watchful, lest he should do any thing that God dislikes. He endeavours, constantly, to live in obedience to the various precepts of God's word. And as soon as he discovers that, in any one thing, he has been in the habit of doing wrong, it is a matter of grief to him; he always strives, afterwards, to correct that habit, and to practise that duty, which he had before neglected. He may frequently do wrong, through ignorance, infirmity, or the force of passions from within, and temptations from without; but it is a contradiction to say, that the pious Christian can, knowingly, deliberately, and habitually, continue in the practice of what is wrong.

There is, perhaps, some may think, one class of exceptions. It is when persons are, by nature, subject to such impetuous and violent passions, that they are carried away by them, in spite of themselves. Or, when, through imbecility of mind, and the force of rooted habits, they continue, almost habitually, guilty of what they acknowledge to be wrong. But wherever these frailties are found in religious persons, they are also accompanied with those marks of piety, which leave us no room to doubt of the nature of their case. Those Christians who are unfortunate enough to be thus situated, make it their practice, *daily*, to lament and pray

against these easily besetting sins. They make it their practice, daily, to avoid every thing, that may lead to those sins; and they constantly struggle against them with all their might. However great their weakness—however powerful their inbred corruptions—however rooted their evil habits—by this species of conduct they always gain ground of their sins: and by divine grace, if their lives are spared, they always overcome them at last.

The sins of these persons, then, are distinguished by this, that they are committed *contrary to the desires of their hearts—contrary to their resolutions, their prayers, and their endeavours*; and they never fail to cause those who commit them, uneasiness of mind, and sorrow of heart. They are committed knowingly, and in a measure, at least, at first, habitually; but they are not deliberately and wilfully persisted in. And this constitutes the great difference between the children of God, and the children of the Devil.

We renew therefore our declaration—those who knowingly, deliberately, and habitually, live in the practice of any one sin, or neglect of any one duty, must be ranked with those whom our text calls wicked. If they do wrong *without knowing it*, or if they do wrong while they are *constantly and heartily praying and striving against it*, and while they *grieve over it as their burden*, they of course are exceptions to this general rule.

That this is Scripture doctrine, is evident from the language of the Apostle: “He who offendeth in one point “is guilty of all;” that is, he who deliberately continues, in any one instance, to do what he knows is wrong, is guilty.

And the reason is simply this. He that acts so, *possesses not a proper Christian spirit*. For there is a certain species of disposition, that is necessary, before we can enter Heaven. This disposition is always accompanied with an *anxiety to know and to do God’s will*. This

disposition produces in us a *fear* lest we should commit sin, and a *constant endeavour to keep God's commandments*. But it is evident that he who knowingly, deliberately, and habitually does wrong, in any one instance, cannot possess this disposition. He therefore cannot be a pious man. He must be numbered among the wicked.

Under the *Second* class of the wicked, we include all those unbelievers who lead moral lives, but do not diligently seek to become acquainted with the truth—all those professing Christians who are contented with giving God only part of their Sabbaths, devoting the rest to their own ease and enjoyments—all those who do not daily pray in secret, and in the family—all those who are not in the practice of daily reading their bibles—all those who neglect the Lord's supper—all those who seldom think of their religious duties, except when the returning Sabbath recalls them to their minds.

We admit that, through ignorance, pious persons may err, in such outward matters. But you who know your duties, on these various points, and yet deliberately live in the habitual neglect of either of them, belong to those whom our text calls wicked. And to all such, the word of God says; "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them"—No matter how exemplary you may be in your moral character—no matter how useful in the world, or how much beloved for your amiable qualities. The word of God says, "He that believeth not shall be damned." The word of God says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The word of God says, "Pray without ceasing." The word of God says, "Search the Scriptures." Jesus Christ says of the Communion, "Do this in remembrance of me." And we are commanded to "have God always before our eyes"—to "walk in his fear all the day long;" to "take up our cross daily;" and to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." Nay, the Apostle declares, that

those who have not the Spirit of Christ, are none of his—and as the Spirit of Christ, was a Spirit of meekness, of humility, of benevolence, of purity, of temperance, of self-denial, of prayer, and of Heavenly-mindedness; if you are wholly destitute of this Spirit of the Gospel, and these constituents of the Christian character, you are one of those, whom God addresses in the language of the text.

For, *lastly*, we cannot promise you happiness or Heaven—we cannot number you among the true disciples of Christ, as long as you are, in your natural and unconverted state. However moral and outwardly religious, in your conduct, you stand upon the same ground with the wicked, until you are “born again”—until you are “created anew, in Christ Jesus, unto good works”—until you are brought to live daily, under the influence of a believing, penitent, and obedient frame of mind. “Verily, verily,” says our Saviour to Nicodemus, “ye must be born again.” “Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” “Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind.” “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” says the Apostle; “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.” Man is, by nature, averse to the restraints, and the spiritual duties of religion. He therefore neglects them, and endeavours, sometimes, to persuade himself, that he can get to Heaven without them. But he is following the multitude to do evil, and he is on the road to ruin, until, through Divine grace, this irreligious disposition, be changed—until he is brought to see his guilt, and his danger—and until he begins seriously, with a believing and penitent heart, to work out his salvation. This is the grand fundamental prerequisite, to a religious life. You are of the number of the wicked, unless you have been convicted of sin—unless you have repented and turned

to God—unless your heart and mind have been renewed, and you have become a new creature—unless, in fine, you have been brought *to govern yourself, by religious motives, and religious principles.*

Men may be amiable, and charitable, and moral, in their lives; and show an outward respect for religion, and its institutions, without being influenced in this, by religious motives, or religious principles. Characters of this kind, may be formed by education and example; by a respect for themselves, and for the opinions, and institutions of society; by mere prudential and worldly considerations, without ever taking into view the will of God, or the concerns of Eternity. Such characters have morality, but no religion. They ostensibly obey the commands of the second table of the decalogue, but forget those of the first. And in thus forgetting God, and the homage due to his authority and his laws, they are guilty of the highest offence, against the Majesty of Heaven. *There cannot possibly be any religion, without religious principles, motives, and affections.* Morality is a tie, that binds man to man. Religion is a tie, that binds man to God: and to be religious, we must be sensible of this obligation, we must feel its constraining influence, and surrender our hearts and lives, to its guidance. True religion, must, therefore, necessarily commence in the heart; and thence, as our great guiding principle, influence us in all we think, and say, and do. Then only will our morality, and our outward religious obedience, be evangelical and acceptable to God, when they arise from a believing, penitent, and obedient frame of mind—when we are led to the performance of them, by a pious regard for God's law and authority, and an humble desire, to secure his favour here and forever.

Now, which of you, my fellow mortals, have reason to believe, that you have come out from the wicked, and

are already, on the way to salvation. If you belong to the righteous servants of the Lord, you can easily be distinguished from the wicked. The tree is known by its fruits. Those who are seriously concerned for their salvation, will begin to obey God's commands, to the best of their knowledge, and their power; and will be punctual, and zealous, in using the various means of Grace, which God has put into their hands. They will daily read, and meditate, and pray. They will constantly strive against sinful thoughts, and tempers, sinful habits, and actions. They will daily walk in the fear of God: and religious subjects will daily occupy their minds. The main bent of their thoughts, their desires, their dispositions, and their endeavours, will thus be religious. And when this is once the case, they are so different from what man naturally is, that they are in Scripture, said to be "new creatures."

Have you ever realized this change, in any measure?—for we admit, that it may exist in different degrees. Do you find within yourself, these characteristic marks of the children of God? If not—if they have not yet begun to exist within you, I have the authority of Jesus Christ, for telling you, that, in your present unconverted state, you cannot enter Heaven; and that unless you repent, and turn to God, you will assuredly, be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord. "Except you be born of the Spirit, as well as of water, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Except ye be converted, and become as teachable and submissive as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven." "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him." "O, wicked man, thou shalt surely die."

You think, perhaps, we lay too much stress upon our text. For all must die, and death is not so very terrible. We admit that death has no terrors for the expiring saint.

He hails the advent of this king of terrors, with joy. He knows, he is but the servant, Jesus sends, to call him to his arms. But our text is addressed to the wicked, to those who have never yet been brought, with a believing, penitent, and obedient heart, to give themselves up to the service of God; and to them death is inconceivably dreadful. Let us endeavour to realize this truth. Gracious Lord, enable us all to realize it.

The death of the wicked is twofold. The first death, or death of the body, and the second death, or death of the soul. Both of these are to the sinner, dreadful, beyond conception. There is not a source of happiness, of which he is not deprived; there is not a source of misery which is not opened, to deluge him with woe. On the bed of death, sensual joys are over. Neither wealth, honour, nor power, can support the soul, while the body is worn away by sickness, or racked by pains. Indeed there is nothing in this world, which, in the hour of death, can afford the least comfort. If the dying, cannot expect mercy from God, they must be miserable. And what ground of hope, or consolation, do the wicked possess? Has not God called, and warned them in vain? Have they not neglected, and abused, all the means of Grace? And does he not declare, "Woe to the wicked"? "Depart from me ye workers of iniquity"? Those who obey not the Gospel shall be punished with everlasting destruction.

Where, then, can the dying sinner look for help, and for mercy? He has been a faithful servant to the world; but the world forsakes him. His own conscience has turned against him, and condemns him, for his disobedience to Almighty God. The word of God pronounces, "woe to the wicked;" and the judge of quick and dead, says, "depart from me ye workers of iniquity." What then must be the thoughts, and feelings of the wicked,

on the bed of death? Ah how gloomy, and dreadful, must be the hour, when hope expires—when a guilty conscience, a burning Hell, and an avenging God, are the only subjects that employ, and harass, the dying impenitent

“O wicked man, thou shalt surely die;” and such is the death you have to expect. Some of the wicked do indeed die, without any of these terrors. But this proves neither their innocence, nor their safety. It proves only one, or more, of these following things—that they are ignorant of their guilt and danger—that they are flattering themselves, with the false hopes of the hypocrite—that they are hardened in sin, and labouring under a most awful insensibility—or that their pains and sufferings are such, as completely to absorb their whole attention, and conceal from their view, the frightful gulph, that is ready to receive them. O it is a dreadful thing to fall, unprepared, into the hands of the living God!

This, however, is but the beginning of sorrows. For the second death will soon follow the first, and the fires of the judgment day, will overwhelm the guilty, with remediless ruin. The second death, (it is painful to dwell upon a subject so terrible; but by the terrors of the Lord, we would fain persuade you)—the second death, will plunge the wicked, into the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone; “where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” For God will pronounce sentence upon them, in the judgment day, and say, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.”

O wicked man, O wicked woman, thou shalt surely die; and such is the dreadful fate which awaits you. Does not your heart tremble? Does not your hair rise on end, at these dreadful terrors, of the Almighty’s ven-

geance? Are you not ready to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" "Lord, save me, or I perish"?

Come, then, returning prodigal, the door of mercy is not yet closed. Come, lay hold on Jesus, the rock of your salvation. Consider your ways—Repent of your misdoings—Amend your life—Pray to God for the assistance of his Grace—Strive for an interest, in the atoning blood of Jesus—Make the word of God, your study and your guide—Let religion accompany you in all your undertakings, and in all your ways—Commence a life of holy obedience; and "work out your salvation, with fear and trembling." For remember, in the great day of accounts, none will be saved, but those, who, with a believing, and penitent heart, desire, and endeavour to keep all God's commandments. Rest assured that God wishes you to be saved, for "as I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner; but that he turn from his evil ways and live. Turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die?" Be not discouraged therefore. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool," for the blood of Christ, cleanses the believing penitent, from all his sins. Cease then to do evil, and learn to do well. Use all the appointed means of grace, and of salvation; and bear daily, on your mind, the warning language of Almighty God. "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him." "O wicked man, thou shalt surely die."

SERMON IX.

ON THE VANITY OF LIFE AND THE FOLLY OF THE WORLDLING.

JOB VII. 16.

“I would not live alway.”

WHO of you, my brethren, under the present system of things, would live for ever in this world? Were I now to come with authority from Heaven, to offer you eternal life in this world without tasting death, are there not some of you, by whom it would be accepted? Are there not some, who are so insensible to spiritual happiness, and so wedded to this life, that they would hesitate to exchange it for another, though God himself promised, unconditionally, to cancel all their sins, and to admit them to the felicities of Heaven? At least, are there not some, who, rather than to make this life a pilgrimage for another, rather than to act as probationers for a better, rather than to make religion their chief concern, would be content with the bare privilege, of living forever in this imperfect and unsatisfactory state? Certain it is, that the generality of our fellow creatures, act, as if they wished and expected to spend their eternity on earth. Here, without ever raising their thoughts to Heaven, they lay up their treasures—here, they engage all their affections—here, they bury all their hopes. Like the rich fool in the Gospel, they enlarge their barns, and their store-houses, they say to their souls eat, drink, and take thine ease, until they are saluted with the dread message, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required from thee.”

God is constantly, both by his providences and by his messengers, soliciting us, to abandon the trifles of time, and to secure our immortal hopes—to flee from burning Sodom, to take refuge in Zoar ; and still the most of us, with the lingering wife of Lot, look wishfully back upon this sinful and devoted world ; and it is of the mercy of God, that we do not suffer the rewards of our ingratitude, and disobedience, and become, with Lot's wife, everlasting monuments of divine displeasure.

Our design in the following discourse, is,

First—To unfold the nature of the principle, and,

Secondly—To prove the reasonableness of the wish contained in the text, after which, by way of application, we shall make some reflections, on the consummate folly of those who do not adopt the language of the text, and who do not act in conformity with the principle therein contained.

First—The *nature of the principle* contained in the text. It is a religious principle—a faith founded on rational convictions, and inspiring the most unshaken confidence—a faith that embraces all the revelations of God's mind and will—a faith that views this world with a constant reference to another, and realizes, with deep conviction, that this life is but a state of preparation for the next.

I would not live forever here, says Job, because I know that I am a probationer for eternity—because “ I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand “ at the latter day upon the earth,” to judge the world ; and “ though after my skin, worms destroy this body,” yet, “ after my resurrection, in my flesh shall I see God,” who will “ bring to light the secrets of the heart,” and “ reward every one according to his works.”

I would not live here forever, says the Christian, because my Saviour, has ascended to the Heavens, and has

invited me to follow him, into his holy habitation—into his everlasting rest ; where all is unchanging, all is satisfying, all is perfect ; where “ all tears are wiped from the “ eyes,” and where sin and sorrow shall be heard of no more.

Such is the nature of the principle, contained in the text. Such is the light in which the pious Christian views this subject. He acquiesces, and takes delight in acquiescing, in the will of Heaven. He is persuaded that man was created for another life, and that his condition there, depends upon his conduct here. He is persuaded that God has, for the wisest purposes, united an immortal soul to a mortal body, and placed them in a state of trial. The Gospel, therefore, requires us to act worthy of our high vocation—to act as immortals ought to act—to act as though we had originally descended from Heaven, and were sojourning in a strange land. The Christian can never forget his origin, he can never forget the land of promised rest. On that, his eye is constantly fixed. There, all his hopes are centered. Heaven is the pole-star, by which he guides his course—the magnet, that directs and attracts his attention ; and with the Apostle Paul, he has a constant desire “ to be with Christ.”

Thus the pious believer reasons and acts. But what shall be said to the worldling and unbeliever—to those who act, as if this world were their all ; and to those, who could wish to spend their eternity on earth ? That their hopes are vain, and that their conduct is preposterous, and may prove fatal to their everlasting peace !

Your hopes are vain, worldling. We have no permission from the Almighty to tell you, that you may live forever in this world. The mandate has gone forth, that you should return to the dust whence you were taken. Die you must.

But this is not all. You are a moral agent, in a state

of probation—you must hereafter appear “before the judgment seat of Christ,” to answer for the deeds done in the body. In that day, your eternal destiny will be determined, according to the improvement you have made of this life, and of the various means of grace and salvation which God has put into your hands. And that no motives may be wanting, to induce you, to lead a “life of holiness in the fear of God,” while we threaten the impenitent, with eternal wrath, we are authorised to promise everlasting blessedness, to those who willingly take up the Cross, and follow Christ through evil as well as through good report. Be persuaded these things are true. In the name, and by the authority of my God, I declare to you, that they are true; and unless they sway your motives, your principles, and your actions, the words that I speak will testify against you in the day of judgment.

But the will of God, in matters of duty, is never in want of arguments, to illustrate, to enforce, and to render it reasonable and binding. Let us then pursue our design, in proving—

Secondly—The reasonableness of the wish contained in the text. I would not live here always, because in itself, and compared with Heaven, this life is all “vanity and vexation of spirit.” Nothing here is substantial, nothing is perfect, but every thing is fleeting; every thing is unsatisfactory; every thing is uncertain. The rose blooms but to fade. The world smiles but to deceive: and man is born but to die.

Before we descend to particulars, it may be useful to observe, that we need no longer argue upon the possibility of man’s living forever on earth; for death and judgment certainly await him, and happiness or misery must be the final issue. Religion calls upon him, in the strongest and loudest terms, to prepare for these awful events;

and declares a happy eternity, to be infinitely preferable to this life. She tells us, that God has seen fit to imprison us here, in order to work out our salvation—that he has sent us to travel through the wilderness, to try our love, faith, and patience; and that if we serve him, and are faithful unto the end, we shall assuredly reach the peaceful Canaan.

But alas ! so little effect have the threats and promises of the Gospel; so feeble to us, is the logic of Heaven; and so unheeded is the voice even of God himself; that the duties he enjoins, are seldom regarded, unless they recommend themselves to human reason. Let us then see, by what arguments, reason can defend the wish, and support the duty, enjoined in the text.

It may here be asked, does your text contain a duty enjoined by God? Our text is contained in a book, that God's Holy Spirit has admitted into the Canon of Scripture, for our instruction: and the spirit of the text, is the spirit of all the revelations of God's will. All are designed, to wean us from this world, and to prepare us for a better: and such is the design of the text.

Those grand arguments, which give infinite weight to our subject, and which can only be derived from the revealed will of God, have been slightly considered. Upon the truth of these, we found the reasonableness of the wish contained in the text. Were the soul not immortal—were there no judgment to come, and no state of happiness or misery to expect hereafter, it would be absurd to insist upon the vanity of this life. "Let us eat, drink, and be merry," would then, in a limited sense, be the dictate of wisdom. So dreadful is the idea of annihilation, that rather than to fall into non-existence, almost all would prefer living forever in this imperfect state. But under the prospects of religion, every one's reason must pronounce such a preference absurd. The experience of every one

furnishes him with a criterion, by which this world may be put to the test, and its merits ascertained. A person that was never dissatisfied, has never existed. It is as impossible, for the mind of man, to be perfectly contented here, as it would be, for an Angel from Heaven. The soul is a stranger, imprisoned in a tabernacle of clay. It naturally looks to its native country. It naturally struggles to be disengaged from its chains. However busy the world may be, to smother it, and to suppress its effects, it often finds opportunity to assert its claims, and to evince its divine origin. Though it is so uniformly overwhelmed, by the cares and pleasures of life, yet often in the moments of reflection, and sometimes even in those of gaiety and dissipation, it exclaims, "vanity and vexation! I would not live here alway!" And then, to escape its murmurings, man again hurries it to other scenes.

The soul is *insatiable in its desires, unlimited in its capacities, and immortal in its nature*. It grasps at immensity. It bounds beyond the narrow limits of existence, and is satisfied with nought but infinitude. Who, among the silken sons of pleasure, were ever heard to exclaim, it is enough? When was the rich man perfectly contented with his wealth, or the ambitious with his honours, and his victories? A few plodding, grovelling souls excepted, where can the man be found, who does not wish and love, to rise to riches, honour, and magnificence? And after all, what is the result? When Alexander had conquered the world, was he satisfied? No—He sighed for new worlds to conquer. When Solomon had completely run "the round of human enjoyment," was he satisfied? No—He pronounced all "vanity and vexation of spirit." How can it possibly be otherwise? Flesh and blood are flattered and pleased with these things. But can an immortal spirit, can your souls be sustained by these vanities? Can you satisfy your appetite by

eating straw or stones? How then can your immortal spirit be contented, *without congenial and appropriate food?* It is impossible. Only ask your own bosoms. Only give them the opportunity of speaking and reasoning, and they will prove to you, that this world, to them at least, is absolutely vanity; and they will unite with Job in saying, “I would not live alway.” *This world has not enough to satisfy all my desires, and to make me completely happy.*

Oh, how many are unacquainted with the desires, the grievances, and the nature of their own souls!

My Christian brethren, your immortal spirits are the purchase of Christ’s blood; and we are commissioned by Heaven, to assert their cause, to maintain their right, and to assist in rescuing them, from the dominion and tyranny of the flesh. We charge you to listen to their complaints. We charge you to remove their grievances. We charge you to treat them, according to their exalted rank. Your souls cannot feed on pleasure—they cannot live on riches or honours—they cannot subsist upon the same food by which the body is supported. They are the offspring of Heaven, sent to tabernacle in the flesh: suffer them not, like wretched prodigals, to perish with hunger; or to be reduced to the necessity of feeding on *husks*. They do not desire to remain here forever; but while they do, suffer them not to be hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, and in prison—without visiting, relieving, and comforting them. *Feed them with the provision God has made, with the “manna that came down from Heaven;” and prepare them for that eternal world, upon which they must soon enter.*

The question, would you live forever here, is not addressed to the body, but to the soul—not to your animal, but to your moral and intellectual part—not to your feelings, but to your understanding. The body is wedded to this world, and suited to this life. It is an Epicurean,

perpetually bent on pleasure, and exclaiming, with the rich fool, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But let the soul be permitted to speak, and it will utter the language of the text. Do you require proof? Let me ask, would you be willing to spend this life in a dungeon? Would you be willing to be deprived of any of your senses? If you have talents, are you willing that they should be rendered useless? If you have riches, are you willing to be plundered of them? By no means. How then can the soul, which is immortal in its nature, insatiable in its desires, and unlimited in its capacities, be satisfied, with being confined to this tabernacle of clay, and chained down to a few feet of earth? How can it be satisfied, when its efforts to rise are perpetually counteracted—when all its powers lie neglected, or at farthest, are confined to the narrow limits of time and sense? How can it be satisfied, when all its treasures are useless, and when its noblest faculties lie in ignominious ruins; buried under a mass of cares, polluted by the pleasures of sense, and stained, not unfrequently, by the excesses of guilty passion? In fine, *how can it be satisfied, if, when it asks bread, it receives a stone, when it asks fish, it receives a serpent, and when it asks spiritual, it receives carnal food, upon which it must ultimately starve?* Under these circumstances, can it be willing to live here forever? *Can it be willing, to forego the inconceivable, and unceasing pleasures of God's right hand, for the short-lived, the precarious and unsatisfactory enjoyments of this world?*

I would not live always, is, then, the natural and reasonable language of our spiritual nature. We have but to listen to our own bosoms, to hear it—we have but to turn to our own hearts, to read it. It is there engraven in indelible characters.

But though the soul had not this tendency, who would live forever, in a world of perpetual change, uncertainty,

disaster, and sorrow? Though our moral and intellectual powers did not plead so earnestly, to be disengaged from matter, and to enter upon the life to come; would the understanding listen to the solicitations of sense, and be induced to wish to live here alway? Live *here alway!* For what? To be always dying, and never to expire? Where can be found the favourite spot that is exempted from the curse; and that does not bring forth thorns and thistles? How can you prevent or cure the maladies of our nature, without Eden's innocence or Eden's tree of life? Sorrow is inevitably the result of sin. Pain and disease are inevitably the result of passionate or sensual excess. Live forever on this earth—this Golgotha—this Aceldama! For what? Is there a pleasure in seeing or in hearing of the ravages of death? Nation after nation, and one generation after another, are swept from the earth, by war, by famine, by pestilence, and by the complicated variety of sicknesses and diseases to which we are subject. Is it desirable to live forever, in a world that is perpetually dying? that is every minute stained afresh, with the blood of its slaughtered inhabitants—and that every minute hears the groans, and witnesses the horrors of dissolution?

Suppose, for a moment, that you alone, had the privilege of living to the age of the Patriarchs, before the flood. By the help of the past, look now at the future, and tell me what you discover there, that renders it so desirable, to live nine centuries more. Are you a Parent—have you a promising and affectionate offspring—have you a numerous circle of relatives and acquaintances; and are you blessed with a partner dearer to you than life? All these connexions must be dissolved: and all the hopes founded upon them, may be blasted. Your Children may disgrace and ruin themselves; and however dear and numerous they may be, you must follow them all to

the tomb. Your partner or your friend, who reclines on your bosom, who heightens all your joys, and divides all your sorrows—your partner, or your friend, who is united to you by the strongest ties of tenderness and affection, must, perhaps under agonies that rend your soul, be snatched from your embraces, and hurried to the cold mansions of the grave. In this world, if you are accessible to pity, you must sympathize—if you have a heart, it must ache—and if you have affections, they will entwine themselves around the objects of time and sense, and they must once be torn from those objects. The more susceptible your feelings, the more agonizing must be your pains.

Proofs of the vanity of this life, are innumerable. There is scarcely any thing that does not, one time or another, become a minister of evil, an instrument in the hand of Providence, to wean us from this world, and to point us to the skies—To teach us that to put our confidence in man, is to build upon the sand, and that to lean upon the world is to lean upon a broken reed, “on whose sharp point, peace bleeds, and hope expires.”

“Live ever here,” my hearer ! “shocking thought !

“So shocking, they who wish, disown it too ;

“Disown from shame, what they from folly crave.

“Live ever in the womb, nor see the light ?

“For what live ever here ? With labouring step

“To tread our former footsteps ? Pace the round

“Eternal ! To climb life’s worn, heavy wheel,

“Which draws up nothing new ? To beat, and beat

“The beaten track ? To bid each wretched day

“The former mock ? To surfeit on the same,

“And yawn our joys ? Or thank a misery

“For change, tho’ sad ? To see what we have seen ?

“Hear, till unheard, the same old slabbered tale ?

“To taste the tasted, and at each return less tasteful ?

“To flatter bad

“Through dread of worse ? To cling to this rude rock

“Of life, Barren of good, and sharp with ills,

“ And hourly blackened with impending storms,
 “ And infamous for wrecks of human hope ?”

Who, then, that has not a heart of adamant, would live *here*, even to the age of the Patriarchs—here, where all our joys are mutual and dependant, and where care, labour, disappointment, and sorrow, are our common and inevitable lot—who, that has not a heart of adamant, and that is not infatuated by the vanities of earth, would wish to live always, in this imperfect, this unsatisfactory, and this changeful state of existence ?

Live *here* always ! For what ? Is a state of imperfection preferable to a state of perfection ? Is earth preferable to Heaven ? Why, because it lies under a curse—because it is full of labour, disappointment, and sorrow ? How can you thus underrate the felicities of Heaven ? How can you suppose, that those blessed mansions in which your Redeemer resides, and to which he invites you, are not infinitely preferable to this body, a tabernacle of clay ; and to this world, a house of mourning ? Do you not see, that in idolizing this world, and forgetting the next, you are taking a course equally bold and profane ? God tells you that he has cursed this earth ; and your experience constrains you to believe it : and will you, then, identify your fortune, with this earth, which is devoted to destruction ? God tells you that your term of probation will soon be ended ; and that “ ear hath not heard, nor eye seen, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things that God hath prepared for those who love him.” And is your religious faith, bounded by the prospect of your eyes ? Do the felicities of Heaven cease to move you, because they are, at present, beyond your reach ? Are they less certain, because they lie beyond the valley of death ? Are they less desirable, because they are unmixed, eternal, and inconceivable ? My God ! where is the dignity of man, if

he relinquish his reason—and where is his reason, if, like “the brutes that perish,” he lives, regardless of tomorrow?

Life is indeed important, and infinitely important, when considered as a time of probation for eternity, and as the great means, under the grace of God, of working out our salvation. In this respect, we cannot value it too highly: and in this respect, this world is a talent, incalculably precious. But oh! they sink into utter insignificance—they are less than dust upon the scale—when viewed, as the only portion of an immortal soul! Void of understanding, then, certainly, they must be, who idolize this world, and live perfectly unconcerned as to the next—who attend to every thing, but the “one thing needful”—who neglect the first and great design of their existence, and like the idle schoolboy, waste their time, in catching butterflies, or picking flowers, *instead of preparing for that dreadful eternity, into which they are hastening!* Oh God! put an end to this alarming infatuation—this awful indifference and unconcern—and “so teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply our hearts “unto wisdom.”

SERMON X.*

ON THE NECESSITY OF PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

MATTHEW XXIV. 44.

“Therefore be ye also ready ; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.”

THERE is no need of any other introduction to the text, than the sad catastrophe, which is the occasion of these solemnities. This must be yet fresh in the memories of you all. But as yesterday, and our countenances were cheerful in the enjoyment of social intercourse, when suddenly there were torn from us, the fairest ornaments of our society ! To-day, it is meet that we should be sorrowful ! The tenderest feelings of our nature demand it, while the example of the Saviour at the grave of Lazarus, gives sanction to our regrets. Come, then, my brethren, and express your generous sympathies, by the shedding of tears. Mingle your supplications with those of the husband—the wife—the mother—and the children of our departed friends, while I attempt to enforce the *necessity of a preparation for death*, by their sudden removal from amongst us.

If man were the creature which the philosophy of some would make him, and his existence to be traced to no higher source than the occurrence of fortuitous *causes* and *effects* ; it would be preposterous to repine at the ravages of death, much more, to impose on ourselves the

* Occasioned by a violent and destructive storm.

services of a religion, which must terminate with our being here. But if, according to the Gospel, he sprang into life by the Almighty *fiat*, and is endowed with faculties that will survive the wreck of nature—faculties, that are capable of contemplating the awful realities of the eternal world, and of inhaling the sweets of a blissful immortality; then, by all the enchantments which a Heavenly perpetuity of existence can inspire, we are invited to render unto God our best services, and to emulate the example of the truly pious.

This argument acquires additional force from the degeneracy of our nature.

In nothing is this more strikingly evinced, than in the darkness which shrouds the human mind, and which obscures our sense of moral perception. In whatever direction we turn our eyes, we see multitudes of living men, eagerly pursuing their respective employments, and exhibiting a *foresight* under all the changes which circumstances may occasion in their *affairs*, the most wonderful and delightful! The divinity of the soul is seen to discover itself in this astonishing drama, and to intimate that it was intended for a more noble employment. But alas! as if capable of nothing but vanity, it pursues with avidity the phantoms which play before it, while its *eternity*, its *depravity*, and its *accountability* to God, engross none of its thoughts!

In what may we expect to find a reason for this strange conduct, but in the position we have laid down? Man, as far as we are acquainted with him, is a *timid, selfish* being; and yet, under sentence of eternal death, he discovers no dread of the punishment that awaits him, but pursues one course of sin and rebellion. Though the Gospel invites him in strains so moving, and allures him by the consideration of “the life everlasting,” yet he seems insensible to its commanding eloquence, “and will

“not be moved by the voice of the charmer, charm he
“never so wisely.” O! strange infatuation!

How gross must be that darkness, which the light of the Gospel cannot penetrate, and which hides from the vision of its unhappy victim, “the glory of God in the
“face of Jesus Christ!”

Though Sinai smokes, and thunders forth in dreadful fury, yet so profound is that sleep in which sin has wrapped the soul, that this too, passes it unheeded. No ray of light is seen to gleam on the cheerless gloom which settles on the mind. 'Tis darkness that may be felt—the habiliment of one forsaken of his God—and the pre-
sage of future woe!

Such, my brethren, is the condition of man by nature; and such, it is to be feared, is the condition of most of you.

Born in a land of Bibles, and within sound of the solemn services of the sanctuary, you have had “line upon
“line, and precept upon precept.” The treasures of Theological learning have been expended, and the fascinations of a persuasive eloquence been resorted to, to win upon your affections, and disturb your deadly slumbers. Our fall in Adam—our restoration in Christ—the punishment of the wicked—and the reward of the righteous—are subjects, which have furnished the preacher with abundant matter, for each Sabbath's discussion: and with a zeal which becomes the office he sustains, he has not
“shun'd to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.”

But what have you been advantaged by these superior privileges? Where are the evidences you have given, that the eyes of your understandings have been opened, and that by God's mercy, you are now “clothed in your
“right mind?” Or think you, that a life devoted to the gratification of your carnal desires, may very well comport with the character of the Gospel? Have you “so

“learned Christ”—and is the light that is in you so far become darkness, as to destroy all sense of your moral condition? Alas! a fire is kindled beneath you, and you perceive it not; the chains that are to bind you are already forged, and Hell is moving to meet you at your coming!

I implore you, therefore, by the degeneracy of our nature—by its evidence in the darkness which covers the mind—by all the curses written in the book of the law against its violators—and by all the blessings consequent on a godly, sober, and righteous life—to awake from this stupor, and prepare for death.

Secondly—Consider we now, in what this preparation consists. And first, it consists in a heart broken for sin. In this is implied a conviction of our having sinned, and exposed ourselves to everlasting torments: a conviction made on the mind by the Holy Ghost, whereby we are made sensible of our past folly, and are led to deprecate the wrath of Almighty God.

In proportion as we cherish this conviction, the mind becomes gradually enlightened to the truth as it is in Jesus; and by a gradation suited to its nature, increases in the knowledge of its true state. All the faculties of the soul resume their proper office, and stimulate to action. The *judgment* approves what the *understanding* perceives, and the *will*, with a readiness worthy of its empire, prostrates the soul at the foot of the Cross.

There, in all the abasement of sincere penitence, it struggles under the weight of its aggravated offences, and in groans too big for utterance, gives expression to its griefs. It contemplates the Divine perfections as flown from its embrace, and in proportion to its perception of their moral beauty, estimates its loss. Here, too, its neglects of duty, and contempt of the most solemn warnings, rush in upon it, while conscience whispers, “thou

“hast destroyed thyself.” It fancies that “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,” have forever eluded its grasp, and left it to the wretchedness of its own folly. It writhes in all the agony of its anticipated punishment, and with relentings as piteous, as its madness had been excessive, awaits the sentence of its final doom. But hark ! a voice is heard issuing from the throne of God, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” Hope, that had been well nigh lost in the dreadful conflict, revives, to the astonishment of the trembling sinner, while the “light of life” shines into his prison, and encourages him to believe. The voice of supplication now bursts from his heart and tongue, while, methinks, the blessed Saviour, whose blood was shed for the redemption of the soul, exclaims, in the midst of the Heavenly host, and with finger pointed down to earth, “Behold he prayeth !”

Yes, my brethren ; and *this*, together with a *turning away from sin*, is the second constituent of a preparation for death.

The power of expressing our ideas and feelings by *speech*, is a distinction to which man is elevated above the rest of the works of God : and while the Heavens shine to the praise of their Creator, and the trees of the forest bow to his nod, it is reserved for man to express by *articulate sounds*, the goodness, mercy, truth and love, of the Supreme Being. The first exercise of this faculty by the humble penitent, is in confession of sin. He acknowledges, with feelings of the keenest sensibility, his ingratitude and rebellion ; and in the language of the publican, cries out “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Like David he complains, that “the pains of Hell hath gotten

“hold upon him ;” and that “ the arrows of the Almighty “stick fast in him”—that “ his sin is ever before him ;” and that “ his moisture is turned into the drought of summer :”—and in imitation of that distinguished servant of God, “ he takes the cup of salvation and calls upon the “name of the Lord :”—He pays “ his vows unto the “Lord in the presence of all his people”—and with a solicitude becoming the occasion of his suit, breaks forth into that beautiful effusion of 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.”

And this is made peculiarly his duty by the economy of the Gospel. All its promises are suspended on conditions, and require the most exact observance of the text, in order to its benefits : “ Therefore be ye also ready, for “in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.” It offers forgiveness of sins to all who will *confess* them, but in no wise extends its saving health to such as practically say, “ What is the Almighty, that we should serve “him ? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto “him ?” But the penitent expresses a different language. He has been taught by the sacred Scriptures, as well as by his own experience, that whatever is separate from God and the services of religion, is “ vanity and vexation of spirit ;” and in opposition to those who indulge in the “ pride of life,” he makes God his portion. “ Lead “me to the rock that is higher than I,” is the constant language of his heart ; and whether we consider him at the *altar*, or in the devotions of the *closet*, his manner is equally expressive of *confession* and *prayer*.

And with this, his life furnishes a happy coincidence. “ Do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy “God,” is the rule by which he is governed in all his intercourse with society ; carefully avoiding any occasion

of offence in himself, and setting an example of holy living, worthy his profession of the service of Christ. He denies himself the pleasures of the fashionable world, and refuses "to stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful." He is purposed not to sin against God, and to this end hath "hid his law in his heart." Whatever the Gospel enjoins, he observes as involving his greatest interest, and adopts its precepts as the rule of his practice; ever mindful, that "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." His life exhibits the most irrefragable proof of the genuineness of his repentance, and begets a pleasing hope that he is "not far from the kingdom of grace." His heart is fixed—trusting in God. Though the voice of persecution assail him, and the world strews in his way ten thousand baits to entice him to sin, yet his zeal and integrity remain unshaken, and "shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," is the principle on which he acts; and it is in reference to the commands of God, and not from a wish to appear singular, that he denies himself, and takes up his cross and follows the Redeemer through the *regeneration*. It would avail him but little to worship with his lips, while he was "rolling sin as a sweet morsel under his tongue." Such is "the sacrifice of fools." The Gospel requires a perfect obedience to all its precepts; and it is only to those who by patient continuance in *well doing*, that its blessings are vouchsafed. Suppose it not then a work of supererogation, to trample under foot "the appearance of evil," when "none but the pure in heart shall see God." On the peril of your souls I warn you against this.

Listen then, my brethren, while I point you to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,"

as the only medium through which your repentant *confessions* and *works* can avail, as the third and last constituent of a preparation for death.

Never did our earth witness so lovely a morning, as that which announced the *birth* of the Saviour. "God manifested in the flesh, made under the law; to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons;" is a subject, which Angels ponder with admiration and delight. 'Twas on that occasion, that the "morning stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy"—that the Scriptures acquired an importance, which the event was calculated to give them—and that the eternal purpose of God, in the redemption of the world, assumed a visible form. Be it the folly of the sceptic and the visionary, to perplex themselves with reasonings on the incarnation of the Son of God, and to reject the "mystery of Godliness," because they cannot account on the principles of a "vain philosophy," how "Christ was made sin for us:"—We pity their weakness, and lament their depravity.

But forbearing to reason on a subject so fraught with mystery, and referring our belief of it, to the word of God, we dare hazard our reputation as enlightened men, for setting our *seal* to its truth, because we find it in the book of *Revelation*.

Come, then, ye timorous followers of the Incarnate God, and give energy to your devotions, and decision to your character, by worshiping on authority of the Scriptures, "the Babe of Bethlehem." Go see him in the garden of Gethsemane, wrestling in all the strength of prayer. Such was his agony, while he endured the sins of the world, that "he sweat as it were great drops of blood." See him hung upon the Cross as unworthy of a place upon earth, and insulted with the derisions of a rude soldiery. All nature stands aghast! The sun

veils himself in darkness, while the earth trembles beneath the sufferings of the Saviour God! “’Tis *finished!*” had no sooner escaped his lips, than it was echoed through the wide expanse of Heaven, “Glory to God in “the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards “men.” It was not to accomplish a solemn nothing, or to give birth to the idle speculations of a disordered imagination, that the Son of God become man, and suffered the ignominious death of the Cross. No, my brethren—it was to accomplish man’s redemption, and to become the mediator of the new Covenant, whereby we may have access unto the Father, and be made “the “righteousness of God in him.” And now that he has passed into the Heavens, and is “set down on the right “hand of the Majesty on high,” he is proposed in the Gospel to our *faith*, as the condition of our acceptance with God.

By *faith*, we are not to understand the bare assent of the mind to the authenticity of the Bible, or to the facts which it records of the *birth*, *crucifixion*, *resurrection*, and *ascension* of the Saviour; but that entire surrender of the heart to Christ which the conviction of these truths, as well as all others revealed in the Scriptures, work in us. It is that grace which is of the operation of God, and which is productive of *good works*. For 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.” “By faith, Enoch was translated, that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

Such is the faith which justifies the godly, and which unites us to Christ our living head. Embrace it as the condition of your soul's salvation, and Christ shall be made unto you, "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Thirdly—In order to excite our interest in the truths I have been discussing, and to secure our best endeavours to the saving of the soul, our text furnishes us with this most weighty and solemn reason: "for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

The awful circumstance of Christ's coming to judge the world at a time when we least expect him—when, perhaps, some are eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage—while others equally unconscious, are wrapped in sleep—is a fact, which may illustrate the uncertain tenure, by which we hold our lives, and suggest the propriety of our being always prepared, to yield up our breath. Man, with all his boasted wisdom and strength, is the creature of a day. "He cometh up like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." In whatever situation we find him, whether figuring in all the grandeur of a court, or immured in the solitude of private life, we trace in his features the lineaments of decay, and are reminded of our approaching end. The seeds of death are sown in his constitution, and by a subtlety which no device can control, lays his fair fabrick in the dust, and leaves his seat vacant in the councils of men. The earth on which he moves, and which yields him his support, emits from its bowels columns of liquid fire, and impregnates the air with noxious vapours wherewith to destroy him. The gentlest zephyr of a summer's morning, is seen to settle the blood in his cheek, and before the setting sun, chill him in death! Against this host of enemies, all armed with more than a thousand darts, and all levelled at the

vitals of obnoxious man, has he to contend. What though he take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall *death* assail him by some minister of his. As well might he attempt to pluck the sun from his orbit, or stay the dashing of the foaming billow, as to elude the grasp of the insatiate monster. The decree of God, "dust thou art, "and unto dust shalt thou return," must be obeyed. All must die. "We see one generation of men coming into "life after another—each one makes his appearance on "the stage of action—performs his part—and makes his "exit—and is seen no more!" MELANCHOLY REFLECTION!

But that which should most interest us in the contemplation of this humiliating subject, is the *uncertainty*, in which the period of our death is involved.

It is not always by protracted disease, or the infirmities peculiar to advanced age, that the springs of life stand still. The history of man furnishes a bill of mortality, in which the catalogue of those, whose prospects of descending to the grave laded with years, were as flattering as any who compose this assembly; but e're the clock struck, and measured another hour, sickened, and died! "This night thy soul shall be required of thee," has been verified in thousands of instances, and in circumstances precisely the same, as those which distinguished the foolish man in the Gospel. The shafts of death are flying in our land, and may perchance number us with the myriads slain, when we may least expect it. "Go to now, ye that say, to-day, or to morrow, we will "go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy "and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what *shall* "be on the morrow; for what is your life? It is even a "vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then van- "isheth away." Such, my brethren, is the testimony of

sacred truth, in regard to the uncertainty of life; and when we consider the delicate texture of the human frame, and the number of arteries, nerves, tendons, muscles, and sinews, of which it is composed, we are instinctively led to the remark,

“Strange that a harp of thousand strings
 “Should keep in tune so long.”

And what does this vast *uncertainty* on which our lives are suspended, suggest to us?—“Be ye also ready.” Yes, it speaks in a voice louder than seven fold thunder, “Prepare to meet thy God.” It reads an important lecture on the vanity of all things here below, and says to us, as the Angels who were sent to deliver Lot from the destruction that awaited his city, “Escape for thy life.” It opens to the imagination, the awful realities of a future state, and exhorts us by the joys of Heaven, and the miseries of Hell, to procrastinate no longer our return to God. It calls to us, to embrace the present moment—for *to-morrow*, yea, the *succeeding hour*, and the opportunities that are now afforded us to prepare for death, may be gone forever. And so reads our text; “for in such an hour as ye think not”—when the motion of your pulse may exhibit the surest indications of health, and you are sketching to yourselves a long career of worldly pleasure, “the Son of man cometh.” Death will put an end to all this strife, and usher you into the presence of your Eternal Judge.

But what catastrophe is this, which has clad our temples in mourning, and whispers to us, “be ye also ready?” What means this large assembly? And these expressive signs of bereavement, which strike mine eyes in every direction? How shall I tell it? God of my Fathers! how shall I express it?

We have convened, fellow citizens, to record an event

in the annals of our history, which begs all description. An event, at which the mind recoils with sensible distress, and which paralyzes the tongue that would attempt its story. But as it is my lot to address you on the occasion, and to give form to the obsequies of this mournful day, I bow submissively.

At yonder Village, the summer retreat of the inhabitants of this immediate country, occurred the event which we so feelingly deplore. On the day of the 27th of September last, our people, as was their accustomed manner, were making, and receiving visits, and smiling in all the sweets of social intercourse. No note of discord was heard to intrude on the pleasures of the day, and no incident of death whereof to lament.

All, were cheerful, contented, and happy. The day, though rendered unfair by clouds and frequent showers of rain, furnished no just grounds to apprehend a storm. The Heavens did not discover an unusual restlessness, and our people retired to rest, unsuspecting of harm. It was not long, however, that they were permitted to recline on their downy pillows, and “give slumber to their eyelids.” The winds began to lift up their voice, and with a violence which threatened one general ruin, alarmed them for their safety. The sea too, as if tossed from its bed, poured in upon them its agitated waters, while livid meteors, as if mocking their distresses, were playing all around.

All hearts were appalled ! The *wife*, with wishful countenance, looked to the *arm* of her *husband*, while the tender *infant*, alarmed by the general confusion, clung to the *bosom* of its *mother* !

But *He*, “who has his way in the whirlwind, and in “the storm—who layeth the beams of his chambers in “the waters, and stilleth the raging of the sea,” brought us salvation by his own arm ; and turned from our dwell-

ings the desolating blast. The "voice of rejoicing was now heard in the tabernacles of the righteous," and all hearts were lifted in gratitude to God. Each surviving family, hoping that they were the greatest sufferers, were not prepared to witness the scene, which the light of approaching day opened to their vision. All eyes were turned to a neighbouring creek, by the side of which lived, two of as lovely families, as ever graced the society of man. The stare of phrenzy was seen in every countenance, while the air was rent with one burst of lamentation! Save a few shattered posts, and there was no mark which pointed to the spot, on which the dwellings of Dr. Myers, and Mr. Robert F. Withers, stood! All gone! and their lovely *inmates* consigned to the caverns of the deep, with the exception of Mr. Withers!

Separate from *the usage of funeral rites*, the chasm, which the night of the 27th of September has made, in *the virtues* of our Community, renders this public expression of our feelings *meet* and *proper*.

In the character of *Dr. Myers*, we see every thing to admire, that ennobles and dignifies the character of man. His life was one course of well ordered conduct, and was replete with lessons of the purest morality. He disdained the bondage in which many are held by their *passions*, and by a philosophy, the most exalted and sublime, brought his *temper* within the control of his reason. Under circumstances, however trying, he was seen to observe the utmost decorum, and to foil his adversary by the sweetness of his manner. To "render unto all their dues," was one of the exalted attributes of his character; and so happily had he cultivated that cardinal virtue, that the Hon. Mr. Mitchell remarks that, "he never knew man or woman say, that he ever attempted to injure his neighbour in thought, in word, or in deed." He was well read in polite literature, which would repel the aspersion

that the deference which he always paid to the opinions of others, was the effect of imbecility in himself. In company he was polite and affable, and gave a zest to conversation, for which his *various learning*, and retentive memory, so ably fitted him.

As a Physician, the distinction to which the Legislature of the State had raised him, sufficiently speaks his worth. In the chamber of the sick, the tenderest sensibilities of his soul, were seen expressed at every sigh, that would heave the bosom of his patient.—But he is gone! gone! forever gone! His example is all that is left us, and this we will cherish and hand down to our Children's Children!

In his amiable lady, interesting little son, and fascinating daughters, the pen of the panegyrist might figure all the graces which adorn their sex. Fostered by the care of so good a man, to whose lips they all looked for the lessons of each day, they exhibited an amiableness of character in the various relations of life, which commanded for them the reputation they enjoyed. Engaging in their manners—enlightened in their understandings—and liberal in their charities—they occupied a seat in the affections of all who knew them. But the *water*, opened its bosom to receive them, and has borne them from our sight! Daughters of Jerusalem! emulate their virtues.

In the rapid succession of thought, which the slightest review of this melancholy catastrophe begets in the mind, we are led in our imagination from the place, where stood the house of the Myers' family, to the *dwelling* of Mr. Fort, where lie the remains of Miss Scott, and the venerable Mrs. Botsford.

It was the portion of this excellent woman* to occupy that happy mediocrity in life, which is most propitious

* Mrs. Botsford.

to advancement in religion. She was not so burdened with the riches of this world, as to distract her mind with the cares attendant on wealth; nor so oppressed in her pecuniary concerns, as to damp the ardour of her devotions to God.

She had always a gift to throw into the Gospel treasury, and an offering, wherewith to meet the distresses of the poor. She was remarkable for the Scriptural simplicity of her manners, and for her attention to those who were labouring under bodily afflictions.

