

DISCOURSES

SUITED TO THE .

ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

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"The Apostles' doctrine, . . . and the breaking of bread."—ACTS II. 42

"When the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them"—ACTS XX. 7.

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TO THE
REV. DAVID SMITH, D.D.,
AND THE
NORTH UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION OF BIGGAR,
THIS THIRD EDITION OF A WORK,
THIRTY-SIX YEARS AGO INSCRIBED, AS A TOKEN OF
PASTORAL REGARD, TO THE ASSOCIATE
CONGREGATION OF BIGGAR,
IS RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,
BY HIS KINSMAN AND THEIR FRIEND,
JOHN BROWN.

PREFACE.

To prevent that species of disappointment which arises from expecting to find in a book what it was never intended to contain, it is judged proper to intimate, that it is not designed, in the following pages, to furnish anything like a complete and regular treatise on the Lord's Supper. They are occupied with a series of Discourses, delivered before, at, and after the administration of that ordinance, composed at distant intervals, and having little or no mutual connection, except what arises from their general reference to the same great subject.

At the time of their composition, the Author considered it his duty to consult such books on their subjects as were within his reach, and to avail himself of whatever in them he conceived likely to be useful to those whose edification it was his object to promote; and as at that time he had not the remotest intention of publication, he was not scrupulously exact in marking, in his manuscript, the full extent of his obligations. In transcribing the Discourses for the press, he has endeavoured, as far as possible, to supply this deficiency; but if, after all,

the reader should occasionally meet with sentiments or language which he recognises as borrowed, it is hoped candour will induce him to conclude, that the obligation is not acknowledged, merely because it was not observed.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that in the arrangement and composition of the whole work, a regard has been paid to the manner in which the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is dispensed in the Scottish Presbyterian churches; and that to promote a fervid, yet enlightened, devotion in their members, when engaged in this service, is avowedly its primary object. At the same time, the Author ventures to hope, that it may be of general use and interest, as a view of Christian doctrine and duty in reference to this ordinance; and that it may also serve the subordinate purpose, of exhibiting a picture of the manner in which the Scottish Presbyterian churches observe this solemn rite of Christian worship.

JOHN BROWN.

BIGGAR, *April* 1816.

NOTE.—At the time this preface was written, the following was the mode of administering the Lord's Supper, all but universally followed in the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland:—The ordinance was observed in a few cases, chiefly in large towns, four times a-year; in most country places among the Dissenters, and in some in the Establishment, twice; in many of the Established Churches only once. The practice of communicating twice a-year was introduced among the Seceders by my grandfather, the Rev. John Brown of Haddington, about the middle of last century, and gradually became universal among them. "Intimation of the Sacrament," as it was called, was generally made a month before its celebration. The Lord's day immediately preceding this was called the Preparation Sabbath; a day in the intervening

week was devoted to public worship, called the Fast Day, when the tokens of admission to the Lord's table were distributed; and two or three sermons were preached on the Saturday. The discourses in the first part of this volume are specimens of the kind of sermons generally preached on these occasions. On the morning of the communion Sabbath, the congregation assembled at an earlier hour than usual. The opening sermon, called the Action Sermon, had ordinarily a peculiar reference to the great business of the day. On its being concluded, after prayer and praise, came "the Fencing of the Table," a discourse on the characters of those who may, and of those who may not, observe the Lord's Supper; with an invitation of the former to the Lord's table, and a solemn debarring of the latter from it. After again engaging in praise, the minister came down to the head of the communion table, read the words of institution, and offered up a suitable prayer. Having given a short address, he distributed the bread and wine; and when the solemn act of communicating was over, dismissed the communicants after a short exhortation. Their places were taken by other communicants, while the congregation was engaged in praise; and the same form, with the exception of the prayer, was gone through at successive table-services till all intending communicants had participated in the ordinance. As on these occasions many from neighbouring congregations were present, the table-services were often numerous, and the communion did not close till far towards the evening. When all had communicated, the minister of the place, after praise, addressed suitable concluding exhortations to those who had communicated.—The second part of the volume is occupied by specimens of the Action Sermon—the Fencing of the Table—the Table-service, and the Concluding Exhortation. The whole services of the day were concluded by a sermon which, as well as the two sermons preached on the Monday forenoon, and those on the following Lord's day, commonly called the Thanksgiving Sabbath, was generally of a practical kind.—Specimens of these discourses occupy the third part of the volume.