But that for which she was most to be esteemed, was her intimate communion with God, and devotedness to the Cross of Christ. For *thirty* years she had been a bright and shining light in this town. She walked worthy of her vocation, and adorned in all things “the doctrine of God her Saviour.” Her life was a well written comment on the practice of our Holy Religion, and, in the *faith* of its divine realities, has she been separated from us by the providence of God! “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

But the tale of our misfortunes does not stop here. I see the *seat** of one whom my heart held dear, occupied by another in this assembly! I look by the side of it, where sat her lovely daughters, and the same spectacle strikes my vision! Alas! Mrs. Withers is no more! The fairest ornament of the Christian character is perished from among us! “O the depth of the riches, both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”

It was seen good to *Him*, my Brethren, who cannot err, to permit the same rude blast, which has separated from our Society, the Myers' and Mrs. Botsford, to

* It was expected that this Sermon would have been delivered in the *Methodist Church*, but in consequence of the injury it received in the late gale, the Council adjudged it unsafe.

deprive us of this exemplary Lady, and all the children whom God had given her !

Of Mrs. Withers' piety, all who were intimately acquainted with her, can give testimony ; and it was only to those that she appeared to the greatest advantage. Modest, and retiring in her manners, she did not at first fix the attention, or dazzle by a *show* of uncommon sanctity ; but in proportion as you became acquainted with her, her excellencies unfolded to your view like the blushing rose to the rays of the genial sun. Her communion with God was scarcely ever interrupted, either by the cares which pressed upon her, or by the violence of sudden temptation ; and these she always turned to her spiritual advantage, whereby, her light shone with increased splendour to all around her. I had the honour of an intimate acquaintance with her, and can therefore with the greater confidence make these assertions. I have conversed with her on every subject that is connected with the Christian *faith* or *practice*, and have invariably found her intelligent and orthodox. She was well read in the Scriptures, and deeply experienced in the things of God. In fine, I have known many excellent women, whose memories should be held in everlasting remembrance ; but one so dead to the world, so scrupulously conscientious in what she regarded to be her duty, and so entirely devoted to God, as Mrs. Withers, I have not known. In her the *poor* have lost a friend, the *sick* a comforter, and the *Church* its brightest ornament. " 'Tis " the Lord's doing ; it is marvellous in our eyes !"

" With songs let us follow her flight,

" And mount with her spirit above,

" Escap'd to the mansions of light

" And lodg'd in the Eden of Love."

And what less could we have expected of her lovely Daughters and promising little Boy, had they been spared

to ripen into as mature age? The virtues of the mother were graven on their tender minds, and were seen expressed in a variety of instances which went to flatter our hopes. But just as we had called them ours, and they had endeared themselves to us by the development of every grace and virtue, *Death*, claimed them for his own, and severed them from our embrace! "Angels of mercy! why did ye not fly to their relief?"

Of this family was Mr. Withers Shackleford. This hopeful young man had just entered on the vestibule of life, and attracted the notice of the public eye. Having advanced considerably in the studies of his *profession*, his friends were big with expectation of the distinction that awaited him, in the practice of Physic. He had won upon their affections by the modesty of his manners, and by an amiableness of character uncommon to his *youth*. His road to eminence was direct, and was not obstructed by private jealousies or personal hate. The heart of an aged mother exulted at the promise of her child, while all around her pronounced her blessed. But just as the flower had begun to bloom, and disclose the richness of its foliage, and sweetness of its fragrance, a destroying wind passed over it, and blighted it forever!

With this distinguished young gentleman, was associated in death, the honest and industrious Captain Wish.

This worthy man had been in Mr. Withers' employ, and was the principal architect of the building, which his family occupied on that eventful night. He had nearly accomplished his work, and was felicitating himself on the reward of his industry, and the comforts it would enable him to procure for his family, on his return home. But alas! he is no more an inhabitant of time, and these must be conferred by another hand.

And here, I would mention the name of the stranger De Rosa, who, attracted by the hospitality so characte-

ristic of our State, left his native country, to seek at our hands the common necessities of life. But he too is no more.

Such, Fellow Citizens, is the extent of our loss ! The heart sickens at the recurrence to it, and in point of *merit*, we feel that we are well nigh left ORPHANS.

We must not, however, suffer ourselves, to murmur against the dispensations of God's providence. We know that the judge of all the earth invariably does that which is right ; and it becomes us, whenever he visits us in judgment, submissively to bear the indignation of the Lord, because we have sinned against him.

SERMON XI.*

ON THE BLESSEDNESS OF NOT BEING OFFENDED IN CHRIST.

MATTHEW XI. 6.

“ And blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me.”

IN the voyage of life, man cannot expect always an unruffled sea. The same wind that fills the sail of the mariner, also lifts the rugged wave. According as the object is interesting, and tends to give to the feelings their strongest impulse, will be the danger, that the creature of expectation, if at all thwarted, will be sorely disappointed, and his hopes dashed violently down. And in what is man so apt to feel and act the reverse, in a high degree, of what becomes him, as in regard to religion? Happy the man, who finds the alternative of being *with Christ*, to be his interest; who finds his religion to be a plain path. “Blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me.” So said our Saviour to the Disciples of John, sent by him to inquire, not on his own account, but for their sakes, “Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?” “Go,” said Christ, “and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. *And blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me.*”

* Delivered at the opening of the Southern Synod, of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church.

My fathers and brethren in the Ministry ; we have before us, a deeply interesting subject. In the consideration of it, we are led to notice, *first*, the causes why men are offended in Christ ; and *secondly*, the happiness of those on whom these causes do not operate injuriously.

First—What are some of the *causes*, why men are offended in Christ? Not, why are any angered or displeased. The original word, rendered *offended*, literally signifies to *cause to stumble*. When our received version was made, the same idea was conveyed by the word *offended*. That which disconcerts the understanding, because ignorance fetters the intellect, and prejudice the heart, is a stumbling-block, an offence. Why are any thus offended? Their ignorance and prejudice conspire to create improper views and expectations. When these are not realized, they are disappointed or offended. Some of these causes of offence are the following.

And here, the *first* we shall mention is, *the indulgence of improper expectations, in the Ministry, of friendship from the world.*

“ Man is, to man, the surest, sorest ill.”

How many, how keen, are the pangs of wounded sensibility, in our sinful world ! Some men’s countenances exile us from their bosoms ; and declare that there is no home in their hearts for us. To come in contact with them, is to find ourselves in a strange place. Or, like the snow-girt volcano, some men have all its exterior coldness, and all its hidden, eruptive heat. Peculiar bodily organization, thus shows almost habitually in the countenances of some, what circumstances would elicit in others more favoured, and which is common to all un-renewed men—*the hostility of man to man*. And think it not strange, brethren, if the subterraneous fire in man’s bosom should, occasionally, give some awful prognostics

of the universal conflagration, which it shall, ere long, enkindle—to burn forever ! Be not deceived, ye Ministers of Jesus ; enmity, the blood-stained tyrant, whose pleasure is slaughtering conquest, whose object is universal domain, never intermits ; or practises but an Elba-retreat. Even in the house of God, and under the voice of the preacher, is this enmity at work, criticising and construing maliciously. If Christ's words were treasured up by his foes, for an unintended application, *they will keep yours also*, ye servants of Christ, for the hour of vengeance.

The same spirit that imprisoned the body of Christ's servant John, now, not unfrequently lays a ruffian hand on the usefulness of Christ's ministers ; and would imprison it for life. Now, when it can, it flatters to betray, and betrays to murder, in reputation, those who proclaim Christ's truth.

In displaying its hostility to the servants of Christ, it is capable of uttering against them, slanders the most foul, or imputations the most unjust, designed to array them in unlovely colours, that they may stand exposed as objects of popular odium. Existing in the individual, or in the society, it prompts to the same language, towards any faithful minister of Christ—“ *I hate him, for he never prophesieth good unto me, but always evil.*”

That the Ministry should thus suffer, while serving their Lord, is to them a cause of offence. While John himself staggered not at the mysterious Providence, when he was imprisoned, but could submit to it without one recoiling thought, or one humiliating sensation, not so did his friends think and feel. They were concerned ; they doubted. If John be an accepted servant, or if Christ be the true Messiah, why does he not recognise and deliver his servant ?

When a man's ministry in the Gospel, is impeded or

concluded, suspicion and doubt often clothe his friends, like the friends of Job, and the Disciples of John, in unnecessary sadness; and they become miserable comforters, poor interpreters. Yet may he, himself, in the comparison of prospects with Providences, of wishes with allotments, fall into distressing doubt. Whether, under the circumstances of his imperfect mode of administering the Gospel, his limited acceptance and usefulness, or his obstructed zeal and labours, he be indeed divinely called to preach the Gospel, is an anxious inquiry often revolved in his unquiet bosom. Because of this, "his tears are his meat day and night. His eye is consumed because of grief."

Added to this consideration, if there be other gloomy considerations, it but increases his gloom. If the wicked are suffered to prosper, if the cause of unrighteousness and error is triumphant, if Zion suffers, if her watchmen are silenced and persecuted, the servant of God desponds; and is almost prepared to displace himself from the service of his Master. And because of disappointment in improper expectations, some do indeed stumble, and *go back, and walk no more with Jesus.*

A second cause of offence is, the indulgence of improper expectations, in the Ministry, of universal and unvarying friendship from the professors of religion.

Doubtless the society of Heaven, is anticipated in the society of earth, such as exists among Christians, and between Christians and Ministers of the Gospel. But earth has never exhibited, very largely, the spectacle which once extorted from enemies the honest confession, "Behold how these Christians love one another!" Herod heard John gladly, and was the subject of religious impressions under his ministry; but he suffered him not to remind him of his sins. For his fidelity in doing so, did he suffer the weight of vengeful power. And often, since

the days of John and of Paul, have Ministers of the Gospel exclaimed with surprise, "Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" Graceless professors would imprison the body, and soul, and reputation, and name of him, who opposes favourite errors, and favourite lusts.

If the love of the world, man's predominant sin, be meddled with or thwarted, the devotees of Mammon demand that this sin shall be atoned for, by some sacrifice of the comfort and privilege of the faithful Minister of Christ. Alas! How many costly sacrifices are offered on Mammon's altar! We need not ask, why is it not possible for man's affections constantly to revolve around Christ Jesus, as their ultimate centre; while, daily, they revolve around the common concerns of life. Covetousness forbids it; and the intolerant selfishness of covetousness, sacrifices to its object, not only the happiness of its slave, but a large portion of the comfort, the right, and the usefulness of the Ministers of the Gospel.

If, by holding to the traditions of men, and thus arresting the progress of light, or if, by propagating errors which originate in placing reason in the room of revelation, or in applying sophistical reasonings to that revelation, much evil is done, sectarian idolatry, whose altar is preserved only by preserving its favourite error, will not hesitate to offer on its altar, all the consequent evil. Coldly and complacently it can observe, how, as a consequence of sectarianism, the unity of the Church of God is rendered still less and less her glory in the eyes of the world; how much the comfort and communion of Saints below are marred; and how greatly the Ministers of the Gospel suffer, in seeing themselves respected, and their labours accepted, only in their own denomination; in observing the suspicious disposition of the world wherever the slanders of an opposite sect have found their

way; and in thus witnessing their influence diminished, their usefulness impaired, their zeal discouraged, their hopes blighted, Christians mourning, sectarians triumphant, and Satan rejoicing.

Contrast this experience with expectation, and how wide is the difference! Among sinners, saved by grace, the professed friends of Christ, of his cause, and of his servants in the Ministry, those things were not expected by these servants. For the sacrifice of worldly prospects of wealth, and fame, and power, they expected a recompense in the cordiality and sweet delight of Christian fellowship; but the reality is less than the anticipation. The reality is often a temptation to despondency, to doubt, to apostacy. The desponding servant deeply laments, that *the love of many, waxes cold* and ceremonious. The doubting servant wonders, whether he be among friends or enemies; or concludes that he alone is exempt from the universal idolatry of the world. The servant who has, in some degree, denied his Lord and Master by words and actions, is ready to deny him again, in disowning the reality of religion in the world, and in the Bible. And, instead of being recalled by the look of mercy, some are offended, and disown Christ, and know him no more, until he shall “come in the clouds of “Heaven.”

A third cause of offence is, the indulgence of improper expectations, in the men of the world, and in unregenerate professors and preachers, respecting the doctrines of the Christian religion.

To all unrenewed men, in the church or without, “the things of God are foolishness.” The experience of every saved sinner declares it again and again. That learned and pious divine, Dr. Scott, *until his conversion*, even after his entrance on the Ministry, never received the Scriptures but through the medium of Socinian com-

ment. *This* quieted his fears, flattered his pride, and gave licence to reason and sin to take their course.

Sinful man expects, in a religion from Heaven, nothing exalted above his own narrow reason. That religion, which would justly be condemned, if it had no mysteries, is condemned by inconsistent man, because it has its mysteries, and thus bears the characteristic of all God's works. Some, who have lately professed friendship for revealed religion, admitting that reason is out of its latitude, when employed in tracing out a religion independent of revelation, do still employ that reason upon revelation, so as to dilute it to the consistency of the religion of unenlightened reason. They give to reason the province of declaring, what God *ought* to reveal in his revelation to fallen man ! From this necessity, the Author of reason and revelation, the Sun of the moral universe, must receive light from a diminutive orb, bound in its orbit by his power, and owing to his rays, all its light !

In thus assuming arrogantly, that reason must illuminate and control revelation, man prepares for himself certain disappointment. Hence, many do stumble at the pure and humbling religion of Jesus, and embrace for their religion, that compound of reason and revelation, administered as an opiate to their souls. In the place where Calvin preached with power the Gospel of Jesus, rank heresies, the native growth of our earth, now prevail ; and *another Gospel*, than that of Christ's, is embodied in Socinian Ministrations.

The *fourth* cause of offence, and the last we shall now mention, is the *indulgence of improper expectations in the men of the world, and even in professors of religion, respecting the Christian Ministry.*

Under the first impulse, produced by considering who the Ministers of the Gospel are in office, men are ready to do homage to them as to superior beings ; but view-

ing them as men of like frailties with other Christians, they are ready to disown them entirely. How affecting the fact, that Ministers of the Gospel are “set for the “rise and fall” of religion, in the minds of men! While a prejudiced, a passionate fondness for some Minister of the Gospel, was on the increase, waxing to its full-orbed size, religion seemed to be gaining ground in the heart, whose fruitful soil consisted only in idolatrous admiration. But when that fondness was exhausted, religion withered. The soil was not deep, and its fruit endured but for a time. Revolving days brought this religious fondness to its wane, and moon-light religion shone no more.

Others, alas! because of the Ministry, fall deeper into that hostility to religion, which had never, in their bosoms, softened even into a deceptive feeling. The Ministry is to them, what Christ's bodily presence was to others, “a stone of stumbling.” Judging of Christ's servants according to their own feelings, or those appearances which unfaithful servants have exhibited, they can see in them nothing but deception and imposture. While to others, not servile nor weak, the Ministry is “*a savour of life unto life*; to these, it is A SAVOUR OF DEATH “UNTO DEATH!”

To some less hostile to religion, small infirmities in the Ministry are an occasion of disregarding religion. If, in the Ministry, there are those, whose qualifications for public service and favour are limited, there are in the world those men of extreme self-confidence, who always feel towards them, a certain undefined contempt. When, in the exercise of his prevalent disposition to *defend* young Timothy, the aged Paul said, “Let no man despise thy youth,” he acknowledged a vulnerable point in his young son in the faith, and nobly threw around him a wall of defence. In himself, were those very vul-

nerable points, (as his *enemies* said,) “ a bodily presence “ weak, and a speech contemptible ;” to which was added some unaccountable, superinduced infirmity, “ a thorn “ in the flesh,” recognised by himself as a messenger of Satan, and recognised by his hearers as a providential call for their sincerest sympathy. Owing to these, will men think lightly of the ambassadors of Heaven. And lightly does religion, lightly does its *Author*, appear in their eyes.

To others, still less hostile, the Ministry, by its attractions, often is the occasion, why men think lightly of Christ. Frequently, the light of God’s word, coming to man through the medium of the Ministry, is most beautifully refracted ; and every eye is engaged. But, let the Ministration be past ; and, because it was fascinating, the light of Heaven shines forth unnoticed or disregarded.

In the Church, as in the world, the Ministry is also, in some degree, a cause of offence. Christians think of Ministers, above what they ought to think. Hence their piety is retarded, when their expectations are not fully answered. When they look for angelic purity, or seek only for entertainment to their intellect or their prejudice, they lose sight of the proper character of the Ministry, and are preparing for disappointment. If, instead of an Angel from Heaven, they find only a mortal man ; if, instead of an intellectual feast, nothing but the Gospel, preached in becoming simplicity, is spread before them ; if, instead of a servile servant of sect, they meet with a man who preaches the truth fearlessly, and acts independently of tradition, many professors are stumbled ; and, in the soreness of their disappointment, some find it *their* interest, (whatever it may be to *the cause of Christ*,) to furnish the ungodly world with weapons against Christianity, in the shape of calumnies against the Ministry. When the Ministry cannot be engaged to afford fuel to

sectarian fires, party spirit, the only tie which bound some professors to religion, is broken ; and, swung from their moorings, they float uncertainly, the sport of winds and waves ; and, without an anchor of Christian hope, become the victims of their commissioned vengeance.

The causes why some are offended in Christ being enumerated, we are now, in the *second* place, to consider *the happiness of those on whom these causes do not operate injuriously*. “*Blessed* is he whosoever is not offended “in me.”

Are there any, to whom improper expectations of friendship from the world, are likely to prove the cause of stumbling at Christ Jesus? Happy, thrice happy are they, if these causes do not operate on them injuriously. Does any minister of Jesus feel surprised at the enmity, emanating from the world ; or wonder, why Christ’s power is not put forth to restrain it entirely? Be not surprised, do not wonder, thou man of God. It may be that the small exertion of Divine power, necessary to curb man’s enmity, shall be withheld. But while this shall exercise thy faith and patience, go and proclaim to the world, what thou dost, elsewhere, *see* and *hear* of a Saviour’s power. Man’s enmity to God, in thousands of instances, has been slain ; and the iron reign of Satan, and of sin, broken down. Prejudice, superstition, idolatry, heresy, infidelity, atheism, sin, all have lost their enthralled votaries ; and now they see, and hear, and walk at liberty, the sons of God without rebuke, the regenerated, privileged heirs of glory. Behold, as the means of affecting this, the heralds of the Cross, in the execution of their important trust. While the crooked policy, and the darkly-aspiring spirit of the world actuate those heretics, that deny the Lord Jesus his Divine honours, to address themselves, by every possible avenue, to men in power, to the men of learning and wealth, behold, from

the bosom of the Church, come forth the ambassadors of Christ, unambitious and undisguised, and, in fulfilling their mission, and in characterising their Divine Master, his religion, and themselves, "*the poor have the Gospel preached unto them.*" With the voice of the preached Gospel, they awaken the attention of both high and low, rich and poor, bond and free. The abodes of poverty and woe, the rough mariner on the deep, the African in his chains, the Indian in his wilds, the continents and the isles, in their own language, all hear the glad tidings of salvation. And what has not the Gospel of Christ achieved? Of every nation, of every pursuit, of every station, of every order of intellect, of every disposition, of every grade of guilt, have men been found, who have felt and gloriously displayed its power. Under every trial have they borne, and exhibited, most patiently, the power of Christ's grace. Temptations, that would *seduce*, or that would *dismay*, have left them unmoved. That, which a miraculous power is always necessary to effect, has been again and again effected, by God our Saviour, in his people.

Happy is that servant, who looks at these evidences of a Saviour's power, and seeks not for those, which, in releasing him from man's enmity, principally relate to his own comfort. Happy is that servant, who is willing to endure the portion of enmity from man, allotted to him by Heaven, which he might avoid, and others do escape, by disowning Christ. "*He must increase, but I must decrease,*" said that servant of Christ, who was admonished in the words of our text. Willing to suffer, for Christ's sake, in the diminution of their own *comfort*, or their own *glory*, every faithful servant looks on afflictive dispensations, not as coming from the hands of man, but as directed of God, to be subservient to his glory, and the advancement of religion. Such obstacles drive not

the servant from his Master's service. Being embraced, these adversities yield a communion with Christ, most precious and divine. They are the foundations of the many EBENEZERS in the Christian world ; which, not the eye of man, but the Omniscient beholds. Here, when stript of his luxuriant foliage, the servant of God may yet advance in the Divine life, in the growth of his *humility* ; as the oaks of the forest strike deep their roots, while winter reigns. Here, may he well engage in learning the lessons of humility, whose diminished usefulness is God's rebuke for that pride of the heart, which said, "Is not this great popularity which I enjoy, by the "might of my power, and for my honour and inalienable "inheritance?"

But who shall compute the value of future, eternal bliss, reserved for those, who *endure unto the end*, which must always stand compared with the present good, expected in separating from Christ? In view of *this*, how much is it the Christian Minister's *duty* to abide the scorn and hostility of the world, and to wear his Christian independence on his breast, as a shield, that the reproaches, assailing him for Christ's sake, may fall blunted at his feet. How certainly is this his duty, his *happiness* ; and how unspeakable the happiness of that servant, who endures to the end. *The same shall be saved.* Yea, though the blackening cloud of man's wrath should gather to a storm, and its heaviest fury beat on the devoted servant of Christ, he may not count his sufferings great, or his life dear, so that the morning of the resurrection may open unto him, the gates of Heaven. On those, who look for Christ's salvation, from Christ their judge, in his second coming, the death of martyrdom, with all its terrors, of fire and sword, has no appalling power. If the temporary apostacy of the aged Cranmer, to purchase the dregs of life, from the fire of the

persecutor, wrung his bosom with the most agonizing pain, until he could recall his recantation, and add the testimony of voluntary martyrdom to seal his unfeigned repentance, equally lamentable to himself, and piteous to others, would have been his early apostacy. The difference in the folly of the apostates shall not be reckoned in the abodes of despair. There, engulfed in woe, apostates shall ever and ever wail their doom. *There shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth* The ire of despairing spirits shall add to the infuriate flames of their Hell; and the smoke of their torment, and the language of their blasphemy, shall rise up forever and ever! Blessed are they who shall not endure the wrath of the Lamb. *O God! gather not my soul with sinners!*

Again: are there any to whom improper expectations, of universal and unvarying friendship from the professors of Religion, are likely to prove the cause of stumbling at Christ Jesus? Blessed are they who are not caused in this way, to stumble at Christ. Blessed are they who do not identify, with Christ himself, those adverse appearances, which he permits, and which disappoint man's inconsistent expectations. The will of man is not always the will of God. Very frequently it would contravene what God permits or commands. Inconsistently, does the Minister of Jesus expect more than his Lord and Master received. "They are not all Israel, who are of Israel." A *professed friend* betrayed the Divine Saviour. And *professed friends*, yet betray him, in the injury of that truth, and those servants of Christ, whom they would appear to acknowledge. Worse than the warm opposition of the world, is the cold-blooded injury done to Christ and his cause, by those, who, in the *coolness* and *treachery* of their nature, can *assume the friend*, and *be the foe*, of Christ Jesus. And worse, by far, to be borne, is unexpected hatred, than that on which we calculate. But

let us not be stumbled, that we fall. The policy of Satan, in the concerns of Adam's family, has always, from the very first, appeared in the *serpentine form*. Let us not be "ignorant of his devices," which are *now*, in various shapes, plying their speciousness, with guileless hearts. Then shall we not be confounded at their full development.

Happy are they also, who stumble not at the conduct of those who are discovered to themselves, no less than to us, as enemies of Christ; whose hearts are revealed, by coming in contact with our Ministry. Rare as is that characteristic preaching, which touches, with a master's hand, the secret springs of human conduct, we do see that, more or less, men betray themselves, when the truth is brought home to their bosoms. Of whom, and for what, did the great and venerable Edwards suffer reprobation, vociferated in the whelming language of popular phrenzy—"Away with him"? Of a people, to whom, for twenty-four years, he had faithfully and affectionately ministered; because, in telling them, that unqualified persons should not prostitute the Holy Supper, he told them the *truth*;—of a people, who could inflict still another and another wound, on a deeply wounded Pastor, conjuring him, while he lingered with them, after his dismissal, not even to preach among them, and refusing even to hear the Gospel from his mouth! My aged, or my youthful, fellow labourers in the cause of Christ; if ours has been, or may be, the history of Edwards in his sufferings, let ours be his meekness, and his magnanimity. Let us, "overcome evil with good." At all events, let us not cease to say of our Lord and Master, *he hath done all things well*. His good will does not forsake us, when man's deserts us. In *another* sphere of usefulness, he will *bless* us. Paul, rejected of the Jews, became the Apostle of the Gentiles. Edwards, rejected

by his congregation, filled up the remainder of his life in preaching to the Indians, and presiding over a seat of learning. Doing our duty, “we are a sweet savour unto God,” whether men receive or reject us. Let us, then, do our duty; and thus be able to say, in any stage of our Ministry, as the aged Paul triumphantly said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Further—Are there any to whom improper expectations, respecting the doctrines of the Christian Religion, are likely to prove the cause of stumbling at Christ himself? Blessed are they, in whom this is not verified. Blessed are they who do not associate, with Christ himself, those crude ideas of Christian truth, which their minds, untutored by the grace of God, have adopted and cherish. Happy are they, who will own a divinity in God’s *word* as in his *works*; who will honour Revelation as a messenger from Heaven, and not receive her as a familiar acquaintance, born of Earth. Adherence to the revealed doctrine of the Deity of Christ Jesus, one of the mysterious doctrines of the Gospel, will be found at last, not to have been the tenacity of Sectarian temperament, but the act of the most enlightened rationality.—The repose of the faith of a Christian on Christ, the rock of ages, is the only true Religion. He who rests on Christ shall never be confounded or removed; but he who stumbles at the rock of Salvation, or on whom it shall fall, perishes irremediably. Woe unto him, whose hopes are the hopes of scepticism. Thousands have gone to Heaven, and found in the Christian Religion, nothing that impeded, but for the moment; and thousands on thousands shall yet embrace that Religion, and find its

Heaven. How just then, and yet how melancholy, the doom of those, whose pride of intellect, or whose love of sin, shut out their soul from the Ark of Salvation. Happy are they who, while others deride, hear and take warning from those preachers of righteousness, who shew the *appointed way* of escaping the coming flood of retributive wrath. Blessed are those professors, and those churches, who *have not denied Christ's name*. To such the promise is good, "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them, that dwell upon the earth." While *false teachers*, "privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that brought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction; and while "*many shall follow their pernicious ways,*" how secure is the blessedness of the righteous, when Omniscience and Omnipotence, are engaged to guard their faith, and guard their souls! "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." While Literature and reason involve their *idolators* in endless mazes, in selfish, cheerless speculations, in a heartless religion, how happy is the humble Christian, or the humble Minister of the Gospel, each in his humility, occupying the position of an angel of light, and a saint in glory. Their *privilege* is the privilege, in its degree, of saints and angels above. It stands, a vivid contrast with the condition of the worldly wise. That which was uttered on the occasion, when Christ spake in the words of our text, always has been and always will be, an affecting truth, bearing to some an aspect of darkness, to others of light: "I thank thee," said Jesus, "O Father, Lord of Heaven, and Earth, because thou hast *hid* these things from the *wise* and *prudent*, and hast *revealed* them unto *babes*." Not the feelings of the sectarian, but compassion for the soul, prompts us to say, Blessed are they, who know, and

receive, Jesus the Saviour, announced as a *Divine Saviour*, a *sacrifice for sin*.

Once more—Are there any to whom improper expectations, concerning the Ministry, are likely to prove the cause, why they should stumble at Christ Jesus? Blessed are they who do not, to their ruin, associate with Christ himself, those defects in the Ministry, imaginary or real, which neither represent Christ Jesus, nor belong to his Religion. Happy are they who can judge of the Ministry, by their principal and prominent features, and can abstract from their view, the defects which do not characterise the Ministerial order. Happy are they, who will acknowledge Christ and his Religion, abstracting from their view, the Ministry itself, while they meditate on the *theme* of their Ministrations. The defects of the Ministry are *frailties*, compatible with sincerity, in *faithful* disciples; or more flagrant and habitual, they denote, that the *false* disciples to whom they adhere, belong to the false accusers of the Ministry as a fraternity. The defects of the Ministry, by which they fall short of angelic excellence, or by which they fall short of the highest of human excellence, belong to them, but by false imputation. *Human nature, in its present imperfect state, as it exists in the Church militant, and as it appears under all possible varieties of talents and temperaments*, is the standard, by which the Ministry of Reconciliation is righteously judged. Within this boundary there is, there always has been, there always will be, a Ministry, *loving the truth as it is in Jesus*, who afford all the excellence which man ought to expect. And happy are they, who, judging a righteous judgment, are not offended in Christ, because of his Ministering Servants. Not by their imperfections, but by their excellencies, do they represent their divine Master. By an *authority to preach the Gospel*, derived from *some branch of the visible Church*,

by their *doctrine*, which is *the truth as it is in Jesus*, by the *spirit* which they breathe, and the *life* which they live, both the fruit of *the spirit of Jesus*, by these in gracious union, and by these alone, do the Ministers of the Gospel represent Christ Jesus. Blessed are they, who, submitting to the wisdom of Heaven, do recognise, in the person of God's authenticated ambassador, God's authority and work. Happy are they, who, looking beyond the point where the natural eye would detain them, reverence the Ministry, whom Christ hath sent as his *Ambassadors*. Though the eye or the ear, the imagination or the intellect, should not be captivated, yet the soul, purified in its vision by grace, beholds a *moral* beauty and glory in the Evangelical Ministry. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth peace." Happy are they, who neither idolizing nor lightly esteeming the Ministry, find that what the Ministry of John was, the true Christian Ministry ever is; an index, pointing to "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Infinitely blest are they, who, realizing the end of the Ministry, are themselves conducted by it into the path of life, in which they find a sacred joy on earth, as a foretaste of that in Heaven—a joy *unspeakable and full of glory*."

In the improvement of this subject, let us, who Minister in holy things, take warning. The time cannot be far distant, ere those who preach Christ's truth, and are thus his witnesses, shall be slain by worldly power. Before that event, they shall long proclaim the truth, *clothed in Sackcloth*. Do we not now find our Ministrations, more or less, a call for self denial and fortitude?*

* Ten years ago, in Geneva, the advocates of the Divinity of Christ, assembled in a *new* church, to enjoy liberty of conscience, were *openly persecuted*, until the civil authority forbade. "Down

Much we bear; much we forbear. Even now a testimony against distinguished evil cannot be uttered so candidly, but that merciless lacerations shall follow the servant of God, and his name be identified with papal bigotry. These things bear to a *crisis*; and the day will come eventually, when the enemies of God shall behold the Ministry prostrate under the rod of persecuting power—their official character and duties nullified—their usefulness imprisoned—their influence, like Sampson's power, gone! Let us be warned of these days. Let us be prepared for trials. And if we do indeed strive, in our Ministry, for an *incorruptible crown*, let us strive manfully; let us endure patiently; let us pray, and hope, and persevere unto the end. In these days, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Let us also, my Fathers and Brethren, take consolation, while we take warning. "All things shall work together for good to them that love God. God is faithful, who will not suffer you, who are tempted, to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." If, on this side, is Scylla—on that Charybdis—and, from behind, the tempest urges—the God, who saves sinners, will make a way of escape. And then, the deliverance wrought, in the deepest gratitude, will the Christian erect his Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me." With shuddering emotions must he think of the moment, when he passed the test of a seducing, or a dismaying temptation; and with overflowing

with the Fanatics, down with the Moravians, down with Jesus Christ"—was the soul-chilling cry of the mob! *Timeo Danaos!*

Crimine ab uno

Disce omnes!

Infidelity, open or masked, is always ready to persecute. The Church is hated by the world, as Abel was by Cain; and for the same reason.

thankfulness for Divine deliverance, will he say with a Saint of old, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

"Now, thanks be unto God, who always causeth us, who serve him, to triumph in Christ."

But let the ungodly tremble, for theirs is the place of danger. If brought into contact with Christ's religion, his servants, or his people, so that they must show the decided feeling of their hearts, they will be offended in Christ. They will *despise* and *reject* Christ Jesus. "He that despiseth you," says Christ to his Ministering Servants, "despiseth me." And how easily, under a specious guise, with pretexts ever at hand, may the sin of despising and rejecting Christ, be committed. "Woe unto the world because of *offences!*" Happy they, who indulge not, who vent not, their hatred of the Ministry, to their own eternal ruin.

Should religion, however, not be brought in contact with ungodly men, yet are they in a perilous situation. Without Christ's religion, they must perish eternally; not so awfully, yet as surely as did the sinners of Jerusalem. Let them not imagine, that futurity can or will disclose nothing more alarming, than the present affords. Let them not imagine, it shall be well with the wicked. Towards their haven of earthly pleasure, every gale may, indeed, seem contributory; and presumptuously will a sinner think, that *all things are working together for his good*. Behold the sinner elated in his sinful course—a loose from all religion. Feverish hope swells wide his sails—day and night he voyages towards his destined point—the contributory winds change not their course, but urge him on—his earthly all is almost gained—distance and time are just measured—the morning of anticipated rest, at length opens—and lo!—like the ill-

starred, precious-freighted Albion, dashed on the mountain rocks of a Foreign coast, the sinner is hurled into the jaws of destruction, and sinks into ruin and remediless woe! *In that very day his thoughts perish!* So death triumphs over man. Earthly hopes find, in death, the wreck of their existence. And then, in that hour of agony and fearful forebodings, to exchange earthly, for Heavenly hopes and views, is almost in vain. Some solitary sinner may be wadded to the shore, or be caught on some trembling rock, as a refuge from the mountain waves. But, mostly, as the harbingers of death find sinners, so death itself finds and leaves them. They perish in their *sinful course!* They perish in the conveyancer in which they trusted! With a despairing note they cry for *help*: Man, pitying man, looks down, but can yield them *no salvation!* And Hell and destruction receive their prey! “Woe unto the wicked; for it shall be ill with the wicked, and he shall eat of the fruit of his doings!” Happy, unspeakably happy, are they, whom the captain of salvation is conveying, in the ark of safety, to the haven of eternal rest. No angry winds or waves can turn them aside, or drive them to destruction. *He* conducts them, who can say to winds and waves, “*Peace, be still.*” Blessed are they, who have entrusted themselves to this Saviour, to voyage them over the rough ocean of life, to their Heavenly home. Blessed, forever blessed, are they, who, neither neglecting nor despising Christ Jesus, find and acknowledge, in him, the portion of their souls, and *the rock of their salvation.*

SERMON XII.*

ON THE REASONS WHICH CHRISTIANS HAVE, FOR MOURNING THE SUDDEN REMOVAL OF MEN, WHO HAVE BEEN DISTINGUISHED, FOR THE EXCELLENCE OF THEIR CHARACTERS, AND THE USEFULNESS OF THEIR LIVES.

II. SAMUEL III. 32, 33; 34.

“ And they buried Abner in Hebron : and the king lifted up his voice and wept at the grave of Abner : and all the people wept. “ And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth ? Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters : *as a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou.* And *“ all the people wept again over him.”*

IN such words as these, does the Sacred historian describe the scene that was exhibited, the emotions that were felt, and the language that was uttered, at and after the interment of Abner, who was brought to his grave, not in the course of nature, but by the hand of murderous violence. Abner was an officer of distinction under King David ; and the king took a large share of the general grief that was excited, on account of his untimely, and unlooked-for removal. The words that have been read, appear remarkably appropriate to the circumstances of that unusual and tragical scene, which harrowed our feelings, awakened our sympathies, and involved us in astonishment, during the last week. They serve as a fit introduction to those reflections, which are, or ought to be,

* Delivered on the 14th of May, 1815, occasioned by the death of the late Dr. David Ramsay.

excited in the mind, by the mysterious footsteps of Divine Providence, which we have so recently, and so painfully discerned among us. A breach has been made upon our Church, which should bring us upon our knees, both in the chamber and in the sanctuary; to own, and to seek submission to, the rod of our Father; to ask, that God, whose way is in the whirlwind, and whose throne is covered with a cloud, would show us wherefore he contendeth with us. At the view of this breach, our hearts have already been agitated with tremor and distress, and our eyes have emptied their crowded tears. But every circumstance is calculated, this day, to renew our grief; and to dispose us to dwell, with affecting solemnity, on the sad scene. In bitterness of soul, have we reason to exclaim, at the precipitate and iniquitous manner in which our friend has been hurried from us, into the world of Spirits; "As a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou, and all the people wept again over him."

In directing our meditations, let us in the *First* place, consider what grounds we have for sore weeping, at the removal, and especially the sudden, the violent and untimely removal, of men distinguished for the excellence of their characters, and the usefulness of their lives; *Secondly*, inquire what our loss has been; and what ground we have to weep—and *Thurdly*, derive improvement from the subject.

In relation to the *first* branch of our subject, it may, at the outset, be observed, that we have cause to weep, under the loss of excellent and useful men, because we are thus deprived of the benefit of their example, which we have been accustomed to enjoy. The righteous are required, by their tempers and in their conversation, to shine before others, for their instruction and encouragement; to keep in awe the workers of iniquity; and thus diminish the number of sins, with which the world is afflicted; and to stimu-

late the children of piety, by discovering to them, that they stand not alone in their holy efforts. How much evil is prevented, and how much good is done, by the constant exhibition of the example of Christians, will be much better known hereafter, than it can be ascertained here. But even here, we are called to witness the extent of its effect, to such a degree, as reasonably to excite the wish, that the excellent of the earth, were tenfold more in number than they are. The example of the worthy, like salt, diffuses its influence through the community; and prevents that entire degeneracy, which human nature would certainly reach, were not its tendencies counteracted, by the holy influence of those, to whom the divine nature has been imparted. How can we do otherwise than weep, when the light, that emanated from such examples, and irradiated surrounding objects, becomes extinct; and especially suddenly extinct, by death? Is there not reason to fear, that the bands of wickedness may be strengthened, and the courage of the sons of impiety increased, when the example of the righteous is no longer in the way, to hold it in check? Is there not ground to apprehend, that the well-meaning, but timid believer, will be less strenuous in his exertions to overcome the world, by his steady character, when the example of his more advanced and established brother, is not at hand to animate him?

A second ground we have, for weeping, for the removal of excellent and useful men, is, that the Church, and the world, are bereaved of their eminent and important services. In the Christian world, there are many worthy characters, whose examples are brilliant; but the sphere in which they move is contracted: their opportunities for active or extensive service are comparatively few. Possessed of but few talents, and moving in a private and domestic circle, they have not those scenes of active use-

fulness to be employed in, which are allotted to others ; and which render the removal of others from society, a most extensive and distressing loss. When a Christian is taken away, who, besides being possessed of many virtues in private life, was distinguished by his zeal and activity on public occasions, the chasm opened by his death is more deep and wide ; and filled up again with incomparably more difficulty. Sometimes one individual will be blessed with a combination of so many, and such various talents, that his loss cannot be made up, by any single man, who may succeed to his place, or be employed in his labours. It requires the abilities and the energies of several combined, to repair the desolation, which his death must occasion. When a man of this description, takes his eternal farewell, of those with and for whom he co-operated, either in Church or State, here below, then may it be said, with affecting emphasis, “ all the people weep over him.” Dismayed at the formidable and menacing attitude, which Divine Providence has assumed towards the children of men, we cannot avoid inquiring, with heart-felt anxiety, “ Shew us wherefore thou contendest with us.” Why have we been visited with such an alarming token of Divine displeasure, as is manifested by the removal of a man, who lived for us, who lived for others, more than for himself ?

A *third* reason, why such dispensations call for our weeping voice, is, that by the removal of excellent and eminent men, we are deprived of the important benefit, that was expected, and that actually resulted, from their prayers. If the fervent effectual prayer of one righteous man, availeth much, how much *loss also* must be sustained, when the tongue that used to be employed in intercession for others, ceases to move in their behalf ; and lies silent in the grave ? Ah ! who can tell the weight of woe, which falls upon any community, Church, society,

or family, when one, who used steadily to lift up the voice of his believing supplication for them, is bereft of power to perform this kind office any longer ! From how many snares have they been delivered—from how many dangers saved or freed—how many blessings have fallen on their heads, through the medium, and as the result of the intercession of such a character ! The influence of prayer is unseen : the quantity of good which it is the means of occasioning, or of evil, which it is the instrument of preventing or repelling, we cannot in any case pretend with precision to ascertain. When a person acts, we see the good he does : it is exhibited to our senses : but, when he prays, and his prayer is heard and accepted, which is the case with every true believer, God alone knows the extent of benefit that is derived to himself and others. We are apt more highly to value a person's deeds, than his supplications. We behold the effects of the one, and can trace them to their immediate cause—but we cannot definitely point out the operation of the other. Undoubtedly, however, the man, who wrestles with God, day and night, for himself, for his family, for his country, for the Church, and for the world, is doing them a signal service ; which is set down in the book of God's remembrance ; and will be known by the universe, at the resurrection of the just. And, it is a consolation to the most obscure Christian to remember, that, in this way, he has it in his power to evince before God, if not before men, his distinguished patriotism, his unfeigned philanthropy, and his entire devotedness to the cause of Christ, and of his Church. But when active, zealous, faithful, persevering public efforts, and fervent, frequent, believing prayers, preceding and seconding these efforts, are both closed at once by the silencing stroke of death, what reason must there be, “ That all the people should weep
“ over the loss.”

A *fourth* ground for sore and abundant weeping, at the removal of worthy and valuable men, is, that the dispensation seems to savour of Divine displeasure. It appears to contain a reproof to survivors, that they have rendered themselves unworthy of the blessings they have enjoyed; and have not been sufficiently sensible of their value, while they possessed them. This construction may, in some cases, be put on the proceedings of Divine Providence, when the children of God are called home to himself, in the midst of their usefulness. If a believer has been distinguished for the warmth of his feelings, for the generosity of his actions, for public spirit in his whole behaviour, for the ardour of his devotion to the interests of the religious or civil community in which he has lived, and, by all his efforts, has failed to excite a similar worthy spirit in others, God, in displeasure, may have removed him, because he was not duly appreciated, nor his labours of love suitably seconded. We may be taught, more effectually than we ever knew it before, his real value, by being left to feel the want of his services, on those future occasions, when qualities like his, shall appear to be peculiarly in demand, but when sought for, cannot be found.

Such as have been mentioned, are some of the numerous reasons, which call for a burst of grief from the heart, and a flood of tears from the eyes of a civil or religious community, when a great and good man is removed, by death, from the scene of his labours, and the sphere of his exertions. And all these reasons accumulate with a ten-fold force, when such a character is suddenly cut down, in the midst of usefulness and of promise, and especially, when he is thus laid low by the ferocious hand of human violence. When we are obliged to say of a character so distinguished, "As a man falleth before wicked men, so fellest thou," what a bitter ingredient

does such a circumstance infuse into the cup of our agony ! Till we can go quite up to the throne of God, and there receive the instruction, that not a sparrow falleth to the ground, without our Heavenly Father, who can be reconciled to the thought, that the man, of character so calculated to shield him from violence, of conduct so adapted to excite the efforts of all to preserve, instead of destroying a valuable life, of talents rarely to be met with single, and more rarely to be met with in combination—that such a man should be brought to his grave, in such a way—When all these things meet together, it is not surprising to hear it said, “ And all the people wept again over him.”

While we have been pursuing the preceding course of reflections, we make no doubt, the mind of every hearer has involuntarily, if not designedly, recalled the melancholy catastrophe of the last week. None can avoid tracing their connexion with that sad spectacle, which has interested the feelings, and roused the sympathies of a whole community. We, my brethren, as a Church, and as a Congregation, must feel and take a more lively, sympathizing, and affectionate interest still, in this scene of woe. Though the community generally, has sustained an irreparable loss, with more peculiar weight, has this stroke fallen upon ourselves. We knew his worth ; we saw his virtues ; we experienced the benefit of his talents ; we reaped the fruit of his labours ; we shared largely in the blessings derived from his activities and from his prayers.

Let us then, *secondly*, inquire what our loss has been, and what grounds we have, under the bereavement, to weep very sore.

We have then, in the *first* place, lost his bright example. For a considerable number of years, he has been enrolled upon the list of the members of this Church. In

the sanctuary, and at the table of the Lord, we have often met him ; and known his deportment there. He was distinguished for the punctuality of his attendance on public worship ; and his uniformly devout behaviour, in the Church of God ; and close and marked attention to the instructions of the pulpit ; all bore testimony to the impression and sentiment of his heart, that “ God was to be worshipped in the beauty of holiness.” He always highly prized the public ordinances of God’s house ; and from a punctual, regular, and constant attendance upon them, nothing was ever suffered to divert him, but what was entirely beyond his control ; the sickness of himself or family, or some urgent call of professional duty. Inclemency of weather, was always regarded by him as a very trivial excuse, for absenting one’s self from the house of God. For a threatening cloud, or a little sprinkling of rain, he never thought of leaving his seat in the courts of the Lord empty ; and when the Ambassador of Heaven would, upon such occasions, have to lament the spending of his breath, and the wasting of his strength, as well as of the careful preparations of his study, on naked walls and unoccupied seats, it was some relief to find, that in our lamented friend, an exception was uniformly presented. He felt the solemn obligation of appropriating the Lord’s day, to the purpose for which it was instituted ; and would suffer no consideration to deter him from going to the house of God on the Sabbath, which would not deter him on any other day, from going abroad for any secular purpose. Whenever, upon an examination of his own mind, he could discover that certain supposed circumstances, would not interrupt any worldly design, he felt himself bound to forbid its interrupting his religious duties.

The influence of custom, and fashion, even over religious feelings and duties, is much to be deplored. But

no one counteracted and restrained this influence, more than he. However he might allow fashion to shape and qualify his other conduct, he ever felt it wrong to submit to its dominion, in religious matters. On this principle it was, that after the severe stroke which fell upon himself and family, in the loss of his dearest earthly friend, instead of excluding himself and them from the house of God, for a number of weeks, as is the general practice, he thought, with David, that the fittest place to appear in, to testify sensibility, to evince submission, to receive consolation, and to seek improvement from affliction, was the house of God. Accordingly, the very next Sabbath found him there. He remembered Zion, with delight, in the period of his affliction.

On all occasional appointments, on the week day, for public religious exercises, it was with him a matter of conscience, to attend; and more especially, on the monthly preparatives for communion, occurring on the Friday afternoons preceding. His religion was of that uniform, cheerful, and exemplary character, which manifested, that with him, "the service of God was perfect freedom." If this regular and constant attention to religion and its duties, had been the mere effect of habit; if it was a mere form, through which he passed, without influence upon his temper, and effect upon his conduct, it would not be worthy of commendation. But genuine principle was interwoven, through the whole system of his outward worship; and his tongue and his life were perpetually speaking in favour of his profession, as a living and not a dead one.

In his temper, he always manifested a very large portion of the mind that was in Christ Jesus. Pacific and meek to a remarkable degree, was the character of his spirit. It is almost inconceivable, that a constitution so sanguine in its temperament, intellects so vigorous in

their exercise, the whole frame of a mind, in a word, so full of energies, and so constantly putting forth these energies, should be associated, at the same time, with a temper so entirely under command; with passions so completely under control. We naturally expect to find, even in a soul deeply tinctured with grace, men of great mental animation occasionally betrayed into those ebullitions of anger, to which such constitutions are more prone than others. But, in him, we met with vigour and animation always; with passion never. He had learned, to a most astonishing degree, the difficult and important lessons of self-possession, and self-command. On every subject that interested his feelings, he spoke and acted, with an energy and a spirit, which nothing could repress; while not a railing word was ever suffered to escape his lips. To the subject of his discussions, he always applied the strongest epithets of approbation or disapprobation, which language could furnish; while to the persons of those, who adopted different views from himself, his language was delicate; and his deportment amicable. He must have taken early and constant pains to rule his own spirit; and to these pains must have been added, an unusual share of Divine influence, to render him the man he was.

For universal benevolence, there could not be his superior. He was the friend of every man: it afforded him peculiar delight to do good to all men; and especially to those, who were of the household of faith. The man that came among us, a stranger, in a strange land, always inquired for, and found *him* out. Merit of every kind, he always patronised; and laboured to bring forth to public notice: if he found it associated with extreme and retiring modesty, it only made him more anxious to do for the individual, what his diffidence would effectually have prevented him from doing for himself.

When we consider his splendid talents, his extensive literary acquirements, and his literary fame, we are amazed at the condescension of his manners. From pride of every kind, who could be more free? He was affable with every one. The youth that had just acquired the rudiments of knowledge, was received by him with a familiarity, and treated by him with a respect, that would seem only due to some veteran in science, worth, or usefulness.

All these excellencies, and more that could be mentioned, throw such a lustre around his profession and his character, as to show, that he was a sincere Christian. Those, indeed, who have known him best, and known him longest, will, we are persuaded, be the most forward to testify to his worth; be most ready to maintain, that whatever were his errors, they were those of the head, and not of the heart. We have dwelt upon his example; let us next consider his services.

The uniform sentiment of his mind was, that he was made, not for himself alone, but for others. On this principle, he appears to have acted, through the whole course of his long and useful life. To fill up every portion of his fleeting time with some important service, was the object ever kept in view by him. In the pursuit of this object, his attention was duly divided between the Church and the State. He felt, that both had claims upon him; and the claims of both, he wished to satisfy. In the world, he was ready to obey the calls of his fellow citizens. In times of danger and of difficulty especially, he felt that he owed himself to the community; and stood ready to add his counsels and his efforts to those of his brethren. In all the concerns of the Church at large, and especially of that to which he had attached himself, he took a deep, an affectionate, and an undiminished interest. In consulting her good, he laid aside all private

feeling, both for himself and for others ; and suffered this to have little or no influence over his determinations and his actions. He strove to find out what was the will of God, and what the situation of his Church required, and then ceased to consult with flesh and blood. His course was marked by inflexible firmness ; and nothing could remove him from the position he assumed, but pertinent Scripture, or solid reasoning. He entered fully into all her exigencies : he contrived plans for removing them ; and he maintained his plans, with a perseverance that no difficulties could damp ; a perseverance, inspired and sustained by the sweet consciousness, that simplicity and godly sincerity lay at the foundation of all his conduct. Both in Church and in State, he ever acted with the most unfettered independence. Where others were cautious and timid, and rather disposed to bend to a spirit, which, at the same time, they knew to be unbecoming and unjustifiable, he was staunch and resolute. He was always ready, always desirous to hear every thing that could be said ; and to have a distinct and complete view of every thing that came before him ; but when this was done, and his mind was formed, he went straight forward, and would never yield his convictions to what was capricious, irrational, unfounded, or absurd. In matters in which he was concerned, in the civil or in the religious life, he was ever *impartial*. The devoted partisan he never would consent to become : his enlightened mind and his liberal heart, knew how to distinguish between those theoretical errors, into which an honest mind may fall, and those principles which clearly mark a depraved heart. He always preferred men of moral worth, though, as he apprehended, somewhat in error, to those whose speculative principles may have entirely accorded with his own, but the goodness of whose radical qualities, he felt himself constrained to call in question.

To all these qualities, so indispensable in a man, who is acting for the public, he moreover added the most *unruffled equanimity*. Having once acted conscientiously, he calmly committed the event to God. Whether his plans succeeded, or whether they failed, the tenor of his mind remained even and undisturbed. He was a firm believer in the doctrine of the Particular Providence of the Deity ; and hence, in a great measure, resulted his composure. Events that would extremely disconcert almost every other man, scarcely moved him at all. Those who witnessed his behaviour under all the vicissitudes of life, must be convinced, that the sentiment, "God does all things well," was deeply engraven on his heart. For the loss of services emanating from such principles, all who knew and loved him, must weep again and again.

But we have further to lament, on this occasion, that we have lost his prayers. Every thing in which he was concerned, goes to testify, that he was a man of prayer. How much he was engaged in this exercise, and how beneficial it proved to him, may be learned from this single specimen. Concern being once expressed to him, lest, through the ardour of his feelings, and the deep interest he took in the case, he might, in an important ecclesiastical matter, in which he was to take an active part, speak unadvisedly with his lips, he calmly told his friend, not to be concerned about him ; that he had bestowed much thought, and employed much prayer upon the matter ; and was therefore under no apprehension of going far astray. This single instance shows, how he carried the concerns of this Church to the throne of Grace , and teaches us, that we have to weep for the loss of his prayers. Once more : The removal of such a man from us, should excite our deepest grief, because there seems to be an indication in it, of divine displeasure. It is true, he has spent a long, an active, and a useful life. He was verging fast to threescore years and ten ; and none

of his days were mispent : it would, therefore, seem as if it were time to give him up ; and instead of complaining that he is removed, to be thankful that so distinguished a man was suffered so long to remain with us ; and so long to be a blessing to us. Yet, when we consider, that he died in full vigour, without one symptom of mental imbecility, or one token of approaching decay, and while there was a promise of his living much longer, and doing more extensive service, we are pained at heart, at the thought of resigning him, and can hardly avoid regarding his removal as a frown. If we have not duly availed ourselves of the benefit, which the possession of such a man afforded us, we have reason indeed to consider it a Divine scourge, that he is taken from us. Whether this conjecture be just or not, his death is evidently a most severe and afflicting loss.

He died suddenly :—he died mysteriously :—he seems to have died prematurely : though he died full of days and full of usefulness. The reason why he died by the hand of violence will be explained to us, in due time, by Him, who told Peter, and who tells us, that what he doth, we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. He has, like the man of God whose name he bore, served his generation by the will of God, and is now gathered unto his fathers. Our duty, my bretheren, is :

Thirdly—To improve this affecting and afflicting event.

This we may do in a variety of ways. It is a dispensation full of instruction. We are taught by it :

1. To weep with them that weep. My brethren, if *our* loss is so great, and *our* grief so pungent, what must *they* have lost, and what must *they* endure, who could call him Father. Ah! to attempt to describe their feelings, would be to mock them. Let us not describe them, but sympathize with them: there is more within our power, and more within our province. “Bear ye”

says the tender-hearted Apostle to the disciples of Jesus, "bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Oh! how desolate is almost any habitation when its head is taken off. But when *such* a Father dies, and dies in *such* a manner, what an immense and awful chasm is made! We thought the desolation sufficiently overwhelming, when they lost their other worthy parent. But now, what shall they do?—Go to the throne of grace, and let us go with them: for there, and there only, can they find grace to help them, in this their time of most peculiar and distressing need. In every practicable way, let us testify and express the deep interest which we feel in this very sore bereavement. And especially, by day and by night, when we bow the knee in prayer, let us not forget to give them a large and cordial share in our importunate requests. How much good may we do them in this way! They may reap the benefit, in the strong supports they feel, in the rich consolations they taste, in the becoming deportment they exhibit, in this truly fiery furnace. Let us entreat the Lord, that he would, in the way most agreeable to himself, and most expedient for them, supply all their wants, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

2. Let us improve this mournful event, by endeavouring, by every means in our power, to supply that lack of service, which will be experienced in consequence of his removal. There is indeed no hope, (you all must be conscious that we do you no injustice in the observation,) there is no hope, that any one individual can be found, combining so many qualities in so eminent a degree. Very rarely indeed do so much piety, so much intelligence, so much activity, so much energy, so much meekness, so much public spirit, so much philanthropy, meet and mingle in an individual character. But it is incumbent on us all who are left behind in the community, and espe-

cially in the Church, to stir up the gift of God that is in us, that though he have not given us so many or such distinguished talents as fell to the lot of our dear deceased venerable friend, and as are now buried in his grave, we may employ and improve those we do possess, whether they be more or fewer, greater or less, to his glory, and in conjunction with that, to the good of our fellow men.

The Apostle exhorts us to be no more slothful, but followers of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises. Let us learn to redeem the time, because the days are evil. In this particular virtue, so rare and yet so important, we know not where to find, or even where to look for so transcendently bright an example, as in him who has lately descended to the shades of death.

His active mind seemed ever on the stretch. His time was his gold—he knew its worth—he knew also its shortness and its uncertainty; and he most faithfully improved it.

3. Let us study to be prepared for death, and especially for sudden death. Here, also, we have an example in him we mourn. Disease, acute disease especially, seldom or never invaded his frame. His strong constitution, his very regular and temperate habits, his uninterrupted good health—all gave promise of a very long and protracted life. Yet he at last died suddenly; and in a way that less than by all others, could have been foreseen or imagined, by himself, or by his friends. “As a man falleth before wicked men, so fell he.” Yet he seemed just as prepared for the stroke, as though he had been forewarned of its approach. It found him in a state of preparation to meet his God. Calm and resigned, he silently breathed away the interval, between the stroke of the assassin, and his death. He indeed had learned the art of dying daily. Let us be admonished too, to be always ready; for in such an hour as we think not, the Son of

Man may come. And if he come upon us by surprise at an unexpected moment, and hurry us away to the bar of God, before we entertain a thought of appearing there, what will be the terror of our feelings, and what the despair of our hearts, when we hear the sentence, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still"!

4. *Lastly*—Let us glorify the grace of God in him, whose character we have endeavoured to portray, whose virtues, and whose usefulness, we have laboured to exhibit. "I determined" says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." And unless, my brethren, our discourses, on whatever subject they be written, and on whatever occasion delivered, have this reference, they are worse than lost. They possess not even the negative quality of being harmless: they are absolutely injurious. If all we have been saying was said with a view to lead you to adore or idolize the creature, we have, indeed, gone far astray. But, as St. Paul said of the churches of Judea, that they glorified God in him, so we recommend it should be done in the present instance. Give the glory to God, that he by his grace made our friend what he was. Were he to detect us detracting from that grace, to which he acknowledged himself always a debtor, and were he permitted to come again among us, with what astonishment and horror would he regard us! How would he long for permission to close our tongues in everlasting silence, rather than that they should forget to refer the praise to Him, to whom alone it is due! All he was, all he said, and all he did, that was for the glory of God, and for the good of men, he did by the aid of that good Spirit who worketh in believers, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. And that same rich and liberal grace which he was so forward to extol on earth, we have no

doubt, he now celebrates with more ardour incomparably, than can ever be felt by the children of God below. On the merits and grace of the Redeemer, he relied, in life and in death, for the pardon of his sins, the acceptance of his services, and the salvation of his soul. Here, my brethren, must we cast the anchor of our hope ; and if ever we reach the abodes of the ransomed of the Lord, how very joyfully shall we sing the song of Moses and the Lamb ! How high our notes, how loud our song ! “ Worthy is the Lamb “ that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, “ and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.— “ Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto “ him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for “ ever and ever.” *Amen.*

SERMON XIII.

ON REPENTANCE.

LUKE XIII. 5.

“ I tell you nay ; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

PERHAPS in nothing are men more apt to mistake, than in the judgment which they form with respect to the government of God over the creatures he has made. When a signal judgment lights upon an individual, or on a particular class of them, and sweeps them from among the living, in an extraordinary manner, we are apt immediately to conclude, that, surely they must have been sinners, before God, exceedingly ; and that some uncommon stain, or deep malignity, has marked their character, above all men who dwell around them. To correct this common mistake, appears to have been the design of our Lord, in the words now read in your hearing. He had just received information of a very tragical circumstance, which had happened at Jerusalem. A number of Galileans had gone up to the temple to sacrifice. Pilate, it seems, either in person, or by his officers, had sallied out against them, had slain the sacrificers, and mingled their blood with their offerings. Who these Galileans were, or to whose jurisdiction they belonged, we are not here particularly informed. It is most probable, that they belonged to Herod, who presided over Galilee, and that this outrage by Pilate, occasioned the quarrel which took place between him and Herod. Some think,

that these Galileans were of the faction of Judas of Galilee, who disowned the authority of Herod, and refused to pay tribute to him; or perhaps they were only suspected by Pilate, to be of that faction, and were therefore barbarously murdered. However this may be, it appears there were present, at that season, some who informed our Lord of the fact, of these men having been slain in the act of devotion; and it would appear from our Lord's answer, that they were about to draw the conclusion, that therefore, these Galileans were great sinners, above all that dwelt in Jerusalem. To this story and suggestion, Christ replies, by telling them another story, which also gave an instance of people's being taken away by a sudden death. It had been but a little time since the tower of Siloam fell; and there were eighteen persons killed, and buried in its ruins. Doctor Lightfoot is of opinion, that this tower was immediately connected with the pool of Siloam, which is the same with that of Bethesda, and that it belonged to those porches, in which, we are informed, the sick and maimed were laid, who waited for the moving of the water; and that those on whom the tower fell, were either some of those diseased persons, or some who went into the pool to purify, for the temple service. Whoever they were, it was a lamentable story; and stood upon the same footing as that of the other, which they had just been relating. "But what conclusion," says Jesus, "do you wish to draw from these disasters? "Do you suppose, that those Galileans, whose blood "was shed by Pilate, or those unfortunate creatures who "were covered with the ruins of Siloam's tower, were "remarkable, beyond others, for the enormity of their "crimes, and were therefore swept away by these singular judgments? Do you mean thus to call in question "the piety of these worshippers, or to cast a reflection "upon the providence of God? I tell you, you are

“ wrong in this conclusion, and I denounce to you, that
 “ unless you repent, you shall *all* likewise perish. You
 “ have broken the laws of virtue and religion, as well as
 “ others ; and therefore, in order to your salvation, repent-
 “ ance is indispensably necessary.” Repentance is a duty,
 enjoined by every system of religion, and by every dic-
 tate of reason and of nature. It was strongly enforced
 by the Jewish Religion ; but it is the peculiar excellence
 of the Gospel, that it proposes the strongest—the most
 powerful reasons, to urge the practice of this duty,
 which possibly could be proposed to the human mind ;
 motives calculated to meet our hopes and our fears—our
 desire of happiness, and our dread of misery—motives
 drawn from the songs of the blessed, in the New Jerusa-
 lem, and the groans of the miserable, in the regions of
 sorrow. There is not a Christian duty, or a pre-requi-
 site to salvation in all the revealed will of God, more in-
 sisted on, or more frequently inculcated, than that of re-
 pentance. Repent, repent, was the united voice of both
 Christ Jesus the Saviour, and his harbinger John. Re-
 pent, was the united injunction of the Apostles and Evan-
 gelists. This is a doctrine of natural, as well as revealed re-
 ligion. This is a point, viz. the necessity of repentance,
 in which all mankind agree—Even those who reject the
 Gospel, or the necessity of the atonement by Christ, do
 it upon this principle, that the light of nature is sufficient
 to point out the necessity and propriety of repentance.
 In this doctrine, therefore, all agree—Infidels and Jews—
 Mahometans and Pagans—with all the various sects of
 Christians, throughout the world, proclaim, with one
 united voice, the absolute necessity of repentance. It is
 to this great—this universally acknowledged doctrine,
 and not to the controverted *tenets* of parties, I am now to
 call your attention. And may I not hope, my brethren,
 that the importance of the subject—the universality of

its belief—and its indispensable necessity to the salvation of man, will secure me a patient and attentive hearing, while I proceed to explain to you, what is implied in the doctrine of Repentance, as laid down in the Gospel.

Nothing can be more certain, either from reason or revelation, than that not every pang of sorrow for sin—every conviction of the danger to which it exposes—or every resolution to turn from it, will amount to true—genuine—Gospel Repentance. For, were this the case, then it would follow, that Judas, Felix, and Herod, were true penitents. But all these characters knew nothing of true repentance; and therefore, we may have all these emotions, and anxieties of mind, and yet be destitute of that repentance, which is unto life. I suppose, in this assembly, an individual could not be found, so completely sealed up in hardened impenitence, so entirely delivered over to a reprobate mind, as never to feel compunction of soul for having transgressed the laws of the Almighty, or, at least, uneasiness for the punishment to which such transgression exposes him. No; my brethren; we might make the appeal to every bosom, and rest it there. Follow the man of the world home from his midnight revel; and could we have access to the recesses of his heart, what writhings of soul should we there discover! What misgivings of mind, at the recollection of mispent time, and the abuse of the blessings of Providence! What rising horrors, at the reflection upon what may be the end of these things! He has planted a thorn in his pillow, which disturbs his repose, when from scenes of extravagance, he retires to rest; and what remorse and anxiety corrode his mind, and destroy his peace! What resolutions of amendment should we there see formed! Tears, perhaps, bedew his pillow; and water his couch, when unwelcome; irresistible reflection forces the conviction upon

him, that, although he has had his day of mirth, yet there *may*, at last, be a day of judgment too. How is he even compelled to raise his eyes to the Heavens, and cast an anxious look to the hills whence salvation comes, that his offended God would pardon that iniquity which perhaps, he then determines never again to commit ! Many of you, no doubt, my hearers, have gone thus far ; and perhaps concluded, that this may amount to that repentance which is unto life ; when alas ! before God, you may, this moment, continue as impenitent sinners, in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. True, Evangelical Repentance, which is unto life, must possess the following characteristics ; by which, I pray you, my brethren, to examine yourselves. In the first place, Evangelical Repentance, extends to, and affects the heart, as well as the external deportment. Every true penitent, indeed, has an affecting sense of the deformity of sin, wherever it appears. On every object to which it attaches, it appears to him to leave a stain. Its covering is sable, and its appearance unpleasant. But, oh ! the true penitent stops not at the deformity of externals. He traces up these polluted streams, to their more polluted fountain. He enters into the deep recesses of his heart, the secret springs of his soul. *There* the painful burden lies. It matters not with him, that his fellow men pronounce his character unspotted ; that those whose eyes cannot pierce the heart, discover nothing amiss in his external deportment, so long as he finds in his bosom a heart callous to the groans of his suffering Saviour—a heart unaffected with the boundless love and goodness of the author of his being—unimpressed with the glories which shine around him, in the works of Creation, Providence, and Redemption. His soul is pained, because his heart is not right with God. He feels that he loves not God or man, as he knows he ought. The law by which

he is bound is holy ; and therefore requires obedience from holy principles ; but Alas ! he is unholy, in every faculty of his soul ! Every thought which rises in his bosom, every motion of his mind, which is sinful, alarms him like the symptoms of the plague, or the stirring of an enemy in ambush. While those around him are very well pleased, if they can square their external conduct by moral rules, he is carefully scrutinizing every motive, and examining every principle of action ; there it is, that he finds sufficient ground for repentance. Even when the matter of his actions is right, he mourns over the impurity and selfishness of the motives, whence they proceed. In short, the true penitent is one who criticises, with nicety, upon both his actions, and the principles of his actions ; and therefore finds sufficient cause for renewed and continued repentance, as long as he lives. All this is too evident to need proof. Can you suppose, that it will satisfy a real lover of God and goodness, that his outward conduct is pure and unspotted, while his heart within him is a mass of pollution ? Will God accept the obedience which flows from improper principles ? God has commanded all men every where to repent. Repentance, therefore, is an act of obedience to the law of God ; but can this obedience be accepted by a God of holiness, when he sees and knows that it proceeds from impure and selfish principles ? Surely not. Repentance which reaches not the heart, is worth nothing. The penitential cries of David, breathe the spirit of true Repentance. He there not only acknowledges that he is guilty of the blood of Uriah, but confesses that he was conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity ; and prays that God would create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him. This is the language of the true penitent, whose heart has been affected with a sense of his guilt, and the pollution of his nature.

- " Prostrate, dear Jesus, at thy feet,
 " A guilty rebel lies ;
 " And upwards, to thy mercy seat,
 " Presumes to lift his eyes.
 " O, let not justice frown me hence ;
 " Stay, stay the 'vengeful storm ;
 " Forbid it, that Omnipotence
 " Should crush a feeble worm.
 " If tears of sorrow would suffice,
 " To pay the debt I owe ;
 " Tears should, from both my weeping eyes,
 " In ceaseless torrents flow.
 " But, no such sacrifice I plead,
 " To expiate my guilt ;
 " No tears, but those that thou hast shed,
 " No blood, but thou hast spilt.
 " Think of my sorrows, Dearest Lord ;
 " And all my sins forgive ;
 " Justice shall well approve the word
 " That bids the sinner live."

Examine yourselves, as you go along, my hearers, by these marks ; and try whether your sorrow for sin be genuine ; and when thus trying, this, your claim to eternal life, do not some of you, stand convinced that your title is not clear, when weighed in this balance of the sanctuary ? And do you not feel conscious that you are found wanting ? A dreadful conviction ! But, shut not your eyes, nor lock your bosoms against it. To be convinced of danger, is the first step towards a remedy.

Repentance unto life implies, in the second place, an affecting view—an impressive sense of the intrinsic evil of sin.

There is, my brethren, a grand secret—a mystery in iniquity, with which the ungodly world is not acquainted. To the unbelieving and unenlightened eye, it is sealed with seven seals. I suppose there is not on earth, an individual, who would not wish to be delivered from suf-

fering the penalty of the divine law ; but impunity—simple impunity, or exemption from punishment, to the mass of mankind, is quite satisfactory. If the impenitent sinner had his choice, he would prefer entering the portals of the N w Jerusalem, with all his favourite sins about him. If he could so contrive it as to commit the crimes, and escape the punishment, all would be well. And indeed, further than exposure to the consequences of his guilt, consisting in sufferings, he cannot extend his views. But widely different is the situation of the genuine penitent. He sees, that, in transgressing the Divine law, there is a two-fold evil : he feels, that it has justly exposed him to death, in all the dreadful import of that word ; but it has gone farther : a more dreadful, and if possible, a more painful consequence is, that it has spread contamination through his soul, and disqualified him for becoming an inhabitant of the purer realms of eternal day. He is conscious that such is the innate state of his mind, in consequence of his iniquity, that, were justice to relinquish her claims, the Cherubim to be dismissed, the flaming sword forever sheathed, the gates of Heaven to be thrown wide open, and he admitted to a seat in the general assembly, around the eternal throne, to touch the harp, and sweep the immortal strings, happiness, substantial happiness, he could not enjoy. Sin had destroyed his relish for the song. For him the temple of God, beyond the skies, of which the Lamb is the glory, has no charms at all. While rapture inspired the Heavenly inhabitants, and glory to the Lamb who was slain was all their theme, he would droop, at a gloomy distance, and hang the wing. The notes of Heavenly music, which warble from ten thousand tongues, and make the celestial mansions ring, to him would lose their melody ; and the insufferable blaze of the Divine glory, would cover him with confusion, and kill him with anguish. It is

for this effect, which sin has produced upon the human heart—disqualifying it for communion with God, and depriving it of a relish for the divine glories, that the true penitent weeps most bitterly. To this affecting view of the nature of guilt, which is peculiar to the true penitent, two things are indispensably necessary; a knowledge of the extent and spirituality of the Divine law; and a view of the love—the goodness, and boundless benevolence of God, displayed in the salvation of man. It is only by the law, says the Apostle, that the knowledge of sin can be obtained. Every man will acknowledge, in general, that sin is the transgression of a law; but it is only he who has discovered the spirituality of the divine law, that can truly know what constitutes its transgression. That nothing, short of this knowledge, will be sufficient to form an ingredient of genuine repentance, appears from this circumstance, that until this discovery is made, the penitent never despairs altogether, of being able to work out his own salvation, by the deeds of the law. Hence, those prayers, and those tears—that reformation of manners, and close attention to the duties of Religion, which we find to mark the sinner's character, after he has first been arrested in his career of vanity. He has been roused from his slumber, by the rattling of Sinai's thunder; and he flies from the gathering storm, to take refuge under cover of the deeds of the law; indulging a secret hope, that for his good works, his prayers, and his cries, God will have mercy, remit his sins, and receive him into favour; and from this strong hold he will never be driven, until the spirituality of the law, makes its way to the heart. Amidst all his reformations, his prayers, and his songs, a beam from the eternal throne, shows him that the law is holy; and just as he was beginning to conclude that all was going on very well, behold, he discovers that the thoughts, the motives and intents of the heart, are all

embraced as objects of this law. With this its spiritual part, he is conscious he has not complied; nor ever can. Shuddering at the curse which is denounced against every one who continues not in all things, written therein to do them, he cries out, in earnest, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He now feels that by the deeds of the law, he never can be justified; that, if he ever be justified, therefore, it must be by the righteousness of another. Now it is, that he is shut up to the faith, and yields to the sceptre of the Prince of Peace. But after all, it is a view of the love, the infinite, boundless, unparalleled love of God, as displayed in the redemption of man, that melts the soul into tears of genuine sorrow for sin. O! how does the iron enter the soul of the true penitent, when he sees the boundless love and infinite goodness of that God, against whom he has so ungratefully transgressed! The author of the universe, the glorious king on Zion's Mount, has followed him with his goodness, courted him by his favours, called him by his word, his spirit, and his providence, in the endearing accents of compassion, to turn, and live, saying, "O sinner, why will you die?" And at last he has entreated him, by the cries, the groans, and expiring agonies of the Son of his bosom; and yet he has done despite to the holy one of Israel, and trampled under foot the blood of the covenant, and by persevering in iniquity, declared that he accounted it an unholy thing. These are the considerations which wring the soul of the penitent, and melt him down in sorrow. But O, what generous, tender relentings of mind, does he feel, when he sees that notwithstanding all his ingratitude, and the malignity of his guilt, yet the throne of his offended Sovereign is encircled with mercy; that the sceptre of peace is extended to him, and he yet invited to draw near and touch it! What Godly sorrows fill his soul,

when faith shows him the price of his salvation ; when,

“ Back to Calvary she flies,
 “ To view her bleeding Lord !”

His cries, in the Garden, and his groans on the Cross, overwhelm him with a flood of distress. Now is the time, when he looks upon *him* whom his iniquities have pierced ; and mourns for him, as for an only son, and is in bitterness for him, as one who is in bitterness for a first born. While others are contenting themselves with trying to avoid the punishment of their sins, his prayer is, “ deliver me from their dominion, and their stains—deliver me from the power of the carnal heart.”

“ Furnish me, Lord, with Heavenly arms,
 “ From Grace’s Magazine ;
 “ And I’ll proclaim eternal war,
 “ ’Gainst every darling sin.”

This leads to a third thing implied in true repentance ; and that is, a hatred to all sin, without exception ! This, to many, my brethren, will appear a hard saying. Here, perhaps, offended disciples will turn back, and walk no more with us. But, my hearers, this is an essential ingredient in true repentance. If you cannot stand this—if you still plead for *one* beloved lust, whatever may have been your sorrows, however your bosoms may have been chilled with the fear of punishment, or heaved with the alarms of guilt, you may rest assured, that you are yet in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity ; a stranger to true repentance which is unto life ; and if, in this situation, you lie down under the clods of the valley, you will be found to have died in your sins, and must bear the consequence, whatever that may be. True repentance is a genuine sorrow, for having transgressed the laws of a God of boundless goodness, mercy, and benevolence ; it must, therefore, necessarily, extend to

every thing which is commanded, or forbidden, in these laws. He who commanded us to keep holy the Sabbath, has also prohibited the profanation of his name ; and he who commanded us to love the Lord, with all our heart, has also enjoined it upon us, to love our neighbour as ourselves ; to do justly ; to love mercy, and walk humbly with our God ; to live denied to *all* ungodliness and worldly lusts ; to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world ; to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts, and shun all appearance of evil. To the neglect of one, as well as the other of these things, therefore, must true repentance extend. Examine yourselves by this mark. See if there be any secret sin which finds a welcome refuge in your bosom ; one which you would rather the law of God had left unnoticed : If so,—if your hatred extends not to all sin, as such, you are yet in a state of impenitence—strangers to true repentance—far from the covenant of promise, and really without God in the world. Fly then to the strong holds, ye prisoners of hope. Your iniquities, on repentance, shall yet be forgiven ; for the King of Israel, is a merciful king.

A fourth thing, implied in genuine repentance, is reformation in manners, and a constant walk with God, in all the paths of new obedience. And in this, my brethren, there is the most marked distinction to be found between the *true* penitent and the legal penitent. The one sins and repents—and turns again to folly—his whole life is little else than a continual series of sinning and repenting, and repenting and sinning. He yields to calls of temptation. His soul recoils at the recollection of the dreadful consequence ; the possibility of a future reckoning fills his mind with terror ; it pursues him from the throng ; enters his secret chamber ; and disturbs his midnight slumber. It is like a canker in his bosom, which destroys his peace. When he looks forward to the gloom

of a dying chamber, he is filled with horror : Eternity, with all its tremendous possibilities, chills his soul ; he breaks forth into tears and bitter cries, and determines to reform his conduct ; but Alas ! his repentance is like the morning cloud, and the early dew, which vanish away. Temptation again presents itself ; he is swept away as by a mighty torrent ; his resolutions are gone, until his repentance again returns. Whereas the other has had his inmost soul enlightened with the truth, his affections dissolved with love to God, whose mercy has provided for his salvation ; with gratitude to his Redeemer, who gave himself a ransom for his sins, to save him from the eternal destruction due from the justice of God, for his depravity and guilt. I have here placed before you, my brethren, the repentance which is unto life. I might still enlarge ; but I would fix your eye upon this all-important point, in its singleness, and its essential merits. On this, I would leave you to meditate ; in the hope, that the bosom of every sinner who has been within the sound of this declaration of God's will to-day, may not cease to be agitated by the deep emotions of a godly sorrow, until he has experienced that peace of God which passeth all understanding. *Amen.*

SERMON XIV.

ON REGENERATION.

JOHN I. 13.

“Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the Flesh, nor of the will of Man, but of God.”

THE Evangelist commences his Gospel, with a *brief* description of *Jesus Immanuel*. He notices his eternal existence with the Father; considers him as the fountain of *light*, of *life*, and of *creation*, and alludes to the *character* and *ministry* of his *harbinger*. He then relates the *fact*, that Christ, the predicted and expected Messiah, “came to his own, and his own received him not.” They *rejected*, they *despised*, they *crucified* this Prince of Glory, who is now exalted to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. There were, however, *some* of that highly distinguished nation, who hailed his advent with transports of gratitude. They welcomed him as the Prince of Peace, as their Saviour and their God. They considered him the *only* medium of reconciliation between God and man; the *end* of the law for righteousness to all that believe; and they received from him, the *unspeakable* privilege of becoming the heirs of an inheritance in the Heavens. They were the *heirs* of this inheritance, because they “were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” And *none but* heirs can be made partakers of this inheritance.

The doctrine which our text is designed to illustrate, is usually denominated *Regeneration*. Every one will readily perceive the *importance*, of having distinct views on this subject ; because a practical error here, will exclude them from the kingdom of Heaven ; and seal their doom *forever* in the world of woe.

With an *humble reliance* on the spirit of God, and with prayerful solemnity, let us endeavour to make this subject as *useful* as possible ; that each individual may learn *his own character* ; and appropriate to himself, the *promises*, or the *threatenings* of the Bible.

The condition of man, *antecedent* to a work of grace upon his heart, is every where represented in the Scriptures, as *deplorable* and *wretched* ; as at enmity with God, and exposed to his wrath and curse. We are taught, that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of “God,” that “there is none righteous, no not one ;” that “every imagination of the thoughts of the heart, is only “evil continually ;” that “we go astray as soon as we be “born, speaking lies ;” that “the carnal mind is enmity “against God ; is not subject to his law, neither indeed “can be :” and that “cursed is every one, that con- “tinueth not in all things, which are written in the book “of the law, to do them.” Can characters, then, whom the law thus *judicially* condemns, expect to stand not only *acquitted*, but justified in the presence of an Holy God ? Can he who rejoices in iniquity, be an *heir* of Heaven ? Can an *unreconciled rebel* be admitted into the Paradise of God ? Can he, who is dead in trespasses and sins, have a title to a crown of life ? The *very nature* of the case forbids us to draw *any* such conclusion. To suppose it *thus*, were to suppose, that principles opposite as light and darkness, could coalesce and mix permanently together. It were to suppose that Devils and sanctified Spirits, could unite in singing the praises of God,

without a jarring sound, or discordant note, in the regions of blessedness.

The language of Scripture on the subject of Regeneration, presupposes that the heart of man is *totally* depraved; and that *a way* is provided for the restoration of his fallen nature. The design of Regeneration, therefore, is to *slay* the natural enmity of the heart: and reconcile us to God, by the blood of Christ. Let it be granted, that man is totally depraved; that the law condemns every transgression; and that holiness is a requisite qualification for the kingdom of Heaven; and we come to this unavoidable conclusion, that our nature must be radically changed, before we can receive the approbation of our God, or be admitted into his presence. In corroboration of this conclusion, we are assured, that no unclean thing can enter the kingdom of Heaven, and that "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

The doctrine of Regeneration, as taught in the Bible, depends not on *one* or *two* passages of *doubtful import*, but forms one of the *prominent traits* in the economy of Redemption. It is so clearly inscribed on the pages of inspiration, that he who runs may read. It is illustrated in such *variety* of language, and insisted on with such *force* of expression, as to carry conviction to every heart, which is not hardened under the influence of sin.

By the Prophet Ezekiel, it is represented under the figure of a *new heart*, and a new spirit; of taking away the *stony* heart out of the flesh; and of giving a heart of flesh. By Paul, this new heart is said to be produced by the "washing of regeneration, and renewing of the "Holy Ghost." At one time, the subjects of Regeneration, are said to have "passed from *death* to life; from "darkness to light; and from the power of Satan, into "the kingdom of Jesus Christ." At another, they are called, "the workmanship of God created in Christ

“Jesus unto good works.” They are “renewed in the Spirit of their minds ; and created after God, in righteousness, and true holiness. Our Saviour, moreover, has excluded *all* from the kingdom of Heaven, who do not follow him in the Regeneration. You recollect the repeated asseveration which he made to a ruler of the Jews—“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” In explanation of this new birth, we are further informed, that “that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit.” The *flesh* here, is doubtless to be considered as at enmity with God ; and the *Spirit*, the operating cause of that life, which is by faith in Jesus Christ.

To describe the new birth, except by its *effects* on the heart and conduct of man, the Scriptures have never attempted. “The wind bloweth where it listeth ; and thou hearest the sound thereof ; but canst not tell, whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” The effect is produced. The author of this effect, is the Spirit of God. We *know* that it is the Spirit of God. There are some, I trust, now present, who know it from *experience*. There are probably others, who are willing to acknowledge the fact. But should there be any who are disposed to doubt its reality, I would ask them, upon *what natural principle* of the human mind, they account for the change which takes place, in the *moral system* of those, who cordially embrace the Gospel of our Lord? There *is* a change. The fact is incontrovertible ; a *change* in the whole man ; in his disposition, principles, and pursuits ; and a change too, which renders him, in every respect, a better man. All who embrace the Gospel, moreover, with *one heart*, and with *one voice*, testify, that they have *new* views of their own characters, of the character of God, and of the

way of salvation; that they have new hopes, new joys, and new fears; that, in fine, "old things are done away; and "all things have become new." These *sudden* and *entire revolutions*, we ourselves have witnessed; and we can attribute them to nothing less, than the supernatural agency of Divine power.

But, taken in conjunction with *other* circumstances, the evidence is *clear* as light, *convincing* as demonstration, and *certain* as the principles of eternal truth. Were only a particular class of people made the subjects of Regeneration, and these, in no respects distinguished by a holy life and conversation, from the common mass of mankind; and were many *temporal* advantages to result from the profession of a change of sentiments and feelings, the doctrine might be objected to, with some shadow of plausibility. But the very *reverse* is true. This change has been experienced, by persons of all ages, and of every state of manners and habits; by persons subject to various prejudices and laws; and influenced by different interests and passions; and the *result* has been uniformly the *same*. The young have been arrested in their thoughtless hours of festive gaiety, by the power of Divine truth; they have seen the *folly* and *wickedness* of their pursuits, and they have consecrated the morning of their days unto God. The aged, while tottering on the verge of the unseen world, have looked back with sorrow, upon a life spent in sin; and, grasping their Redeemer, have died in the triumphs of faith. The infidel, has been constrained to abandon his refuges of lies, and fly for deliverance, to the arms of a crucified Redeemer. The idolater, has often broken down and destroyed the images, to which he had looked for protection and mercy; avouched the Lord Jehovah to be his God; and found rest to his soul, beneath the banner of the Cross. And even the moralist, has, not unfrequently, disclaimed all

merit, and all hope of justification, except through the peace-speaking blood of the Redeemer. Nor is it confined to persons of a particular genius or disposition. Characters of every description, from the most base to the most refined, from the beggar to the prince, from the unlettered peasant to the philosopher, have alike been made to sing that new song, even praise to our God, for redeeming grace and dying love. In support of any other point, which the natural disposition of man leads him to contest, is there such a variety of characters united? On any other subject, do they speak the same language? In support of any other sentiments, will they, rather than renounce them, suffer every temporal calamity; nay, even all the agonies of torture; not only with fortitude, but with composure and joy? When the Saviour of sinners expired on the Cross, the Centurion exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God!" And thousands of the faithful followers of Christ, expiring in similar agonies, have wrested a testimony of their righteousness from the mouths, even of their very enemies. Let reason now be asked, if she can assign any natural cause *adequate* to produce these effects. Reason may exhaust her resources in vain; but, with candour, she must acknowledge, that they are not only distinct from, but far superior to the common operations of nature. And even unbelief itself, must be almost constrained to acknowledge, the supernatural agency of Divine power.

Having premised these general observations, we shall consider more particularly what Regeneration is; but, in a subject of so much importance, and in respect to which, some specific errors are apt to be admitted, permit me, previously, to concentrate your minds upon the truth, by guarding you against some of the mistakes into which we are *liable* to fall.

Regeneration is not any thing derived from our pa-

rents ; “ for we are born not of blood,” or of *bloods* as it is in the original. Our parents may repose sweetly on the bosom of Jesus ; they may be interested in the covenant of Redemption ; while we, their guilty offspring, may be spurned from the presence of the Lord, and reserved as “ vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.”

The phrase, “ born not of blood,” may have an allusion to the ceremonial cleansings of the law. If this be the case, we are assured, by Divine authority, that it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. There is no fountain, in which we can wash and be clean, but the blood of atonement. He who does not follow Christ in the Regeneration, no matter how *exalted* his parentage—how extensive his privileges, nor how numerous and costly his sacrifices, is not an heir of the kingdom ; but is “ a stranger, and an alien from “ the commonwealth of Israel.”

Regeneration is not effected by the will of the flesh. For “ the carnal mind is enmity against God, is “ not subject to his law, neither indeed can be ; so “ then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” God is a Spirit ; and they that worship him, must worship him in Spirit, and in truth. There is no *will* or *desire* of the heart, that the Spirit approves, which does not presuppose the heart already changed. There can be no holy affection, no holy desire, antecedent to Regeneration. For the prevailing inclination of the natural heart is opposed to God. And to suppose a person capable of changing his prevailing inclination, is the greatest of all absurdities ; is, in fact, to suppose him capable of doing that, which is attributed solely to the agency of the Divine Spirit. It is the Spirit of the living God, and not the will of the flesh, which melts and moulds the heart anew ; and brings it into a willing subjection to the obedience of Christ.

The new birth is not effected by the will of man. The prayers, the entreaties, the instructions, and the example of pious parents, and Ministers of the Gospel, may tend to overawe and restrain the sinner ; but they cannot convert his soul. They may plead for him, with importunity, at the throne of grace ; but, after all, they must submit and say, "Not my will, but thine, O God ! be done." If to be born again, consists in Baptism, in the observance of any ceremony, or in the performance of any external rite, then, that ceremony, or that rite, becomes essential to salvation ; which is contrary to that covenant, which was ratified and sealed by the blood of Christ ; that covenant which is established on better promises, which is all our salvation, and all our desire.

Regeneration is not effected by the powers of reason, or moral suasion. Reason may convince ; but cannot persuade. The understanding may assent to all the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, while the heart remains a stranger to its influence, and even the passions may be kindled into a flame, which, in some respects, resembles real love, by animated and glowing descriptions of the upper Temple ; by a lively view of the unspeakable love and infinite condescension of the Saviour of sinners, or by any other representation of prospects, or of character, which is strikingly sublime ; but joys thus excited, are transient as the occasion which gave them birth, unless a principle of grace be implanted in the heart. They will not, they cannot, abide the storms of temptation and trial. Like the morning cloud and the early dew, they pass away, without producing the least fruit of real and genuine gratitude.

But to be born of God, implies something specifically different, from those exercises of the mind, which can be accounted for, on natural principles. Regeneration, con-

sidered as the immediate act of the Holy Spirit, is, and ought to be discernible, only by its effects. But without it, there will be no conversion of a soul, dead in sin, unto God. The effects of truth, in convicting, illuminating, and guiding the regenerated to peace, and glory, may, and ought to be seen, and felt ; and may be described in the following manner.

The renewed mind, is convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment ; that is, the sinner generally feels a deep and pungent sense of the plague of his own heart ; sees something of the infinite demerit of sin ; and is weighed down under the ponderous load of his own guilt. He learns, that righteousness, or deliverance from the body of this death, can only be obtained, through the merits and mediation of Christ. He sees the way in which he is directed to come ; and the danger to which delays are exposing him. He generally attempts to merit salvation, by his own works. He reforms his life. He attends, with punctilious exactness, to the external duties of religion. And thus, he hopes, to advance in the Divine life, and secure to himself, a title to a Heavenly inheritance. Mistaken soul ! He has not yet learnt, that the law is *Spiritual* and *Holy*. But the eyes of his understanding, are, at length, opened. He then sees, what he is by nature ; and what he is by practice. He is surrounded with blackness, and darkness, and tempest. At last he finds, that all his exertions are impotent and unavailing ; and that he is utterly lost and ruined, as it regards any hope in himself. He then throws himself at the feet of sovereign mercy ; and yields, unconditionally, to the terms of the Gospel. It is a *dark* and *gloomy* night which the soul spends here, on the precincts of despair. It is the garden of Gethsemane, where the Father, for a moment, forsakes ; and where the powers of darkness, make their last, grand effort. But the morn-

ing which succeeds, far transcends, in brightness, all powers of description. It is the dawn of an everlasting day; which, though sometimes interrupted with clouds and storms, continues to shine, with increasing splendour. New hopes, new views, and new desires, now take the place of the old and corrupt inclinations of the heart. The soul thus redeemed from the power of sin, and beating high with love, gratitude, and filial fear, adores the riches of that grace, which rescued him from the gates of Hell, and placed him on the rock of ages. He now cries, in the language of the Psalmist, "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy name, give glory, for thy mercy, and thy truth's sake."

These bright views, and this triumphant faith, however, are not enjoyed by all who have really passed from death unto life. Some go mourning all the days of their lives; and for *their* encouragement, it is written, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." The experience of one Christian, cannot be the unerring standard, by which others are to be judged: For what is generally termed *experience*, embraces, not only those feelings which are consonant to the temper of the Gospel, but also the dejected and rebellious state of the mind, previous to Regeneration; which does not properly belong to religious experience. The evidence of the new birth, therefore, depends more upon that habitual temper and state of mind, which the Gospel requires, than upon any particular feelings which we may have experienced. For it cannot be supposed, that Jeremiah, who was sanctified from the womb, ever felt those deep convictions of his own sins, which the wicked Manasses felt; or that Timothy, who was made acquainted with the Scriptures from a child, ever felt as severe compunctions of conscience, as Saul of Tarsus; yet the one might have equal evidence with the other, that he was a child of grace.

To talk of being born again, however, in ordinary cases, without any conflict of sentiments, or agony of feeling, is perfectly frivolous and vain. If we are slain by the law, we must feel something like the arrows of death, something like the waves of Divine wrath, beating upon our souls. And if we are made alive by the Gospel, we must feel some of the joys attending the new birth. I do not say, joys unutterable, and full of glory; for we have not yet attained; neither are we perfect: but the mind must be calmed. It must taste the comfort of pardoned sin. It must have a hope in Christ. It must take pleasure in contemplating the scenes of the Cross. It must discern spiritual things. It must feel that its dearest interests are wrapped up in the glory of God; and in the salvation of souls. Take away Christ from an heir of Heaven; and you destroy all his pleasure. There is none to whom he can pour out his soul. There is none that can save him from death. There is none, in the whole universe of God, that can supply the place of his Redeemer.

Regeneration, I would further observe, is not an operation on the hearts of men, *various* in its effects. The malady it removes, is every where the same. The cure is effected by the same life-giving power, for the *very same* purpose. The means of grace, however, are extremely various; and the conflict, *previous* to a radical change, may be more or less severe, as the great Physician of souls, sees most suitable for the manifestation of his own glory. But there must be a conflict. The nature of the case demands it. Not that I would limit Divine power; for God's ways, are not as our ways. He can dispense with the ordinary means of conversion; and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, subdue the most rebellious sinner: But we have no reason to expect it; since faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word

of God ; since he has appointed the means, and blesses, to this end, the words of eternal truth.

Nor is this conflict of so singular a nature, as to render it incredible ; for it is perfectly analogous to the operations of the mind in other circumstances. We never abandon a theory of Government, or a system of Philosophy, and embrace another diametrically opposite, without a struggle of feelings and sentiments. A condemned criminal at the foot of the gallows, cannot hear his reprieve, without the deepest emotions. And, can we, who are condemned by the righteous law of our God, and every moment in danger of being punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, receive the welcome message, that our sins are forgiven, with indifference ? Should we not rather fall at the feet of our deliverer, wash them with our tears, and wipe them with the hair of our heads ? If there is no gratitude here, the heart of man is incapable of gratitude. If, upon remembrance of the rock, from which we were hewn, and the hole of the pit from which we were digged, we are not furnished with a new song of praise, there can be no praise in Heaven ; or, we have no part, or lot in the matter.

Does it not, I would ask, appear perfectly consistent and rational, that a man should feel heavy laden with his iniquities, and that he should be in an agony, when we consider the character of the Being against whom he has offended, and the nature and aggravation of his crimes ? The infidel may endeavour to assuage the anguish of his sin-sick soul ; and the sceptic may laugh him to scorn ; but wisdom affords no such poor, pitiful, and incompetent succours. With tears of sympathy, she exposes the malignity of the disease ; and directs to the only, the infallible cure, the blood of Christ. The frequent happy termination of a deep concern for the welfare of the soul,

is an evidence, that it is not irrational ; that it is not the effect of a disordered imagination, but that it is the work of God. Attribute it, if you please, to the influence of fear, or any other natural passion of the human heart ; but did ever fear produce love ? Can an object which is dreaded become agreeable ? Did fear ever destroy the reigning power of iniquity in the heart, and implant there the grace of life ? It may be the instrument of bringing a sinner to the knowledge of his situation ; and so may any other passion ; but nothing, except the Almighty energy of Divine grace, can deliver him from that situation ; and give him the spirit of adoption, whereby he can cry, Abba Father.

It is hoped, my brethren, that there are none present professing the name of Christ, who consider Regeneration unimportant. But important as we may consider it, do we know, my brethren, how liable we are to be deceived ; how artful the enemy is, with which we have to contend ; and how dangerous it is to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think ? Let us, then, scrutinize our feelings ; let us, examine our motives ; let us, watch over our hearts, knowing that, out of them are the issues of life. The self-deceiver is no less in danger than the hypocrite. Both alike are condemned with the ungodly, by him who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins.

When bowed down under a sense of guilt, is peace whispered to your souls ? Does the recurrence of some passage of God's word afford you momentary comfort ? This, I would observe, is by no means an incontestible evidence that your sins are forgiven. For many have exulted in these delusive hopes, for a season ; and then, growing weary of restraint, have relapsed into their former course of iniquity. Have you, when overwhelmed with darkness and doubts, been comforted by a ray of light,

from some unknown quarter? Marvel not at this; for Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. Trust not to momentary impulses; for, where the spirit of God has found a residence, he abides. Trust not solely, to any glowing, or ardent emotions of the heart, or to a great zeal, or boldness, in defence of the principles of Christianity. Rely not on dreams, visions, and raptures; on voices heard, or fancied to be heard, or any thing of a transient nature, which you may experience. Religion, true religion, is lasting. It is not the mere morning cloud, or early dew; it has a more substantial basis. It is not a light, which bursts like a meteor, in the darkness of night, and unveils surrounding objects, to wrap them again in greater obscurity; but it is the light which continues to brighten; and will continue to brighten forever. It is the commencement of that pure and operating principle of holiness in the heart, which slays its natural enmity; and causes its growing energies to expand, and will cause them to expand in the moral image of Christ, till it arrives at the precincts of infinite perfection.

I appeal now to those who have a principle of grace implanted in their hearts; and would ask them, if they do not remember the wormwood and the gall? Have you always felt as you now feel, on the subject of religion? Have you always esteemed the Lord Jesus, the chiefest among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely? No; No, is the answer of your looks and of your hearts. There was a time, Alas! it is painful to recollect, when your hands were raised in rebellion against your Saviour and your God. You were arrested in your career to ruin. You were subdued by the mighty power of God. You were brought to cry for mercy, at the foot of the Cross; and perhaps, in an unexpected moment, mercy beamed upon your distracted, agitated souls. And would you now exchange the humble hope that you are

born of God, that you were redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb, and that, through riches of grace, you have an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away, for all the honours, the pleasures, and the riches, which this world can afford? No; you would tread the earth, sun, and moon, under your feet, and cling fast to the throne of God. In comparison with the exalted privileges which you enjoy, there is nothing which this world calls great, or magnificent, or splendid, that can even once be named. All these perish with their using; but yours is "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge," will give you, on the day of final retribution, when he welcomes you to his presence; and makes you kings and priests forever.

Live, then, my brethren, I intreat you, as if this were not your abiding place. Slumber no more, upon the watch tower, where God has placed you. Let your ardent desires and prayers ascend the holy hill of Zion, that the influences of renewing and sanctifying grace may fall upon us in copious showers. Act in conformity to your desires and prayers; and then, with patience and with faith; wait for the blessing of the Lord.