In consequence of neighbouring congregations being vacant, by their ministers assisting each other in the administration of the Lord's Supper, great crowds used to assemble at the place where this ordinance was observed: and it was found necessary, as the church could contain but a small portion of them, either to observe the Communion in the open air, or to have a succession of sermons preached without doors, while the peculiar services of the day were going on within. In the evening, it was customary to deliver the concluding sermon to the whole congregation, in the open air. That abuses were occasionally committed on such occasions cannot be doubted; yet still it is scarcely possible to look back without regret, to the impressive spectacle which was not uncommon in Scotland, of an assembly of many thousands, on a fine summer Sabbath evening, on a mountain-side, listening with deep attention, and apparent devotion, to the glad tidings of great

joy, delivered with solemn interest and tender affection. Multitudes have been obliged to say on such occasions, and the recollection has been sweet to their dying hour, "Surely the Lord is in this place. How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Since this volume was first published, considerable changes in the external mode of administering the ordinance of the Lord's Supper have taken place, chiefly among the United Presbyterians. The ordinance is more frequently administered—in very many congregations four times, in some six times, in at least one twelve times, in the course of the year; and in many instances, the practice of simultaneous communion has been introduced. The fast-day and other week-day services, if not altogether discontinued, are by no means uniformly connected with the communion; and "tent preaching," as it was called, has, except in some instances among the Reformed Presbyterians, disappeared from the Lowlands.

January 1853.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE THIRD EDITION.

MY respected friend the Publisher lately informed me, that these Discourses, which have for some time been out of print, are still occasionally asked for, and suggested the propriety of a New Edition. To this proposal I had but one objection,—the subjects of some of these Discourses had come repeatedly before me in subsequent publications; and I knew that, regarding this volume as, like so many better ones, finally disposed of, I had in a number of instances without scruple availed myself of its thoughts and expressions. On looking into the book, however, I found that this had not been done to the extent I had supposed, and I have resolved to comply with my Publisher's advice. In preparing the copy for the printers, considerable changes have been made, both in the way of subtraction and addition; the result of which is, that this Edition contains fully a third more matter than any preceding one.

Grateful for the kind reception this volume (one of my earliest publications) has received in its former Editions, I present it in this enlarged, and it is hoped,

improved form, to the Christian Public, with the prayer that its original object, "the promotion of a fervid yet enlightened devotion in the observance of the Lord's Supper," may be extensively gained.

The four sermons on "Keeping ourselves in the Love of God," originally published at the close of the Exposition of the First Epistle of Peter, but not reprinted in the second edition of that work, are subjoined as no inappropriate Appendix.

J. B.

ARTHUR LODGE, EDINBURGH,
January 1853.

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PART I.

DISCOURSES

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ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

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DISCOURSE I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP, AND OF DUE PREPARATION FOR IT.

PSALM XXVI. 6.—“I will wash mine hands in innocency : so will I compass thine altar,
O Lord.”

THUS did the holy psalmist resolve in reference to the exercises of public religion, and in reference to preparation for these exercises ; and thus ought we to resolve. What is the import of his resolution ? and why ought we to make that resolution ours ? To these two questions, this discourse is intended to furnish a satisfactory reply.

I. The psalmist's resolution,—“I will wash mine hands in innocency : so will I compass thine altar, O Lord,” is obviously a complex one, and naturally divides itself into two simple determinations : the first a resolution to engage in the exercises of public religion, “I will compass thine altar, O Lord” ; the second, a resolution to prepare for engaging in these services, by a thorough purification of himself, “I will wash mine hands in innocency : so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.” Let us attend in succession to these two determinations, of which the psalmist's resolution expressed in our text is composed.

1st. He resolves to engage in the exercises of public religion, "I will compass thine altar, O Lord." The allusion in these words scarcely requires to be explained to those who are acquainted with the ritual services of the Mosaic economy. Sacrifices either expiatory or eucharistic formed the principal part of the services of public religion under that dispensation,—the one emblematical of the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus, the other of the grateful acknowledgments and services of the saints. When the priest, as the substitute of the offerer, had laid the sacrifice on the altar, it seems to have been usual for him to walk with slow and measured step around it; and it is not unlikely that the attending multitude at a distance joined in the procession amid the solemn music of the temple. Thus did they encircle the altar of God.¹ It is easy to perceive, then, with what propriety the phrase "compassing God's altar" is used to express an observance of the duties of public religion.

The religious service which God enjoins on man, may be considered as, like man himself, constituted of two parts,—a body and a soul. The essential part of true religion is purely spiritual. It consists in a right mode of thinking and feeling in reference to God—in just comprehensive views of the Divine character, and in a corresponding state of the affections. To know God, to fear God, to trust in God, to believe all his revelations, and to acquiesce in all his appointments—these exercises of the understanding and the heart may be attended to at all times and in every situation; and being rather fixed habits than occasional employments, may be termed the soul of religion. Without these, all external service is a dead uninformed mass; without these, the most fatiguing labours and the most painful sufferings are of no value.