But are there not many here, who have not followed Christ in the Regeneration, who have no part or lot in the matter? I pretend not to point them out by name. I leave it with your own hearts, to decide. But should there be any, who are condemned at the tribunal of their own consciences, I beg of them, the privilege of calling their attention, seriously, to the subject before us. You are not born of God, you yourselves being judges. You have often been warned of your danger. Perhaps divine truth has fallen so frequently on your ears, that you mistake the forbearance of God for his reconciliation; or what is still more alarming, you may have blunted the tender feelings of your hearts, by resisting the operations of the

spirit. There is no other consolation left you, but a mere peradventure, that religion is a delusion. But, if it be a delusion, it is a sweet delusion. If it be a dream, as you may imagine, it is a dream which will last forever. It has been the dream of Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles. It is the dream of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, who have been born of God. It is the dream of all who shall escape the damnation of Hell.

You have been constrained to acknowledge the reality of religion. You acknowledge it, every time you enter the sanctuary; and yet, you have not been born of God. You have thought that religion was the one thing needful; and yet, you have never secured an interest in the blood of Christ. You may have resolved to work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling; and perhaps you may have appointed the time when you would commence; and perhaps, furthermore, you may have even paid the homage of your lips to your God; and *yet*, you are out of the ark of safety. Remember, my friends, that you are soon to pass the grand ordeal; and that, unless you receive the righteousness of Christ, you will be weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Your portion, then, will be, with the hypocrite and unbeliever, in the regions of despair. If this be your doom, no friend shall pour the oil of consolation into your bleeding heart: No tender Parent shall endeavour to assuage your anguish: No bosom-companion will sympathize in your miseries: Every cord of tenderness, affection, and love, shall be sundered, in those flames which God has kindled in his wrath. And alas! who can bear the wrath of Almighty God? We often flee from the *wrath* of a man. We should dread, worse than death, to have the mighty arm of Gabriel raised against us. Who, then, can endure the wrath of him who is able to destroy, both soul and body in Hell! For you, there is but one way of escape. Unless you are born of God, even he that

formed you will not have mercy on you, and he that made you will shew you no favour. The stone cut out of the mountain, without hands, will fall on you; and grind you to powder.

Unless you are born of God, he will treat you as his enemy; for he has declared, that "whosoever is not for him is against him." Unless you are born of God, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." And, "Can you stand before his indignation? Can you abide the fierceness of his anger?" "O, consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, when there shall be none to deliver you."

May God, of his infinite mercy, impress your hearts, with a suitable consideration of these solemn and awful realities, bring you to a knowledge of himself; and make you the heirs of his kingdom. *Amen.*

SERMON XV.

ON TRUE GREATNESS OF MIND, AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE
CHARACTER OF THE BEREANS.

ACTS XVII. 11.

“ These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they
“ received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the
“ Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.”

THIS comparison is made, between the Thessalonians and Bereans. Paul, in company with several of his fellow labourers in the vineyard of God, had recently visited Thessalonica; and there, for several weeks, faithfully sowed the word of life. For three successive Sabbaths, he entered into the Synagogue of the Jews, and reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that Jesus, who was crucified on Calvary, was the Redeemer of the world. His labours were not altogether unsuccessful. Some believed. Others shut their ears, and hardened their hearts, against the voice of truth. And the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, collected a company of worthless fellows, and set all the city in an uproar, crying, “ These men which
“ have turned the world upside down, have come hither
“ also. They do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying,
“ there is another King, one Jesus.”

From this scene of tumult and peril, the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas, by night, unto Berea. On their arrival at this place, they went into the Syna-

gogue of the Jews. A more pleasing scene is here presented. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word, with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." They not only permitted the Gospel to be preached among them, without interruption; but, with all readiness of mind, they attended on its instruction. They manifested an ardent desire, to become acquainted with the principles of the Christian Religion, and to know whether it was founded in truth. The Jews of Berea broke loose from those bonds of prejudice, which so generally held their nation in darkness and unbelief. They were willing to come to the light. They felt the solemn obligations, and the high importance of exercising candour in their inquiries after truth; and especially in forming their opinions on a subject of such moment, as that presented them by Paul and his company. This subject, they perceived, merited a serious and impartial investigation. The result was likely to prove unfavourable to their views and feelings—to require a sacrifice of some of their strongest attachments. They did not, therefore, meanly determine to condemn, or utterly reject the Christian religion. But, with true magnanimity of mind, they resolved to follow truth, wherever it might lead. They laid themselves open to conviction. While they eagerly attended on the preaching of the Gospel, they searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so. To the law and to the testimony, they appealed for a decision. Hence, they suffered themselves to form no hasty or rash conclusion. It was not a superficial, transient inquiry, conducted by prejudice. They *sought the Scriptures*. It was a serious, attentive, and close examination. They searched them *daily*. It was habitually pursued. They searched them, *to know whether these things were so*. The examination was be-

gun, and prosecuted, not with a determination to establish some favourite opinion, or to bring Christianity into discredit ; but, with an ardent desire to know whether it harmonized with the voice of the ancient prophets ; whether it was founded in truth. This transaction does honour to the Jews of Berea. Inspiration has pronounced an eulogium upon their character. “ These were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word, with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.” The lively interest they took in this important subject, their freedom from the influence of prejudice or passion, their candour, integrity, and diligence, in the search of truth, are a display of true elevation and magnanimity of mind ; and will receive the applauses of the wise and the good, as long as the records of the Bible live. We have before us, an example of genuine greatness of character. It is pronounced so, by the infallible testimony of inspiration. All who possess their elevation and nobleness of mind, will, in similar circumstances, follow their example.

We may, then, lay it down as a doctrine drawn from our text, that true greatness of mind will dispose every person, who lives in a Christian country, impartially, and studiously, to examine the Christian religion ; that he may determine whether it is from God, and become acquainted with its principles.

This greatness, does not necessarily suppose an uncommon share of genius. Men of the highest talents, are sometimes a disgrace to themselves, and to the human race. It is opposed to that narrow bigotry, which believes because it believes ; which feels no conviction from demonstration ; and which is capable of seeing nothing but darkness in the blaze of the sun ! It stands opposed to that contemptible spirit of self-conceit, which is always too wise to be instructed ; and to that ridiculous vanity,

which induces one to reject the opinion of others, that he may appear wiser than the rest of mankind. It stands opposed to that indolence of character, which refuses to make the exertions necessary to come to a knowledge of the truth, and to that self-interest, prejudice, and passion, which bias the understanding, and hold so large a portion of mankind in the chains of ignorance and folly.

True greatness belongs to the man, who, sensible of the frailty of human nature, feels the need and the desire of instruction; who opens his eyes to receive the light; who, in pursuit of truth and duty, breaks loose from every improper restraint, rises superior to those low and unmanly considerations, which set boundaries to the knowledge and exertion of little minds.

This greatness appears in an openness, candour, and ingenuousness of mind. It gives to every subject its merited importance. And knowing that truth must be essential to human happiness, in the spirit of a truly wise man, he solemnly resolves, ardently to pursue, and cordially to embrace it, wherever it may be found. Those subjects which more especially involve the present and future interests of men, will receive his first, most serious, and diligent attention.

These are some of the characteristics of real greatness. And every man to whom they belong, will be disposed to give Christianity, a dispassionate, and thorough examination.

Various considerations will induce a man of genuine greatness of mind, impartially, and studiously, to examine the Christian religion.

First—He must either receive or reject Christianity; neither of which can be done by an elevated mind, without a previous and thorough investigation.

Blindly to receive it, as a Divine revelation, would be weakness; *blindly* to reject it, as an imposition on the

world, would be presumption and madness. To believe without evidence, or disbelieve in opposition to evidence, is the mark of low and illiberal minds. It is what a great man despises. He considers it a mark of childishness and folly, to adopt sentiments of which he is totally ignorant. And, to reject an opinion without sufficient examination, to discover whether it is true or false, and especially an opinion represented to be highly important to human happiness, he deems disengenuous and uncandid. Christianity is before him ; a religion represented as involving every thing which is dear to men. How will he act? Can he receive it with his eyes shut? Can he turn from it, with indifference and contempt? No. Every generous and noble principle of his nature, will impel him to a serious and dispassionate examination of this religion; that he may know, whether it is founded in truth, and what are its principles.

Secondly—Our obvious need of a revelation from God, will also excite him to examine the Christian Religion.

No man of candour and reflection, can doubt for a moment, that our world greatly needs a revelation from Heaven. He finds assurance of it, in every system of Pagan religion; and in every volume of Pagan history. The most enlightened Heathen nations, have worshipped a host of gods, and attributed to them, all the frailties and vices of men. They have been involved in wretched perplexity and darkness, respecting a future world, a way of reconciliation with God, and all that is dear to an immortal being. Their religion and their lives may, with very little qualification, be pronounced a disgrace to human nature. But the man of real wisdom, has no occasion to go abroad for arguments. Finding in himself and in all around him, melancholy proof of the frailty and corruption of our fallen nature, he discovers the absolute need of all the light which revelation pours upon the

mind, and all the motives which revelation addresses to the conscience and the heart, to conduct the lost children of Adam, in the paths of truth and of happiness. Socrates, a Heathen philosopher, acknowledged our need of a revelation from the gods; and expressed his belief, that a Divine teacher, at some future period, would appear in our world, to impart that instruction to mankind, which could be derived from no other source. The man who possesses, in a Christian country, a small share of the understanding and candour of Socrates, will more clearly discover, that our world needs a revelation from God. Impressed with this belief, he will eagerly turn his attention to the Christian religion; with the expectation, or hope, of finding there, such a revelation. "It is certain," he will say, "that the best interests of our world, require some instructions from Heaven. It is, therefore, rational to expect a communication from God. But when, or where, shall we look for it, if it is not to be found in the Bible?"

The existence of the Christian religion, in a world where intelligence from Heaven is so much needed, will afford him presumptive evidence at least, that it came from God; and excite him to a very serious examination of the evidences by which it is supported.

Thirdly—He will examine the Christian religion, because *it professes to be that very revelation which we need.*

Christianity declares itself to have come from Heaven; and to bring salvation to a ruined world. It takes a stand, far above all the systems of heathen philosophy, and heathen religion. It professes to delineate the character of the only living and true God; to describe the obligations and conditions of our fellow men; and to reveal a glorious plan of redemption, from sin, and from woe. In short, it professes to impart all that religious instruction, which is necessary to the present and everlasting

happiness of man. Christianity, if these pretensions are well founded, is the very religion, and the only religion, which can deliver our world, from the dreadful curse, under which it groans. Will the man who has any desire to understand the truth, who has any rational concern for his own future destiny, or who has even shed the tear of compassion over the miseries of the human race, reject this religion, without serious examination? Will not every man, who has any claim to the noble character of the Bereans, “search the Scriptures daily, whether these things are so.”

Fourthly—He will examine the Christian religion, because it professes to give *the most satisfactory evidence of its Divine original.*

Christianity does not call for a blind faith, or a blind obedience. She does not, with false systems of religion, make darkness her protection. She loves the light; places herself, without disguise, before the eye of the world; and invites investigation. She requires us to believe nothing which she cannot support by the most incontestible arguments. In proof of her divine origin, she presents before us the glorious doctrines and precepts which rise infinitely above every thing which the world had been able to produce; and which sink into everlasting disgrace, all the systems of Heathen religion. She appeals to a series of miracles, wrought in face of the whole world, and attested by the best authorities, both among her friends and her enemies. She appeals to prophecies, delivered hundreds and thousands of years ago; which have been fulfilling, in every subsequent period of time; and are now fulfilling, with wonderful minuteness, before the eyes of all men. She appeals also to the history of her rise and progress in the world;—a history so well authenticated, and so visibly marked with the finger of God, that I may venture to say, it has never been care-

fully examined, without exciting admiration and astonishment. These, and many other sources of evidences, Christianity opens to our view. With these, she promises to vindicate her character, and her high claims. And with these, she bids defiance to the efforts of infidelity.

Will the man of candour, of true elevation of mind, despise or reject the claims of such a religion? A religion which professes to support itself by the strongest testimony, which invites the most scrutinizing investigation, and promises to abide the issue? A refusal to examine the character and evidences of such a religion, would betray a total indifference to truth and to virtue; and forfeit, forever, all claims to candour, and nobleness of mind.

Fifthly—He will diligently and seriously examine the Christian religion, because, if it be from God, it is of infinite importance to understand and embrace it.

God does nothing in vain. If he has given a revelation to our world, that revelation must be essential to the happiness of mankind; it must have an important bearing on the temporal, as well as eternal interests of man.

Christianity comes to us, professing herself commissioned to exalt the character of human society; and to shed the blessings of Heaven, on wretched mortals. But what is infinitely more important, she declares herself empowered to give them redemption from future misery; and raise them to realms of immortal glory. On this subject, Christianity knows no compromise with infidelity. She speaks in language plain and decisive. “He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.” Were it possible that Christianity should prove a delusion, the Christian would still be as safe as the unbeliever. But should the foundations of infidelity fail, where would be the infidel? Nothing could save him. He must sink into the bottomless pit. The religion of Christ pronounces the most dreadful

anathemas upon unbelievers; it cuts them off forever from hope. "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." To reject this religion, then, is to put every thing to hazard. To say the least, it *may* be true; and if it is true, the unbeliever is lost beyond all hope of recovery. Will a man of wisdom reject such a religion, before he has given it, a thorough and impartial examination? Will he take a rash step, which may draw down everlasting ruin upon his head? This is not the part of wisdom. No subject more important than the Christian religion, ever called the attention of our fallen world. It carries with it evidence that it came from God, which nothing but depravity and wilful blindness can withstand. It involves the best interests of human society; and the everlasting destinies of men. With this grand and awful subject in view, how will a man of candour and reason act? Will he turn from it, with contempt or indifference? This may be expected from the man of low and illiberal mind, who is governed by prejudice or passion, and who despises every thing worthy the attention of an immortal being. But the man whose views are elevated, and who venerates the truth, can never be guilty of conduct so irrational, and so base. He gives to every subject its merited importance. And a slight examination will convince him, that Christianity has higher claims to his attention, than any other subject, which was ever presented to the view of mortals.

A thorough investigation will afford him the strongest assurances, that it originated in the counsels of infinite mercy; that it came from God; and that it brings with it the richest blessings, which Heaven ever bestowed on our ruined world.

He now applies himself, with more candour than ever, to the sacred Scriptures. He cannot, with many, be

guilt of the inconsistency, the folly, and the meanness, of acknowledging the Bible to be the word of God, and, at the same time, treating it with as much indifference, as though it were nothing more than a collection of childish fables. He knows, if it is a revelation from Heaven, it must be of infinite importance to mankind, to understand and receive it. To pervert, or shut his eyes upon the truth, he is sensible, would be madness in the extreme. Indolence, the love of the world, and the love of sin, may all conspire to divert his attention from the subject before him. But to yield to their influence, would be, he considers, to sacrifice his reason, and every noble principle of his nature—to degrade his existence, even below the level of the brute. The strongest considerations, which can be exhibited to the mind of man, all the weighty motives which eternity can present, call his attention to the word of God. He resolves to break loose from the power of prejudice and corruption; and obey this solemn call. He searches the Scriptures daily, that he may understand their true import; that he may gain a thorough knowledge of the great doctrines and duties of revelation, which they reveal to a lost world. With candour, diligence, and prayer, he pursues his inquiry. The blessing of Heaven descends upon him. He soon finds, from happy experience, that the Scriptures are able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this pursuit, he acts up to his character, as a rational being. Exploring the glorious truths of redemption, is indeed the noblest employment of man. In this he shows a veneration for truth; and some regard for the authority of God. This has been the employment of the greatest, and the best of men, in every age of the world. This is the delightful employment of the Angels in Heaven. They love to look into the mysteries of redemption. By this, and this alone,

may he escape everlasting ruin ; and by this may he secure a glorious and immortal inheritance, in the kingdom of God.

How contemptible, and how pitiable is the character of those, who consider Christianity too low a subject, to merit their attention ! They despise and ridicule that, of which, they are profoundly ignorant. They impute it to their uncommon discernment, that they have discovered, without examination, that Christianity is a cheat; and that all Christians are fanatics, or fools. What a pity, that Locke, and Newton, and Solomon, had not possessed their amazing penetration ! But no one, I apprehend, will envy them, the purity of their hearts, or the strength of their understandings. They call rather for our compassion than our ridicule. How frail, and how miserable a creature, is fallen man ! May the Lord have mercy on all, who yet know him not ; and bring them to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Have we, brethren, the noble character of the Bereans ? Do we, with their candour, and ingenuousness, “ receive “ the word with all readiness of mind, and search the “ Scriptures daily, to know whether these things are so ” ? Do we give to Christianity that attention, which its high importance claims ? Are our eyes often directed to the eternal world ? Are we habitually preparing to stand before the tribunal of God ? These, Brethren, are very important questions, in which we are all personally and deeply interested. That we may, henceforth, be suitably impressed with the importance of maintaining, and be enabled to maintain, that noble spirit exemplified in the character of the Bereans, may God, of his infinite mercy, grant for the sake of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

SERMON XVI.

ON THE REDEEMER'S BENEVOLENCE IN THE SALVATION OF
LOST SINNERS.

LUKE XIX. 10.

“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

AS Jesus, at a certain time, was passing through Jericho, he attracted the attention of a multitude of people. Among the number, was a publican named Zaccheus. This man, prompted by motives of curiosity, attempted to get a sight of this wonderful character. But, as he was small of stature, and the crowd great, he was likely to be disappointed. He, therefore, ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree, that he might see him as he passed by. “And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, “and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, “and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. “And he made haste, and came down, and received him “joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, “saying, that he was gone to be a guest with a man that “was a sinner. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the “Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the “poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by “false accusation, I restore him four-fold. And Jesus “said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, “forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.” As a vindication of his conduct, in visiting the house of a man abhorred by his countrymen, as the chief of sinners, he adds the words of our text. “For the Son of Man is “come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

This Son of Man, is Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world. As he possessed a divine and human nature united, he is called "the Son of God," and "the Son of Man," "the root and the offspring of David." He is "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person;" the Creator and Governor of the World; and all the Angels of God are commanded to worship him. This is the glorious character of that Redeemer, who came to seek and to save those who were lost.

Let us now look at the character of those, towards whom his benevolence was displayed. It was towards those who were lost;—beings who were utterly ruined; whom God had pronounced ruined; whom all Heaven had given up as lost.

They were lost to virtue. Sin had made its appearance in the world; and overspread all nations. It had pervaded every human breast; it had polluted and poisoned every child of Adam. The unerring voice of inspiration had declared, "All flesh has corrupted its way upon the earth." That principle of celestial life, originally implanted in the soul of man, had been extinguished and lost by transgression. Not a spark of that Heavenly fire yet remained to glimmer in the benighted soul. All was dark as the habitation of the grave! Mankind had become universally alienated from God. In the language of the Bible, "There was none righteous, no, not one." They had enlisted in the cause of impiety; and they trampled the laws of Heaven under their feet. In relation to their obligations to God, they were dead to the demands of justice, and dead to the calls of reason, and the claims of gratitude. Nothing could be more just, nothing more solemnly binding on any created being than the duties required of them by God. But, in contempt of the most sacred demands of justice, they utterly disre-

garded these duties; and sundered the strongest ties which can bind a creature to the throne of Heaven. As the laws of God are founded in wisdom and equity, reason, in strong and persuasive language, calls mankind to obedience; and urges the folly and madness of contending with Omnipotence. But the voice of reason, to the children of apostate Adam, was powerless and unavailing. They were equally unaffected by the claims of gratitude. The millions of blessings poured upon them, and upon the whole creation, could not win their affections; could not allure them to the paths of virtue; could not raise a single tribute of grateful praise, to the Benefactor of the world. They were utterly lost to virtue. He, who surveys human actions, and searches the human heart, pronounced them "dead in trespasses and sins." They were lost to Heaven.

While their souls were polluted with sin, it was, in the nature of things, impossible that they should join in the employments, or share in the bliss of the upper world. There can be, indeed, no paradise in creation, to a being alienated from his God. Let his eyes be opened, and he would find a place of torment, wherever God is present. He might fly to the remotest realms of the universe; but he would find no refuge, from God, or from suffering. He carries the worm that never dies, in his own breast. Such a character is lost to the happiness of Heaven. In addition to this, the decree of God has gone out against him: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Divine justice also, and all the attributes of God, stand in his way; and forbid his admission into the realms of life. Such was the condition of those unhappy beings, whom Christ came to seek and to save. They were lost to Heaven. And, without his merciful interposition, they never could have seen the kingdom of God. They were lost for time.

As they pursued the path of human guilt, they were wandering from the paths of virtue, and wandering from their God. No created being had power to arrest them, in their course of folly and guilt. No considerations, which earth or Heaven could present, could allure them to the ways of wisdom. Had not that great Deliverer, who "turns the hearts of the children of men as the rivers of waters are turned," appeared for them, they would have continued to wander to the end of life. They must have lived, and died, under the displeasure of that righteous God, who is angry with the wicked every day. They must have been cast off from the divine favour; and devoted to ruin. They were not only lost for time, but they were also lost for eternity. Mournful indeed were their future prospects. The gates of Heaven were forever closed against them. Eternity, while its ceaseless ages roll away, could never bring that period, when the hardened offender against his God, could be admitted to the world of glory. But this was not all; they were doomed to a state of endless woe and despair. No prospects of life or mercy opened to their view. Nothing but darkness and horror were before them. They were lost to virtue; they were lost to Heaven; they were lost to God. They were lost to themselves: they were lost for time: they were lost for eternity. This was the deplorable condition of a fallen world. These were the miserable beings, whom the Son of Man came to seek and to save. Such were the guilty wretches towards whom his benevolence was displayed. They were "dead in trespasses and sins"—the enemies of virtue, and the enemies of God.

Let us look at the manner in which this benevolence was displayed.

He "came to seek and to save that which was lost." It was compassion for guilty wretches,—for miserable

outcasts from the favour of God, which caused him to leave the Heavens and come down to our apostate world. He laid aside the robes of immortal glory; and clothed himself in a frail mortal body. He took upon him our degraded nature. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." Though he was the eternal Son of God, and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" yet, "he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant," that he might seek and save them that were lost. It was to accomplish this benevolent design, that he was content to spend his years on earth in poverty, toil, and reproach. For this, he was willing to be considered "without form or comeliness;" and to be "despised and rejected of men." For this, he was willing to live a life of sorrow; and for this, he was willing to die a cruel and infamous death! Even in the years of childhood, he showed that his heart was full of that work of mercy, for which he came into the world. And after entering on his public ministry, he went from place to place, looking for, and gathering, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He sought them wherever they were scattered, upon the mountains, and in the valleys. He sought them, by day and by night. Persecuted and despised, without a resting place for his head, or a shelter from the storm, exposed to hunger, and subjected to toil and suffering, he persevered, with unabated zeal, in his labours of love. Wherever he beheld perishing sinners, thither his compassion was directed. He called them to himself, the great Shepherd of souls. He proclaimed to them the Gospel of the kingdom. He showed them their guilty character and lost condition; and he opened to them, the way of everlasting life. Finally, he sealed his mission with his blood. He poured out his life, to make reconciliation for the sins of Israel; and for the sins of a

guilty world. And when he ascended to the Heavens, he gave command to his followers to go forth, accompanied with the power of the Holy Ghost, to preach the Gospel to all nations; testifying to small and great, "repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ;" declaring to every creature, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned."

Do not, my brethren, confine your views to the few and very inadequate observations made on this subject. But place before you the whole work of redemption. Dwell upon the whole of that work of mercy, which has been going on in our world, from the fall of Adam, to the present day; and which shall continue to go on, till the consummation of all things. Expatiate upon all that Jesus has done and suffered for his enemies,—to seek and to save lost sinners!

You behold a scene which has no parallel in creation! A display of compassion which astonishes the Angels! It is the compassion of a God! "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!" At the very time our sins were crying to Heaven, for vengeance on our heads, behold Jesus, descending from Heaven, to die for our salvation! At the very time our hearts are burning with enmity against his character, and our hands lifted against his government, behold him bleeding on the Cross to deliver us from everlasting ruin.

"O, for this love, let rocks and hills
 "Their lasting silence break!
 "And all harmonious human tongues,
 "The Saviour's praises speak!"

This subject naturally suggests many profitable reflections.

How strong a claim has Jesus Christ, upon the gratitude of men! It is not possible for the human mind to conceive of a more marvellous display of compassion, than that which is presented to our view, in the life and death of the Son of God. This will excite the everlasting admiration of Heaven. It will swell the notes of Angels, and of redeemed Saints, as long as eternity endures. Every thing here, is affecting in the highest degree. This love,—O how great! The objects to whom it is displayed—how vile and detestable! If ever, since the beginning of time, there was a claim upon the gratitude of creatures, that claim is upon us.

Hard as the rock of adamant, cold as the icy hand of death, must be that heart, which is not affected, with what Jesus has done for perishing sinners! If every spark of sensibility is not extinguished from our hearts, if every noble principle of our nature is not annihilated, we must be moved; we must pour forth a tribute of gratitude, to that benevolent Redeemer, “who has loved us, and given himself for us.”

In the example of Jesus Christ, how forcibly are we called to the duties of Christian benevolence! The work of mercy is not yet completed in our world. Open your eyes, brethren, and behold the children of want and misfortune, of ignorance, depravity and woe, who call for your compassion. Behold the thousands and millions of lost sinners around you, who are like sheep scattered upon the mountains, having no shepherd; who are ignorant of God, and of the way of salvation; who are destitute of the Holy Bible; that bright lamp which guides wandering souls to Heaven. What crowds do you see, impiously trampling upon the laws of God and man, and fearlessly rushing forward in the road to Hell! If we

can contemplate such a scene without emotion, we are dead to the calls of mercy; we have not a spark of that compassion, which shone so illustriously in the character of Jesus. And if the view of such a scene does not call forth our benevolent exertions, it is because we have no resemblance to the blessed Redeemer; because we are not his followers. For, "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

But there are difficulties in the way. It is acknowledged. They who undertake to enlighten the ignorant, and reform the vicious, have little prospect of success, without resolution, energy, and perseverance. But shall we shrink from so laudable an undertaking, and so imperious a duty, because difficulties arise in our way? Shall we, to avoid difficulties, consign our fellow creatures to ignorance, to vice, and to ruin? Look at the example of Jesus. Was ever an undertaking more difficult than that which brought the Son of God from Heaven? Had he been repulsed by difficulties, had he deserted his work of mercy, because hard to accomplish, what would have been the condition of our world? What would, this day, have been your prospects? He saw from the beginning, what was before him. It was love that caused him to engage; it was love stronger than death, that carried him through! He calls us, in labours of mercy, to imitate his example. Shall we refuse to obey, because every obstacle is not removed out of our way? God forbid!

But to employ our exertions, especially the strong arm of authority to suppress vice, might ruin our popularity; and bring us into disgrace. Is this plea heard in a Christian land? "O tell it not in Gath! publish it not in the streets of Askelon! lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." Shall magistrates who bear the sword of civil justice, in a Christian land, or those of us, who occupy

private stations in life, refuse to employ those exertions, to suppress vice and irreligion, which God and our country demand, lest we should endanger our reputation? Shall we suffer the laws of Heaven, and the laws of human society, to be daringly violated, every thing sacred to be trampled to the dust, our children, our servants, and our neighbours corrupted, and their souls ruined, merely to escape the reproaches of the most abandoned part of mankind? Shame to the Christian name! Look at the example of Christ. "Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him, the form of a servant," and became a poor despised Nazarene, that he might "seek and save that which was lost." Has the Lord of nature humbled himself, to the most degraded condition of human life, that he might extend mercy to his creatures; and shall we be unwilling to endure a little reproach, in order to promote the temporal and everlasting interests of our fellow men?

The work of Christian benevolence and charity, may require an expense of property. It may require us to give often, and to give liberally; to give, not only to relieve victims of poverty and wretchedness, but to enlighten those who are in darkness, especially the darkness of sin, and to lead them to the Saviour of the world. Missionary Societies, and Bible Societies, have, of late years, arrested the serious attention of the Christian world. And they have been supported, in many places, with a liberality which does honour to the Christian name. The call begins to be heard, in this part of our land. In some places, donations are solicited, for the support of Missionaries among the nations of the east. The eyes of the people in this place,* were directed to a Bible Society,

* Waynesborough, Georgia.

the object of which is, to diffuse among the destitute of our own Country, that Gospel which brings salvation to a lost world. Will any, with an object so benevolent in view, withhold a portion of that bounty, which God has bestowed upon them? Who was it, brethren, that became poor for our sakes? He who was rich, he who was possessor of Heaven and Earth, for our sakes became poor; that we through his poverty might be rich! He who had been adored by myriads of Angels, upon the throne of Heaven, appears in our world, without a resting place, for his head! The Lord of nature is reduced to the poverty of a common beggar! And for what? That he might seek such, and "save them that were lost!" That he might bring forgiveness and everlasting life to the perishing souls of this assembly! With such an example before us, is it in our nature to resist the calls of benevolence from our fellow creatures, to withhold our liberality, and shut up our bowels of compassion? O no! I will not be so ungenerous as to suppose it possible. Want of liberality, is far from being the character of the people of this place. Many are the proofs they have given, of a very different character. Another memorable one, I am confident, will, this week, be added to the number. The object in view is all important. Our benevolence, like that of the Saviour of the world, is to be employed, "to seek and to save them that are lost."

Great and everlasting consequences will follow the transaction before us. It may be the means of bringing thousands and thousands to everlasting life. It will be recorded in Heaven; and published to the universe at the day of judgment. May each one of us, on that solemn, and august occasion, be found among the friends and followers of Jesus, and receive the benediction from his lips, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

SERMON XVII.

ON EARLY PIETY.

I. KINGS XVIII. 12.

“I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.”

THESE are the words of Obadiah to the prophet Elijah. During the tyranny of the cruel and persecuting Ahab, the Heavens were shut, that “it rained not on the earth “ by the space of three years and six months.” At the period of this long continued drought, and the consequent famine, the pious Obadiah is introduced to our notice. He was Ahab’s Steward; but even in this station, he maintained his fidelity to God, and his affection for his people. The name Obadiah, Signifies “The Servant of the “ Lord;” and this name is descriptive of his character.

When Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, “cut off the prophets “ of the Lord,” the decisive and intrepid Obadiah interposed, to wrest them from the withering grasp of this female monster. He “took a hundred prophets, and hid them “ by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.”

While famine was marking, with desolation, his progress through the dominions of Ahab, and leaving upon man and beast, the impression of his lean and withered hand; an incident occurred, which brought about an interview between Obadiah and Elijah. Ahab, pressed to the last extremity by famine, “said unto Obadiah, go into the land “ unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks; perad- “ venture we may find grass to save the horses and mules “ alive, that we lose not all the beasts.”

While they were exploring the country in different directions, the venerable and persecuted Elijah presents himself to the astonished Obadiah. From respect to the character of this man of God, Obadiah “fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my Lord Elijah? And he answered him, I am : Go, tell thy Lord, behold Elijah is here.”

To the communication of this message, he objected, as rash and perilous. He could not believe, that the prophet intended to present himself, in the presence of the exasperated King. He knew that Ahab had spared no pains to find him ; that he had hunted through his own kingdom ; that he had explored, in search of this hated object, the dominions of surrounding monarchs ; and that Elijah had been hurried, from place to place, by the spirit of the Lord, that he might escape the fangs of this angry tiger. He supposed the prophet would again be directed to make his escape ; and his *own* life would be the forfeiture, if Ahab were disappointed, in the execution of the anticipated vengeance. “It shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not ; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me ;—but I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.” This expression of Obadiah, is not to be considered as an ostentatious boast of his piety ; but was intended, merely, to assign a reason, why Elijah should treat him with cordiality and candour. “I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.”

It is very obvious to remark, that, by “*fearing the Lord,*” as used in our text, we are not to understand, that *servile* dread of his character and presence, which is the source of disquiet to the unsanctified heart. There is a *filial* fear of God, which “is the beginning of wisdom ;” and which comprises the sum of true Religion.

It was upon this holy and vital principle, that the eye of Obadiah was fixed, when he said "I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth."

From these words, we shall consider, the importance of Early Piety. This becomes evident, from a variety of considerations.

First—That Early Piety is peculiarly important, appears, from the estimation in which it is held by God himself. His decisions cannot be *incorrect*. When God gives his opinion, this opinion is stamped with the seal of undeviating truth. Numerous are the testimonies which he has given, in favour of a consecration of our first days to him.

To the young, he has addressed the most plain and positive commands; and these commands, are clothed with the authority of God. "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth." "My son give me thine heart."

To these commands are superadded the most ample and extensive promises. "Those that seek me early, shall find me." To the youth who seeks for wisdom as for silver, and searches for her as for hid treasures, it is said, "Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."

Knowing the aversion of the young to *holiness*, and their predilection for *iniquity*, the infinite God has followed these *commands* and *promises*, by the most affecting *entreaties*: "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord." "Wilt thou not, from this time, cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth."

To these commands, promises, and entreaties, are subjoined the most faithful *warnings*. To the incorrigible youth, the volume of inspiration presents dreadful premonitions of the wrath to come. "Rejoice, O young

“man, in thy youth ; and let thy heart cheer thee in the
 “days of thy youth ; and walk in the ways of thine heart,
 “and in the sight of thine eyes ;—*but know thou, that,*
 “*for all these things, God will bring thee into Judgment.*”

He has done more than this. When commands, and promises, and entreaties, and premonitions, have failed, as they ever *must* fail, unattended by a *special* blessing, how often does he interpose, and impress them, with irresistible energy, upon the hearts of the young. In the execution of the plan of salvation, the providence and grace of God have borne the *strongest* attestation, in favour of Early Piety. In the recovery of a chosen seed, and in peopling the Heavenly mansions, *the dear youth* of our world have been the peculiar objects of divine compassion. *David*, the future king and psalmist of Israel, is the friend of God, while he tends his father's flock. *Samuel*, even when a little child, in the midst of a corrupt age, and a degenerate priesthood, is favoured with the messages of Heaven. When God addressed him, he could say, “Speak ; for thy servant heareth.” *Obadiah*, the pious steward of the reprobate Ahab, “*feared the Lord from his youth up.*” *King Josiah*, at sixteen years of age, was devoted to the cause of God ; and at *twenty*, we see him, with the intrepidity of a spiritual veteran, abolishing the high places,—cutting down the groves, consecrated to filthy deities,—dashing the vessels of their worship into shivers,—crumbling their images to the dust,—putting down the idolatrous priests, and burning their bones upon their altars. *Jeremiah*, was sanctified before he was born. *Daniel*, when a young man in captivity, is clad in spiritual armour, upon which all the weapons of a heathen court can make no impression. *John the baptist*, was filled with the Holy Ghost, from his birth ; and *Timothy*, “knew the Holy Scriptures, from a child.”

That God should *command* the young to attend to the concerns of Religion, is a direct evidence, that this subject is important in *his* estimation. When we see these commands followed by the most merciful *promises*, we have a more manifest exhibition of the divine feelings on this point. When we hear *entreaty* after *entreaty*, breathing the very accents of Heavenly compassion, directed to the young, we have another testimony to the value of *Early Piety*. This subject rises in our estimation, when we see the finger of Heaven, pointing to the pit; and hear the voice of Heaven, *warning* the impenitent youth, against the irrepealable maledictions of his God.

But our argument matures into demonstration, when God interposes, by his saving power; lays his hand upon the young; bows them to his sceptre; and moulds them into the Heavenly tempers of the Gospel. Here we have the highest attestation in favour of *Early Piety*.

In these acts, its importance is inscribed with the divine finger;—it is stamped with the seal of Heaven;—it bears the sanction of Jehovah.

Secondly—We argue the importance of Early Piety, from its natural fitness.

For an illustration of this point, we would appeal to the condition of youth, and the nature of the Christian system.

Youth is the period of *dependence*; and ought, consequently, to be the period of *piety*. Throughout the multifarious relations of the universe, wherever there is *dependence*, there is *obligation*. Our parents, who are the instruments of our existence, and who watch over our tender years, and direct our inexperienced steps, *deserve*, and generally *receive*, the expressions of filial gratitude. Bad as our world is, an unnatural child wears the brand of infamy, from one end of the earth to the other. These impressions originate in the very princi-

ples of human nature ; and when these obligations are not felt and performed, there is a violent severance of the bonds which unite man to his fellow man. And these principles are equally true, of the relations of man to God ; and emphatically so, with respect to the young. “ A son honoureth his father ”—“ If then *I be a Father*, “ where is mine honour ? saith the Lord of Hosts.”

Gratitude, and *ingratitude*, to a benefactor, are viewed in much the same light as *obedience* and *disobedience* to a parent. Let the youth of this assembly consider the great God, for a moment, in the character of a benefactor. Your very existence is from him ; his power and providence shielded your infancy, and watched around your cradles. Your rational faculties which distinguish you from the brutes, and assimilate you to the angels, are his gift. Your opportunities of mutual cultivation, are the product of his sovereign goodness. You might have been doomed to intellectual night. But you are now so situated, that you may become acquainted with the surface of the globe you inhabit ; number the stars which decorate the Heavens ; learn many curious and useful things, respecting the external and internal structure of bodies ; and investigate the laws by which the material universe is bound together, directed, and sustained.

But your superlative blessing is the Gospel of Christ. Were it not for this, the grossest moral darkness would have covered you. Your God would have been a dumb idol ; and your own parents might have given you, in sacrifice to devils. For these temporal and spiritual favours, it is fit, in the very nature of things, that you make some returns. While you live regardless of these obligations, you may, with propriety, be addressed in the language of the prophet—“ Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O “ earth ;—for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished

“and brought up children; and they have rebelled
“against me.”

But the *natural fitness* of early piety will more strikingly appear, if we consider the character of the Christian system. The mantle of piety, and the ornaments of grace, confer the most charming and amiable attractions upon the young. The young man, who is a friend of the Lord Jesus Christ, however he may be *secretly hated*, or *openly ridiculed*, by the wicked, possesses a true dignity of character, which irresistibly commands a tacit veneration, even from the sons of impiety. The religion of Christ imparts to man a new attribute, by which he enforces a kind of homage, even in the most degenerate times, and from the basest of characters. Were we to draw the moral portrait of a young man whom an angel might look upon and love, we would copy the features exhibited by Saul of Tarsus, after his memorable journey to Damascus. We would inspire his zeal;—impart his decision of character;—excite his generous sacrifices for Christ; and superadd his unparalleled intrepidity, as a messenger of the Cross. The brows of such an one shall be entwined with never-withering wreaths, compared with which, the laurels that a Cæsar reaps, are weeds. Were we to delineate the character of a young female, encircled with all the loveliness which can attend this state of imperfection, we would present her, pressing with her right hand, the Bible to her heart;—her eye lifted to the throne of God;—and her countenance illuminated, by a ray of hope from Heaven. Or, in an attitude not less impressive, we would exhibit her, like Mary of old, prostrate at the feet of Jesus Christ, washing them with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head.

Thirdly—The person who embraces religion when young, has more ground of hope than others.

The religion of the Gospel is a system of self-denial. There can be no real dependence on Christ, till every other dependence fails. There can be no hope in him, —till other hopes are sacrificed and overwhelmed in despair. We shall never cast the sure and steadfast anchor within the veil, till *all others* are torn away by the storm.

The more we relinquish for *the Gospel*, the greater may be our confidence in its promises. It is a fundamental law in the Kingdom of Christ, that “he that will lose his “life shall save it.” Those who forsake *all* for Christ are, in this world, the heirs of every *necessary inheritance*, and, “*in the world to come,*” of “*life everlasting.*”

To the eye of an inexperienced youth, the world is covered with the mantle of deception. Its groans, and disappointments, sighs, and tears, have no existence in his estimation. All is full of enchantment. The music of Paradise is heard in every grove;—the breath of health perfumes every breeze;—riches and honours, and pleasures, attend on every step; and *happiness* in full and flowing attire, dances in every region of the globe. These fancied scenes establish a dominion over the minds of youth. The deception reaches, and penetrates, and poisons the heart. It exerts a control over every principle of action. The pleasures of the world are magnified beyond limits; and its groans of despair, and knells of death, are unheard or annihilated. To an unconverted youth, the world is *every thing*. It is his Heaven;—it is his eternity;—it is his God! The story of the young man who came to Christ for instruction, inspires a peculiar interest. What was said of him is true of every youth; “He went away sorrowful; for he was very rich.” The young are rich *in prospect*. The fallacious promises of the world, are their treasures; and though they may be worth nothing in actual possession; yet, in anticipation, they are *rich*; rich in deceptive prospects;

rich in lying prophecies of good ; rich in dreams of unsubstantial bliss.

With these impressions, if the young are willing to sacrifice *the world* for the *Gospel*, what solid ground of hope ! The youth who places himself under the direction of Christ, when the heart is warm, the affections ardent, and the world enchanting, may emphatically adopt the supplication of the Psalmist ; “ Cast me not off in the time of my old age ; forsake me not when my strength faileth.”

Fourthly—The Christian youth may calculate on extensive usefulness.

Throughout the universe, *material* and *immaterial*, there is a wonderful relation and dependence. The sun and planets, mutually attract and are attracted. The needle vibrates to the pole, and the lead gravitates to the centre. The rays of the sun exhale vapours from the earth, and these again descend, in showers of rain, to water and fertilize our fields. So accurately is the material system balanced, and such is *the action* and *the reaction* of one body upon another, that it has been conjectured by some Philosophers, that the annihilation of *one* particle of matter, would destroy the harmony of the whole ; and reduce the visible universe, to a state of anarchy.

In *the moral* system, relation and dependence, are not less obvious and important. Every rational being, from the seraph to the savage,—from Gabriel to the Hottentot,—has his post assigned him. To trace minutely the relations and dependencies of the human family, would be unnecessary and superfluous. Suffice it to say, that every man is related to his fellow man ;—and he is made not for *himself* but for *a world*. The foundation of extensive usefulness, must be laid, in early life. Correct and legitimate principles of action must be interwoven with the very structure of our minds ; and associated

with the earliest affections of our hearts. A sacred impulse must be given to the years of childhood; or we have no security against a fatal desertion of that orbit which God has assigned us.

In all the relations of life, we are bold to assert, *that the Christian* is, of all characters, the most *useful*. This assertion, we challenge infidelity itself to deny. Who can discharge the duties of husband, and wife, so well as those who bear each other's burdens, "and so fulfil "the law of Christ"? What parents so useful as those who train up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"? What sons and daughters are the instruments of so much *happiness*, not only to their *friends*, but to the *world*, as those who are consecrated to the fear of God? Who can be so useful in any of the relations of life, as the real Christian? The Gospel which he presses to his heart, furnishes him with the best practical principles. He has imbibed the spirit of the Heavens. His bosom has been inspired with every Christian grace, at the foot of the Cross. To a life of active and condescending usefulness, he feels himself constrained by the example of him who "went about "doing good," and who, with his own hands, washed his disciples' feet.

In whatever sphere this man is destined to act, he must be useful. Every thing on which he lays his hand, feels a *new* impulse; and his touch, like the imaginary stone of the Alchemist, converts all things into gold. Such a character, whether he be the inmate of a palace, or the tenant of a cottage—whether he hold a sceptre, or follow a plough, will leave the world better than he found it.

Far be it from our intention to assert, that no character but the Christian is useful to the world. We depreciate the labours of *no man*;—we draw no veil over merit; we tear from no brow the laurels of renown. The Gene-

ral in the field, and the Statesman in the cabinet, and the Citizen in the more quiet walks of life, who have served their country with fidelity, receive our veneration and respect. But in all these stations, *the friend* of the Gospel is more useful than *its enemy*. The principles of Christ furnish a person with various and endless resources of usefulness to his fellow men, of which he who is under the influence of mere worldly motives, is entirely destitute.

But we all have a common interest in eternity. To this great inheritance we are born. This is one of the first sentiments to be inscribed on the youthful mind. A preparation for this state is necessary; and, in this business, we may be beneficial to one another. Meager indeed is *that charity* which crawls upon the earth; and contracted indeed is that *beneficence* which is circumscribed in its operations, by the boundaries of time. The Christian looks beyond the present scene. While he rejoices in the *temporal* interest of man,—his great and superlative object is to pluck *immortals* from *Hell* and plant them in *Heaven*. And, for this course of conduct, he has reasons which are bottomed on eternal truth.

But a few days—and the present scene is changed. The social relations are broken up; political systems vanish; and human governments are dissolved. Legislation is at an end; wars cease; the bow of the victor is broken; the spear of death is cut asunder; and the chariot of conquest is burned in the fire. The volume of human speculation, and of human science, is forever closed. The student no longer trims the midnight lamp; and “the star surveying *sage*,” no more “*applies the sight-invigorating tube*.” The accumulated masses of *wealth*, which have been heaped together, by the exertions of laborious days, and sleepless nights, are melted down to dross. The miser no more eyes his shining

dust, nor weighs his bags of gold. The brightest and most dazzling *honours* are covered with the broad stains of pollution and contempt. No more does the man in whose bosom ambition has kindled the fires of Hell, wade through seas of blood, to conquest and a crown. *Sensual gratifications* expire; and plant the sting of scorpions in the heart. Man can brutalize himself no more. The earth itself, shakes and crumbles into atoms. *The skies* are veiled in sackcloth;—*the sun* is extinguished;—the moon is converted into blood;—the stars of the firmament, as useless cobwebs, are brushed away;—the Heavens are rolled together as a scroll;—the car of desolation is driven over the prostrate ruins of a disjointed world;—and the great fabric of nature sinks, in one wide-spread and universal conflagration!

What, of human effort, now remains? Dear youth, not a trace, not a vestige can be found, except that which has been directed to the joys of immortality. In the affair of salvation, we all have something to do; something for *ourselves*, and something for *others*. He that lives without engaging in this work, lives without an adequate object; and the world is not made poor by his death. "TEKEL" may be inscribed upon his coffin; and "*Here lies creation's cypher*"—may be the epitaph upon his tombstone. The name of *such an one* shall perish; and over his memory shall be thrown the mantle of eternal night.

Fifthly—THE SAFETY of the Christian youth is another argument in favour of early piety.

The present state is a mere pilgrimage; and not our final home. The road to the grave, whether it terminate in happiness or misery, is a road skirted with dangers, and planted with thorns. He who would take the amount of human afflictions, might at the same time number the sands upon the margin of the ocean,—give

names to the orbs of infinity,—or enumerate the atoms which compose the solid globe we inhabit. The history of man is the history of *temptations*, of *sufferings*, and of *death*. To these, youth are peculiarly exposed; and against these, the religion of the Gospel can alone defend them.

The Christian youth *is safe against temptation*. The world is full of snares. In this age of *hardihood* and *impiety*, what, but the grace of God, can save our youth from being swept away, by the overwhelming torrent of *infidelity* and *vice*? What, but the influence of the Gospel, can be our security, against the Sabbath-breaking, the profane swearing, the blasphemy, the profligacy, the intemperance, the gambling, and debauchery, which, in every direction, meet the eye, and assail the ear, and shock the heart! Take away the restraints of the Christian religion, and you leave our sons and daughters liable to become curses to their parents, and the scourges of the world. You abandon them, the victims of every temptation, and the prey of every vice!

The Christian youth has an antidote against *the sufferings of life*. Sin has transformed the earth into the abode of tears. The cup of affliction passes from one hand to another; and, to the impenitent sinner, it is indeed the cup of consternation,—sometimes of despair. How little do youth consider the pangs which will, by and by, rend their bosoms! These hearts, gay and sportive as they now are, must be transpierced with many sorrows! Should you live a few years, you will witness the ravages of *death* around you. A young companion shall fall at your side;—you will stand by the death-bed of a brother, or a sister;—the affectionate son, with a trembling step, and an agonized bosom, will follow his father to the grave; the distracted daughter shall wipe the cold sweat of death from the cheek of her expiring mother;—and

many who now experience all the expressions of parental care, will be enrolled on the register of orphans! In these scenes, dear youth, who will support you? Can you, with safety, lean on any arm, except the omnipotent arm of Jesus Christ? Sustained by him, you may walk upon the waters of tribulation, unhurt and undismayed, while the storms roll, and the waves dash at your feet.

But there is one scene, still more affecting than these. Every youth is exposed to the shafts of death;—and Oh! how often do we behold the young and gay, pale and prostrate victims at his feet! Perhaps some of the youth of this assembly, are destined to an early grave. A few steps more may bring some of you to your bed of death, and your eternal home. And what, Oh! what can defend you, against that destroying angel, who is emphatically styled the “King of terrors”? Nothing—on the authority of eternal truth, I assure you, nothing but “the whole armour of God.” Clad in this Heavenly panoply, you shall conquer when you die; and from your expiring lips, shall issue the songs of triumph.