Were man a pure and uncorrupted spirit, entirely unencum-

¹ "Not only had the priests often to go round about the altar when they were to sprinkle on its horns the blood of different sacrifices (See Lev. iv. 18, 25, 34; xvi. 18, etc.), but when the king brought sacrifices, he led the sacrifice to the east side of the altar, gave it there into the hand of the officiating priest, and did not turn back the same way, but came round about the altar to the north side, where he remained till it was offered. But on solemn occasions, the musical Levites surrounded the altar seven times with songs of praise and thanksgiving, while the smoke of the whole burnt-offering ascended on high as a sweet-smelling savour to Jehovah. On such occasions, the sweet psalmist of Israel went before all the bands of musical Levites with the harp in his hand, surrounding the altar of God with praise and songs of triumph and joy."—WELSH.

bered with matter and untainted with sin, this might perhaps have formed the whole of his religion. But his constitution as an embodied spirit, and his situation as a fallen creature, render something more necessary. The religion of such a being must be in some measure palpable and material; it must have a body as well as a soul. This body, He who "knows our frame, for He hath made us," has given it in those external ordinances which recur at stated intervals,—those devotional services, public, domestic, and secret, which, though in various forms, have constituted a part of man's religious duty under every dispensation of Divine grace. It is a profound remark of one of the greatest of our moralists, that "religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by faith and hope, will glide out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpresed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example."¹

With regard to the important subject of external, and especially public religion, men have run into opposite extremes. They have separated what God has connected; and have taken up, some with the one part of religious duty, and some with the other, instead of the whole. The most common and fatal mistake is to substitute the material external part of religion for the whole of it; to rest content with the form, while unacquainted with the power of godliness. But it is also an error, and one of no slight import, to cultivate an entirely spiritual religion to the neglect of the instituted means of devotion. Of those who, from a mystical mode of thinking and feeling, have renounced external ordinances as useless, and placed the whole of religion in the solitary contemplation and love of God, not a few, finding it impossible to realise their own idea of a purely spiritual and perfect devotion, have given up with religion altogether; and even in cases where the ultimate result has not been so fatal, if final happiness has not been sacrificed, moral improvement has been materially obstructed.

In the character and conduct of David, we have a beautiful illustration of the perfect practicability of uniting the cultivation of spiritual religion with a strict attention to external ordinances. In his psalms we have the finest specimens of pure and spiritual devotion; and we also find expressions of the highest regard for

¹ Johnson.

the external, and especially the public, ordinances of religion. "One thing," says he, "have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." "We will go into his tabernacles; we will worship at his footstool." How does this energetic language, so expressive of high esteem for the comparatively carnal and imperfect ordinances under the law, reprove the greater part of the professors of Christianity for their listless indifference to the highly spiritual and rational external services of the new dispensation!

David's high esteem of public ordinances, and his resolution carefully to observe them, are peculiarly instructive, as they strongly illustrate the futility of those arguments, if they deserve the name, by which the neglectors of these institutions seek to defend their conduct. These are principally the two following:—That they can derive no advantage from public ordinances, as they are already sufficiently acquainted with the principles of religion; or that they are so deeply involved in worldly business, that they cannot devote the requisite time and attention.

The first objection comes with a bad grace from any person, and it is a gross falsehood in the mouths of those who are most disposed to urge it. There are comparatively very few who may not find even new information, by attending on the public exercises of religion. Men, well informed on other subjects, are often miserably ill informed on this, though of all subjects the most important. David's knowledge of Divine truth was very extensive, when we consider his circumstances; yet *he* did not think it unnecessary to compass God's altar, to inquire in his temple. Indeed the objection goes on a false supposition altogether. The communication of new information is by no means the only, nor even the principal, design of public ordinances. We meet together for higher and better purposes than, like the Athenians, "to tell or hear some new thing." To recall truth to the mind, to impress it on the heart, to excite and express religious affection, to stimulate to active duty,—these are the purposes of public ordinances. Who that knows himself, can say that he stands in no need of any of these things? The right way to observe Divine institutions

is, considering them as the divinely-appointed means of spiritual improvement, to engage in them from a regard to Divine authority, and with an humble expectation of the Divine blessing.

Nor does David's resolution place in a less clear light the impropriety of their conduct, who neglect the public ordinances of religion on the ground of want of time or hurry of business. It is not likely that any of them have a greater variety of important affairs to manage than David the king of Israel. Yet he resolves that, whatever be neglected, religious duty shall not. "I will compass thine altar, O Lord." Activity in secular business is in no way inconsistent with attention to religious duty. Diligence in business and fervour of spirit, are but two different parts of the same work,—the service of God. In ordinary cases, they do not at all interfere with each other; and when they do, there can be no doubt which should give way with the man who believes the soul to be more valuable than the body, and time less important than eternity. I know no law, either Divine or human, which obliges any man to involve himself in more business than he can manage; but I do know more than one Divine injunction, sanctioned by a tremendous curse, which require every man to keep God's Sabbaths and to reverence his sanctuary.