Sixthly—We argue the importance of Early Piety, from the peril of an irreligious youth.

We have already seen, that dangers beset and threaten on every side. Before the irreligious youth, there is much *tribulation*, and no *support*. If he loses friends, he buries them in anguish; and the tears which he sheds over their remains, are the tears of despair. Are the parents of such a child snatched away? He cannot say, with David, “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.”

When diseases prey upon the body, and threaten to disjoint and prostrate this tenement of clay, the heart of the distracted youth has no principle of patience, resignation, or support.

But the superlative peril to which the irreligious youth

is exposed, is an *early death*. The graves of the young, crowd the burying places of the dead. A vast majority of our race never reach the days of manhood; and with this majority, some blooming youth in this assembly may be doomed to lie! The consideration, that this may be the lot of *any*, ought to carry terror and conviction to the hearts of *all*. The blow of death is a *decisive* blow. It is succeeded by the *bliss*, or *vengeance*, of eternity. And should you be hurried to the tribunal of God, in an impenitent state, to which you are every moment liable, the seal of immutability is then affixed to your doom! But who can depict the anguish, of perishing under the light of truth; of exchanging the instructions of the sanctuary, for the wailings of the pit; and of plunging into *Hell*, from the very gate of *Heaven*?

But, suppose your expectations of life are answered: still, the ordinary progress of an irreligious youth, is indeed affecting. Your very *life* is full of peril. You tread on enchanted ground; you feed on poison; and breathe the air of pestilence.

Follow, with me, the footsteps of a young man without religion; and tell me, if you can calmly contemplate *this picture*, as exhibiting the lineaments of your own character? When a child, and instructed by his parents or others, he possesses a tenderness of conscience, and a sensibility of heart. He *feels* the truth. He trembles when he sees a grave opened, or dreams of death. He is overwhelmed with conscious guilt, when his sins are presented to his eye; he weeps when he sees the Son of God, "bathed in his own blood," and hung upon the tree; his features brighten when he hears, that this Jesus has conquered death, and plucked away his sting, and "scourged the venom out;" and he turns pale, when the faithful finger, points to the worm that never dies, and to the flame that is never quenched. He resolves, in the

sanctuary, to seek the mercy of God. He goes home ; reads his bible ; and prays. But, alas ! after all these promising appearances, the impression is soon effaced. As he grows older, he becomes more insensible, till some alarming providence, or some affecting truth, again arrests his attention. His remorse is now pungent ; and his convictions strong. But, alas ! his proud heart will not bow. A young companion frowns, or smiles, or sneers, and a puny insect inspires more dread, than the Omnipotent God. Freed from the restraints of conscience, and the impressions of truth, he runs, with madness, in the road to death. He now associates with the profane ; and, although the first oath that passes his lips may alarm him ; yet he soon becomes familiar with the whole dialect of impiety. He can follow the *footsteps*, and imitate *the example* of the sons of vice. His progress through life, is from one degree of guilt to another ; till the once promising young man, becomes an old and hardened enemy of God. The thunders of Almighty and vindictive wrath have rolled, till their reverberations have died upon his ear ; he has fixed his eye upon the agonies of the Son of God so long, that the *stones may weep*, but he *cannot* ; the throb of holy joy may thrill through the bosom of every Saint in Heaven, and every Saint on earth ; and this sacred pulse may beat to the very extremities of the spiritual universe ; but *his* polluted blood, is chilled and stiffened in his veins ; *his* heart is harder than the nether millstone, and colder than mountains of ice ! The glories of Heaven may tune the harp of every angel, and swell the anthem of every redeemed sinner ; but, in *his* bosom, every string is broken ; and every note is discord !

Of the future prospects of this character, we need not speak. We may say, in the emphatic language of Jesus Christ, “ It had been good for that man, if he had not “ been born.”

Nor is the progress of an *irreligious female*, less instructive to her sex. Naturally dependent, unprotected, and timid, she often feels, when young, the necessity of a refuge "from the windy storm and tempest." When she thinks of death, her frame trembles; and her heart palpitates with fear. How often does she read the story of Jesus Christ, and bathe the sacred page with her tears!

But alas! her impressions are like the "morning cloud" and "the early dew." Young companions smile; and the world prevails. Dress and amusement, and vanity, characterize her life; till her dreams are disturbed by the *footsteps* of death. She turns pale when the messenger knocks at the door,—reads his commission,—and lays his hand upon her heart. The closing scene is too often a scene of horror; and all beyond that curtain, is despair.

It is obvious to remark, that the sentiments advanced in this discourse, are by no means restricted, in their application, to the young. Many of our observations address themselves, with additional and peculiar force, to those who have outlived the days of youth, and are yet crowding the downward road to ruin. To this dying congregation, including the impenitent of different ages, we may now say, your duty, and your interest are before you. But may we not tremble, when we calculate the possible, and perhaps the probable consequences of this Sermon? With the joys of Heaven to invite you home, and the flames of the pit to drive you from the fearful brink, is it not to be apprehended that you will go away and forget what you have heard, and suffer the noise of the world to drown, "the still small voice," of the Spirit of God? Relieve me from this impression; bear away this anxiety; and you lift a mountain from my bosom. I retire from this temple of worship, with a joy which words were too feeble to express.

And now, I would affectionately and emphatically inquire, *what answer shall I return to him that sent me?* Shall I tell your God, that another message is rejected? Shall the book of Heaven, when its leaves are unfolded, testify, that not a youth—not a sinner of any age, in this assembly, would bow to Christ and live? Remember, oh! remember, that the heralds of the Gospel, who now address you, will not address you long! The hand which is now extended to lead you to Christ, will, e're long, be enwrapped in a shroud. The eye which now fixes with affectionate interest, upon so many youthful immortals, will be sightless in its socket; and the tongue which now pleads the cause of your salvation, will be chained in the silence of the tomb! But, to the unrelenting sinner, whether young or old, God will send *another* preacher. I see him already on his way. He rides upon a pale horse—and his name is DEATH! *His* message you SHALL hear; *his* preaching you MUST feel!

SERMON XVIII.

ON THE PROPER AGENCY OF REASON, IN MATTERS OF
RELIGION.

JOB XXXII. 8.

But there is a Spirit in Man ; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”

MANY of the divisions and corruptions which have afflicted and humbled the Christian Church, have originated in erroneous views of the proper office and agency of *Reason*, in matters of *Religion*. As this is a subject which lies at the threshold of all Religious inquiry, it presents itself in its full magnitude, to every traveller in search of truth; and from the views he takes of it, he derives a powerful direction as to his subsequent course ; and a decided influence upon his religious opinions.

Opposite impressions, have led conflicting parties, into wide extremes, and most dangerous conclusions. Thus, multitudes exclude Reason from any participation in their spiritual concerns ; considering her guidance altogether unsafe, and her light wholly delusive.

On the contrary, other multitudes bow, with entire devotion, before her shrine ; bring every thing to the test of her approbation ; reduce all systems to the level of her comprehension ; and subject all doctrines to her supremacy.

These opposite extremes of error, are as common as they are pernicious. Among the contemners of *Reason*, you shall find those, whose Theology consists chiefly in incomprehensible mysteries, and perplexing speculation.

With them, mystery is but another name for truth. Their maxim is, the more contrary to Reason a doctrine may be, the more entirely is it worthy of implicit confidence. They blindly follow the dogmas of their leaders, deeming it the highest impiety, in matters of faith, to listen to the dictates of the understanding.

Another numerous class of those who reject the authority of Reason, in matters of religion, consists of enthusiasts, and visionaries of every description. They implicitly yield themselves to the guidance of feeling; their hopes and joys, rise and fall, with the fluctuations of the passions. Their Religion is made up of violent impulses, and fervours of affection; they boast of a light within; and by that they must walk, though Reason and Revelation, alike forbid. With them, the most conclusive arguments, go for nothing. They are exalted far above the regions of rationality. To submit to the cool dictates of the judgment, in the services of piety, to bring their peculiar tenets to the scrutiny of calm and patient examination, and to carry the torch of Reason into the dark recesses of mysticism, would be, in their estimation, little less than sacrilege. Thus, the gloomy votaries of ecclesiastical infallibility, and the devotees of fanaticism, unite in rejecting the aids of Reason; and excluding her from any agency in the vast concerns of Religion. On the other hand, very many fall into the opposite extreme. In their eagerness to avoid the torrid heats of enthusiasm, they withdraw among the ices of cold speculation. Disgusted with the follies and extravagancies of fanatics, they shun ever the appearance of pious feeling; and carefully cultivate, rather the knowledge of the head, than the affections of the heart. Elated by a fancied intellectual superiority, they deem their unassisted reason competent to the solution of all doubts, and the explanation of all truth; they therefore proudly reject all mysteries

which are incomprehensible ; and all doctrines which are beyond the limits of the human understanding. They enthrone *Reason* as the supreme arbiter of truth, and error ; and to her decisions, make their sole appeal. The doctrines of Revelation must be lowered to the level and reduced to the dimensions of their comprehension. The reality of Divine influence, must be rejected, because they cannot discern the mode of its operation. The fires of devotion must be extinguished, because they are not kindled at the altar of Reason. The emotions of Religious joy, must be repressed, because they are not excited by the force of argument, Thus, Religion is deprived of all life and energy, despoiled of those sublime mysteries which mark its divine origin, and frittered down to a mere system of moral ethics, that it may gratify that pride of man, which it was designed to abase ; and be in union with those principles of human merit and efficiency, to which it was designed to be in irreconcilable opposition. The opposite extremes of error, therefore, upon this subject, lead to results equally calamitous. Those who rashly reject the guidance of Reason, and those who place implicit confidence in her dictates, are equally at war with the essential principles of the Gospel. The former are urged forward by the impulse of feeling, the sport of winds and waves, without direction or object ; the latter cling to the shores of their own knowledge, venture not beyond the line of their own understanding, and thus, make no progress towards a Heavenly destination. The former yield themselves to the entire dominion of every influence, which claims to be from God ; and blindly obey every behest which calls itself Divine, without the smallest scrutiny ; the latter retire, and intrench themselves within the resources of their own minds ; assume a lofty tone of independence ; and set at defiance, all sanctions, but those of science ; all conviction but that of argument ; and all authority but that of reason.

Those represent human reason, as an artful deceiver, ever to be shunned and opposed. These ascribe to her, prerogatives almost divine; and make every thing bow in low subordination to her paramount authority.

Amid these conflicting views, these opposite extremes of error, it becomes us to search for the line of truth. Our time will be well employed, in reflecting upon this intricate subject. Let us endeavour to ascertain and define the true province of Reason, in matters of Religion; and inquire into the proper application of her powers, and the real extent of her authority. Let us also fix the limits beyond which we cannot trust her guidance; where we must have a brighter light, than her feeble torch can afford; a more clear and comprehensive perception than she can claim, to make good our course, among the perils and difficulties which surround us.

With this design, we shall attempt, in the sequel of this discourse, to show, affirmatively, what is the proper office and agency of Reason, in the concerns of Religion. It will be the object of a subsequent discourse, to assign proper limits to this agency; and, show negatively, what Reason cannot accomplish. In pursuance of our present design, we observe, that Reason alone renders us moral and accountable beings; subjects of the Divine government; capable of receiving a Revelation from God; and receiving any benefit from Revelation. That beings must be able to distinguish between good and evil, must have a self-determining power, must be capable of moral agency, before they can become the proper subjects of praise or blame, of reward or punishment, must be universally admitted. That there should be imposed the restraints of law, where there is no freedom of volition, is the greatest of all absurdities.

The Revelation which God has been pleased to make, is addressed to us, as rational beings: it constantly ap-

peals to our Reason. Why does the Almighty condescend, in the holy volume, to unveil himself to our view, in all the attractions of goodness, and mercy, and in all the beauties of purity and truth? Why does he spread out before us, the lovely portrait of genuine virtue, and point us to its glorious destiny?

Why does he unfold to us, the treasures of his wisdom, and bestow upon us, a complete system of moral instruction? Why does he use the words of invitation and persuasion, and urge upon us, the most powerful motives and arguments? Why does he address us in the language of promise, and present before us, all the terrors of his wrath? Certainly, because we possess rational faculties: because he has given us reason for our guide; and through that medium, all moral influence is communicated.

If our Reason has become so utterly depraved and perverted, as to be excluded from all the operations of Religion, why does Divine wisdom make such efforts to instruct, to convince, and to persuade us? It would be infinitely easy for God, to produce any change he pleased, upon the heart and the affections, by his own immediate agency, without any external means; and yet, why has he not done so? Evidently, because we are not passive machines, but rational, intelligent agents. Besides, if Reason has no agency in the concerns of Religion, then it would be as proper to address the motives and arguments of the Bible, to infants, or idiots, as the most enlightened man. If it be not, therefore, the greatest possible folly, to address to men, the truths and sanctions of the Bible, it must be, because Reason enables them, to feel the influence of Divine truth.

If rationality be the ground of moral obligation, we must infer the ability to comply with the Divine requirements. If man be, in the Divine estimation, susceptible of conviction, and persuasion, from arguments and ex-

postulations, and a proper subject of penal sanctions, then, we must infer, that the free exercise of our rational faculties, in matters of Religion, is indispensable. If our moral obligations be in proportion to the strength of our rational powers; if where much is given, much will be required—if more will be required of him who has had ten talents, than of him who has had one—more of those who live to mature years, than of those who die in childhood—more of those who possess highly cultivated minds, than of the unlearned—then it follows, that Reason is the foundation of all Religious influence, upon the human mind.

It is also undeniable, that Reason is able, clearly to perceive the desirableness and necessity of a Divine Revelation. Man is capable of reflection, of foresight, and of drawing correct conclusions. He finds himself in this state of being, surrounded by woes and dangers, the victim of continual evils—the child of sorrow, disease, and death.

He can perceive the moral disorders, which surround and affect him—he can form some conception, of the moral ruin which has befallen his race; he sees the desolating effects of the unruly passions, and evil propensities of his fellow beings; he feels within himself, the painful war of conflicting principles; and his own incapability of pure and holy felicity. The dictate of Reason is, if the Ruler of the universe, be good and holy, this wretched race has rebelled against him, and lost his favour. He inquires how shall this ruin be repaired? this floodgate of misery closed?

How shall we, wretched wanderers, return to allegiance and happiness? Can the guilt of man be expiated? Will the God of Heaven remit the penalty of his violated law? Can he, consistently with his perfections, pardon

transgression? Can human nature be restored to its original purity, and excellence?

Reason clearly sees, that none can answer these questions, but God himself; she therefore considers a Revelation from God infinitely desirable. She sees herself surrounded by darkness, which nothing can dispel, but light from Heaven; by doubts and mysteries, which none can explain, but the Father of wisdom; she sees obstacles interposing between man and happiness, which nothing, but infinite power, can remove; and clouds of wrath, blackening to a tempest, over the heads of the guilty race of man, which nothing can disperse, but the rays of Heavenly mercy—She therefore, anxiously expects a messenger from God, a Revelation from Heaven. From that Revelation, she expects to know, the character and designs of Jehovah—the origin of moral evil—the disposition of the Deity towards this hapless world, and the future destinies of sinful men. Such would be the views and expectations of enlightened Reason, even where Revelation never dawned. Such were its views and hopes, before the commencement of the Christian æra. Some of the wisest of the Heathens, cherished the confident belief, that God, in compassion to his blind and erring creatures, would, at some time, give them a revelation of his will. If, then, Reason is capable of perceiving the necessity of Divine Revelation, we infer, that she has an important agency in the concerns of Religion.

As a system of revealed Religion, is now made known, claiming to be communicated by a Divine messenger, to contain the will of God, the terms of man's restoration to the Divine favour, and all that it is necessary for us to know, as to our present state, and future destinies: it is the important office of Reason, closely to examine the evidences on which these claims rest; to collect all the testimony which can be brought to bear upon the subject.

and then to draw the momentous conclusion, whether or not, this Religion be a revelation from God.

And this great duty should always be performed by Reason, in every enlightened mind. To believe the Gospel, because it was the Religion of our ancestors—because it is the Religion of our country, or because we were taught, from our infancy, to believe it, without examining for ourselves, and carefully considering the objections and proofs, is utterly unworthy of an enlightened and liberal mind. It is as disgraceful to our Religion, as it is degrading to ourselves.

Christianity comes, surrounded with evidence, carrying in its front, a weight of testimony; it challenges investigation; and boldly relies, on the irrefragable proofs which support its claims. To take its truth, as a matter of course, and to refuse examination, is to place it on a level with those Religions, which are utterly unsupported by evidence, and have no foundation in truth. A Mahomedan, or a Hindoo, has just as good reasons for embracing his Religion, as the man who adopts Christianity, without examination. He will tell you, his Religion was that of his Parents and Ancestors; that it was the established faith of his country; and that he was taught to believe it, from his infancy. To scrutinize evidence does not imply a doubt; but rather a determination to prevent the possibility of doubting. Thus, it is a duty to let Reason be employed, in this, her legitimate office, of investigating the proofs, removing the difficulties, and confirming the doctrines of the Christian Revelation. There are ample materials provided for such examination. Why are all the minute facts, connected with the early Gospel history, preserved upon record? Why is the verification of the prophetic writings continually presented to view, in the New-Testament? Why are the words and actions of the blessed Saviour, so minutely recorded?

Why are his miracles, which were performed in the midst of thousands, so fully and circumstantially related? Why are the proofs of his resurrection and ascension placed in so striking a light? Why is it, that every important occurrence, on which the credibility of the Gospel would essentially depend, took place before many witnesses?—And why is it, that the Apostles continually refer to these sources of evidence; hazard little by assertion; but constantly employ the most cogent and conclusive arguments?

Do not all these things show, that it was designed, that Reason should scan these proofs, carefully examine these facts, and establish a foundation for our faith, firm and immovable? Here, then, is an important field for rational inquiry. A volume is before me, which claims to contain a revelation from God. Was any revelation necessary? Is the purport of this revelation, such as the wants and woes of man require? Are the objects proposed to be accomplished by this system, such as could not be accomplished by other means? Are the great and leading facts which it relates, supported by sufficient testimony, to remove all rational doubt? Those facts being admitted, are the great principles of the system necessarily established? Is there sufficient evidence, that the prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New? Is there clear and unanswerable proof, that miraculous interventions of divine agency did frequently attest the truth of the Gospel? And during the eighteen hundred years which have passed away since the commencement of the Christian dispensation, have the evidences of its divinity accumulated strength? Do the events which have attended the diffusion of Christianity, the comparative state of Christian and Anti-christian nations, the influence which the Gospel has exerted, and the moral effects which it has produced, afford corroboration to the original testimony?

If such inquiries as these, are honestly and faithfully made, by Reason, and the conclusions which result from them carefully pursued; and if the issue be, that the affirmative is true, then, the duty of Reason is performed; she may rest, with confidence, on these great truths, that the Gospel is a revelation from God; and that a Divine Messenger has descended among men to effect their deliverance from guilt and depravity; and to instruct them in the way to Heaven. Having established these fundamental truths, it becomes Reason to sit down, as an humble disciple, at the feet of this divine teacher; and meekly receive the instructions of Eternal Truth. Such is the sphere of action, and such the proper agency of Reason, in the vast concerns of Religion. Far from excluding her from our system, we assign her an important station; and give full scope to her exalted powers. It is her influence which constitutes us moral and accountable beings; renders us proper subjects of law and government; and makes us capable of the knowledge and enjoyment of God. To her are addressed all the motives, arguments, doctrines, promises, and threatenings, of revelation. She discovers the obstacles which interpose between fallen man and true happiness; the disorder and depravation of which sin has been the cause; the darkness and perils in which it has involved us; and can clearly discern the necessity of a light from Heaven, to guide us out of this labyrinth of woes;—of an exertion of divine efficiency, to restore the desolations which sin has spread, and of both instruction and influence from the Father of Spirits, to redeem and sanctify depraved man, and prepare him for the mansions of blessedness. She has also a most important agency in reference to revelation. It is her duty to investigate its pretensions; to collect and examine all the facts which go to the establishment of those pretensions; to scrutinize all the proofs which arise from

the fulfilment of prophecy, and the intervention of miraculous powers; to search into the records of past ages; weigh the various testimonies of profane historians; and consider the known phenomena of nature, to ascertain the credibility of the sacred records. Thus, it is evident, that we assign a wide and important province to the powers of reason;—impose upon her solemn and responsible duties; and pay her all the honours due to her high attributes, and Heavenly origin.

Not a step do we take, in defiance of her authority; not a truth embrace, in violation of her dictates. Every precept and doctrine we adopt, is in perfect unison with the decisions of that understanding, which is given us by the inspiration of the Almighty.

From the preceding views of the subject, we proceed, now, to make some practical observations.

First.—We perceive the falsity of the charge generally preferred against evangelical preachers, that they reject the authority, and exclude the agency of Reason. Because we do not spend our whole time, in strengthening the outworks, and polishing the armaments of Christianity, but, being satisfied with our security in that respect, are chiefly solicitous to watch against the machinations of internal foes, to preserve discipline, and cherish a spirit of active obedience;—therefore, we are accused of total indifference to the strength of her bulwarks, or the beauty of her towers. But do we not show the greatest confidence in the walls of our Zion, when we consider them so impregnable, as to keep every assailant in awe, so indestructible as to inspire universal confidence, and render all active defence unnecessary?

If we employ most of our efforts, rather to impress the truths of religion upon the heart than to confirm them in the head,—rather to excite the affections, by unfolding the sanctions and destinies of Religion, than

to convince the understanding by reciting its evidences,—rather to resist the chilling influence of cold speculation, than the open attacks of infidelity ; it is because we do not suspect our hearers of scepticism ; but esteem them full believers in the Christian revelation.

Were our impressions of an opposite character, did we esteem it necessary to declare and defend the foundations of our faith, to enter the lists with any of the various forms of infidelity,—we should not shrink from the conflict. We would meet the foe on the fair ground of rational inquiry and argument ; and marshalling the mighty host of evidence in favour of revelation, under the banners of Reason, bid defiance to every uncircumcised Philistine, who should dare assail the armies of the living God. But why spend time in proving what not a hearer denies ? Why conjure up an imaginary enemy, merely for the sake of putting him to flight ? Why take up the time of the afflicted and disconsolate, who need the consolations of religion,—of the trembling Christian, who wants support and encouragement,—of the growing believer, who longs for the rich provisions of grace,—of the broken-hearted penitent, who pants for the balm of Gospel mercy,—of the slumbering sinner, who must be roused to a sense of the dangers which surround him,—or of the careless, thoughtless mortal, who must *feel* the truths which he now admits, and forgets, in the same moment ? Why consume the precious time of all these, in arguments and illustrations, in which they feel no interest ; and from which, they can derive no benefit ? It is true, themes of this sort afford a fine field for the displays of genius, and the gratification of vanity ;—they are exceedingly pleasing to certain classes of hearers ; because they neither disturb their security, nor alarm their fears :—they lead to illustrations, and discussions, by which the taste is regaled, and the fancy entertained ;

but they produce no good ; they are utterly inefficacious to the salvation of the soul.

There are Ministers richly endowed by nature, and refined by mental cultivation, who have a reach of imagination, and a vivid glow of fancy, inferior to none—who have the treasures of learning, the refinements of taste, and the beauties of diction at their command ; whose resources of entertainment are rich as the stores of philosophy ; who could, not only collect and arrange, but elevate and adorn ;—who, by choosing popular subjects, and embellishing them by ingenious speculations, could gather the fresh and fragrant honours of public applause ; and obtain the highest distinctions to which genius aspires ;—who yet turn away from all these delusive prospects ; sacrifice all the hopes of ambition upon the altar of truth ; encounter the frown of the world, by dwelling upon the doctrines of the Cross ;—excite the indignation of some of their hearers by declaring their guilt and danger : and steadily pursue the path of unyielding fidelity, amid the arrows of slander, the sneers of contempt, and the incessant storm of merciless persecution.

We observe, *Secondly*, that zeal and fervour in Religion, so far from being irrational, are in perfect unison with the dictates of enlightened Reason. We are accustomed to hear, that the influence of Reason tends to check all the ardour of devotion ; to repress all the emotions of religious feeling ; and to produce a degree of moderation, nearly allied to utter insensibility. It is readily admitted, that it is the office of Reason to prevent the extravagancies of the passions ; to regulate the imagination ; to prevent the mind from being carried about by every wind of doctrine ; or being captivated by fanciful delusions. But it is utterly denied, that her influence is opposed to the deepest impressions of religious truth, or

the entire predominance of pious affections. The distressful emotions of the awakened sinner are increased rather than repressed, by the dictates of Reason. What ! Does Reason forbid anxious concern, when the destinies of immortality are at stake? Does she cry peace, when the voice of God exclaims there is no peace? Does she bid the man to be cool and unmoved, who stands upon the brink of eternity's ocean; and whom the next swollen surge may overwhelm in everlasting ruin? Does Reason condemn the alarms of him, who stands burdened with guilt, exposed to the thunders of Heaven's wrath, unsheltered and unforgiven? Does she disapprove his rapid flight to the city of refuge, when the avenger of blood is close behind? No, my hearers: men never act more rationally, than when they tremble at the displeasure of a Holy God; than when their hearts are stricken through with terror, at the thought of standing before the bar of Jehovah, unprepared; men never act more in obedience to Reason, than when the interests of the soul and the destinies of a future world wholly absorb the mind; than when this world sinks to nothing in their estimation; when nothing can cheer them, but the light of Gospel hope; nothing relieve them, but the experience of pardoning mercy. The prodigal never acted so rationally, as when he resolved to return, as a penitent, to his offended father. The publican obeyed Reason, as well as conscience, when he smote upon his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And Paul never acted so worthily of his rational powers, as when he spent three days without meat or drink, in darkness and unutterable anguish, supplicating the mercy of that Redeemer, whom he had persecuted. The charge of irrationality, and of derangement, is rather applicable to the careless, than the awakened sinner; to the man who smiles while Angels weep, than to him who weeps while Angels

smile; to the man who ventures perdition upon the chance of life, rather than to him who overlooks time, in his solicitude for eternity; to him who wastes the seed-time of his existence in trifles, and exposes himself to everlasting famine; rather than to him whose eye is constantly fixed, upon the harvest, which shall be gathered in, in a future world.

Reason condemns the conduct of him, who is anxiously accumulating earthly treasures, while he utterly neglects the Heavenly inheritance. Reason condemns the exultation of him whose joys may be blasted in a moment by death; and loudly reprobates the folly which purchases ungodly pleasures, thoughtless mirth, and *criminal indulgencies*, at the tremendous expense of never-ending woe. Thus, he who is most seriously and devoutly engaged in Religion, acts most agreeably to the dictates of Reason. Thus, he who fears God, and fears none else; who hates sin, and hates nothing else; who makes Religion his one great object, and accounts all else as vanity; who dreads no evil but God's displeasure; and makes this life the vestibule of Heaven; acts most worthily of Reason, God's noblest gift to man. Hence, we perceive the absurdity of calling great ardour in religion, and strong emotions upon spiritual subjects, irrational. The principle which opposes them is philosophy, falsely so called—that wisdom of man, which is foolishness with God.

We may observe, *Thirdly*, An entire devotedness to the cause of Christ; a style of preaching calculated to arouse, convince, and alarm; and continual efforts and fervent prayer for the conversion of sinners, so far from savouring of enthusiasm or fanaticism, are sanctioned by the authority and approbation of the coolest Reason.

It is common to hear it said, of men who are much more engaged in courting popular favour, and acquiring

a reputation for distinguished talents, than in bringing sinners to the Saviour—whose sermons are much more calculated to afford entertainment, and excite admiration, than to send the auditors to the closet of devotion and self-examination—who labour more for polished style and brilliancy of thought, than for impressive truths and solemn exhortation, and who are as well satisfied if critics admire as if Christians are edified,—if the multitude be pleased as if sinners repent—that they are liberal and enlightened ; and under the influence of Reason as well as Religion. And it is as common to hear it said, of men who are serious in a serious cause, who feel the appalling responsibility of their station ; who realize that their own souls and the souls of their hearers are at stake ; who believe that their people must be brought to repentance, must be savingly converted, or perish forever ; and who, therefore, devote all their exertions to the accomplishment of this one great object, who wish to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and him crucified, and are willing to make any sacrifice to the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom—that they are bigotted enthusiasts, visionary fanatics, and strangers to rational views and solid judgment. But if we take the Bible for our guide, Jesus Christ for our model, and the destinies of an endless duration for our criterion, we shall be led, in both cases, to far different conclusions. Is it not the dictate of reason, to pay a higher regard to the decisions of God, than to those of frail, fallible men ? Yet God says, “ He that winneth
“ souls, is wise ;” “ They that turn many to righteous-
“ ness, shall shine, as the brightness of the firmament,
“ and as the stars for ever and ever.” “ Blessed are ye,
“ when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall
“ say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for my sake.
“ Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your re-
“ ward in Heaven ; for so persecuted they the prophets

“which were before you.” Of one who utterly disregarded the opinions of others, and humbly sat at the feet of Jesus, he said, “Mary hath chosen that good part “which shall not be taken from her.”

Is it not rational, that a Christian Minister should copy the example of Jesus and his disciples, take up the Cross, and follow his Lord, through evil report, as well as good report? Let us suppose, then, a Minister, who should conduct his ministerial labours after the model of Jesus and the Apostles. He would make it his only object to call men to repentance; and this object, he would pursue, constantly, perseveringly, and earnestly. He would utterly disregard the opinions, the powers, and the reproaches of men. He would go from house to house, warning men of their danger, and urging them to fly from the wrath to come. He would not confine his ministry to the Sabbath; but every day, and on all occasions, he would call the attention of men to the concerns of their souls, and the realities of a future world. He would hold frequent prayer meetings, with his fellow-Christians; yea, he might continue all night, with his brethren, in devotion; for so did Jesus with his disciples. Now, should a man thus imitate the Saviour and his Disciples, in what light would he be viewed in our days? He would be called a fanatical madman, as his master was. Be it so. But does that prove that he acts irrationally? Does that prove, that it is contrary to Reason for the servant to be as his Lord? No: it only proves, that the wisdom of man is folly in the sight of God; and that, what is highly esteemed and approved by God, is often foolishness in the estimation of men.

When one course of conduct will insure to a man applause and prosperity in this world, but will surround his dying bed with terrors, cover him with confusion when he stands before the judgment seat of Christ, and

expose him to endless condemnation: and another course of conduct will prove a thorny path of self-denial, will expose him to contempt and opposition, involve him in difficulties, and despoil him of all temporal comforts; but which will cause him to triumph in the hour of dissolution; and in consequence of which, he will receive, before the assembled universe, that glorious plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Which of these courses of conduct does Reason urge us to pursue? Indeed, if the doctrines of the Gospel, if Heaven and Hell, be solemn realities, nothing can be more irrational than to treat them in a cold, formal, and indifferent manner. If unconverted men be on the brink of perdition, is it not reasonable to address them, with all imaginable earnestness and feeling? If this, our only state of probation, be rapidly passing away, is it not reasonable to use all possible persuasions and arguments, with those who are wasting it? What would be said of a man, pleading for his own life, or the life of his friend, who should show no feeling, no earnestness, no apprehension; but should evidently try to make an elegant speech, to excite admiration, by beautiful imagery, and flights of eloquence, and who should mingle a variety of other topics with the object of his plea? would he not be pronounced void of Reason? Just so void of Reason is he who does not preach as if he never should preach again, and as a dying man to dying men.

SERMON XIX.

ON THE BOUNDARIES WHICH LIMIT THE INQUIRIES OF REASON
IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

· PROVERBS III. 5.

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding.”

IN the *preceding* discourse, we attempted to describe the proper province and office of *Reason* in the concerns of Religion. It is our *present* purpose to point out the boundaries, which limit the inquiries of Reason; beyond which, her guidance is utterly insufficient; and her noblest powers entirely fail.

If it be important to ascertain what Reason *can* do, it is no less so, to be apprized of what she *cannot* do. If it be criminal to exclude her from her proper agency, it is equally so to exalt her in the place of divine communication. If many errors result from a dereliction of her authority, the consequences of depending upon her guidance beyond the limits of her sphere, are still more fatal and pernicious. How many, by following her wandering light, into the wide and trackless regions of speculation, have been bewildered in an inextricable labyrinth of doubt and darkness!

It is worthy of our serious attention, therefore, to inquire what subjects lie beyond the reach of our rational powers, for the knowledge of which, we are wholly dependent upon Revelation.

First—The attributes and perfections of the Deity are wholly beyond the reach of rational investigation : all our knowledge of them is derived from Revelation. Reason is competent to discover the marks of design, in the works of creation ; and to elicit unanswerable arguments in proof of the existence of an intelligent First Cause : But there are strong doubts, whether the idea of God would ever have occurred to man, had it not been originally revealed. We often hear of the natural perfections of Deity, which are evident from the works of his hand ; but even here, we are unconsciously guided by the light of Revelation.

We speak familiarly of the eternity of the divine existence ; of the essential omnipresence of Deity ; and his all-pervading knowledge ; and yet, what little progress does Reason's ken make towards comprehending existence, without a beginning : and how utterly unable are we to conceive of a Being, equally present in every part of the universe, and possessing perfect and infinite intelligence. All our faculties are lost and confounded, in the attempt to grasp the mighty idea of the Divinity. " It is high, we cannot attain unto it." All the knowledge we do possess, is solely derived from the sacred volume. And many of the attributes of Deity, even when clearly revealed, are entirely too vast for human comprehension. The most sublime and profound geniuses, both of ancient and modern times, have felt and confessed the total inadequacy of their powers ; and have bowed, in reverential awe, before the mysteries of the divine existence. And even the most holy men, the inspired Prophets and Apostles, whose whole lives have been spent in sacred studies, and in devout intercourse with the Deity, have had the most overwhelming views of the incomprehensible majesty of Jehovah, and the unfathomable depths of the divine perfections.

Secondly—Reason cannot pretend to scan the motives and designs of God's administration. For feeble, short-sighted man, to sit in judgment upon the plans of infinite wisdom, or to attempt to scan the principles and final issues of the divine government, betrays a degree of folly and presumption, only equalled by its appalling impiety. All our knowledge is confined within a narrow circle. It can penetrate a little way into the thick darkness of the past, assisted by the feeble lights of memory and human records; but the future is obscured by an impenetrable veil; and only partially removed by the hand of revelation. What arrogance, then, for man, to extend his inquiries into that boundless expanse of duration, before the creation of this world; or to pretend to trace the movements of the Almighty mind; or ascertain the designs for which this magnificent system was called into existence! What temerity, to bring the doings of infinite wisdom to the bar of human reason, and to subject the allotments of God's Providence to the inspection of our feeble rationality! What impious presumption, to question the rectitude of the legal sanctions and penalties, which God has established; to inquire into the origin of natural and moral evil; to attempt to shew how this might have been prevented; or how it might have been remedied, without an infinite sacrifice; or to judge of the results designed to be produced, by this dispensation, upon the universe generally! Secret things belong to God; those which are revealed, to man. As far as the light of inspiration discovers to us the origin of this world, and the designs and dealings of God towards the race of man, it is our duty and privilege, to push our inquiries. And all that is either safe or profitable for us to know, as to the ultimate purposes of God, or the destinies of a future world, is clearly made known to us in the Sacred Volume. But to spurn the boundaries which In-

finite Wisdom has fixed to man's inquiries—to enter the illimitable regions of unholy speculation—to attempt to survey the vast empire of Almighty Providence—to solve the mysteries, or fathom the designs of God's administration—evinces a hardihood, and self-confidence, on which the Angels look down with astonishment and pity. As well might the ephemeral insect be supposed to measure continents and empires, or comprehend the policy of government, or the intricacies of science.

Thirdly—Reason is wholly incompetent to judge what kind of Revelation it is consistent for God to make. We have heard much of the principles of natural Religion, independent of all revealed truth. But all that is excellent in these principles, is borrowed from the Bible. And every thing in the common systems of moral ethics, which deserves the name of religion, was originally obtained from the same source. To bring Revelation, therefore, to the test of natural Religion, is most absurd; for they both rest on the same foundation; and must stand or fall together. How can we pretend to examine whether the doctrines of the Bible are consistent with the character of God, when all the knowledge we possess relative to the Divine character, is derived from that very Bible? How can we judge, whether the laws and precepts of Revelation be in unison with the nature and perfections of Deity, when without the aid of Revelation, we are in utter darkness and ignorance, as to that nature and those perfections? We cannot decide, whether the Gospel be worthy of God, unless we possess some certain knowledge of the attributes of Deity, independent of the Bible. We cannot judge, whether the plan of Redemption be the best which could have been formed, unless we have a perfect knowledge of all beings and all worlds in the universe, with all their natures, interests, and destinies. Thus, it is evident, that we are utterly incompetent to

decide upon the fitness and consistency of any system of Revelation: we are destitute of all knowledge of God, but that obtained from Revelation; and therefore, have no means of judging whether that Revelation is worthy of its author. We cannot, consequently, bring the principles of the Gospel to the test of other principles, previously known and of higher authority; for no such principles exist. Reason, therefore, cannot judge, *a priori*, what kind of Revelation it is consistent for God to make. Its only office is, to ascertain, whether the claims of the Bible to Divine authority be supported by sufficient external testimony; and if so, to receive, with implicit confidence, the system of doctrines, and the Divine instructions it contains.

Fourthly—Reason is incapable of a perfect comprehension of the nature and tendencies of moral evil. Many of the consequences of actual sin, are palpably obvious. The desolations it has spread through the world, the individual woe and ruin it has caused, and the host of calamities and pains which follow in its train, cannot fail to strike every reflecting mind, with a deep conviction, that sin produces misery. It is impossible to observe the effects of gross vice upon individuals under its dominion, or upon societies where it prevails, without strengthening this conviction. It requires no laboured arguments to prove, that the passions, inclinations, and tempers, which are essentially sinful, are productive of varied and extensive unhappiness. We need only survey the mournful mansions of pale disease, the loathsome receptacles of guilt and infamy; we need only see the dungeons, and fetters, and scaffolds, of human justice; follow the blood-stained path of war, through carnage, and rapine, and conflagration; and reflect upon the actual state of mankind, whether civilized or savage; to obtain the fullest evidence of the fatal effects of moral evil. It is the

clearest dictate of Reason, that if the Supreme Being be good and benevolent, man has lost his favour and incurred his wrath; that, if the human race was created innocent and happy, some fatal evil has caused a sad reverse, both in their character and condition. Reason can even go so far as to perceive the impossibility of a sinful being's enjoying real happiness; and that the consequences of sin in a future state must necessarily be unmingled misery.

Thus far, unassisted Reason can clearly discover the destructive nature and woful effects of sin. Such have been the views of the wise and virtuous, among the Heathen. But this falls infinitely short of a full comprehension of the nature and tendency of moral evil. This is only a discovery of some of the poisonous fruits; the root is still to be disclosed. It is utterly beyond the powers of unassisted Reason to comprehend the whole extent of evil in the nature of sin, or the wide spreading ruin it tends to produce. Is it impossible for finite powers fully to understand the Divine character and perfections? Equally incomprehensible is the true nature of that evil principle which rises in opposition to the Eternal. Are our faculties lost in reflecting upon the infinite extent of God's moral government? How, then, can we fully estimate the magnitude of an evil, which aims at the overthrow of that government?

Unless we can definitely know the situation and circumstances of all the millions of worlds, peopled with rational beings, in God's universal empire—unless we can clearly ascertain the true moral state of each of those numberless races of rationals—unless we can discover what kind of connexion and intercourse subsists between the different worlds in the universe—unless we can know the precise effects produced, or likely to be produced, upon the inhabitants of other worlds, by the rebellion of our guilty race—unless we can determine in what degree

the conduct of mankind, and the dealings of God towards them, are held up as a spectacle to the whole rational universe, to teach the most important lessons, and make the most lasting impressions; in a word, unless we possess an extent of knowledge which is wholly unattainable by any created being, we cannot comprehend the nature and tendency of moral evil. As this is a subject utterly beyond our reach, involved in such darkness and mystery, it becomes us, humbly to receive the information God has been pleased to afford; and devoutly to acquiesce in the decisions of infinite wisdom. We must allow the Almighty Jehovah the prerogative of managing the concerns of his own vast empire. He must be permitted to judge of the guilt of rebellion against him; of the destructive consequences to be apprehended from sin; of the measures necessary to be taken to render its pardon consistent with the general good; and of the degree and duration of punishment, which must be inflicted, upon incorrigible sinners. Therefore, when God declares, that sin is an infinite evil, and that it cannot be pardoned without an infinite atonement; when he informs us, that it is a moral poison, which pervades and pollutes the soul; rendering it utterly incapable of holiness or happiness, and deserving of infinite punishment; it becomes us to receive, with reverence, the testimony of eternal truth, saying, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" This argument puts to silence many of the arguments and objections of proud unbelief, against the doctrines of the Gospel.

Away with all theories and controversies about the origin of evil. God has not seen fit to reveal it: and let not man presume to decide on the deep things which belong to the secret councils of Deity. Away with the argument against the Divinity of the Saviour, and the necessity of an infinite sacrifice for human guilt, drawn from a low estimate

of the evil of sin : it is founded in ignorance, reared by folly, and supported by proud impiety.

Let no man dare to arraign the justice of God, in condemning sinners to eternal misery. God alone is competent to decide on the rights of universal justice, the proper sanctions of the Divine law, or the necessary penalty of its violation.

Fifthly—Reason is incompetent to judge of the moral prerequisites for future happiness. Our ignorance of the real nature of sin, necessarily incapacitates us for perceiving the necessity of an entire moral transformation, to prepare depraved man for the joys of Heaven. While Reason cannot discover the nature of Heavenly enjoyments, nor the dispositions, tastes, and affections requisite to the partaking of them, it cannot judge of the needful preparations which sinful man must experience, or perish. Reason can well discover, that the heart of man is depraved in its tendencies and desires ; that he naturally fixes his supreme attachment upon temporal and unholy objects ; and seeks happiness in the gratifications of self and sense ; and that some renovation must take place, in order to enjoy a state of being purely intellectual and spiritual : but, what is the degree or nature of this renovation, or by what influence it is effected, it is utterly impossible for unassisted Reason to determine. It must, consequently, be the subject of pure Revelation ; and we must meekly receive the information which God is pleased to afford. When, therefore, we are informed, in the volume of revealed truth, that man is, by nature, totally depraved and corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins, utterly unable to restore himself, to atone for his sins, or to do any thing good or meritorious in the sight of God ; that all his own righteousness, his morality, his religious knowledge, professions, and observances, are entirely in vain ; that he must be quickened, renewed,

and regenerated, by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit, in order to salvation; and that every one who is not thus made spiritually alive, thus changed in the affections of the heart, who is not thus translated out of darkness into light, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost, cannot be saved; but that the wrath of God abideth on him: I say, when these things are distinctly and repeatedly declared to us in the word of God, it becomes us to raise no objections against them; it becomes us not to sit in judgment upon their propriety, or rationality; but to submit to the declared decisions of the Omniscient Mind, and fully to embrace these doctrines, simply on the testimony of God.

Upon all these points, upon which we are incapable of judging for ourselves, our best authority is, "Thus saith the Lord."

Sixthly—Reason cannot change the inclinations, or fix the affections, on those objects which she approves as most worthy. The clearest convictions of *right*, are often united with the persevering practice of *wrong*. Why do many enlightened and well informed persons continue in licentious courses, though perfectly convinced of their criminality? Clearly, because the feeble powers of Reason are unable to withstand the impetuous force of inclination. And even where rational conviction does prevent open immoralities, restrain overt acts of sin, and produce external decency and propriety of conduct, the original tendency remains unimpaired; the current of evil inclinations is as strong as before. And this is the radical defect in rational Religion. It avails, to the production of a character, amiable, respectable, and pious, in outward appearance. But it leaves all the unholy propensities, and corruptions of depraved nature, unchanged and unsubdued. There remains an inward consciousness of a restraint, a force put upon inclination; and of acting

an assumed part, in opposition to the prevailing bent of the mind. A man may be fully persuaded of the excellency of virtue, of the powerful motives to a holy life, and of the baseness and hatefulness of vice; and yet find himself utterly unable to check secret inclinations, for the indulgences and pursuits which he condemns. Such an one may well adopt the sentiment of the Heathen:

“I know the right, and I approve it too:

“I know the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.”

Equally beyond the power of Reason is it, to fix the affections upon objects which it approves as most worthy. He has not yet taken the first step in self-knowledge, who is ignorant of his inability to command his affections. I am, for instance, perfectly convinced, that the Divine character is infinitely lovely; that God is the only object of supreme regard; and that I am bound, by every possible obligation, to love him, with an undivided heart: but it by no means follows, necessarily, that my affections obey my judgment. What multitudes feel the conviction of the duty, and yet remain in utter alienation from the God of Heaven!

One may admit the full persuasion that holiness is most lovely; and yet be far from loving holiness. He may seriously believe, that Religion is the only really valuable acquisition in the world; and yet, his heart may revolt at the duties and precepts of Religion. He may be convinced of the ruinous folly of a worldly life; and yet, in such a life, he may find his only happiness. He may admit, that life is a fleeting vapour, honour an airy nothing, and wealth glittering dust; and yet, his undivided affections remain fixed upon them. He may feel the weight of the motives which lead him to the strait and narrow path of piety; and may earnestly wish to walk therein, and, at the same time, may be urged rapidly forward by

his passions, in the opposite direction. He may have an intense conviction, that his inclinations and affections must be entirely changed, must be fixed upon holy objects, or he never can be happy in Heaven; and yet continue to live and die the same.

How readily does Reason admit, that Religion is the great business of life, and the chief object of regard: but to bend all the energies of the mind to the influence of this truth, is beyond all human power. How rational is the proposition, that the favour of God is the chief good, and yet how difficult to excite ardent desires to obtain it. It is *one* thing to be convinced, that to be engaged in the Divine service, and to enjoy intimate communion with the Deity, is a state of unrivalled dignity and happiness: it is quite *another* thing, to be heartily devoted and inclined to such a condition. It is *one* thing, to be persuaded, what are the noblest objects of regard: it is *another*, to fix upon them the supreme affection.

From this total inefficiency of Reason, arises the necessity of Divine influence, to accomplish this great work of moral renovation in the heart of man: and the first step towards this work, is a complete conviction, that it is utterly beyond our powers, and can be effected by God alone. While we flatter ourselves that we possess a controlling power over our wills, inclinations, and affections, we shall never submit to the terms of the Gospel. It is to those who mourn the perversity of their wills, and the depravity and unholiness of their desires and affections, and who feel their utter inability to change the current of sinful feeling, and that, if ever they are sanctified and renewed, it must be entirely the work of God; and who, therefore, come to a throne of grace, as perishing sinners, saying, "Save, Lord, or we perish;"—it is to such that the promises of the Gospel are addressed, and the blessings of the atonement offered. Proud Reason must

lay down her vain pretensions, at the foot of the Cross; nature must feel herself utterly helpless, and place her only hope in free, sovereign grace, before that moral renovation can take place, which constitutes the sinner an heir of glory. For “the carnal mind is enmity against God;” “Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Once more—Reason is not authorized to bring the doctrines of Revelation to her bar, nor to reject them on account of their incomprehensibility. We have already made some animadversions upon the arrogance of man’s presuming to judge, what truths it is proper for God to reveal, or what doctrines are consistent with the Divine character. We are now to apply those remarks more particularly to the alleged mysteries, or incredibility of the truths, of the Christian system.

Unassisted by Revelation, we are utterly ignorant of the nature of Deity, and of the manner of his existence: they are as completely beyond the sphere of our knowledge, as the planetary revolutions are beyond the ken of the dim-sighted mole.

In the sacred volume, is contained, all we know upon this high and mysterious subject. Revelation has disclosed to us as much of the Divine nature and attributes, as we are capable of knowing in our present state of existence, sufficient to make us wise unto salvation. But what we do know, compared to what we *do not* and *cannot* know, is as this world which we inhabit, to all the myriads of systems, throughout the illimitable regions of space. There is no created being, in the universe, though some may possess powers to us wholly inconceivable, who can comprehend the character and existence of God. And it was to be expected, that any communication which should be made upon this infinite subject, would contain mysteries unfathomable to our limited under-

standings. Therefore, it becomes us to bow before the majesty of revealed truth; and humbly receive the record which God is pleased to give us of himself. The Gospel reveals a Triune Godhead;—three distinct Persons in the Divinity, forming one infinite essence. This is a mystery, which, probably, angels desire to look into. All we know, or can know, about it, is, that thus it is written,—thus it has pleased the Eternal God to reveal himself to man. We have only to inquire, Is this truth taught in the authentic records of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? If so, we must believe and adore. But, to pretend, either to comprehend or to deny this doctrine—to make it the theme of argument and speculation—to employ abstract metaphysical reasoning in its elucidation—to form bold theories to bring it within the grasp of the human intellect—is going upon perilous and presumptuous ground. And if we go farther, and bring the doctrine to the bar of Reason, for trial, and reject and renounce it, because its mysteries cannot be solved—because its depths cannot be fathomed; we arrogate to ourselves the attributes of Divinity; we sit as judges over God himself. With equal propriety might we undertake to prescribe what truths it is proper for God to reveal: as well might we attempt to show, upon the principles of reason, and the nature of things, what kind of being God ought to be—as to reject the mode of existence in which the Deity is presented to us in his holy word. I do not allow myself to speculate upon this subject, even in private; much less to converse and dispute upon it. “It is high as Heaven, “what can we say? It is deep as Hell, what can we “think?” A simple reliance upon, and a cordial faith in the Divine testimony, relative to this doctrine, without being able to explain or defend it, will entitle the humble Christian to a seat in glory.

It is abundantly revealed to us in the Bible, that the

pardon of sin is impossible without an atonement; that the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God, is the only sufficient atonement; and that all, who leave this world without receiving the blessings procured by the mission of Christ, must be everlastingly miserable. Vain reasonings upon these doctrines, are exceedingly improper. We have no right to ask, whence came evil? Whether sin could have existed, without the Divine appointment? Whether God designed our race to be sinners before he created them? Or, whether he might not have prevented the fall. These are presumptuous inquiries: these secret things belong to God:—probably we shall know them perfectly hereafter. Equally impious is it for us to inquire, whether there might not have been some other way of saving sinners, than the plan contained in the Gospel? Whether God might not have pardoned sin, on easier terms than the sacrifice of the Cross? Whether sin be, indeed, an infinite evil? Whether the sins of a short life, can deserve interminable punishment? And, whether it be consistent with Divine benevolence, to punish them with endless misery? This, again, is an attempt to set ourselves above Jehovah; to scrutinize the principles of his government; to re-judge his decisions. “Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?” “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” We are incompetent to decide upon these high and awful matters. Have you a perfect and comprehensive view of all the designs and operations of God’s moral government, in all worlds and systems in the universe? If not, you cannot judge of any particular act of his administration. Are you qualified to judge of all the possible plans, whereby sin might be expiated, which was most consistent with the Divine character, and most conducive to the good

of the universe? If not, you are not authorized to say, that the Gospel is not the only expedient, which could have been devised. Do you know the precise effect which was produced upon the moral inhabitants of other worlds, by the rebellion of man; the degree in which those other beings are acquainted with, and interested in, the transactions upon this guilty globe; or the consequences likely to result to the vast intelligent empire of Jehovah, from the manner in which this race of sinners is dealt with? If not, you know nothing of the absolute necessity of just such an atonement as the Gospel reveals; or of the wide-extended ruin which might have been caused by pardoning one sinner upon other terms.

Can you fully comprehend the rights of God's government? Can you exactly estimate the atrocity of rebelling against it, or the real nature and tendency of moral evil, or the stern necessity of a terrible example to preserve the loyalty of other worlds, or what are the natural results of unholy dispositions, or what extensive purposes of general good are to be answered by a perpetual exhibition of the direful consequences of sin? If not, how dare you question the justice, the righteousness, and the benevolence, of that irreversible determination which God has made; when he has distinctly announced to us, that he will punish all, who die impenitent and unsanctified, with everlasting destruction from his presence.

It is revealed to us, that all events were foreknown to the Deity from eternity; that he has an efficient agency in all events; that nothing can take place but in accordance with the original plan of his foreknowledge: and yet that man is a free agent, accountable for all his volitions, motives, and actions. This is confessedly above Reason; but not, therefore, contrary to it. If we attempt to avoid these difficulties, we fall into greater. Many have

rejected these doctrines; but none have been found able to substitute others, more consistent, in their place. To deny God's absolute foreknowledge, and plan of action, is to assail his Divine attributes, and to overthrow the whole fabric of Revelation. On the contrary, to deny that we act freely, and that we are voluntary agents, is to annihilate our moral powers; it is to rebel against our continual consciousness; to reject the evidence of our constant experience, of our inextinguishable feelings of self-approbation or remorse. He who denies man's free agency, represents God as a tyrant, and all the pains and sufferings of this life as resulting from flagrant injustice. He who denies his own free agency, renounces all claim to rationality, and places himself on a level with a machine of wheels and weights, or a passive engine. No, my hearers, God has made known to us, that his decrees and his agency are perfectly consistent with our freedom, and accountability; and we must believe it.

It is made known to us, in the Gospel Revelation, that at death we shall commence a state of existence purely intellectual, separate from the body; that at the end of the world, there shall be a resurrection of the body, and a re-union of the soul with it; that all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive their eternal doom; and that, after it is pronounced, "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." As these events are future, it is evident they are known only to God; that he alone can disclose them; and, therefore, it becomes not man, to indulge in vain speculations upon them. We have no materials for argument, no general principles to guide our inquiries, no facts to direct us, no data from which to draw our conclusions. All that we do, or possibly can know, as to the future destinies of men, is derived solely from the Bible: that alone affords a light which can penetrate the gloom; and nothing can be

more absurd, than to employ the aid, and borrow the materials of Revelation, in forming a rational decision, as to the truth of that Revelation. Reason, therefore, has no authority to judge of the possibility or probability of these future events: it is a matter of pure Revelation; and he who unfolds those things which shall be hereafter, is able to accomplish all his purposes.

Yet vain Reason is prone to inquire, how spirit exists without members and organs? How perceptions or affections can fulfil their operations, without the senses; and demands, how can it be known, that the soul survives the body? Let Reason first explain, how the soul exists *in* the body; how mind acts upon matter; how volition produces action; how the soul can be conscious, while the body sleeps; how the mind can possibly feel energy, when the body is sinking into a mass of corruption?

Let her first explain these things, the truth of which every body knows; and then, she will be entitled to extend her inquiries.

But how, the sceptical votary of Reason triumphantly asks, how is the resurrection of the body to be effected? How shall the particles, which have been widely scattered, blown about by winds, wafted by waters, converted into vegetables, and these again decomposed, incorporated with other human bodies, and passing, in the course of ages, through numberless transformations, be collected and re-animated? But let me ask this proud reasoner, to explain how this world was formed, or by what process the first human body was raised out of the dust? Let him define what he understands by the principle of vitality in animated bodies: let him analyze the essential properties of matter: let him explain how a blade of corn springs from a corrupted seed: or how the human frame is fashioned in the womb: let him first account for those things, which are matters of experimental and

indestructible belief; and he will thence be marvelously assisted in his inquiries about the resurrection.

But human rashness pushes its inquiries still further. Men frequently ask, what kind of bodies we are to have after the resurrection? What form, what substance and qualities? Where is the final judgment to take place? How long will it continue? Where is Heaven situated, and what is the nature of its happiness? Where is the prison of despair, and what is the nature of its misery? The best answer I can give to such presumptuous inquirers, is briefly this: You will know in due season.

These are the secret things of the councils of the Most High. He reserves the knowledge of them to himself; and it is sinful temerity in man, to pretend to pry into them. "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in Heaven, but the Father only." All that is important for us to know, is revealed. It would be in no way beneficial for us to know, how the dead are raised up, or in what sort of bodies they come. Reason cannot comprehend, what a spiritual body is. No good would result from our being informed, in what region of the universe the final judgment will take place, nor what degree of locality and materiality may be attached to future retribution. It is enough for us to know, that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to be judged according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad; that the dead, small and great, must stand before God; that the books shall be opened; that the holy will be set on the right hand, and the unholy on the left; that the judge will say to those on the right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you, from the foundation of the world;" and, to those on the left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels;" and, that the righteous shall be received into his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures

for evermore; while the wicked shall be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. These are not themes, intended for vain reasoning. They are matters of faith; they are subjects of great, of everlasting import. In reference to them, our proper conduct is, humbly to bow before the revealed will of God, and prayerfully to examine ourselves, as to our preparation for those solemn scenes of futurity.

Thus have we imperfectly illustrated this interesting subject, and seen how limited is the sphere of mere Reason, in matters of Religion. We may hence learn the cause, why those who make Religion solely a matter of rational inquiry, and undertake to persuade themselves into piety, by the dictates of the understanding, generally fail of their object; and finally take refuge either in some wild scheme of latitudinarianism, or in the reveries of a sceptical philosophy.

We may also learn, why it is, that the most acute, penetrating, and comprehensive minds, are found to be even less susceptible of religious influence, than those of feeble intellectual powers. The child of ten years old, or the unlettered peasant, has sufficient reasoning powers to receive religious influence, and become wise unto salvation. And greater intellectual energy generally produces a state of feeling unfavourable to real piety. Though when men of great minds *do* experience the teaching and sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, they become eminently holy, and incalculable blessings to the world.

Lastly, we learn the importance of distrusting ourselves, and going to the fountain of true instruction, and imploring, by constant and fervent prayer, the illuminations and instructions of that Heavenly Agent, without whose aid, we cannot become meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

SERMON XX.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

JOHN V. 28, 29.

“Marvel not at this : for the hour is coming in the which all that
“are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they
“that have done good unto the resurrection of life ; and they
“that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.”

MAN, considered with reference to his latter end, has a standing the most solemn and awful ; and should consequently spend his days, in the present state of existence, in the most profound seriousness and solemnity. He is the workmanship of the Omnipotent and Eternal Jehovah ; created for the most grand and important purposes—the glory and everlasting enjoyment of his Maker ; but all have sinned and come short of this glory, and forfeited this enjoyment ; they have defaced the Divine image, which was once their glory ; forfeited the enjoyment of God, which was their greatest happiness ; sunk themselves into the mire of sin, by which they became most filthy ; and incurred the tremendous penalty of God’s holy law, which renders them most miserable. In consequence of this melancholy breach, death has made its way into our world ; and has the seat of its empire among the works of God. Hence, death is the way of all the earth ; and the grave, the house appointed for all living. All, both high and low, rich and poor, king and subject, master and servant, must yield to this king of terrors. All must fall before him ; some, by raging

fevers, and racking pains ; some, by lingering consumptions ; and some, fall in the field of battle ; whilst others plunge into watery graves. But although they thus fall, yet they do not forever lie in their graves : there is a day coming, in which the awful voice of the Omnipotent shall awake the dead, in all quarters of the globe, and cause them to come forth to the judgment seat of Christ, where sentence shall be pronounced on them, either of everlasting happiness, or of eternal woe and despair, according to their works. Christ Jesus, by his sufferings and death, repaired the breach of the broken law ; and made salvation possible to the fallen family of Adam ; and according to their improvement or misimprovement of light, and use or abuse of means and privileges enjoyed, will they be dealt with, at the great and final day of accounts. It is of this day that our Lord speaks, and assures us, in the words of the text. Finding the Jews amazed and astonished, at his declaring his sovereign and supreme authority and power, to quicken and raise whom he pleased from the dead, he doth, in these verses, assure them, that there shall be a general Resurrection, and an universal day of judgment, both of the righteous and the wicked ; and a future distribution of rewards and punishments, in another life, according to men's actions in this life. “ Marvel not at this : for the hour is coming “ in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his “ voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good “ unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil “ unto the resurrection of damnation.” In these words we have three things, which we shall consider in the further prosecution of this subject, viz.

First—The certainty and universality of the Resurrection of the dead :

Secondly—The powerful and efficacious means by which this great and sudden change shall be effected and

accomplished, in the morning of the Resurrection; and *Thirdly*—The different ends of the Resurrection, according to the difference in the characters of the persons, which shall then be raised, whether good or bad.

First, then, let us consider the certainty and universality of the Resurrection of the dead. The belief of a general Resurrection of the dead, which will come to pass at the end of the world, and will be followed with an immortality, either of happiness or of misery, is a principal article of religion, alike among Jews and Christians. It is expressly taught, both in the Old and New Testament; and this any person who is at all acquainted with his Bible, may readily see. “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; though my reins be consumed within me.”* For New Testament evidence, let the words of our text suffice; not because there are no more proofs to be found here; but because they are so abundant that it is unnecessary to repeat them. The Resurrection of the body, is a doctrine which was unknown to the wisest of the Heathens; and is peculiar to the Gospel. Some glimmerings they had of the soul’s immortality: but no knowledge of the reviving of the body. But reason assists faith in this point, both as to the will of God, and as to his power to perform it. The Divine laws are the rule of duty to the entire man, and not to the soul only; and they are obeyed, or violated, by the soul and body in conjunction. The soul designs; the body executes. The senses are the open ports to admit temptations. Carnal affections deprave the soul, corrupt the mind, and mislead it. The heart is the fountain of profaneness; the tongue expresses it; thus, the members

* Job xix. 26, 27.

are instruments of iniquity ; and when the body is obedient to the holy soul, in doing or suffering for God, and denies its sensual appetites and satisfactions, in compliance with reason and grace, the members are instruments of righteousness : hence, it follows, that there will be an universal Resurrection ; that the rewarding goodness of God may appear, in making the bodies of his servants gloriously happy with their souls ; and their souls completely happy, in union with their bodies, to which they have a natural inclination ; and his revenging justice may be manifest, in punishing the bodies of the wicked, with eternal torments, answerable to their guilt. As to the possibility of the Resurrection, the continual production of things in the world is a clear demonstration of the power of God, for that purpose. Our Saviour, and the Apostle Paul, have thus illustrated the doctrine of the Resurrection. A grain of corn sown in the earth, corrupts and dies ; and afterwards springs up entire ; its death is a disposition to life. The evidences of God's power, in the works of returning nature, in producing flowers and fruits in their season ; and the several instances recorded, both in the Old and New Testament, of persons who were raised to life, some of whom had slept many days in their graves, together with the first formation of the human frame ; are certainly sufficient to instruct us, how easily God can make those who are in the dust to awake to life. How ignorant, then, and how void of right reason, if they pretend at all to reason upon the subject, are those who deny this doctrine ! Do they rightly consider the evidences of Divine power, in creation and providence ? Surely they do not : surely the wickedness of their hearts has blinded their understanding, or they would immediately concede the proposition, that there is nothing too hard for the Almighty ; and that all things are possible for him. Thus, both from Scripture

and Reason, we plainly see the will and power of God, to raise the dead. We, therefore, now proceed, to consider, *in the Second place*, the means by which this great change will be effected and accomplished. The means, our text informs us, will be the voice of the Son of God: "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth;" a voice bursting forth from the bright and glorious cloud encircling Infinite Majesty and awful Omnipotency, and clothed with irresistible power, sounding a dread alarm throughout the universe. "The Judge is come; arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." The voice of the Son of God is now sounding in the sacred word, and in Divine Providence, warning mankind of the approach of this awful day; and calling upon them to repent, and prepare to meet their God in judgment; but it is but little regarded by the greater part; they turn a deaf ear unto it, and persist in their wicked courses: but, this awful voice, they must obey: they shall spring from their dusty beds, and witness the most awful and tremendous catastrophe—the earth trembling, the waves roaring, the Heavens shaking, the stars falling, and elements melting, mingling blaze with blaze. The Apostle Paul, speaking of this solemn and awful event, gives us the following description. "The Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God."* The Lord Jesus shall descend himself, to finish that last part of his mediatorial office: he shall descend with a shout, with the voice of an Archangel, and with the trump of God. Christ himself shall probably give the word of command to the quick and dead, to appear before him; his command shall be proclaimed by an Archangel; the angel's proclamation shall be confirmed by the sound of a trumpet, which

* 1 Thess. iv. 16.

will be heard far and near, even by those who are in the graves, and in the depth of the sea. What solemnity and awe must crown the dreadful day! All the terror, majesty, and awful reverence, which have ever been seen on the earth, shall fall infinitely short of it. Great was the terror on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law; but far greater will be the terror at the day of judgment, when Christ comes to punish the transgressors of that law, and the disobeyers of his Gospel. In obedience to the thundering voice of his Omnipotent power, the graves shall burst asunder; the sea shall expose her contents to view; and death and Hell shall deliver up their prey, whilst scattered fragments of the human frame shall throng the regions of the air to meet their kindred atoms. The Lord Jesus Christ, to whom the judgment of men and angels is committed, shall take his seat upon the throne of judgment; and before him shall be assembled all, both small and great, that ever were, are, or shall be, in the world; some with loud acclamations, and songs of joy; but others with horrible shrieks, and cries of horror and despair; according to their conduct in the present state of existence, which will meet with a reward suited to its nature. And this leads us to consider, *in the Third place*, the different ends of the Resurrection, according to the difference in the characters of persons who shall then be raised, whether good or bad. Those that have done good shall be raised to everlasting life; but they that have done evil, to eternal damnation. This part of the subject is very extensive: but we are forced, for want of time, to reduce it to very narrow limits. Those who shall be esteemed good, or shall meet with Divine acceptance, are briefly, but comprehensively, described by our Lord, in the 24th verse of this chapter. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me," saith he, "hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation; but

“is passed from death unto life.” By hearing, here, we are to understand, obeying, both internally and externally, in heart and life; by believing, we are to understand, assenting and consenting to the whole Revelation of the Divine will; especially his testimony concerning his Son Jesus Christ. Then those who shall be accounted to have done good, are they who, under a deep and heartfelt sense of their sinful, guilty, miserable, and helpless state, and a firm persuasion of the ability and willingness of the Lord Jesus to heal all sin-sick souls, and save all penitent, returning sinners, commit their all, for time and eternity, into his hands; embracing him with their whole souls, in all his offices, as a Saviour from sin and wrath, a Prophet to teach them his ways, a Priest to atone for their guilt, and a King to sanctify them, and prepare them for the everlasting enjoyment of himself. These are the persons that shall, at the sound of the last trumpet, come forth to the Resurrection of life; a life of the most exalted glory, and exquisite happiness; a life that shall never be interrupted by sorrow, pain, or death, or a lack of any thing which the immortal soul can wish for or desire: and they shall shine as stars of the firmament. The end of Christ’s coming, with reference to his saints, is to be glorified and admired in them: Christ Jesus, the head, will not only be glorious in himself, but also glorified in his members. The glory God gave the Son, he hath given; and will array them in such a glory, in soul and body, that he himself shall thereby be glorified; and he will do such things for them, as will call forth their own and others’ admiration: things that will not only exceed their unbelief, but likewise their faith. But, on the other hand, those that do evil, are directly opposed in character to those that do good. Time would fail me, to enumerate the evils perpetrated by a wicked and ungodly world, were I to attempt it, in order to lay open the particular

evil, or evils, of every particular individual: I shall, therefore, only say, and this will embrace the whole, that they know not God: i. e. they have no experimental acquaintance with, they obey not, the Gospel of Jesus Christ; they will not forsake their sins wholly for Christ; nor will they give up their carnal pleasures, for the pleasures of Religion: they are more concerned about the things of time, than about the things of eternity: they love the creature more than the Creator. These are the persons who shall come forth to the Resurrection of damnation, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire; and no tongue can express, no heart conceive, of their agony and pain, under the condemning sentence of their Judge! It is expressly declared, that “they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”* O, the tremendous dreadfulness of that wrath and vengeance, which, at the the great day, will be inflicted on the ignorant and disobedient part of mankind! To denote the greatness of it, it is called destruction; not as if it were an abolishing of their nature, and an utter extinction of their being, as the destruction of beasts is; but a loss of happiness and well being, as the destruction of the fallen angels was; and to set forth the duration of it, it is called everlasting destruction, a dying life, a living death. Their debt will never be paid; they shall never come out of prison; they will be always satisfying, but never able fully to satisfy Divine justice. Destruction shall come forth, immediately from the presence and glorious power of Christ, upon them; and that, without any measure of mitigation. The sentence denounced will be instantly executed; and the sinner that is banished from Christ’s presence, shall

* 2 Thess. i. 9.

be everlastingly tormented by his power ; in which there is a two-fold punishment, “ the punishment of sense, and “ the punishment of loss.”

Is it so, my friends, that there will be a general Resurrection and universal Judgment, both of the righteous and the wicked, and a future distribution of rewards and punishments, in another life, according to men’s actions here ? Then, what manner of persons ought we to be ? Does it become us to be trifling and vain, or to neglect the one thing needful, or to disregard the better part ? Think, O think, of the dreadful end of such an ill spent life : turn to the Lord in this the merciful day of your visitation, with grief for, and abhorrence of, your sins ; and firmly resolve, in the strength of the Lord, that you will obey and serve him, during the short remnant of your days here upon earth ; that, when you come to die, you may have peace of conscience, and a well grounded hope of being raised by Christ to a glorious immortality ; and spend an everlasting Sabbath, with angels and glorified spirits, in pleasure and in praise. *Amen.*

SERMON XXI.

ON THE CONSEQUENCE OF UNBELIEF.

MARK XVI. 16.

“He that believeth not, shall be damned.”

THIS passage is so uncouth in its phraseology, and so awful in its obvious import, that a doubt may arise in many minds, whether the selection of it, as the groundwork of a discourse, is judicious in itself; or calculated to be useful in its influence and effects. Other passages, it may be supposed, might have been easily chosen, more tender and conciliating in their language, yet bearing in their import, the same amount of terror to unbelievers. It is, however, if the Evangelist may be credited, the language of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, that lovely, gentle personage, into whose lips grace was poured; who did not strive, nor cry, nor lift up his voice in the streets; who was meek and lowly in heart; and full of grace and truth. And these very circumstances, in the character of Jesus Christ, give an emphasis of terror to his language in this passage, vastly beyond what the words themselves convey, harsh as they may sound in our ears. When harsh expressions, come from the lips of a man of fiery and furious temper, who is ordinarily accustomed to express himself with bluntness, and want of feeling, we regard it, as a matter of course, that he should express himself in such terms; and the very fact, that such observations

come from a man of such a temperament, abstracts considerably from the weight and impressiveness, they would otherwise have.

But when a man of uniformly meek temper, and amiable character, whose general current of language is in unison with his soft and conciliating disposition, seems to step aside occasionally from the evenness of his character, and to express himself with a severity of language that is unusual; if we have confidence in his habitual integrity, the only conclusion we are left to draw is, that he views the subject, on which he utters himself with so much vehemence, as peculiarly important; or the sin he is denouncing, as singularly aggravated.

In the life of Jesus, these remarks are eminently illustrated. A Lamb-like gentleness pervaded his entire character, and shed a mild and lovely lustre over his general intercourse with mankind: but yet, there were occasions, upon which the thunders of Sinai, seemed to issue with tremendous peal from his lips. There were sins, against which, there were sinners, against whom, he uttered woes sufficient to make the flesh shiver on the bones; the blood curdle in the veins; and the hair to stand erect upon the head. Yes, it was not the bold, impetuous, ardent, and sometimes erring, and sinning Peter—but the meek, the amiable, the affectionate, the unerring, and unsinning Jesus, who said, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Hell;” who said upon another occasion, “Ye are of your father, the Devil, and the lusts of your Father ye will do;” who dealt out to the Pharisees, his unceremonious and unqualified charges, of gross and rank hypocrisy. It was the same Jesus, who said, as in our text, “He that believeth not, shall be damned.”

All the circumstances of the Saviour’s situation, when he gave utterance to these awful words, are calculated to

clothe them with ten-fold solemnity. Had he uttered them, when he was jeered at by the Roman soldiery, when one smote him after he was blindfolded, and said in derision, "Prophesy who it was that smote thee;" had he uttered them, when Peter timidly disowned him; when Judas avariciously and unfeelingly betrayed him; when Pilate, notwithstanding the checks of his conscience, yielded his honest convictions to the gust of popular passion and tumult,—we might have accounted for their utterance, from the treachery, the ignominy, the ingratitude, and the cruelty of those, with whom, in these novel circumstances, he was dealing. But far different was his situation: he was now risen from the dead: had disarmed death of his dominion; and rescued from the grave, his prey. The period of his sufferings was past; the powers of darkness were vanquished; the keys of death and Hell were in his hands; he had spoiled all the principalities and powers of the infernal world; and made a shew of them openly upon his Cross. He spoke them in an attitude of Majesty, and in the temper of meekness. He was giving instructions to his Apostles, what to do, as the officers of his Church. Putting their Ministerial commission into their hands, he said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And then pronounces the decision, which is to fix the destiny of all classes of mankind. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Who is it, that will presume to say, after this, that faith is a matter of little consequence; that men may believe this thing or that; in different schemes, wide apart from each other, in most essential attributes; yet all shall alike be saved; or that good works will save them, with any kind of faith, or with no faith at all? "He that believeth not," says the Son of God, "shall be damned."

From these words, let us consider, *First*—The nature and character of that unbelief, against which, the awful denunciation in the text is pointed ; and *Secondly*—The import of the denunciation.

First—The nature and character of unbelief. This must be gathered from various considerations. The immediate context informs us, that it is the Gospel, the belief of which is demanded of man ; and the unbelief of which, seals his condemnation. But, what is the Gospel ? Here we are completely afloat. The simple meaning of the word, is *good tidings* or *good news*. But this meaning, of itself, does not at all remove the difficulty. For a dozen schemes of salvation are presented at once to the mind of the inquirer ; all of which purport to contain, and to a certain extent, do actually contain, *good tidings*.

“But what,” says the inquirer, “am I to do, if, the moment I ask, what is that Gospel, which I am to believe, on pain of condemnation, I am hailed from a variety of different quarters, with *Lo here!* and *Lo there!* ?” The only answer that can be given to such a querist is, You must grope your own way through as well as you can ; and with all the helps you can get. For there is no infallible guide on earth. You need not go to the Pope of Rome, for he is neither commissioned nor qualified, to shed one ray of light on the subject, beyond what may be obtained on the spot, on which you sit or stand. You need not go to Ecclesiastical Dignitaries, to *Archbishops* or *Bishops*, in any other country, nor to those Ministers of Jesus, who take no higher name than the unassuming one of Pastors or Teachers. For they all are in precisely the same predicament, as to infallibility. You may get their opinion, and hear their remarks, and weigh their reasonings, and take all the aid, for it is only aid, that any or all of them can give you ; but you must at last, judge for yourself, what the Gos-

pel is. What, then, must you do? Must you take up, and wade through the folio, the quarto, the octavo, or even the duodecimo volumes, of controversy? Men who have time to devote, and talents to employ, and impartial candour to decide, may not unprofitably turn their attention this way; and some are officially so situated, that it becomes in some respects their duty to do this.

“But,” says the inquirer again, “to me such a course is impossible. I have not the time; for by the sweat of my brow, I must get my bread. I have not the talent; for my understanding is not acute; and my education has been scanty: the only thing I can pretend to lay claim to, is impartiality. If I know my own heart, I do sincerely desire to know, in order that I may do my Heavenly Master’s will.” Then, inquirer, if this is your situation, and this your character, Jesus Christ has given you the very best direction you can possibly get; nay, he has given you several directions; all of which, you may, in your situation, completely comply with. One is, “Search the Scriptures; for in them, ye think, ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me.” Christ does not direct you to the Pope of Rome; nor to the decrees of Councils, nor to volumes of controversy. No; but he says, “Search the Scriptures.” You reply, you do. Every day you read more or less in the Bible—perhaps a chapter in the morning—another at noon—and a third at night—and on the Sabbath, you read in them considerably. But, mark the force of the expression, “*Search* the Scriptures;” and strong as it is, the translators have diluted and enfeebled it not a little; and without circumlocution, they could not help it. The original word, too energetic to be expressed by any single word in English, means something like this, *Dig* the Scriptures; like a man who is working in the mines, and examining with all his eyes for precious metal.

Now, this is a different process entirely from a simple perusal of the Holy volume. The one skims the surface ; the other presses, and penetrates, and works, till it gets at the substance. The great Author of the Bible, had he pleased to do so, instead of leaving the Sacred Oracles in that apparently loose and disjointed form in which they now appear, as a whole, could have thrown them into a complete system ; so that we might know exactly and at once, where to look for all the information on any one topic. But he has not chosen to do so ; and therefore we ought to be satisfied with his own plan. But he has directed every man, without discrimination, to search the Scriptures : and every man who can barely read, can do this. Among the best ways of searching the Scriptures, is, when we meet with an important passage, and especially, if it be difficult as well as important, to search for all the parallel or similar passages, interspersed throughout the Sacred Volume.* Let every one who wishes to know what the Gospel is, be thus employed, in comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Another direction, which the Saviour has given to the inquirer after truth, of no less importance than the former,

* Dr. Scott, the author of the most popular commentary now extant, has signally facilitated this labour, by his marginal references. All persons, and particularly those who have but little time to spare, may, by this help, learn the Scriptures in the shortest time, and best way ; and make up their views more satisfactorily, than by any other process. There has been published, the Bible alone, without the notes, and practical observations, but with all the marginal references, in one volume, not much above the ordinary size. No family should be without this book. No parent who wishes his children to know from the Scriptures, what the truth is, should deny himself or his offspring, such a valuable auxiliary. By this improvement, persons may, without having before them, more than one book, employ their time very pleasantly, and profitably, in making the Bible its own interpreter, by thus consulting the references, on important and difficult passages.

is this, "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The plain reason why many of the systems, calling themselves by the common name of *Christian*, are yet as diverse from each other, as any two substances that can be contrasted, is a neglect of this direction. It needs but a glance of the eye to discern, that these systems differ inconceivably, as to the views which they take of man's nature, of his duties, of his sins, of what it is, that properly and essentially constitutes sin: they differ immensely, in the degrees of self-denial, and humiliation, which they imply or urge. But, as every man must have something which he can call his Religion, to give ease to his conscience, or credit to his character, a corrupt heart predisposes him to take up with loose and general views; to be most favourable to that system, which is most favourable to his own sins; and which will leave him nearly as much at ease as ever, in his careless habits, his criminal courses, his worldly mindedness, and his love of pleasure. His heart, under these circumstances, can very soon pervert his understanding; and render him very sincere, in a belief, that leaves him at ease in Zion. The system he embraces, leaves him no further an altered man, than, as his conscience, once partially awake, is hushed to repose. But, in order to know whether that sincerity, which thus buoys a person up, is connected with the inquiry, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting;"* or whether God has not sent upon such an individual, "strong delusion, that he should believe a lie, because he loved not the truth, but took pleasure in unrighteousness," it becomes him,

* Psalm cxxxix, 23. 24.

very seriously to inquire, before he determines to “sleep on and take his rest.” The really sincere inquirer after the Gospel, is directed to do the will of God, as far as he knows it; and much of that will, every one who has the Bible in his hands, and inhabits a Gospel land, must necessarily know. If our sentiments and views are yet bewildered, and we are deeply concerned to know, what it is we must do to be saved, we must act up to the light we already have; we must, in our practice, pay a uniform and undeviating regard to the plain and practical commands of God, in relation to him, to our neighbours, and to ourselves. When the habitual and progressive searching of the Scriptures, and obedience to the will of God, wherever we know, or can ascertain it, go together, we cannot be far from the kingdom of Heaven—we cannot be far from knowing, what that Gospel is, which we must believe.

But there is another direction still, which the Bible gives to inquirers after the way to Zion. It is this. “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given unto him.” A person may examine the Scriptures themselves, with such a self-sufficient and unsubdued spirit, that from this cause, he may fail, in many momentous particulars, of finding it a light to his feet, and a lamp to his paths. He may still be perplexed and embarrassed beyond measure; and feel as though he needed another revelation, to explain that which he already has. This, it must be confessed, is a trying, and a distressing case. As far as it is a sincere one, the best remedy is, that which has been mentioned. “Let him ask of God. In every thing, by prayer and supplication, let him make his request known unto God.” The promise of God is, “The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way: the secret of the Lord, is with

“ them that fear him ; and the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein.” These are God’s assurances ; but, for their fulfilment, the voice of prayer must ascend ; and the heart of anxiety and inquiry must be poured out before him. “ For all these things, God will be inquired of.” We cannot hope to gain a knowledge of the truths of Scripture, a soul-satisfying knowledge, if we wilfully or habitually, neglect this important prescription. For we read that, “ the spirit takes of the things that are Christ’s, and reveals them to the soul.” And how are we to obtain the illuminating influence of this great and good Spirit ? By sincere, humble, and believing prayer. What says our Divine Instructor on this subject ? This is what he says, “ If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, *how much more,*” observe, “ *how much more,* will your Father, which is in Heaven, give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” Searching the Scriptures, then, doing the will of God, and asking wisdom from above, by prayer, are three important directions, to be observed, by those, who would know what that Gospel is, respecting which, it is said, “ He that believeth not, shall be damned.”

These directions being given, as a general guide to those who would understand what the Gospel is, and to judge, which, among entirely discordant and inconsistent schemes, the doctrine of Christ is, we proceed to answer that inquiry, by pointing out, what we conceive to be a few of the leading particulars, the disbelief of which will occasion the condemnation threatened in the text ; while, to the hearers, is recommended the conduct of the Bereans, whom Paul applauded, because, “ they searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.”

Here, the first particular we shall mention is, that belief in the doctrine of man’s deep depravity, and entire ruin in himself, is necessary to man’s salvation : therefore,

the disbelief of this truth, must involve the individual in condemnation; because, while he has an inadequate view of his own necessity, and depravity, he never will make application, for the only remedy, "the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from all sin."

"They that are whole," says Christ, "need not a physician, but they that are sick." "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to Repentance." And when we are required, as sinners, to accept the salvation offered in the Gospel, more is necessary to be believed, in relation to our own condition, than that we are somewhat disordered. The doctrine of the Bible is, that human nature is entirely depraved. This appears to be expressed in the very strongest language: The Scripture representation on this subject is, "O Israel, *thou hast destroyed thyself;*" "all our righteousness, is but as filthy rags;" "there is none that doeth good, no not one." "You hath he quickened," says Paul, "who were *dead* in trespasses and sins." "I know that in me, that is in my flesh,"—my carnal nature, "*dwelleth no good thing.*" "The carnal mind is *enmity* against God; it is *not* subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can be.*" "So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God." "When we were *without strength*, Christ died for the *ungodly.*" "God be merciful to me a *sinner.*" "Who can bring a clean thing, out of an unclean?" All such language as this, implies the total destruction of goodness in the heart of fallen man. And, unless we have this conviction, and belief of our entire departure from God, and of our complete loss of his Holy image, we never can give Jesus Christ and his offers, that cordial and unqualified reception, which he demands, and which is necessary, to render his merits available to our salvation.

Again: Regeneration, or the radical renovation of the heart after the Divine image, is another particular, the

belief of which is necessary to our salvation. "If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*," or a new creation. This doctrine, Christ very explicitly inculcated on Nicodemus, in his conversation with him. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This doctrine, indeed, stands in essential connexion with the last mentioned. If it was only a partial disorder which sin introduced into our nature, it might be remedied. In this case, outward reformation might suffice; and inward renovation be unnecessary. But if "the whole head is sick," if "the whole heart is faint," if "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," then, the change which has to pass upon it, must be inward, must be radical, must be entire; and man must be delivered from every expectation of bettering his own condition; and must seek to be renewed in the spirit of his mind; to "put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and to put on the new man, which is created after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness."

Further: The belief which is necessary to salvation, and the absence of which ensures the condemnation threatened in the text, is a cordial, entire, unreserved trust in the merits and righteousness of Christ alone, for everlasting salvation. In order to this, correct views of the nature and character of Christ must be taken; and a genuine approbation of him, in all his works and offices, be yielded. Every thing must be renounced as a meritorious dependence, but the blood, the death, the atonement, and the righteousness of Christ. "What things were gain to me," says Paul, "those I count loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Among Paul's former gains, must unquestionably be reckoned his exemplary morality, and the

strictness of his religion in his own way. "For after the "straitest sect of his religion, he lived a Pharisee." But all this gain is renounced as loss for Christ. "God forbids that I should glory, save in *the Cross* of our Lord "Jesus Christ." "Other foundation can no man lay, than "that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "There is no other "name given under Heaven among men, whereby we "can be saved." "No man cometh unto the Father, "but by me." "Except ye eat the flesh, and drink the "blood of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you." These, and a variety of similar passages, express the necessity of a voluntary, an entire, an unreserved, and an unqualified reliance on Christ, as the wisdom, the righteousness, the sanctification, and the redemption of his people. He, therefore, who does not thus believe in Christ, must be regarded as essentially rejecting him, whatever confidence he may express in him, as a prophet; whatever allegiance he may swear to him, as a king. Almost the whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is a development of the Redeemer's priestly character, as being himself, at once the offering and the offerer. "He gave "himself a ransom for many." If these parts of the Redeemer's undertaking, therefore, are either undervalued or overlooked, the question may, with awful propriety, be asked, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great "salvation?" Escape, in this case, our text assures us, is impracticable. We proposed to consider, in the *Second* place, the import of the condemnation here denounced.

1.—It imports a continuation of the condemnation to which the unbeliever is already subjected; and the continuation of that alienation of heart from God, which is itself a Hell. Unbelievers are already condemned; and the only difference between their present and future condemnation is, that the one is reversible, the other irreversible. "He," says Christ, "that believeth not, is

“condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” But, notwithstanding his present condemnation, there is room for him to be saved; he may repent, believe, and turn; and become one of those to whom the declaration applies, “There is therefore, now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” But, if he die an unbeliever, his doom is sealed; his fate is fixed; his sins are unpardoned. “If ye believe not,” says the Redeemer, “that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” The wrath of God, which is now represented as abiding on the unbeliever, will then, for ever and unchangeably, abide upon him.

2.—But besides this, he will continue in that alienated state of heart from God, in which he is already found. “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.” This, indeed, may, at first, appear to be no penalty to him, who, on earth, was accustomed to take delight in the exercise of these unholy dispositions. Even in this world, however, the unchanged sinner is often wretched, in the midst of his carnal pursuits. They rather amuse, than really satisfy him: they serve to take him off, from those unwelcome and painful reflections, which he would otherwise make upon himself. But the condemned individual, in a future state, will have no alleviation of this character, to soften his anguish, or to beguile the tortures of reflection. Carrying all his unholy dispositions and passions with him into the eternal world, these passions and dispositions, instead of finding other materials on which to work, or other nutriment on which to subsist, will perform their torturing operations on himself: will feed and gratify themselves by making him their victim, in whose bosom they are found. And if, even in this world, the language of Solomon is found to apply, “The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit,

“who can bear?” How intolerable, in the world to come, must be the anguish of a spirit, which, from the very nature of its case, and of the circumstances in which it is placed, must be more exquisitely wounded, than it possibly could be here, on earth! “Son, Remember,” is the language of Abraham to the rich man, who lifted up his eyes in torment. If, in a future state, the condemned sinner could lose his memory, he would get rid of many of the materials of his anguish. But his memory will there have a vividness, and a retentiveness, which it never possessed here.

In what, of a positive external nature, the final condemnation of Hell will consist, we have not the means of accurately ascertaining. To give us some conception of its horrible nature, it is represented to us, under the most alarming and awful images, which the whole range of nature can supply. It is “a worm that never dies;” it is “a fire that is never quenched;” it is “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;” it is “the blackness of darkness for ever;” it is “everlasting punishment;” it is “outer darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth;” it is “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;” it is “shame and everlasting contempt;” it is—but we forbear: if the expressions, and images, already used, cannot convey an adequate idea of what it is to be damned; cannot excite a becoming concern to escape “the indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish,” implied in this condemnation, it were a useless and a hopeless effort, to extend farther, or to vary more the sad description.

And what does every hearer now resolve to do? Does one reply, “I have already done that which is required. I have believed on the name of the Son of God, and therefore shall not come into condemnation, but am al-

“ready passed from death unto life”? Happy, indeed, is your condition, if this statement be true. But, rest not satisfied with its truth, until you have well examined the evidences that sustain it. “By their fruits ye shall know them.” “Not every one who saith unto me, Lord Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in Heaven.” Does another reply, “I have no belief in these statements; but regard all these things as a cunningly devised fable”? We have, then, nothing more to say. The day of death and judgment, must and will decide, this controverted point: but O, remember, if you should be mistaken, and yet never discover your mistake till then, you will find “no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

Does still another say, “I believe all this, and I intend, very soon, to pay to this subject, that attention which such belief urges”? O, lay aside intentions, and come to action. Not to-morrow, but to-day. You have not a solitary promise for to-morrow; but you have exceeding many great and precious promises for to-day. “Now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation: to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

SERMON XXII.

ON THE ADMONITION ADMINISTERED TO ELIJAH, FOR HIS
DESPONDENCY.

1 *KINGS*, XIX. 9.

“And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and behold,
“the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him,
“*What dost thou here, Elijah?*”

THE prophet Elijah lived in troublous times. God, in his wise providence, raised him up in Israel, at a period when the whole nation had become idolatrous. Ahab, the reigning monarch, was such a monster in iniquity, that he is said to have sold himself to do wickedly. Corruption and degeneracy were the order of the day at court; and the spirit and manners that predominated in the palace, were greedily imbibed, and faithfully imitated, by all orders of men in the nation. Jehovah was set at defiance; his authority denied; his institutions discarded; his servants discouraged, and driven into corners; and the impious and idolatrous worship of Baal, was triumphantly established throughout the land. So scarce had vital piety become, and so rare was the exhibition of true religion, that only seven thousand persons, of all the ten tribes, could be found, who adhered to the Lord: and these were so overawed and deterred, that Elijah knew not of their existence, until informed of it by the Lord himself. We may judge, from all these circumstances, how very arduous a task was allotted to the prophet. To revive and reform religion, among a people, with whom scarce the shadow of

it seemed to remain; to stand up in vindication of a cause, whose adherents, comparatively few in number, did not venture openly to appear; to reprove vices, and to censure practices, which were as universal as they were deeply rivetted; what a work was this for one, of whom the Scripture testifies, that he was "a man subject "to like passions with ourselves"! God, however, ordered him on this unpleasant embassy; and sent him to this unequal combat. Alarmed at the prospect of difficulties and dangers, which, great as they unquestionably were in themselves, were greatly augmented in the prophet's imagination, his soul sickens and dies within him. He flies into retirement, with paleness in his countenance, and despair in his heart. What is particularly remarkable, however, is, that he should adopt this course, after he had prosecuted his work with some success; and had, though left entirely alone, in a religious experiment, signally defeated, and caused to be slain, four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal. Jezebel, King Ahab's wife, to revenge the slaughter of these false prophets, threatened Elijah with a similar fate. This induced him to retire into the wilderness, and there pour out the desponding prayer, "O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than "my fathers." Afterwards, he betook himself to a cave, indulging still the same disconsolate spirit. It was in this situation, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What dost thou here, Elijah?" This was an important question. Elijah had abandoned his duty, through a criminal fear of man. He was spending too long, in useless solitude, the time that he ought to have appropriated to public duty, and to active usefulness. It is a question so full of meaning, and so useful to be considered by every person as put to himself, that it will lay the foundation for many pertinent remarks, and much salutary improvement. It is a question, addressed to the conscience of

the sinner and of the saint, that should excite both to a due self-examination. It is a question, which every individual would do well to put to himself daily, and to see whether an answer can be given to it, that will satisfy conscience, and that will satisfy God. To aid its proper application, we shall, therefore, refer it to various characters among men, to various states of the mind, and pursuits of life. And there is reason to apprehend, that it will find us all, more or less, like E'lijah, out of the way of duty.

We ask the question, *First*, of the secure sinner. What dost thou here, in this state of complete unconcern about thine own felicity, making no inquiry, what thou shalt do to be saved? Placed upon earth but for a day, destined to a speedy removal to another region, where change will never be known, what hast thou done, or what art thou doing, towards rendering that state so happy, as not to admit the desire of change? Alas! nothing is doing. From infancy to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age, in all these states, multitudes are found at ease in Zion. Day has succeeded day, and year followed year, and still thou art at the same spot, as to religious and divine things. Nothing done for eternity; no inheritance laid up in Heaven; no treasure there. Gallio-like, thou hast cared for none of these things. The inquiry never occurs, or, if it does, excites no concern, "Am I prepared to die? Have I repented, and "done works meet for repentance? Have I believed, "and brought forth the works of faith?" A thousand thoughts have passed through thy mind; but, among them all, has never been reckoned, the thought of an hereafter: a thousand plans have been pursued; but, that of laying up a good foundation for the time to come, has not been among the number. Is it not time to hear the order, and obey it, "Arise, O sleeper, and call upon "thy God"?

Secondly—The mere worldling may properly be asked, “What dost thou here,” full of cares and anxieties, plans and projects, for the increase of substance, the acquisition of honours, the enjoyment of pleasures? But are these the objects which thou wast sent into the world primarily to pursue? Is it the height of thy ambition, the summit of thy hope, the first of thy desires, to be opulent, or great, or voluptuous? Satisfied to aim at objects which thou mayest never gain, which, if gained, will not satisfy, and if they did satisfy, can be possessed only until death, art thou unwilling to be rich towards God? Is there no relish for the joys that are at his right hand? Are there no ambitious feelings excited for the honour of becoming the sons of God, kings and priests in his temple, to go no more out? To such persons, as rational and immortal beings, the question must be utterly confounding, “What dost thou here?” O that such a conviction were produced on the minds of characters of this description, as would issue in the determination, “What have we to do any more with idols?” followed up with the acknowledgment, “for thou art the Lord our God.” Not in any thing below the sun, does human felicity consist; for “a man’s life,” says the Saviour, “consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” Be these things what they may, though the pursuits of some be, in comparison, far more noble than those of others, still, religious “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom, and with all thy gettings, get understanding.”

But as the words before us were addressed to a good man, who was found out of the path of duty, we shall, in the remainder of this discourse, prefer accommodating them to the various cases, characters, dispositions, and pursuits of the children of God: there is much more emphasis in the question, considered as addressed

to them, than as applied to others. For they profess to seek those things that are above; to aim at fulfilling the duties of their station, and answering the ends of their creation and redemption. But sometimes the Christian may receive the censure implied in the text.

1.—For the improper company he keeps, and the unsuitable scenes to which he resorts. “What dost thou here, Elijah?” Are these fit associates for a person, whose profession binds him to abhor that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good? Are these scenes becoming, for him who is under engagements to walk, not according to the course of the world, but after the precepts of his Lord? With the world, we must sometimes mingle; with those who are mere men of the world, we must occasionally have intercourse. Business requires it: civility demands it: our connexion with society, in its various branches, renders it expedient, and oft-times even necessary. But if we make those our chosen companions, who fear not God, nor love his name, nor do his will; if we prefer their company to that of the saints, the excellent of the earth; if we resort to it more frequently, continue in it longer, and especially if we are afraid to reprove the evils which we cannot but discern and dislike, we are out of our place: What do we here? This is not to honour God. These are not the places at which we shall be built up in our most holy faith. We stand on forbidden ground: the longer we tarry here, without a providential call of duty, the greater risk we run, the more of the Divine displeasure do we incur: we provoke the Saviour of men, to withhold from us, that influence, which is necessary, to enable us to honour him in the hour of temptation. Are the known enemies of God our bosom friends? Are the places where he is not named or known, or named or known only to be abused or blasphemed, our chosen resorts?

If so, we act so out of character, that we may well blush when asked, "What dost thou here, Elijah?"

2.—This language is applicable to the believer, when guilty of improper conduct, or engaged in unworthy pursuits. A holy people, zealous of good works, is the character of those, whom God has called to the knowledge of himself, and of his Son Jesus. From the period at which they take his name, and profess to have received his nature upon them, they are to exhibit a deportment that shall be uniformly consonant to their new nature, and to their heavenly and immortal prospects. But, who can refrain from the exclamation, "What dost thou here, "Elijah?" when the Christian is seen wholly absorbed by wicked or worldly things, wholly intent on gain, and indifferent, or too little scrupulous about the means employed to accumulate it? What does such an one mean, and in what condition is he found, when, forgetful of the sacred precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," he is utterly indifferent about his neighbour's welfare, or, perhaps, in dealing with him, takes undue advantage of the necessity of his situation, practises usury upon him, and justifies his unworthy conduct, by alleging the example of others, who, perhaps, have not the fear of God before their eyes? Thou, who professest to take the Saviour's precepts for thy rule, the Saviour's conduct for thy pattern, what dost thou, in this state of condemnable conformity to the iniquitous principles, the false maxims, and unhallowed practices of the world? Is this a situation for a child of God, a disciple of Christ, an expectant of immortal life, to be found in? Who would know such a man to be what he professes, if he forms his judgment by what he sees him do, by what he hears him say? But again :

3.—The sinful tempers, the unchristian spirit, of a professor of religion, no less than his ambiguous or un-

worthy conduct, are meant to be censured by the pointed question in our text. 'Thou follower of the Lamb, what dost thou mean, by exhibiting in thyself the fury of the lion? Thou who prayest, "Forgive us our trespasses, as "we forgive those who trespass against us," what would be thy situation, should God take thee at thy word, should he mete out to thee the same measure of resentment, which thou dealest out to others; should he discover the same implacability of temper towards thee, as thou art showing in every look, in every word, in every action, to thy neighbour? What dost thou here, in this state of mind, so dissimilar, so opposite to the mind that was in Christ? Is this the temper that should be indulged, are these the feelings that should be cherished, by such as profess to learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart? What dost thou, again, believer in the Son of God, in the possession of a spirit uncandid, and disingenuous? What mean these concealments of soul, this want of openness, which an honest heart ought never to betray? Whence arise, or whither tend, those suspicions, those jealousies, those apprehensions, that seem to lurk within thee, and yet that dread to express themselves openly, lest by being brought fully to the light of truth, they should be discovered to be unfounded, and to have no real cause for their existence, other than the depraved state of that heart, in which they are found to reside? Christian, Religion is an honest thing. It is inconsistent with that dark and winding course, that subtle and disguised conduct, which is sometimes attempted to be reconciled with it. Nathaniel exhibited its real character, and its native features, on the occasion on which Jesus said of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there "is no guile." Cherish against your neighbour no unfriendly suspicions, unless you are very sure you have a good foundation for them. Set afloat no unkind rumours

with regard to him, until you can meet him with these charges, prepared to substantiate them to his face. Go and tell him his fault, to the extent in which you know it to exist; and set it not in circulation among others, whose ignorance, ingenuity, or evil-mindedness, disposes them to magnify it a hundred fold. The manifestation of a temper the reverse of this, will put a person to shame and silence, when a truth-loving God shall thus interrogate him, "What dost thou here, Elijah?"