2d. The psalmist resolves to prepare for engaging in the public ordinances of religion, by a thorough purification of himself,—“I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.”

This resolution, as well as that we have been considering, is expressed in figurative language, borrowed from the ritual of Judaism. Under the law there were “divers washings.” It is difficult to say to what particular rite there is here an allusion; it may refer to the rite of ablution in general, which was very common among the Jews, or to the purification of the priests before engaging in the discharge of their duties,¹ or to the rite by which uncertain murders were to be expiated. We are disposed to think that it is likely to the second of these usages that the reference here is made; and there can be no doubt that it was intended to teach the important truth, that moral purity, freedom from guilt and pollution, is necessary in order to our acceptably engaging in the exercises of religious worship. In language suited to the exist-

¹ Exod. xxx. 17-24; xl. 30-32.

ing order of things, the psalmist declares his resolution to approach God "with a heart," to use the words of an apostle, "sprinkled from an evil conscience, and a body washed with pure water."

Viewing the psalmist's words in this point of light, they plainly imply a conviction of the necessity, and an acquaintance with the nature, of true preparation for Divine ordinances, a persuasion of personal guilt and depravity—a knowledge of the means by which they are to be removed—and a determination so to employ them as to gain the end in view. Such appear to be the leading ideas suggested by the psalmist's resolution, "I will wash mine hands in innocency." They are highly important, and deserve our attentive and devout consideration.

The psalmist discovers a conviction of the necessity of preparation in order to acceptably worshipping God. There are many professed worshippers of God, who rush into the Divine presence "as the horse rusheth into the battle." They enter the house of God without preparation, and they retire from it without advantage. This heedlessness originates in ignorance, or want of consideration respecting the character of God and of themselves. It is because they do not reflect that God is infinitely great, holy, and just,—and that they are inconceivably mean, guilty, and depraved,—that they act in a manner so irrational, so criminal, and so dangerous. David had extensive and accurate views both of the Divine and the human character. He knew and felt that "God is a great God and a great King above all gods"—that "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and He cannot look on sin"—that "evil shall not dwell with Him, and that He hates the workers of iniquity." He knew and felt that mankind at their best estate are altogether vanity, "That they had all gone aside—that they had altogether become filthy—that there was none that did good, no, not one." Knowing this, he perceived that preparation was absolutely necessary in order to enable man to worship God with acceptance; that "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all who are about Him;" and that "holiness becometh his house for ever."

The same views of God and man which convinced the psalmist of the necessity of preparation for the Divine ordinances, must have led him into an acquaintance with the nature of that preparation. He perceived that the preparation requisite for such

a being as man approaching God, could not be mere ceremonial rites, or even external reformation. Knowing that "God desireth truth in the inward parts," and that "the righteous God trieth the reins and the heart," he saw plainly that nothing short of freedom from guilt, and renovation of heart, could fit man for acceptable and comfortable intercourse with God.

Nor were these truths as to the necessity and nature of preparation for the Divine service, in the case of the psalmist, merely general principles—part of a theological system which he had been taught. He saw and felt his own interest in them. He knew that not only mankind need this kind of preparation, but *he* needed it.

The words we are considering obviously intimate a sense of moral pollution. "I will wash mine hands." Clean hands need not to be washed. "Pure hands" is a common figurative expression for innocence and holiness; polluted hands are the emblems of depravity and guilt. The sentiment so plainly implied in this passage, is explicitly stated in many other places in the book of Psalms. David was deeply convinced that he was at once guilty and depraved. "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "Who can understand his errors? Mine iniquities have gone over my head; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me."

But, while the words of the psalmist strongly imply his sense of his own moral defilement, and his persuasion that till it was removed he was unfit for the performance of acceptable Divine worship, they are not the language of helpless, hopeless guilt and depravity. He knows that he is guilty and depraved, but he knows also how he may become righteous and holy. "My hands are polluted, but "I will wash them in innocency." It may appear to many, that these words merely imply that David was resolved to repent of all his past sins, and to abstain from them for the future, and be more careful henceforth in the discharge of all his duties; and by these penitential tears, good resolutions, and sincere endeavours, secure for himself the acceptance of his homage when he laid his sacrifice on the altar. But it is not thus that we have learned Christ, nor is it thus that the Scriptures of the New