4.—We cannot avoid urging this pointed question upon the Christian in affliction. That is the time that tries the graces which men pretend to be possessed of. It is then, that God brings us to the test. He kindles and heats the furnace, he puts the metals that appear precious in it, he watches the process of the operation, and decides on the qualities and character of the sufferer.

Then the real gold comes ultimately out more brilliant than ever it before appeared; the dross that disfigured and defiled it, is dissolved. Those metals, which were only base materials, melt utterly away. 'Tis then the question is put, "What dost thou here, Elijah?" and the conduct manifested, gives the answer to the question. Whatever struggles between remaining corruption, and reigning grace, the genuine believer may at first be conscious of, by and by they are over. His conduct in the trying scene, becomes a living lecture on the petition he has often offered, "thy will be done." "It is my will," says he, to whom the prayer is offered, "that this your substance should be destroyed—that this your child, should die—that this, your bosom friend, the desire of your eyes, should be taken away with a stroke—that this body should be pained with acute, or tried by lingering disease." "Thy will be done," says the sincere soul still. "This valued property, this beloved

“ child, this bosom companion, and this frail body, were
 “ all thy gifts. Dispose of them as thou seest meet ; for
 “ thine they are, and I would not withhold them from thee.
 “ It is the Lord who claims them—let him do as seemeth
 “ him good. What do I here, it is my desire and de-
 “ sign to do and to suffer thy holy will.” ’Tis thus
 affliction tries and proves the children of Jehovah. To
 this point they all ultimately come ; but with some, there
 is so much more dross, and it is so much more intimately
 mixed with the gold, than is the case with others, that
 the time employed in effecting this end, and the se-
 verity of the means for bringing it about, are different
 with different persons. For a long time, the feelings of
 nature maintain so obstinate a contest with the principles
 of grace ; and self-will so vigorously opposes the will of
 Jehovah, that victory seems uncertain on which side
 to plant her standard. In this distressing stage of the
 business, how pertinently and properly may we expostu-
 late with the sufferer, and say, “ What dost thou here,
 “ Elijah ?” Are these rebellious tempers, these mur-
 muring exclamations, these unhumbléd feelings, the dis-
 positions which become a creature towards a Creator, a
 sinner towards a long-suffering God, a Christian towards
 a loving Saviour ? Severe as this affliction seems, is it
 not still far less than iniquity deserves,—far less than the
 Saviour underwent for you ? Do not remaining mercies
 call for a sufficient measure of gratitude to overba-
 lance these repining sighs, these implicit accusations of
 the Deity ? Or do not the greater sufferings of your
 neighbour amply prove that God’s strokes on you, are of
 lighter weight than those by which others are oppressed ?
 Then what dost thou here, inactive and desponding, in-
 capable of relishing remaining mercies, undervaluing
 what thou hast, because of the removal of what once was,
 but is now no longer thine ? Why is duty neglected ?

Why is apathy and indolence indulged? Why art thou swallowed up of excessive sorrow? This is not the posture of a Christian—these are not the exercises of mind, by which we should be characterized. Weep, weep bitterly, under your loss or trouble; feel, deeply feel, the severity of the stroke. For Jesus wept, and sighed, and groaned, upon similar occasions. But yet, sorrow not as those that have no hope; be not so extravagantly disconsolate, as to make others think, or to believe yourselves, that all is gone. Much as you recoil from the bitter cup, earnestly as you pray in the language of your Lord—“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;” yet, close your petition, like him, with this submissive clause, “If this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” In a waiting posture, at the Saviour’s feet, pray that grace may help you to perform a duty which nature shudders to accomplish. Then, when asked, “What dost thou here, Elijah?” you may reply, “Doing as my Lord has bid me do, when he says, *“it is good for a man to hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God;”* doing what a creature, what a sinner, what a Christian ought to do—*“hearing the rod, and him who appointed it.”* Happy frame of mind! Blessed tendency of affliction! Right and wise improvement of the visitations of the Lord! “Blessed is the man, that thus endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

5.—With the expostulation, “What dost thou here, Elijah,” the Christian may properly be addressed, who has left his first love, in whom the things that remain are ready to die. When spiritual life is first infused into the soul, starting from his long sleep of death, and from the delusive dreams that have amused him, while his faculties were thus enchanted and enchained, the awakened

sinner manifests an earnestness, to his immortal interests, never known or felt before. For a while, he is so much and so warmly engaged in the pursuit of spiritual good, is so delighted with, and engrossed by, religious objects, that the fear is entertained, that he will be righteous overmuch. But these days of warmth and vigour, of fervour and elevation, pass away. The Christian, acquiring greater light and knowledge, and being of longer standing, in the courts of the Lord, is apt to lose a considerable measure of the relish, which he once had for spiritual things. There is, indeed, an injudiciousness, and an immaturity, in his first views and exercises, which he finds it expedient afterwards to dispense with. But in exchanging warmth for solidity, and fancy for reason, we become in danger of growing entirely formal. Our religion assumes a more guarded form, in some respects, but it is apt to be attended with, or followed by, a lukewarm state of mind, peculiarly odious to the head of the Church. Instead of being fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, we become neither one thing, nor another; we regard Religion, so far as to own it, externally to perform its duties, and engage in its exercises—but our hearts are so inanimate, our conduct so indecisive, that, partaking of the Laodicean character, of being neither cold nor hot, we are in danger of meeting the Laodicean sentence: “I would thou wert cold or hot; so, then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will reject thee with loathing and abhorrence.” It is observed, in the parable of the Virgins, that the wise as well as the foolish, slumbered and slept. In this, they were to be blamed; though their sleep was not the sleep of death. If we are not watchful, the subtle enemy, who is ever vigilant to discern and malicious to improve advantages against us, will ensnare us e’re we are aware. Against gradual declension in the spiritual life, we should pray

and strive; and when we have been charmed away, from the Saviour, and from duty, by the deceitful glare of worldly objects, or the stupifying influence of sinful pleasures, we may be even thankful, if God, by some alarming, and soul-rousing providence, call out to us, "What dost thou here, Elijah? Instead of watching, and praying that thou enter not into temptation, thou art already far gone in delusion and in danger, and the strong man armed, threatens to keep thy heart as his palace, and his own goods there in peace. Awake thou that sleepest—trim the lamps that burn so dimly—seek the unction of the Holy Spirit, whose influence, like oil, will re-ignite if extinct, or render brilliant, if it be dim, the flame, that should shed a light on every surrounding object." The question, "What dost thou here," not only carries in it a censure of a state of indifference, but conveys an exhortation to the instant adoption of means, for bringing back our wandering souls to the fold, whence they have, perhaps inadvertently strayed. Keep no longer at such an inauspicious and unhappy distance from the fountain of living waters, at which it seemed once your delight to drink; but repair thither, for the revival of your dying graces, for the re-igniting of your half-extinguished light. The same Sun of righteousness, which both illumined and warmed the soul, when it lay in the darkness of spiritual night, and was bound in the icy fetters of sin, must disperse those clouds that have since enveloped it with gloom, and thus invigorate it with those energies which have been long suspended, or withheld. Instead of remaining where you are, drooping or declining Christians, betake yourselves speedily to him, who, notwithstanding your departure, is still waiting to be gracious, is still exalted that he may have mercy.

One or two reflections, on the frailty and perversity of man, in contrast with the mercy and goodness of God, shall close the subject. Who can help feeling astonished at the part Elijah acted, that considers the interpositions of Jehovah in his favour? By miraculous events, God authenticated his mission, prospered his ministry, and consoled and encouraged his heart. But, because a base and wicked woman uttered her malicious menaces against him, he trembles, he flies, he abandons his duty, he throws aside his work, he takes his refuge in the desert, he prays that he may die. Lord, what is man! Is this the same Elijah that confronted, that defeated, that caused to be slain, four hundred and fifty idolatrous priests, whose heart, on that occasion, knew not fear? Yes, this is he; but oh! how changed! But not less astonishing is the forbearance of Heaven. "What dost thou here, Elijah?" is all the censure which Divine benignity passes upon him; and immediately, he has renewed tokens of the presence, power, and love of Israel's God. Well might St. James affirm, that Elias was a man of like passions with ourselves. And how often do we imitate this unwise and unworthy portion of his character! Sometimes, Divine goodness, so affects, so amazes, so dissolves, so subdues us, that we determine, we never will distrust our God again. Vain determination! The first difficulty that occurs, the first temptation that assails, the first peril that awaits us, unmans our soul; and like Elijah, either in temper or in conduct, we act so unlike ourselves, so out of character, that God puts us to shame, by the keen interrogation, "What dost *thou* here? "*thou*, a child of God, who keeps his people, as the apple of his eye; *thou*, a disciple of Jesus, who gathers his brood under his wings, what dost thou here, in this unworthy company, in these unbecoming scenes, in this unchristian temper, in this complaining attitude, in

“ this forbidden conduct ? ” Every such reproof must cause our sins to find us out—must so affect us with a sense of guilt on the one hand, and of Divine goodness, on the other, that we must acknowledge, “ It is of the Lord’s mercies, and because he is God, and not man, that we are not consumed. *Amen.*”

SERMON XXIII.

ON THE CURSE PRONOUNCED AGAINST THE SERPENT, INCLUDING THE FIRST PROMISE OF A SAVIOUR, MADE TO OUR FIRST PARENTS.

GENESIS III. 15.

“ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed : it (he) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

OUR text, connected with the immediately previous verse, contains the curse of God, pronounced upon the serpent, the seducer, the wicked seducer of the mother of all the human family. Subjects of fear, shame, and a sense of guilt, because of the fall, Adam and Eve had vainly attempted to hide themselves from the Lord “ amongst the trees of the garden.”* “ The Lord called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?”† Adam made a feeble and false apology:‡ “ I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked ; and I hid myself.” God convicted him, and charged him with his crime in the mode of interrogation.§ “ Who told thee that thou wast naked ? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat ?” Adam makes another feeble apology :|| “ The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” The woman,

* See verse 8. † v. 9. ‡ v. 10. § v. 11. || v. 12.

Eve, is now convictingly interrogated.* “What is this thou hast done?” A true, but vain and unjustifiable apology is made by the woman: “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” Then follows the curse of God, pronounced in the text and context, on the serpent. In the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th verses, we find the predicting curse of God, upon our mother Eve, and upon Adam, and the very ground for his sake; “because he had hearkened unto the voice of his wife,” and disobeyed his Maker. This curse of God, the consequence of sin, we find laying upon both sexes of the human race ever since, except so far as, in particular cases, it is reversed by Sovereign Providence. Some think the sentence pronounced in the text, was pronounced against the serpent as an animal; others, that it was pronounced against the Devil, who made use of the serpent as a visible instrument of his deception and malignity: others again, are of opinion, that both the animal serpent and Satan, were the objects of the curse. With these last we agree; and cannot understand the passage rationally without so doing. Among the many kinds and species of serpents in the world, it is not agreed, I believe, what kind of serpent that was, in the form of which, or by which, positively, Satan tempted our first parents to sin, and to ruin themselves. Some suppose it was the basilisk. The curious on this subject, may examine Pool’s Synopsis, and other authors on Natural History.

We acknowledge uncertainty as to the kind, form, and capacity of the original subtle serpent. But from the terms of the curse, we think there is no hazard in believing, that previously to the temptation and fall of man, the serpent went erect, and eat better food than mere dust. Such a supposition, or fact, would be but a plain and proper antithesis to the last member of the 14th

verse ; “ Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.”

To the terms of the text, let us now more especially attend.

“ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, “ and between thy seed and her seed : it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

Observe, these words were spoken directly to the serpent, but in the hearing of Adam and Eve ; and though they be a curse, as to the serpent, whether animally or Satanically considered, yet they contain, as far as we know, the first drop of mercy ever made known to an intelligent creation ; at least, the first ever made known to man. They are Gospel—a glimmering Gospel—the first medicine applied to the despair and alienation, and to the recovery of the human heart. As the language of the text regarded man, and especially woman, it was predictive and promissory of great honour and good. Satan, in and by the serpent, had intrigued the woman, the darling wife of Adam, into his service ; to procure the fall of Adam, a covenant head ; and so bring the merit of damnation upon all the human kind ; and, no doubt, felt an infernal gratification at his success. But, as mortification and disappointment to the devil, and commiserating, pardoning grace, to the fallen, fearful pair, God, as it were, says, ‘ Boast not, Satan, in your alliance with the woman, the immediate cause of her husband’s ruin. “I will put enmity”—not continue friendship and co-operation—“between thee and the woman ;” yea, more, “and between thy seed”—all thy kind, all devils and wicked men—“and her seed ;” her son Jesus Christ and the true Church: “it (he,)” Christ, her seed, “shall bruise thy head”—do thee a capital injury—“destroy thy works,”* “and thou shalt “bruise his heel”—only

his heel—do him but a slight injury. “The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it,” the Church, the mystical seed of the woman.*

In treating farther of this subject, I shall endeavour, now:

First—To explain the enmity between the serpent and the woman:

Secondly—To shew who is especially meant by “her seed” in the text—and why he was to be the woman’s and not the man’s seed:

Thirdly—To shew the reason, or cause, of the mutual enmity between the “seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman:

Fourthly—To notice the fulfilment, or positive execution, of God’s predictive curse, in the text, “it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel;” and

Lastly—To apply, or improve the Doctrine.

And now, O Lord God of Heaven and Earth, direct the heart of the Preacher on this interesting, profound subject.

Agreeably to this plan, I proceed,

First—To explain the enmity between the serpent and the woman. And here, my first remark is, that it is an enmity constituting a curse, which God himself has pronounced. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman.” This is a remark, which may be made, of all the physical peculiarities, sympathies, or antipathies, of the animal world. Previous to man’s fall, no enmity existed between man and any creature on the earth, in the air, or sea. To man, the image of God, other creatures were all peacefully subservient.† “And have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth

* Matt. xvi. 18.

† Gen. i. 28.

“upon the earth.” Since the fall, it is less so with all animals. But there seems to be a peculiar enmity between all the serpent kind, and man; and, particularly, between all the serpent kind, and woman. If we be not mistaken, there is a repugnance in the feelings of humanity generally, to every thing that creeps. The English word, Serpent, is a participle of Latin original, and is derived from the motion of the animals so named. Somehow or other, in the course of Divine Providence, the odium implanted in the woman, by the Lord himself, at the tempting serpent, has been extended to all animals, say of the snake kind, which go “on the belly,” the situation and mode of travelling to which the instrument of the devil was doomed. The first feeling upon sight, is to kill or fly.

Will it be said, that the material serpent was morally innocent; and deserved no curse? So we might say of all the animal creation; and yet they suffer by the fall. So we might say of man’s body. The human body, as mere matter, abstractly considered from the soul, is incapable of sinning; yet how does it suffer hunger, thirst, cold, heat, fatigue, sickness, and even death! And in all civilized countries, where men, for capital offences, die by law, it is the body, the instrument of the wicked soul, that suffers, although it had no volition in the case. So God cursed the serpent with enmity and its consequences; and made it a constant visible memento to mankind, of the evil and danger of transgressing the law; or of being instrumental to others’ sinning against God.

Another remark I would make on this subject, under the first head of our discourse, is, that whatever may be said, and whatsoever curious and speculative things might be alleged about the serpent seen by the eye, and heard by the ear of Eve, and all its subsequent race, in kind, species, disposition, and inconveniences; the devil,

Satan, Apollyon, is principally, and most especially meant, and addressed in our text.

Now, no doubt, before the fall, the devil hated the woman, as he did all holy beings, and their happiness, from his very nature as a fallen angel; else why attempt the ruin of the woman, and all her sort? The enmity of Satan, then, toward the woman's *good*, did not begin with the sentence against him in the text; but existed before. Some difficulty may seem to arise here; but it is only apparent; and will easily vanish by explanation: thus—that enmity felt by Satan to the woman before the fall, was of the same kind, and on the same principles, with that which he felt toward holy angels, and toward God himself. Holiness and the honour of God was the object of his hatred and enmity. But observe, now, since he has succeeded in his temptation, the woman had changed her character,—had become, in common with Satan, an enemy of God; a new relation took place between Satan and mankind. “Ye are of your Father the devil, “and the lusts of your Father ye will do.”* This sad relation, founded a species of friendship even between the devil and the woman. This relation, this coincidence, this communion in principle and practice, God, in the text, threatens and promises to break up. As it respected Satan, it was, indeed, a threat, a curse; but as it respected Eve, it was a promise, a great Gospel blessing. The enmity, then, of Satan to the woman, and of her to him, consisted in no essential moral change on the part of the tempter; but in a cordial change on the woman's part. Satan continued, and will continue, an enemy to God. The woman, from an enemy, became the friend of her Creator, and rightful Sovereign; and of course, heartily opposed to Satan and sin. This change in the woman, in

* John viii. 44.

any woman, or man, is of Divine efficiency. It is effected by the power of God, according to the Gospel; and fulfils the expression, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman."

As far as any individual becomes soundly and truly religious, so far he hates the devil, considered as such; and just so far, Satan, God's adversary, reciprocates such a hatred or enmity. This mutual aversion of Satan and renewed human nature, grows naturally out of the eternal, infinite, necessary difference between holiness and sin; between moral rectitude and moral evil. These two opposite principles can never, to eternity, be reconciled—can never be cohabitants. The holy, then, must go to Heaven; and the unholy, as certainly, must go to Hell. We see, then, evidently, that the enmity under consideration, is *sin* in Satan, and *grace* in the woman. But some objector may say, "I can see and believe, that God can put grace in the heart of the woman, but cannot see so readily, how he can, or that he does, put *sin* or enmity into the heart of Satan, or any other being." To this we answer, the sentence in the text, as respected the devil, was indirect and oblique; though not in words, yet in meaning; and went to declare and predict the state of mind and feeling that would result to the *wicked one*, from the restoration of holiness to the human heart. Besides, perhaps, it is not imprudent in us, to say and confess, that so limited is our understanding, we cannot tell, and ought not rashly to say, what God can or cannot do with a sinner's heart, by his immediate or mediate agency, consistently with his perfect purity and holiness; so as to give up or influence that heart to evil and its hurt. The complexion of some Scripture language, and not a little of it, is awful and humbling on this subject. The following passages may serve as a specimen: "And the Lord said unto Moses,

“When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in thine hand: *but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.*”* “And *I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.*”† “And *I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.*”‡ “And *I, behold I, will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.*”§ “For it was of the Lord to *harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses.*”|| “He *hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*”¶

No softening attempts to wrest these Scriptures from a fearful meaning, should encourage men, by a careless life, to provoke the Lord to “put enmity” in their hearts to “the things that belong to their peace, before they be hid from their eyes.”

Submitting now, any thing farther under this head, to the consideration of my hearers, I proceed,

Secondly, To show, who is especially meant by “her seed” in the text, and why he was to be the woman’s, and not the man’s seed.

Who, then, is the woman’s promised seed, the object

* Exodus, iv. 21. † Exodus, vii. 3. ‡ Exodus, xiv. 4.

§ Exodus, xiv. 17. || Joshua, xi. 20. ¶ John, xii. 40.

of Satan's enmity? To this, the proper answer is, all the holy, descended from her womb, from one generation to another, until the world's end: or, in other words, the Church. By the word, woman, is sometimes, in the sacred Scriptures, meant, the Church.* She is stated as "being with child, and travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." This woman is the seed of Eve. She is sometimes called Jerusalem; and said to be "the mother of us all."† Indeed, the Church, as such, is denominated often in Scripture, by the term "seed;" and particularly the true Church.‡ "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the *seed*, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all"—that is, all the faithful, whether of Jewish or Gentile birth. Between all these and the *Old Serpent*, there is and will be an enmity. But, again:

Jesus Christ, most eminently and especially, was intended by "her seed" in the text. The pronoun "*it*" in the text, is singular; and of the neuter gender. Probably it ought to have been translated *he*, and to have agreed with the pronoun "*his*" heel. This does not, however, affect the sense, nor imply disrespect. The Holy Ghost hath his name expressed in the neuter gender, in the Greek Testament; and sometimes in the masculine. "Ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον."§ The reason is merely the idiom of the language. Christ himself, describing the Father, says, "Πνεῦμα ὁ Θεός."|| We notice, however, with emphasis, the singularity of the expression, "it shall bruise thy head." Compare this with the following expression: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to

* Rev. xii. 1, 2.

§ John, xiv. 26.

† Gal. iv. 26.

|| John, iv. 24.

‡ Rom. iv. 16.

“seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.”*

The Holy Spirit here interprets the text, with all-sufficient plainness. The coming of this seed of the woman, was not only intimated in the text, but typified and prophesied of, by too many things and persons, to be quoted in a sermon. The following language of the prophet Isaiah, is very remarkable: “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”† No less remarkable are these words of the prophet Micah: “But thou, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”‡ These passages, in connexion with the Gospel history of the conception and birth of Christ, constitute a holy and infallible comment on the text; and will serve as a sufficient answer to the question, who was most especially meant by “her seed,” in the Lord’s address to the serpent.

But we are bound by promise (if able) to show why this seed, this Christ, was to be the woman’s, not the man’s seed. And here our first remark is, that by the woman, as a mean or medium to get at Adam, Satan accomplished the fall of the *human kind*; and expected to deprive the Deity of the glory resulting from the holiness and happiness of mankind. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.”§ Satan availed himself of the *tender* connexion subsisting between the wife and the husband.

As Satan used the woman, the weaker and more flexible vessel, to destroy her husband and his race; so

* Gal. iii. 16.

† Micah, v. 2.

‡ Isaiah, vii. 14.

§ 1 Tim. ii. 14.

God Almighty takes him in his "own craftiness," and makes the woman a channel of salvation.

Again: The woman was not as criminal as her husband, Adam; for she was *beguiled* and *deceived*.* But "Adam was not deceived." He sinned with his knowledge—with open eyes. The Scriptures nowhere find an apology for Adam, grounded on his ignorance or deception. He does not pretend to it himself. He only attempts to palliate or extenuate his crime. "The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." In these words, Adam obliquely intimates, that God himself indirectly promoted the fall, by the companion he gave him. This impudence to God, was among the first practical fruits of Adam's apostacy: and it is not an uncommon thing for men, in their hearts, and sometimes in their speech, to this day, to palliate their grossest errors and crimes, by attributing them to the Divine procedure. Even drunkards, fornicators, and felons, will resort to Divine decrees, or predestination, or fate, as their exculpation from blame, although conscience charges their sin to themselves, and not to God, who forbids it.†

Further: It may be specially remarked, that the woman, Eve, was not a covenant head. Her sin was a private one,—the sin of an individual, having no federal descent. Not from Eve, but from Adam, guilt descends to all the human family. "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."‡

Every seed of *man*, therefore, is a sinner; and could not atone for his own sin, by a shorter than eternal punishment. How then could he atone for others? With the *seed* of the woman it is otherwise. Woman,

* Gen. iii. 13. † 2 Tim. ii. 14. ‡ Tit. iii. 11. † Rom. v. 12.

not being a federal head, and, of course, not conveying guilt to posterity, if, by any means unconnected with man, she can become a mother, her issue, "her seed," will be innocent. On a case like this, the prophet Isaiah had his eye, when he recorded the prediction, "Behold "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call "his name Immanuel."* The Virgin Mary was with child, not by man, but by the Holy Ghost.† Of course no sin was transmitted to the *seed* Immanuel, or Jesus, from Adam; but he was born "holy, harmless, separate "from sinners." This child, or *seed* of the woman, as respected his body and soul, was and is as positively human, as any child that ever was born.

It will be said, he is often called in Scripture, "the "Son of Man." True, indeed. The word man is an aggregate term, including both sexes;‡ but it is not so with the word woman, except figuratively; as in this expression: "As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them;"§ and in Rev. xii. 1. A woman is man, as to kind, but not as to sex; Christ was the son of man as to kind; but of the woman only as to sex; and this will justify his being called "Son of Man," sixty-eight times in the New Testament. But he was, too, the reputed son of Joseph, by common opinion, and by civil law, being born in wedlock. Hence it is plain that his name in Scripture, "Son of Man," is no contradiction to the doctrine delivered above. Being the *seed* or child of the woman, by the Spirit of God, Christ was human; but not sinful, being the son both of God and man. He was "in the likeness of sinful flesh," but was not sinful flesh.|| On the account of the manner and design of his generation, he is called God's "only begotten Son."¶

* Isaiah, vii. 14.

† Mat. i. 20, 21, 22.

‡ Gen. i. 27.

§ Isaiah, iii. 12.

|| Rom. viii. 3.

¶ John, iii. 16.

There never had been a generation like his, either in relation to his mother or father—his human or Divine nature. He was and is, then, the woman's, and not the man's seed; that he might be what he is, Immanuel, Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life;" "the end of "the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" the Mediator between God and man—to be which he is infinitely fit; being man through the woman, and innocent and holy through his Father, God; and uniting in himself the nature offending and the nature offended. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of "Saints!"

This subject is copious, and fruitful. If Adam and Eve understood it, it might not only astonish them, but heal their despair; and ally their hearts anew to God, and to each other; and prepare them to sustain, with some strength, and filial pious submission, the chastising predictive sentences, about to follow the Gospel glimmering intelligibly in the text.

Satan was, no doubt, painfully disappointed by the sentence. It contained no Gospel for him; for "Verily, "Christ took not upon him the nature of angels."* The case of devils is awfully desperate. Endless animosity to God, and eternal destruction, must be their expectation. "A fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary." We proceed—

Thirdly, To show the reason or cause of the mutual enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. In this we are, in a measure, anticipated by some things already said: but we shall be a little more explicit. In Natural History, we find that serpents, with little if any exception, are venomous, apt to bite, poison,

* Heb. ii. 16.

endanger, and kill; and that, too, often in a lurking and concealed manner. Hence mankind's hatred of them generally, and aptness to kill them, and especially by blows on the head, their principal seat of life and of poison. Of this hatred, and disposition on the part of man to kill them, serpents seem to have some instinctive knowledge and apprehension; and we are mistaken if the countenance of man does not excite, in serpents or reptiles, more fear and animosity, than the countenance or visage of any other creature. Instinct, too, as well as intellect, is from God; and all physical antipathies are under the operations and control of his providence. How far speculations of this kind may be justly and prudently founded on the text, we shall not dogmatically say. Even a physical enmity seems to exist between the serpent and the human kind; but this is by far the least important, as well as most doubtful part of the subject.

Satan on the one part, and Christ and the church on the other, are the parties at mutual enmity. And why so?

Satan is the adversary of God, in all his nature; particularly of all his moral perfections and conduct; and his holiness. Christ, the woman's seed, is infinitely the friend as well as son of God; and is "the express image of his person and brightness of his glory;"* and "in him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily."† This *seed* of the woman, of such a character, Satan, from his pride and impurity, cannot but hate. The enmity of Satan, the serpent, is venomously and peculiarly pointed at Christ as *Mediator*, and as the head of the covenant of grace. With malignity and hatred, does he view any person or scheme, tending to the salvation of mankind, and to the development and glory of the Divine character. By procuring Adam's fall, he attempted and ex-

* Heb. i. 3.

† Col. ii. 9.

pected the ruin of all the human race. Foiled in this project, he attempts the seduction of Christ; which, had he accomplished, Hell, in Satan's company, must have been all men's final doom!* But Satan, the tempter, fails; and therefore hates the skill, firmness, integrity, and holiness, of the Saviour. He finds that, however he may drag many to perdition, yet many, through the *seed* of the woman, will arrive to holiness and glory; and that he can only "bruise his heel."

Now it is easy to see, that the enmity of Christ at Satan, the serpent, is not at him as a creature, or as an order of being; but as an adversary of God, of holiness, of order, and of happiness in the intelligent world. Christ, "the Lord God merciful and gracious, slow to wrath, and of great kindness," cannot but hate an apostate angel, that would wish the fall and eternal damnation of all the angels in Heaven, and men on earth; that would dare to tempt even himself, the Mediator, to sin against God; that the only channel of mercy from God to men might be eternally shut; and the song of Moses and the Lamb never be sung. That the serpent should hate Christ, is morally natural; but infinitely foolish and wrong. That Christ should be an enemy to Satan and his views, is infinitely natural, wise, and holy; and entitles him to the love of God and man. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."† Oppugnancy in character, principles, and practice, will always cause reciprocal enmity. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The same general principles cause a constant enmity

* Mat. iv. 3. 6. 9.

† John iii. 8.

between "the old serpent" and the Church. He is wicked; so are all his seed. She is holy; so are all her true seed. He is the enemy of God, and of all holy beings. She is his friend, the redeemed, regenerated, sanctified of the Lord; "God's building, and the temple of the "Holy Ghost." Their characters are as wide of each other as sin and holiness. They cannot be friends. It is impossible. In the proportion in which the Church, "the "body of Christ," loves the Triune God, she hates sin, and Satan the author of it; and is hated by him in his turn, and by his votaries; and will be persecuted.* And this naturally leads us,

Fourthly—To notice the fulfilment of God's predictive curse, (or promise) in the text, "It shall bruise thy head, "and thou shalt bruise his heel."

These words imply a curse, a humiliation, to Satan and his kingdom—but Gospel to believing men.

This is a very pregnant proposition, or head of doctrine. All the History, sacred and profane, of the world, particularly Church History, might be called to our aid here, in discussing this point. But the variety and length already attained, will justify brevity by reference. See the state of the Church since the recovery of Adam, i. e. since her birth, her infancy, to the present day. Satan has been always biting at, and bruising her heel; wounding Christ in his members. Abel was soon murdered, and the antediluvian world corrupted. But Christ cursed Cain to vagrancy; drowned the kingdom of Satan; and saved the Church in the family of Noah—and thus "bruised the serpent's head." He recovers again; re-exerts himself; spreads idolatry through the world; and hopes to extirpate the knowledge of the true God from the human race. But the *seed* of the woman calls Abram

* Matt. xxiv. 9. John xv. 18.

from “*Ur* of the Chaldees,”* and deposits with him the true Religion, and breaks the serpent’s head, or schemes, again. Afterwards, by the plagues in Egypt, the serpent’s figurative head, idolatry, gets a severe bruising. The Apis and Osiris of the Egyptians, turn out feeble vanities and lies, in contest with the seed of the woman, who can rally and combine all the resources of the universe into his service. The serpent spread the land of Canaan all over with idolatry and superstition; and bruised the *heel* of Christ—but here his head was bruised again, by the extermination of the Heathen; and the implantation and spread of the Church. Passing inevitably over many things, we would notice the injuries inflicted by Satan and his coadjutors, on the “child Jesus,” and the young man Christ; but they were more than countervailed by Christ’s repeated *outcasting* of Devils; thus proving his power and sovereignty, over the very sons of Hell. The serpent persecuted the woman’s seed, even to the death of the Cross; but, by this very death, followed by a quick and predicted Resurrection, the serpent’s head was mortally bruised. The news, the Gospel,† flew through the world; and Jews, and Romans, and Greeks, Barbarians, Scythians, bond and free, became Christians. The seed of the woman, the Church too, has been often injured, or bruised in the heel, by Satan and his seed, through persecution; but eventually, such things struck the roots of Christianity deeper, and enlarged the boundaries of Zion.

The seed of the woman, with his sword girded on his thigh, is now traversing the human world by the light of the Gospel, “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;”‡ and gradually, but certainly, prostrating the kingdom of Satan. By the dispersion of the Bible, the sword of the Spirit, in all languages, moral

* Genesis xv. 7.

† 1 Cor. xv. 1—8.

‡ Rom. i. 16.

darkness is dispelled ; and the enslaved votaries of *Juggernaut*, and other such follies, are coming to light and liberty ; and Christ is becoming “ all in all,” getting the “ Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of “ the earth for his possession.” His kingdom is coming, and his will is doing on earth, as in Heaven.

The hearts and voices of millions, rescued from Satan, ascend, at the same moment, in homage, adoration, and praise to God, through Christ in Heaven ; than which, nothing is more vexatious and opposite to Satan’s pleasure, and infernal interest.

On the faith too, of prophecy, we believe, that the kingdom of the *woman’s seed* will go on to completion ; and Satan’s be ruined. “ On this rock will I build my “ Church ; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against “ it.”* It is now time,

Fifthly—To apply or improve the Doctrine. And,

1.—We are called on, by the subject, to admire and adore the Infinite Wisdom, Justice, Mercy, and Power of God. Satan thought he had devised a plan, and succeeded, not to prevent human existence, but to promote the fall, and ascertain the eternal damnation of all the human family, the second order of God’s creation. He thought to have allied with his own, all human hearts, in constant and everlasting animosity toward God and his government ; and to have consociated with his own pain, the Hell torments of all the damned human world ! Infernal gratification !

But while the justice and wrath of God, righteously burn against the serpent, Satan, the first and worst of all sinners, God’s wisdom and grace to men, defeats that inveterate enemy. Almost in the same breath in which he curses the serpent and his seed, by a Gospel promise, and

* Matthew xvi. 18.

his effectual blessing with it, he regenerates the “be-guiled” woman, and her apostate husband; heals their despair; and re-allies them to himself, with the prospect of eternal happiness. What a disappointment this, to the Prince of Darkness! To “spiritual wickednesses in high places!” Truly, God’s “righteousness is like the great mountains,” and his “judgments are a great deep.”*

2.—It is some honour and solace to women, that although “the woman, being deceived, was first in the transgression,”† yet it pleased God to make her, not man, the immediate channel of the access of the Saviour, Jesus, to the world;‡ and to promise that “notwithstanding, she shall be saved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety.”§ Without intending to contradict Solomon, “One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found,”|| I would observe, that as the woman was first and more readily tempted to evil, so now, agreeably to the genius of the text, she seems more ready or apt to believe the Gospel, than the man. This remark is made on the experimental observation of above thirty years in the ministry. If this be a fact, it is, no doubt, of God; and it is a great mercy to the female sex, and a great obstruction to the kingdom and designs of the devil.

Pious believing women have not only an influence upon others, but especially, more than men, over their own children, in sowing the seeds of early enmity to sin and Satan, in their tender hearts.

God fill your hearts, dear women, with enmity to Satan and all his seed; and grant you success in planting, cherishing, and diffusing widely, at home and abroad,

* Psalm xxxvi. 6. † 1 Tim. ii. 14. ‡ Isaiah vii. 14.

§ 1 Tim. ii. 15. See Drs. Guyse and Whitby. || Eccles. vii. 28.

such enmity. In this way, you have God on your side ; and can be inimical to Satan ; a blessing to yourselves, to your husbands, to your families, to the Church, and to the world. “For the elect’s sake these days (calamities) shall be shortened.”* The more enemies Satan has among women or men in the world, the better ; and the more, my hearer, Satan hates you, and you return it, and resist him, the clearer is your title and preparation for Heaven. Yield, then, to every insinuation of God against the devil, his and your adversary.

3.—From the text, and what has been said, we infer, that no Christian, or Christian family, or Church, need expect to escape the assiduous and malignant aims and attempts of Satan at their hurt. He is a devil, and his “are of their father the devil, and the lusts or works of their father they do and will do.”† Satan is a murderer, if he can be so, of all moral truth, peace, and prosperity. He originates all the bloodshed and persecution, moral and civil discord, and death, in the world ; and has an inveterate, radicated, execrable, interminable hatred, at the Church. By all the art, and intrigue, and industry, in his power, through the instrumentality of fellow-evil-spirits, or wicked men, or misconduct of believers themselves, he will exert his enmity, and agency, against the prosperity of Christ, or of Zion. But,

Lastly—He shall not prevail: “it shall bruise thy “head.”

Satan, or his colleagues, or servants, will not be annihilated ; but suffer eternal fire. Rejoice, O Zion ! the head, the dominion of the serpent, has got many a bruising ; and will get a more thorough and extensive one yet, both in America and other parts of the world. The word of

* Matt. xxiv. 22. Mark xiii. 20.

† John viii. 44.

God is gone out for it ; and it cannot fail, that “ the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”* O sinners, cease your connexion with Satan ; and escape eternal burnings and misery with him. “ For Tophet is ordained of old ; yea, for the king it is prepared : he hath made it deep and large : the pile thereof is fire and much wood ; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.”† To be and continue the servant of the serpent, is the way to that awful place. But Christ is “ the way, the truth, and the life.” May God bless his word. *Amen.*

* Isaiah xi. 9. See abundance more in the Bible to the same effect.

† Isaiah xxx. 33.

SERMON XXIV.*

ON BUYING, AND NOT SELLING THE TRUTH.

PROVERBS XXIII. 23.

“Buy the Truth, and sell it not.”

KING David reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem.† In that city, in the course of said reign, were born unto him of Bathsheba, four sons legitimate.‡ Of these, Solomon, the author of our text, was the youngest, and most fortunate. Partiality, even in parents toward children, is not a modern thing. Isaac had his favourite Esau, and Rebecca her chosen Jacob—the Father, on the law of primogeniture—the Mother, on partial affection. Solomon was his Mother’s favourite son; and she had the command of King David’s heart. In consideration of his having murdered her former husband, and intruded upon her own virtue, every condescension, on his part, was due to her. In his heart, purified and ennobled by penitence, generosity arose; and the Queen must be gratified. These things, under Providence, mounted Solomon upon the throne. When wives have the management of their husbands’ hearts, and wills, it is of the highest moment, that they be sagacious, pious, and wise themselves. Bathsheba chose as Royal successor to her husband, the most distinguished genius then upon earth.

* Delivered before Upper Long Cane Society, at their Annual Meeting, May 2d, 1800.

† 1 Kings ii. 11.

‡ 2 Saml. v. 14. 1 Chron. iii. 5.

His natural capacities derived the best advantages from a polished, courtly education; and from supernatural grants to a most prudent and sagacious prayer* for wisdom.

Solomon, the author of our text, was probably about forty-eight years old, or at his *Ne plus ultra* of mental, acquired, and experimental sense and knowledge, when he wrote the Proverbs, and our text. Admit this as true; and add to the idea, the confidence of fidelity, that the Divine Spirit directed his pen; then will his golden counsels weigh heavy in every wise man's heart.

By some, it has been thought, that the Proverbs of Solomon were written in his penitential years; when, to his judicious theoretic perception of the infinite difference and essential opposition between *vice* and *virtue*, *falsehood* and *truth*, he could add the solemn and deciding pathos, and force of experience, as to both.

This may, indeed, be put beyond conjecture, by a careful perusal of the chapter containing the text. Examine it well; and you will see in it, not only the fruits of study and thinking, but the language and glow of the heart.

In twenty-two verses previous to the text, he had given sixteen very interesting counsels, in affirmative and negative language, interspersed with illustrations of their propriety. Then, as a matter infinitely interesting to the success of good counsel, and to the well doing and being of his readers, in the peculiar style of the text, he urges the most solemn regard to truth.

Truth, in the holy Scriptures, as well as in other writings, and in common life, is a word of various import. It is generally contrasted with falsehood.

By the term *Truth*, in any science or life, natural or moral, a *good* and *useful* idea is conveyed; by *Falsehood*,

* 1 Kings, iii. 5. 12.

a *bad* and *dangerous* one. Truth is precious, honourable, and comfortable, in all things interesting to mankind; but falsehood is the very reverse. It is especially so in moral concerns. True sentiments, true language, true living, according to some given and eternal law, are the glory, and interest of intellectual beings.

The language in the text, is evidently figurative, and mercantile. "Buy the Truth, and sell it not."

The Merchant explores the world, by sea and land, in quest of objects gainful, but finds not any inestimable; and hence, the wheels of Mercantile exchange go round, in everlasting rotation, until, at last, as "naked came the trader from his Mother's womb, so naked shall he return."

Nothing but *Truth* is of inestimable and perpetual value. This thought gives grandeur and elegance to the style and substance of the text.

In further endeavouring your entertainment and advantage, from the subject before us, I shall,

First—Exhibit to you, a summary view of the Truth; or what it imports, in the sense of the text:

Secondly—Shew you, what you are to understand, by "buying, and not selling the Truth:"

Thirdly—Take a view of the genius of the text; and of the tendencies and prospects of this Society, and other similar institutions:

Fourthly—Apply the things said, for our improvement.

First, then, I shall exhibit to you, a summary view of the *Truth*, or what it imports in the sense of the text. And now, as in other things, so in the subject before us, the Scripture, is its own best interpreter. From the language of the text, "Buy the Truth and sell it not," it is evident, Solomon meant the same thing by *Truth*, that Job did by *Wisdom* and *Understanding*;* "But where

* Job xxviii. 12. 17.

“ shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of
 “ understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof,
 “ neither is it found, in the land of the living; the Depth
 “ saith, it is not in me; and the Sea saith, it is not with me.
 “ It cannot be gotten for Gold, neither shall Silver be
 “ weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued
 “ with the Gold of Ophir, with the precious Onyx, or
 “ the Sapphire; the Gold and the Chrystal cannot equal
 “ it; and the exchange of it, shall not be for Jewels of
 “ fine Gold. No mention shall be made of Coral or of
 “ Pearls, for the price of Wisdom, is above rubies; the
 “ Topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it; neither shall it
 “ be valued with pure Gold.”

Truth, then, is synonymous with Wisdom; and means the same thing, is of the same value: but Wisdom is synonymous with the fear of God.* “ Behold the fear
 “ of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil,
 “ is understanding.” Truth, Wisdom, and Understand-
 ing, then, are kindred words, or signs of ideas; and reciprocally illustrate each other, and are opposed to falsehood, folly, and ignorance. “ Wisdom,” i. e. truth, “ ex-
 “ celleth folly, as far, as light excelleth darkness.”

Again—It is evident from the style and spirit of the text, that Solomon, by *Truth*, understood the same thing that he himself, meant by Wisdom and Understanding in his Proverbs.† “ Wisdom is the principal thing, get
 “ Wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding.”‡
 “ Say unto Wisdom, thou art my sister, and call under-
 “ standing thy kinswoman.” That is, “ Buy Wisdom,
 “ Understanding, or *Truth*, at any possible rate. Study,
 “ cultivate, and desire them, so as to be cordially fa-
 “ miliar with them, even should every thing else be
 “ estranged.”

* Job xxviii, 28.

† Prov. iv. 7.

‡ Prov. vii. 4.

Moreover, by Truth, the wise man meant the *Commandments of the Lord*.* “Lay up my commandments
“with thee; Keep my commandments and live; and
“my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon
“thy fingers; write them upon the table of thine heart.”

The terms, and arguments, we observe, under which the Divine law is here recommended, are equal in energy to those in the text, and to those before cited, relative to Wisdom, as demonstrating *Truth*, Wisdom, Understanding, and God’s Law, Word, or Commands, to be equivalent terms.

In Psalm CXIX, the Father of Solomon, and his tutor, uses the Lord’s Law, Testimonies, Ways, Precepts, Statutes, Commandments, Judgments, and Word, as terms all equivalent; and in verses 30th, 142d, and 151st, he explains the whole, under the term *Truth*. “I have chosen the way of Truth, thy Judgments have I laid before
“me; thy righteousness, is an everlasting righteousness,
“and thy law is the *Truth*. Thou art near, O Lord;
“and all thy Commandments, are *Truth*.” Observe, King David put the same value on the “Law of God’s Mouth,” viz. *Truth*, that the text and other Proverbs, put upon *Truth*, Wisdom, and understanding.† “The law of thy
“Mouth is better unto me, than thousands of Gold and
“Silver.”

This shews that the Royal prophetic Father’s and Son’s *Truth* were and are the same; and among other things, imports God’s eternal Word or Divine Revelation; that most precious of all things under Heaven, to the principles, morals, and prospects of the sons of men.

It may be further remarked, that in the prayer of the Lord Jesus,‡ for the disciples, we have these words, “Sanctify them through thy *Truth*: thy word is *Truth*.” This agrees with, and corroborates things already said;

* Prov. vii. 1. 2. 3. † Psalm cxix. 72. ‡ John xvii. 17.

and by "Word," here, are meant two things, viz. Divine Revelation in general, and the Gospel of the New Testament particularly : and Jesus the Son of God personally.

The Gospel of the New Testament, is the great, and practical comment on, and fulfilment of the law of the Prophets : " The law was given by Moses, but Grace " and Truth came by Jesus Christ." The Gospel of the Old and New Testaments are substantially the same *Truth*, differing only in the mode, ease, and lustre of administration.

Jesus Christ our Redeemer personally.* " Jesus saith " unto him, I am the way, and the *truth*, and the life, no " man cometh unto the Father, but by me." † " These " things saith the *Amen*, the faithful, and *true* witness."

The premises being established, it follows, that the things represented in the *Truth*, the sacred Oracles, as vicious, sinful, and dangerous, are *truly* so ; and those testified to be virtuous, holy, and safe, are and will be so, in absolute Reality. But the *Truth* testifies the universal fall of Men in Adam, ‡ " Wherefore, as by one man " sin entered into the world, and Death by sin ; and so " Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It also testifies the universal corruption of every human heart. § " And God saw that the wickedness of Man was " great in the Earth, and that every imagination of the " thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually." || " The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately " wicked : who can know it ?" ¶ " Because the carnal " mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the " law of God, neither indeed can be." These awful truths testify this further *Truth*, that however the pride or blindness, i. e. falsehood of men, may deceive, flatter, and vainly buoy them up, there is no true moral good,

* John xiv. 6. † Rev. iii. 14. ‡ Rom. v. 12. § Gen. vi. 5.

|| Jer. xvii. 9.

¶ Rom. viii. 7.

in a natural man, by whatever name, he may be fain to call it. With a natural man, all the good, that is in his heart or character, is animal, mechanical, educational, or interested.

When the *Truth*, the personal word of God, is pleased to draw the most humbling picture of practical corruption and iniquity, he testifies, that the heart is the source, the foul fountain head.* “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.” Is this the case, my hearers, and that “A clean thing, cannot be brought out of an unclean?”† If so, we may infer, that hence, another branch of the “*Truth*” is, that, “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” But Faith, Repentance, Sanctification, and all Christian goodness, are the characters of none but those born of God. The *Truth*, then, is, that those void of Faith, Repentance, and Holiness, living and dying such, must go to Hell; the duration and misery of which, no Universalist has ever calculated, to the satisfaction of a Man of sound understanding, or to the benefit of religious or civil society.

The “*Truth*,” further, is, that God has not left us in the above premised sinful and miserable state, without a remedy adequate to our Pardon, Sanctification, and Salvation. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” ‡ “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

* Mark vii. 21.

† Job xiv. 4.

‡ John iii. 16.

“ For what the law¹ could not do, in that it was weak
 “ through the flesh, God, sending his own Son, in the
 “ likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the
 “ flesh ; that the righteousness of the law might be ful-
 “ filled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the
 “ Spirit.”* “ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all
 “ acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world, to
 “ save sinners, of whom I am chief.”†

The counsels of God are a great deep ; and his eternal and discriminative purposes unfathomable ; yet, in the eternal *Truth* of the text, “ whosoever will come, may
 “ come, and take of the Water of life freely ;” and the truths of the Gospel, the various directed and prescribed uses of them, made efficacious by the Holy Ghost, are the ordinary effectual means of eternal life.

The *Truth* presents to our view and expectations, as our characters may be, an awful and eternal Hell, or an amiable, alluring, and eternal Heaven ; the former, the last dismal abode of the sinner, and the wages of his sinful, Christless Life ; the latter, the endless city of Joy, and refuge, to those who, “ through Faith and Patience, *in the Truth*, shall inherit the promises.”

A clear mental perception, with a cordial and influential approbation of the Divine existence and character, of the Gospel plan of salvation—of the justness of revealed statements of the nature and issue of all Vice and Virtue, Sin and Holiness, this world and the next, is implied in “ *Truth*,” in the text.

In proportion as men are wrong with respect to these things, they are under the dominion of darkness, i. e. Falsehood : all error is Falsehood ; *not Truth* : and all error, especially of a moral kind, is beguiling, weakening, pernicious, and, if prevalent, it is destructive. *Truth* is

* Rom. viii. 1—4.

† 1 Tim. i. 15.

substantial, spiritual, strong, consoling, and everlasting ; Error or Falsehood, is vain, fallacious, weak, comfortless, and in its irrational animal gratifications, miserably transient. “ Woe to the wicked, for it shall go ill with him.” “ The hope of the hypocrite shall perish.”

I have given you, as I promised, a summary view of the Truth. “ Buy the truth and sell it not.” I now proceed, further to fulfil my promise, by shewing you,

Secondly—What you are to understand by “ Buying “ and not selling the Truth.” Here, permit me to observe, that this is not altogether solitary language in the Bible. Some such language, referred to under the former head, quoted from Job, from David, and from other parts of the Proverbs, strongly resembles this expression. Isaiah also uses similar phraseology, “ Ho every one that thirsteth, “ come ye to the Waters, and he that hath no money, “ come ye, *buy* and eat ; yea come buy Wine and Milk “ without Money, and without price.”* Isaiah’s “ Wine “ and Milk,” are Solomon’s Truth in our text. Something like it is also the language of Christ,† “ The Kingdom “ of Heaven is like treasure hid in a Field, the which, “ when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, “ goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the Field. “ Again, the kingdom of Heaven, is like a Merchant- “ man seeking goodly pearls : who when he had found “ one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, “ and bought it.” The treasure in the field, is the *Truth* ; so is the precious pearl.

Now, by “ Buying the Truth, and selling it not,” we are not to understand paying for it by any equivalent. Job, David, and Solomon declare it is inestimable, and has no equivalent ; although, blessed be God, the natural materials of the Bible, with the impression by ink and print, of letters and words, signifying sacred Truths, can be

* Isaiah lv. 1. 2.

† Matt. xiii. 44, 45, 46.

bought for a few shillings ; yet the truths themselves are beyond all price, and of eternal value and weight. So also is a personal, pious, and judicious Ministry of the *Truth* and Ordinances, within the pecuniary power of a wise, harmonious, and generous Society, even of moderate ability ; but the value,—intrinsic value of such Ministry, to them and their posterity, as it has reference both to this life, and that which is to come, could not be reciprocated by the mines of Peru.

As not only present good to individuals and society, but everlasting salvation, is the tendency and aim of *Truth*; it is impossible any created property, or efforts, should be justly reckoned as an equal consideration. “ Where-
 “ with shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself
 “ before the high God? Shall I come before him with
 “ burnt offerings, with Calves of a year old? Will the
 “ Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten
 “ thousands of rivers of Oil? Shall I give my first born
 “ for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin
 “ of my soul?”* These Truths, my audience, shed a glory, and beautiful emphasis on Isaiah’s proclamation of Truth, “ Buy Wine and Milk without money or price.” Therefore, by “ Buying the Truth and selling it not,” you are to understand, that like the merchant set upon gain, your heart must be set upon the Truth; † like the merchant, preferring, from motives of his own, things afar off, to things in hand, you are to prefer *Truth* or Religion, in its present nature, and ultimate result, to all temporal and fleshly considerations : like the Merchant, at all periods of his life, in the face of all hazard, braving the dangers of air, earth, and sea, to obtain his false riches, ever on the wing to fly away, you are, in the face of the most daring obstructions, to seek the *Truth*, the *one thing needful*, the *durable substance*, the true and eternal

* Micah vi. 6.

† Col. iii. 1. 2.

riches, in every way prescribed by the *Word*. Should the Truth even cost you the Cross, you must not shrink, "He that endureth to the end, shall alone be saved."

By "Buying the Truth, and selling it not," no doubt you may understand, yielding your minds and attention to sacred illumination, and instruction; sacrificing your selfish righteousness to the righteousness of God; subjugating your vices and sinful passions and pleasures, to the prohibitions and authority of eternal Truth, in spite of all circumstantial avocational excuses.

Again, by "not selling the Truth," you are to understand, that you are not by any temptation, or consideration whatever, to give up your commanded attentions to Religion, or the great doctrines and life of the Gospel. Weigh any thing imaginable against the interests of Truth, in the Balances of the Sanctuary, and it "will be found wanting; and should the beams ever come to a poise, throw a thought upon death and eternity into the scale with *Truth*, and the debate will soon be decided in favour of Wisdom.

By "Buying, and not selling the truth," it will be fair and rational enough for you to understand, a Society or Church, laying and pursuing the best contrived and efficient plans, for establishing a judicious, promising, and permanent Ministry among them; and other means of Religious and civil information.

This leads me to the next head of promise; which was, *Thirdly*—To take a view of the genius of the text, and of the tendencies and prospects of this Society, and of other similar Institutions: And here, my first remark is, that your incorporation, by giving you a legal and corporate existence, tends to perpetuate the Society by its consolidation. Like the laws of attraction and gravitation, it unites the individual constituents, into one general mass; and it concentrates their affections, designs, and strength.

As long, then, as the Society shall be blessed with a few Men, say even half a dozen, of good sense, true piety, public spirit, Evangelic generosity, and some tolerable measure of eloquence, the prosperity of the Society is insured.

The spirit of discontent, restless, and thoughtless emigration, will be spontaneously checked ; and the present, and rising members, with a few occasional exceptions, will be attached to the soil, within the sphere of the attraction of the Society. This, besides other advantages, will enliven the cultivation of the soil, and progressively contribute to the elegance and convenience of every man's seat.

A man of much experience of the world, once observed to me, that a country never began properly to flourish, until the inhabitants preferred their paternal patrimony to any other place.

Unincorporated Societies, from the inconstancies of human things, are subject to such effluxes and influxion of parts, and the inflowing parts often so heterogenous, by some means, to the original and radical members of the society, that without some strong *Stamina Vitæ*, or vital principles, society will dissolve, by the incoherence, and unfortunate discordance of its members.

When Churches, or other Societies, however, are incorporated, and founded on a judicious basis, although, like the human body in sickness, they may suffer some temporary wastages, yet their bones being still secure, flesh and vigour will be resumed.

Again, I would observe, that such is human nature, that it cannot be dead to interest ; nor is this either sinful or illaudable, when interest is pursued with honesty. It is a spring of action in human nature, preventing mortiferous idleness. Mutual interest is a powerful bond of union.

All within the limits of the Church, who are contributors to the fund, are, and must be, mutually cemented by this principle; and the more so, as the emolument is both of a temporal and moral nature, and secured by all the force of law.

Nor is this bond of union, nor ought it to be, without energy from the present infantile and inoperative state of the Fund. Perhaps more than one-half of our happiness, and stimulus, is in prospects. Attend to the motives of your hearts, and if they be good, besides your sensations of common benevolence, you will find the storage of parental affection and care, running down your veins to generations ever so remote. I have no notion that death abolishes the generous concerns of the heart, for the best interests of survivors. "There is joy in Heaven over every sinner that repenteth." I feel myself in mankind, and posterity, living to the world's end! I have no doubt, but all the streams of benefit to mankind, to the end of the world, that started from any one good man, or was handed along by another, will, in the wise government of God, have an influence on the author's or abettor's Heavenly state. How animating is the thought! How encouraging, even to the widow's mite, of duty and public spirit!

Further:—It is a fact worthy of your attention, that LIBERTY, to which we justly attach great value, may be, and often is enjoyed, where it is not understood; and hence, in its exercise, many forget, that it consists in the power of doing *what we ought to choose*, and in not being compelled to accomplish what we ought not to will; and that it is not merely a relinquishment of this scriptural right, but also a neglect of duty not distinguishable from LICENTIOUSNESS, which squanders upon other objects, what reason, as well as the word of God, pronounces a reward justly due to those who labour in the Gospel.

The education and talents, which, in union with, and under the influence of fervent piety, are ordinarily necessary to the successful development of religious truth, and which God has frequently blessed, to the conversion of sinners, and the edification of saints, are, when duly exercised, certainly entitled to that provision, to which the Apostle to the Gentiles refers, when he thus argues with the Corinthians—"Even so hath the Lord ordained, "that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the "Gospel;"* and when he thus exhorts the Galatians,— "Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to "him that teacheth, in all good things."†

But as this Society is now able, and harmoniously disposed, to support a cultivated Ministry, and blessed in the enjoyment of it; so, should any unfortunate incident deprive them of their present blessing in that respect, the savour of their name and measures may, under the auspices of Heaven, have a felicity upon another choice. Any judicious Minister, feeling, as to his family, as any other wise and honest man, would prefer a settlement, *cæteris paribus*, in that Congregation where he saw the best prospects, especially of a moral kind, for his posterity, after he is laid in the dust.

It will not be long until the proceeds of your Fund, under good management, may come into operation for supporting the Gospel; and then, by contributions and the interest of the Fund, the Church will be able and willing, to allow a Minister such support, as will rescue him from the toils of the field, and the gripe of poverty.

With such a provision, a Minister of select talents, thorough education, fervent piety, and independent weight of character, may be expected to fill your pulpit—to shine when he is there—and be able to persuade and

* 1 Cor. ix. 14.

† Gal vi. . 6.

provoke you or your posterity to "Buy truth and sell it not." Something now in its minority, in the care of this Church, will call loudly for such a ministry; and it will not be less so in ages to come.

From such well founded prospects, in the success of your present plans, the probability is, that characters of the best taste, emigrating from other states to these regions, will prefer a settlement among you, to the advantage of your strength, respectability, and the melioration of your manners. While the inquiry of some will be, where shall we find the best lands for tobacco, and the best market? the inquiry of the better sort will be, where shall we find the best and most permanent state of society, especially of the religious kind? And perhaps, at a time not long hence, the proper answer may be, in UPPER LONG CANE.

Again: Besides the good confined to the spot, with which your measures are pregnant, it may be diffusive. It may be like the woman's leaven, hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.* The example may, sooner or later, catch and save many other Churches from final ruin.

What can men or societies do more nobly with their property, than to lay it out upon uses of the most noble and everlasting kind? What can be of more service than means the most conducive to promote and perpetuate the Truth? Here the noble soul of our friend, General Washington, comes to our recollection. See him, living for ever by his perpetual benefactions: See him placing thirteen thousand three hundred and thirty-three and one-third dollars in Alexandria, as an everlasting capital, for the education of poor children; giving ten thousand dollars as an infrangible capital, to Liberty Hall, at Lexington;

* Matt. xiii. 55.

and bestowing sixteen thousand six hundred and sixty-six and two-thirds dollars, on a National University ; making forty thousand dollars, on the whole, for the promotion and perpetuation of grammatic, scientific, and moral truth. "Buy the Truth, and sell it not," was, doubtless, his maxim. It is impossible to calculate the sum of political and moral good, that may grow out of such glorious stewardship, of the good things God bestowed upon him. And, my friends, although your contributions cannot equally astonish the arithmetic line,—and the eye and ear, with the sight and sound of thousands ; yet, your motives are good ; and your prospects flattering.

The Public-Library-Scheme lately adopted by you, has also a good aspect upon the Truth. By that scheme, every man is availed of his neighbour's purse, in the purchase of books ; and all the books may be nearly as useful to every man, as if they were his own private property. Too many books in a person's eye, or hand, at once, often prevents the proper reading of either. In your Library-Scheme, your books will come into your hands, so as to be read without confusing and distracting your attention. You cannot place away that portion of your property better. You become possessed of a private and common interest jointly, and lose not a farthing by the bargain. Dr. Franklin, many years ago, started such a Library in Philadelphia ; which has become a property of great importance to the city ; and you may observe him bequeathing his share in it, in his will, to his posterity or heirs. So may you.

Your scheme would still be more complete, if it were under cover of the incorporation. I observe from the papers, a certain Library Company lately incorporated by the Legislature in Georgia. It will not be improper for you to take this matter into consideration. The establishment and protection of such Libraries, is a certain

mode of having many Ministers instead of one:—Ministers, not only in the pulpit, but in every house:—and their suggested ideas, not fugitive, but fixed, and always ready to be re-examined. This is a benefit of incalculable importance.

We proceed now, agreeably to promise, *Fourthly*, to make some application of what has been said; and as something of this nature has been interspersed with the body already, and your attention is called to the business of the Society, I shall be very short. And *First*. My friends, permit me solemnly to advise you, in Solomon's words and meaning, to "Buy the Truth and sell it not." Consider and view it, in its glorious nature and tendencies; and be enamoured with it. See, and endeavour to feel the force, of the sublime and masterly style and arguments, under, and by which, truth, wisdom, and understanding, are set forth, and recommended, by some of the first and most eminent characters that ever adorned the world; Job, David, Solomon! "Get wisdom, and with all your getting, get understanding." Let all your motives—all your pursuits—all your expenses, point, directly or indirectly, to the acquisition of that object—the pearl of great price, *Truth*—the knowledge and love of Truth—the Divine Oracles, in their great meaning and influence;—Jesus Christ and his Salvation, their author, their substance, and their end. "In him are all the promises, yea and *Amen*." Endeavour to have true views of every thing you are about; of every duty you are performing; of all your motives of action, and of the tendencies, the ultimate tendencies of all your actions, secret or known. Above all, endeavour after true views of your religious concerns and interests.

Deception and falsehood, in these things, are awfully dangerous. Ten thousand mistakes in any thing else, must be more safe, than one single mistake in the "things

“that belong to our eternal peace.” The wisest man on earth needs to take care as to the *Truth*. Solomon had sad experience of this. How did he tumble from his towering wisdom, and eminent station, into unnatural and degrading vices, to the humiliation of human sufficiency, and as a warning to the world, to regard the *Truth*.

Secondly.—“Be not weary in well doing; for, in due season, you shall reap if you faint not.” Let your hearts, and your courage, and your patience, surmount every obstacle in your way;—that hundreds and thousands may bless you, when your bodies, not your benefits, are dead; for the *Truth* which they may be enjoying through the price of your previous care and providence. May God crown your labours, and the labours of all such, with success, by his Divine Blessing.—*Amen*.

SERMON XXV.*

ON THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE DISPENSATIONS OF GRACE
BY THE GOSPEL, AND A ROYAL MARRIAGE FEAST.

MATTHEW XXII. 9.

“Go ye therefore into the high ways, and as many as ye shall find,
“bid to the Marriage.”

HIGHLY, my brethren, are we favoured by the dispensation of Gospel grace! What Prophets and Kings desired to see and hear, but could not attain, are exhibited to our eyes, and published to our ears, if not in its full extent, yet in reality. We see Messiah's Kingdom established among men, in its glory and beauty; and hear the glad tidings which God, through the mediation of his Son, has sent to all mankind; even to the most guilty and wretched, publishing pardon, peace, and salvation.

Salvation is of God alone—of his free, unmerited grace:—And this we must acknowledge, whether we contemplate it in its origin, the Eternal Council of Divine wisdom, love, and mercy, which has, for lost man, provided a Saviour; in the rich blessings of grace and glory it bestows; or in that sovereign efficacy, by which grace arrests and subdues, careless, rebellious, sinners; who, in a moral sense, are, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins.—But though this work is the Lord's, and the unrivalled glory belongs to him; there is yet something for his servants to perform, as instruments and

* Delivered before the Marine Bible Society of Charleston, South Carolina.

means in his hands, for accomplishing his merciful purposes. Having themselves, tasted that he is gracious, they are directed to invite others, to come and be partakers, with them, of the same excellent blessings.

To this subject, the text before us directs our attention. It is a part of that parable in which our Lord represents the Dispensation of his Gospel, under the similitude of a Marriage Feast, made by a Monarch for his son. The persons first invited as guests, refused, or neglected to come; the servants then received a charge to go out into the high ways—where the passing stranger, as well as the neighbouring citizen, the poor and vulgar, as well as the rich and honourable, might be found; and without discrimination, to bid as many as they should find to the Marriage. Such is the publicity, such the freeness of the Gospel call!

By the persons first invited, may be particularly meant, the Jews, to whom the Gospel was first sent; by the latter, the Gentiles: or, in a more extended view of the subject, the one class may be considered as intending persons whose minds are enlightened and improved, and who ordinarily enjoy the means of grace; the other, those who are ignorant, careless, or flagitious—far from God, and from Righteousness. By the servants sent on this errand, Gospel Ministers seem to be principally intended; yet, not exclusively: for in publishing the Gospel invitation, “the Bride,” or whole Church of Christ, and even “he that heareth,” may say “come.”

The whole parable strongly expresses the free Grace of God; which, through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, is extended to a dying world; and, at the same time, it as strongly enforces the obligations under which Christians are laid, by the Divine Authority and Mercy, to exert themselves for bringing their brethren of mankind into a state of salvation.

In our attempt to illustrate this subject, we shall pursue the following method :

First—Consider the analogy which exists between the dispensations of grace, by the Gospel, and a Royal Marriage Feast.

Secondly—Take a view of what is designed, by coming, rightly, to this Feast.

Thirdly—What by the duty enjoined on the King's servants, of going into the high ways, and *bidding to the Marriage as many as they should find*; and,

Lastly—Attempt an improvement from the whole, suited to the purposes of the present solemnity.

First—We are to consider the analogy, or resemblance, between the Gospel Dispensations, and a Royal Marriage Feast. This must not be done with a view to entertain a curious fancy ; but, according to our Lord's design, to exhibit a just representation of God's free and sovereign Grace ; as extended through Christ Jesus, to unworthy men. The figure in the parable, strikingly illustrates this interesting and sacred subject.

A Feast is not a common repast : It is not provided merely, to satisfy the demands of nature, with necessary food ; but to produce gratification and delight, by its dainties, and by its abundance. The choicest viands, the noblest wines, and richest cordials, may be here expected. Here, friends meet in happy, social intercourse, and converse : Rightly conducted, it affords them rational, refined enjoyment ; exalts their pleasure into joy, and expands their hearts with reciprocal, enlarged benevolence.

A Marriage Feast, as it recognises one of the most interesting and joyous occurrences of human life, must be considered as taking rank of those Feasts which are of an ordinary character ; though held for the purposes of pleasure, or of friendship. But if Royalty be added to its character—if it be provided by the munificence of a Mo-

narch, and be consecrated to the honour of a Royal person, as a party in the Marriage Contract; the pleasures of the Feast will accordingly be heightened, in proportion to the dignity of the person, and to the joyfulness of the occasion. The subjects of the Prince must consider their admission to the Feast as a strong evidence of their sovereign's favour; and all the guests, while they are rendered happy, must feel themselves honoured. While in the Feast, they behold magnificence added to elegance, and bounty to kindness, they are especially charmed with what they behold in the person of their Prince; the sweet attractions of condescension and favour, blended with the awfulness of majesty: this raises their pleasure to admiration, and their joy to ecstasy.

By such just and pleasing imagery does our Saviour represent to our faith, his glorious Gospel grace. Here is a Feast, which God has provided in his Holy Mountain, the Mountain of Zion his church; "A Feast of fat things, full of marrow, of wines on the Lees, well refined:" A Marriage Feast, which the King of Heaven has made for his Son; who has espoused the souls of sincere converts, penitents, and believers, which compose his Church on earth, to himself, by faithful promises of Grace and Mercy; and has consummated the spiritual marriage with this church, by taking her into a special covenant relationship to him, as her Saviour. Blessings of the most excellent kind on which souls may Feast, are here provided. Here are pardon, justification, acceptance, and peace with God; through the Redeemer's meritorious obedience, atonement, and intercession. Here are the pleasures of purity, and of a good conscience—Here are Gospel doctrines, ordinances, and privileges, the promises of grace, and the hopes of glory. At this Feast, redeemed saints are the guests; Angels the attendants;—God, himself, is present. Here the King of Glory, the Eternal Father, dis-

plays at once his awful majesty, amazing condescension, and superabounding mercy; the benignant Saviour, unveils the glories of his face, in which appear toward man, "love without end, and without measure grace;" while the Blessed Spirit, the Comforter, speaks peace and divine consolation to every humble, penitent, and believing heart.

Thus, at this sacred Feast, believing souls have sweet communion with Saints, with Angels, and with God. Their eyes are delighted with manifestations of the Divine goodness and glory; and their ears are charmed with Heavenly melody; in the songs of redeeming love, sung by Saints and Angels. Great is their present happiness, and delightful their anticipations, of the future beatific vision, and glory in the Heavens. We are to consider,

Secondly—What is meant by coming, rightly, to this Feast. It includes more than an attendance on ordinances; than a profession of religion. Three important articles seem to be designed; repentance for sin, faith in the Redeemer, and a surrender of ourselves to God.

1.—Repentance for sin. This, in principle and disposition, is a grace; in act, it is a duty; and comprehends a forsaking of sin, as well as mourning on account of it. It includes, the conviction of truth, admitted; humbling confession of our guilt; sorrow for having offended and dishonoured the Most High, by it; a giving up of our sinful pursuits and enjoyments; a strict denial of our perverse appetites and passions; and a firm resistance to temptation, in whatever form it may assail us. To this repentance, God calls us by his word; commanding men, every where, to repent; and informing them, that, without it, they shall surely perish.

2.—Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is so essential an article in the Christian system, and in the Christian life, that one of the most common characteristic names given to the children of God in the New Testa-

ment, that of believers, is derived from it. To this we are directed, and invited by the Gospel. To this the promises are made: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath life—and shall not come into condemnation;" "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." It draws the line of discrimination between the heirs of glory, and of misery: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned."

But a serious question arises on this subject. What are we to understand by this faith in the Redeemer? Is it merely rational?—a cold, speculative assent of the mind, to the truths which the Gospel reveals? Is it simply the effect of education, or a concurrence in the prevailing sentiments of those with whom our social connexions are formed; and only produced by our sense of propriety? Far from it. It is an active, vital principle, which produces strong emotions in the soul; and important effects in the life. It is indeed a rational assent of the mind to the truths which respect the Redeemer, as they are supported by their proper evidence, and as they are viewed in the light of Revelation. But it is more—it is a relying on Christ Jesus for salvation; in opposition to every other ground of hope, or confidence. A cordial reception of him as our Mediator, Redeemer, Lord, and Saviour. It welcomes his invitations; believes his promises; and trusts his grace. It works by love; purifies the heart; and disposes it to acts of obedience. The assent it gives to the truths of grace, is in accordance with its belief of other truths which occasion humiliation, grief, and terror, to the soul: It believes that God is holy, just, and true; that his wrath is provoked by the sins of men; that his threatenings are as faithful as his promises, and will be executed on all finally impenitent sinners; that human nature is fallen; and that the soul

which believes is, itself, in particular, in a state of guilt, condemnation and misery—having no power to deliver itself, no merit of its own to bring for its acceptance, no atonement that it can make to propitiate the Divine Majesty, and procure deliverance from the dreadful curse of his violated Law, which declares, “The soul that sinneth shall die :” so that unless, by sovereign mercy, it is interested in the Mediator’s righteousness and atonement, it must remain under the curse, and perish.

This view, of those alarming truths, tends to endear the blessed Redeemer to the soul ; and to make, in its estimation, the Gospel invitation, and promise, which give assurance of free pardon, acceptance, and salvation through him, a joyful sound. To this refuge, therefore, does the believer fly ; and, in his Saviour’s righteousness and grace, does he confide : and with joy does he realize, in the exercise of faith, that, in the economy of grace, this righteousness of the Son of God is imputed to those who believe in him, for their acceptance and justification, in Jehovah’s presence. This seems to be intended by the robe of righteousness, of which, the Prophet Isaiah speaks ; and by the wedding garment, mentioned in this parable ; which is represented as an essential requisite, for the acceptance of every guest, at the Marriage Feast.

3.—A surrender of ourselves to God ; which includes subjection ; and devotedness to him, is necessary to our coming aright. Our Lord unites this to his invitation, addressed to those who labour and are heavy laden ; “Come,” says he, “unto me, and I will give you rest.” But he adds, in words never to be forgotten, “*Take my yoke upon you*, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.” In a state of sin and folly, we are rebellious ; if we embrace his salvation, we must and will learn obedience to his commands, and resignation to his providential dispensa-

tions. God has been defrauded of his right while we have employed the powers of our souls, and the members of our bodies in the service of sin ; now they are to be consecrated to him, and employed in his holy, honourable service. The free choice of the soul is now to live to him, as being made alive from the dead;—its language is that of Paul, at his conversion, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Love, and gratitude, unite with a sense of original obligation, to produce this self-consecration to God. And it is a sincere, deliberate, and most solemn act ; an act essential to our entering into God’s covenant. Let us,

Thirdly—Take a view of the duty enjoined on Jehovah’s servants, of going into the high ways, and bidding as many as they find, to the Marriage.

If these high ways design the general resorts, stations, and employments of human life ; and refer to those who are to be found in them, who are men of all nations, ranks, characters, and capacities ; then does the injunction, in the text, not only manifest, in a strong light, that Gospel grace is of vast extent ; but also, that it is the duty of Christians to exercise an enlarged benevolence toward their brethren of mankind ; and to exert themselves, in the use of suitable means, to bring them to participate in the blessings of salvation. The servants are directed to go out into the high ways, and to bid as many as they should find to the marriage ; that is to call, to invite, and urge them to come. Luke has it, “*Compel* them to come in.” This call is co-extensive with the human race : “Preach,” says the Divine command, “the Gospel to every creature.”

Some are destitute of the common means of grace : Such are the Heathen, on whom Gospel light has never shined : and of too many in lands called Christian, who are brought up and held in a state of gross ignorance. For

these, means should be provided. Some are thoughtless and careless, neglecting the great salvation, while they are amused with the vanities, and fascinated by the false glare of life. It is necessary that they should be alarmed; that they should be roused from their waking dreams, and gay delusions; be taught their danger, in an acquaintance with the approaching realities of death, judgment, and eternity; and that they be directed to the source of true and lasting happiness. Many are found so immersed in cares and business—in projected enterprises, and unremitting efforts to obtain earthly good; to secure their possessions, and augment their treasures; that they can scarcely afford a moment, or a thought, for any other subject. These should be reminded, that “one thing is needful;” and measures should be taken to make them feel the force of that pungent question, “what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Many are impious and prophane, resolute and bold in sin: erroneous sentiments, both passions and false reasoning corrupt their hearts; the lewd jest, the daring oath, or the vile falsehood, defiles their lips; while acts of lewdness, violence, injustice, or perfidy, blacken their characters, and pollute their lives. They must be admonished; and must be plainly told, “that because of these things, the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience;” yet, also, that God will forgive repenting sinners, however great their crimes have been.

Others are to be found, who are self-condemned, and overwhelmed with a sense of their guilt and depravity. Their remembrance of past transgressions, and a consciousness of the present corrupt, and polluted state of their hearts, operate to produce deep discouragement, and despair of the Divine mercy. Instead of drawing near to God, their feelings excite them to flee, like guilty

Adam ; and, if possible, to hide themselves from his presence. They are in a wilderness of terrors, and see not their way out of it. It is the privilege of God's messengers to inform these distressed souls, that "there is forgiveness with Jehovah, that he may be feared:" that he "is in Christ Jesus, reconciling a guilty world to himself;" that the Redeemer, who is mighty to save, and full of compassion, invites lost, wretched sinners, to come to him for pardon and life ; and promises, that, of those who come, he will cast out none.

In a word, whatever counsels, admonitions, or reproofs are to be administered by the messengers of salvation, to men of different states and characters, all must have a bearing on this great point—"Come to the Marriage:" come to Christ and live. Come to him as penitents ; come to him as believers ; come to him as a willing, obedient people ; consecrating your bodies, your souls, your lives, your all to him, for ever. The Gospel does not call to mere outward reformation, or to means of grace, separately considered, or as distinct from the end. It calls to Christ ; it calls to salvation.

Whatever means are conducive to this end, these should the Ministers and Churches of Christ employ, as they have ability and opportunity, for accomplishing the benevolent, sublime design. The preaching of the Gospel, and the use of the sacred Scriptures are pre-eminent. And whatever tends to their support, furtherance, or diffusion, claims attention, devout regard, and aid, from all the servants of God ; from all the friends of truth, of holiness, and of man.

By devising plans, in the spirit of wisdom, faith, and love, for bringing such means into regular and vigorous operation ; and in giving them firm support, by their liberality, by their labours, and by their prayers, the

servants of Christ perform the duty enjoined in their high commission.

In a general improvement of this subject, on which we can but lightly touch at present, we must be led,

First—To admire the grace which has provided the sacred Feast, and to adore its Divine author. The love of God in Christ Jesus, and its ample provisions of grace, form a theme, which fills the church on earth with gratitude, and joy unutterable, and the glorified spirits of Heaven with holy wonder. And it will furnish matter for the united, transporting songs of glorified Saints and Angels to eternity. O! Let it excite *our* highest love, admiration, gratitude, and praise.

Secondly—As the subject furnishes matter for the most serious self-examination, let us inquire: Having heard the gracious invitation, Have we been induced to come to this Feast, and to come invested with the wedding garment?

Have we neither made the excuses of those, who, under the influence of worldly motives went, rather, “one to his farm, and another to his merchandize;” nor, in a careless, unhallowed manner, approached the presence of Heaven’s eternal King, in a merely formal profession, nor with hypocritical pretensions? But, Have we, on the contrary, the evidence in our consciences, that we have come, renouncing our sins, and mourning on account of them, with godly sorrow; because we have, by them, offended our infinitely good God, and Saviour? The evidence, that we have felt our need of the blessed Redeemer; of his righteousness, his atonement, intercession, and renewing grace; so that we could not dare to approach a holy God, but in the Saviour’s name, relying on his merit, and seeking salvation through him alone? But encouraged by his invitations, promises, and superabounding grace, Have we, though with a deep sense of our own unworthi-

ness, ventured our everlasting all into his hands, and taken hold of his covenant? Have we felt the force of our obligations, and been constrained by the love of Christ to devote ourselves unreservedly to him; to serve him in faithfulness, and to glorify him with our noblest powers? These are questions of most serious import: for the King will soon come in, to see the guests.

Thirdly—An important use of this subject is, to excite those to whom the Gospel dispensation is sent, to exercise a becoming concern, “that they receive not the grace of “God in vain.” Heaven has provided this Feast at an immense expense. The humble birth, sorrowful life, and bitter death of the incarnate God, declare this truth. Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary, proclaim it to the universe. Let not men, then, make light of the Gospel; nor affront the Majesty of Heaven, by refusing, or neglecting the astonishing overtures of his mercy and goodness. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” But besides avoiding the guilt and ruin consequent on refusing the grace,—and neglect, we see, is accounted a refusal,—how powerful are the motives which should induce us to accept that gracious invitation which calls to life, liberty, and peace; which assures us that the inestimable blessings of salvation are freely and bountifully bestowed, on all who come to the Redeemer in God’s appointed way; however guilty and wretched they have made themselves, by their former transgressions! O! let sinners be persuaded to lay down their arms of rebellion; to confess their sins; to come to Jesus Christ and live. Let those, especially, who know their unworthiness, who feel their misery, who lament their errors, and desire to be made holy, be encouraged to come to this most merciful friend of man, and receive the blessings of his grace. And, O! let them remember, that these blessings are to be obtained “without money

“and without price;” that “*whosoever will*, may take the “water of life freely.”

Fourthly—This subject is calculated to impress us with a deep sense of the obligations we are laid under, by the Divine authority and grace, to exert ourselves for bringing all the human family, if possible, to partake of the blessings which Divine mercy has provided, and has revealed in the Gospel. These have been, in a measure, considered in the body of our discourse; and they are indispensable. Let Ministers, let churches, let pious individuals, and benevolent Societies, lay them to heart.

But I am, on this occasion, to consider, more especially, what relates to a dissemination of the Holy Scriptures among men of a particular class: a class, numerous, and highly important to society, whose spiritual interests have been too much neglected, or overlooked. These are the courageous, hardy Mariners: “the men “who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in “great waters; who see the works of God, and his wonders “in the deep.” To these, David directed this serious counsel, of old, “let them sacrifice, with the sacrifices of “thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.” And, respecting them, he expresses the ardent desire of his soul, “O! that men would praise the Lord for his “goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children “of men.”

Their religious interests claim our particular regard. For, besides the general claim, founded on their being our brethren of the human family, rational and immortal creatures, capable of eternal awards, to whom the Gospel is sent; they are entitled to regard from the following considerations: National prosperity, and defence, depend much on the services they perform, while encountering the dangers, and suffering the hardships of the deep; our intercourse with Foreign Nations, and the

sending of the Gospel to lands beyond the ocean, depend greatly on them. They have not the opportunity of attending, ordinarily, on public ordinances, and means of grace. Too many of them, it is to be feared, consider themselves as having a licence, from their line of life, to live free from the restraints of religion; to be profane, and to give themselves up to the gratification of their appetites and passions; by which they are hurried on to destruction, without regarding their danger. And, unhappily, this general prevalence of irreligion and vice among them, presents strong temptations to such as are entering on maritime employments, though previously induced to honour religion, to depart from its practice; and this makes it necessary that they should be furnished with all its directions and supports, to fortify them against these temptations.

The open hearted, generous sailor, will not deny, nor blame me for asserting, that a small part, comparatively, of his associates, are seriously, and strictly religious: but it is with pleasure we can assert that, some, even common men, as well as commanders, have been, and are, eminent for piety. A convincing proof, that their religious interests are entitled to our serious care.

These interests of mariners have not been forgotten by the Bible Societies which were first formed among us; and copies of the Scriptures have been actually distributed among them by the original Bible Society of Charleston. But so diversified are the objects of their attention, that a Society specially formed for the benefit of Seamen, is highly laudable. The Marine Bible Society of Charleston, which I have now the honor to address, has been brought into existence, by the benevolence of its members, for this particular purpose; as, to the honour of our country, have others, from the same motive, in different cities of the United States.

Bible Societies are of recent origin : but they are so admirably calculated to diffuse the light of Divine Truth, that now, since they have been brought into existence, it seems strange that so excellent a scheme of Christian benevolence as that on which they are founded, had not been formed long before ; even for ages.—Honoured of God is that individual, who first proposed it.* The object of these Societies, is the gratuitous distribution of the sacred Scriptures ; principally among the poor and destitute, without note or comment ; with a view to the conversion of sinners from the error of their way ; and to the direction, support, and consolation, of those who love their God and Saviour.

The design of sending abroad the sacred volume without comment, is directed to two important purposes :

First—to secure the approbation and aid of all Christians, however diversified in sentiment, in the noble effort to irradiate a benighted world, with the saving knowledge of God ; and, *Secondly*, to manifest that the light which beams from the page of inspiration, is, of itself, sufficient to guide the honest inquirer into the way of eternal life.

The British and Foreign Bible Society, has taken the lead in this benevolent, magnanimous undertaking ; and, with the aid of its auxiliary Societies, has done wonders. That of Russia, is progressing fast in its steps, in the path of true glory, both in point of exertion and success. Others are formed in various parts of the European Continent ; some in Asia ; and one or more, even in Africa. In our own favoured country, they have, in the short term of about ten years, become numerous ; and of late, the American Bible Society, concentrating their general force and influence, has risen as a Constellation of this Wes-

* The Rev. Mr. Hughes, a dissenting Minister, near London.

tern Hemisphere. We trust its light will direct the feet of many benighted travellers, to the city of refuge, and to the mountain of holiness.

Wisdom selects, and piety approves, those means which are best suited to promote the Glory of God in the Salvation of men. And what means, it may be asked, are, or can be, better adapted to the accomplishment of this great purpose, than God's own holy word? By this, the eternal king has revealed his adorable perfections, and Heavenly state. Here he has made known his holy counsels and righteous laws, formed as they are by unerring Wisdom and Justice; and which are supported by such power, faithfulness, and Sovereignty, as will never yield his glory to another. In his word, we behold him rising in his might, and calling forth Creation; upholding, and governing the creatures, and the Worlds he has made, by a paternal, yet righteous Providence; in which judgments are executed, as well as benefits bestowed. There, in the anticipations of Faith, we also behold him, in the fulness of time, ascending the throne of judgment, summoning the world before him, giving the awards of eternity, and bringing nature to its final dissolution. By this word, we learn Man's true character and state: what he was; what he is; and what he shall be—Once the holy and happy creature of his God; now, guilty, fallen, and depraved; as a sinner, the child of folly, pain, and wretchedness; as an imperfect Saint, encompassed with infirmity—though encouraged by Divine mercy, and sometimes greatly comforted, with discoveries of a Saviour's free love and grace; yet, still groaning under the burden of indwelling corruption, and the remembrance of innumerable sins and follies past, encountering difficulties, and contending with temptations; but, e're long, we see him in the faithful representation, of the word, exalted to glory in the Heavens; while, on the other hand, we be-

hold careless impenitent sinners cut off, and consigned to everlasting woe.

Here the Saviour is presented to our view, in all the glories of his person, and riches of his grace; as the author of redemption, and peace to man; as the way to the Father, the Resurrection and the Life. Here are invitations, and promises of grace; here life and immortality are clearly brought to light; here sinners are faithfully warned, and humble inquirers carefully directed.

O! how excellent is the book of God! How vast and various its subjects! How precious its contents! Its language is "plain to the simple; lofty to the learned." Its essential truths so plain, that he who runs may read; yet its mysteries, like those of its counterpart, the book of nature, so profound, so transcendent, that the human line cannot fathom them; nor the utmost stretch of man's soaring intellect, reach their exalted summit.

Respected members of the Marine Bible Society; you have chosen right means for accomplishing the pious, benevolent design of your coalition. O! let your motives be pure;—not self-righteous, and vain; and let your exertions be unremitted and vigorous, becoming your object: then may you expect the Lord's gracious smiles on your labours, and on your own souls.

Are there any of those hardy men, who traverse the ocean, here? O, let me intreat you, generous sailors, to pay a serious regard to the transactions of this evening. Here, you behold a voluntary association of respectable men, engaging, as Christians, to seek your good, even your Salvation. They ask no benefit, no service of you; but they invite you to forsake that course, which, if persisted in, will bring you into rocks and quicksands, where you must suffer shipwreck, and founder, to rise no more.

They invite you to come and partake of the inestimable blessings of the Gospel of Christ, and of the cove-

nant which is sealed with his precious blood : And, for this purpose, they present you with God's holy word, to guide you into the way of eternal life. God, I trust, has put it into their hearts, to perform this work of Christian kindness, for your souls' benefit; and he, himself, invites you to his favour, by his word of grace. Let me, therefore, entreat you, most earnestly, to embrace this Salvation; and then, to use your best endeavours, to engage others to unite with you, in becoming the children of Wisdom, and servants of the living God!

Christian Brethren, in general, suffer the word of exhortation. Give diligence to make your calling, and election sure. Be thankful for your Gospel privileges; and be careful to improve them. Let no man content himself, with a name to live, while he remains dead in sin. Come truly to the Gospel Feast; come with a Wedding Garment: And aspire to the high honours and enjoyments of the Christian life; to Communion and Fellowship with God.

To all, we are authorised, by the Gospel, to say; "Behold, now is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of salvation!" "Come, for all things are now ready!"

A contribution is asked, this evening, in behalf of Bible interests; in favour of the Salvation of Mariners. Let, then, your liberality be exercised, on the occasion, in a manner becoming those who have zeal for God, gratitude to their Redeemer, love to immortal souls, and a due regard to the interests of eternity.

And to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the infinite fountain of all grace, and benignity, be everlasting praise and Glory. *Amen.*

THE EDITOR'S CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

DEAR READERS,

MY brethren having addressed you, in a series of discourses, on some of the most important and interesting subjects which can claim the attention of mortals, permit me, within the compass of a very brief address, to recapitulate the various topics on which they have expatiated; and to inquire what has been the result of the instruction, thus imparted to you. As the preaching of the Gospel will assuredly be, to all to whom it is delivered, either a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death; and as you have had, in the preceding pages, a faithful exhibition of Divine Truth, it must follow, that you are deeply interested in ascertaining, whether the Servants of the Lord who have here been addressing you, have effectually reached your hearts; or whether they have bestowed upon you, labour in vain. The inquiries I make, are addressed to your consciences; and are designed to awaken and perpetuate a deep conviction, that your great business here, is to prepare for a future and better state of existence.

In the foregoing discourses, you have been exhorted, to aspire after that perfection which the law of God requires; and of which, your Father, who is in Heaven, is proposed as the example. Can you now, after the most deliberate self-examination of which you are capable, say, that this has been your constant, serious, and habitual endeavour; and that, although you are sensible, that, after the performance of your best services, you must have fallen far short of that spirituality which God justly demands of you; yet,

with Paul, it has been your uniform aim, "forgetting those things "that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before," to "*press forward* towards the mark, for the prize of the "high calling of God, in Christ Jesus"? You have been warned of the guilt and danger of delaying to keep God's commandments. Have you faithfully improved this warning; and, sensible of your lost and ruined state by nature, have you repaired, without delay, to that fountain which "is opened to the house of David, and to the "inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness?" Has Christ been made unto you, of God, "wisdom, and righteousness, "and sanctification, and redemption;" and have you received such evidence of your interest in him, as has inflamed your hearts with love to him, and sweetly constrained you, to yield a cheerful and willing obedience to his commands? You have been urged, to "keep your hearts, with all diligence." Have you, in consequence of being thus urged, maintained a constant and vigilant watchfulness over your own hearts; beseeching God, at the same time, after the example of the devout Psalmist, to search you and try your hearts, to try you and know your thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in you, and to lead you in the way everlasting? Your attention has been invited to the great atonement of the Cross. Have you been enabled, by faith, to lay hold on that great atoning sacrifice? Can you recognise the Lord Jesus Christ, "who knew "no sin," as being "made a sin offering for *you*, that *you* might be "made the righteousness of God in him"? And can you heartily unite with the Apostle Paul, in saying, "God forbid that I should "glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the "world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"? It has been demonstrated to you, from known and undeniable facts, and from the plain and unequivocal testimony of the Holy Scriptures, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Have you been made deeply sensible of the depravity and corruption of your nature; and have you found it so grievously oppressive, that, with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, you have been constrained to exclaim, "O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Have you felt guilt to

be an insupportable load, and corrupt affections to be galling fetters; and have you made suitable application, for relief, to him who has declared, that "he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," and who, in infinite compassion, has invited those who labour and are heavy-laden, to come unto him, and has promised to give them rest"?

The way of acceptance, as announced in the Gospel, has been opened to you. Have you duly availed yourselves of that bountiful provision, which God has kindly and graciously made for the salvation of your souls; by a constant and habitual endeavour, to walk, "not after the flesh, but after the spirit"? You have been assured, that "The Lord reigneth," and thereupon called to rejoice. Has the sweet assurance of his constant superintending Providence, warmed your hearts with gratitude and devotion; and have you felt yourselves constrained to break out, with the Royal Psalmist, into this passionate overflowing of a grateful heart, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; and crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies: who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's"? You have been apprized that the wicked man shall surely die. Have you seriously considered the import of this solemn declaration? Have you, from a view of this awful truth, been excited to serious self-examination; and has it been your sincere, constant, and habitual endeavour, by maintaining the character of the righteous, to escape the doom of the wicked? You have been reminded of the vanity of life, and the folly of the worldling. Has this induced you, importunately to implore the God of boundless mercy, that he would "so teach you to number your days, that you might apply your hearts unto wisdom"? You have been assured, that, "in such an hour as you think not, the son of man cometh;" and this assurance has been most feelingly and pathetically illustrated, by a variety of awful instances of God's righteous judgments, as displayed in the desolations produced by the tempest

and the storm. Have you hereby been excited to consider the transitory, and unsatisfying nature of all earthly possessions and enjoyments; and the shortness and uncertainty of human life; and have you been stirred up to keep yourselves in a constant state of preparation for your latter end?

You have been informed of the blessedness of not being offended in Christ. Have you been aspiring after this blessedness? And do you esteem Christ, as “chief among ten thousands, and as altogether lovely”? The example of one, who has faithfully served God, in his day and generation, has been set before you; and it has been demonstrated to you, that the removal of such a man, is a just cause of mourning. Have you hence been excited to become “followers of those, who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises”? It has been announced to you, as the solemn declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ, that, “except ye repent, ye shall perish.” Have you thus been led to the exercise of that godly sorrow for sin, which “worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of,” under the full conviction, that “the sorrow of the world worketh death”? You have been addressed, in a very interesting manner, on the nature and necessity of Regeneration. This is a subject of vital importance; and I should feel inclined to dwell on it, at some length, had not my worthy brother, who has called your attention to it, already given you such a lucid exposition of its nature, and importance, as to obviate the need of my saying much more to you, on this head. Allow me, however, affectionately to inquire,—Have you sensibly felt how essential to your permanent happiness, is that renovating change of heart, without which, our Lord Jesus Christ has declared, that you cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven? Has it been your happiness to experience this great change? Have you Scriptural evidence of having “passed from death unto life”? Can you say, of a truth, that, with you, “old things are passed away, and all things have become new”? Have you been favoured with well-grounded evidence, even the evidence of the word of God, that you have been “born again”—“born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”? The noble character of

the Bereans has been set before you, as a fit model for your imitation. Is it it *your* practice, as it was *theirs*, to “receive the word” with all readiness of mind,” and to “search the scriptures daily,” to ascertain how far the instructions you receive in the Sanctuary, are found to harmonize with the oracles of God?

The joyful tidings have been communicated to you, that “The Son of Man is come, to seek and to save that which was lost.” How have your hearts been affected by these glad tidings? Have you seen and felt the suitableness of Jesus Christ, to all your distresses, wants, and necessities, as poor, lost, and perishing sinners? And have you welcomed him to your hearts, as a Saviour, every way suited to the exigencies of your state, and to the desires of your souls? The importance of early piety has been seriously urged on you. Have you the testimony of a good conscience, that you have not forgotten to “remember your Creator in the days of your youth;” and that, from your youth up, you have so lived the life of the righteous, that you have now, a fair prospect of finding your last end to resemble his death? The proper agency of Reason, in matters of Religion, has been forcibly explained to you; and the boundaries which limit her inquiries, have been clearly defined. Have you exercised those reasoning powers which God has given you, in a candid and serious inquiry into the nature and character of that revelation of God’s will, which he has been pleased to grant, to his depraved and benighted creature, man: and, in the exercise of these powers, have you carefully confined them within their proper limits? Has the result been, a firm conviction, that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness”? And have you derived from it, that doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, which will make you wise unto salvation? You have been assured, that, although your souls must be separated from your bodies, yet, there is a time coming, when they will be re-united; and that your bodies shall arise, either to the resurrection of life, or to the resurrection of damnation. Has it been your anxious endeavour, to secure the former, and to escape the latter?

It has, in plain and explicit, terms, been declared to you, that "he that believeth not, shall be damned." Have you been careful to inquire, whether you have scriptural evidence of the genuineness of your faith; whether you are, indeed, "crucified with Christ;" whether you are "rooted and grounded in love;"—whether your faith be that, by which ye "believe *with the heart* "unto righteousness;" which "works by love, purifies the heart, "and overcomes the world"? The question which the Lord addressed to Elijah, "What dost thou here?" has also been addressed to you. Are you now able, with a good conscience, to answer, "Lord, I am endeavouring to walk in the way of thy commandments, without wearying, and to run therein without fainting"? You have had before you, an instructive illustration of the first promise of a Saviour made to the human race. Have you seriously inquired into your own personal interest in that Saviour; and is your evidence of that interest so clear, that you can say, with truth, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth*"?

You have also been instructed respecting the value of truth; and an explanation has been given you, of the analogy existing between the dispensations of grace by the Gospel, and a Royal Marriage Feast. Have you duly attended to the importance of buying and not selling the truth? And are you provided with the Wedding Garment, so as to become suitable guests, at the Royal Marriage Feast, which the King of Heaven has furnished?

If, to all these questions, ye can, with a clear conscience, return such answers as might, with propriety, be expected from the disciples of Christ, then, the pleasing inference is, that you have not read this book in vain. If, on the other hand, you are conscious, that, however faithfully a learned Paul may have planted, and however zealously an eloquent Apollos may have watered, both the planting and the watering have alike been lost upon you, then it becomes you, without further delay, earnestly and importunately to beseech God, that he would be graciously pleased to grant the increase; that the preaching of his word may, under his blessing, be unto you, not "a savour of death unto death, "but a savour of "life unto life." I beseech you, then, suffer the word of exhorta-

tion. "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God
 "did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye
 "reconciled to God." "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the
 "faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves,
 "how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Re-
 member that there is no future happiness for those who are desti-
 tute of an interest in Christ. O, then, see that ye secure to yourselves,
 a saving interest in his atoning and purifying blood. Let the earth be
 acquainted with your bended knees; let the air be acquainted with
 your fervent supplications; and never rest satisfied, until you have
 the most comfortable evidence of your vital union with the Lord
 Jesus Christ, who, of God, is made unto all that believe on him,
 "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

That the choicest blessings of Almighty God, may attend you,
 both in this life, and in that which is to come, is the fervent
 prayer of

Your willing servant in the Gospel,

THE EDITOR.

THE END.

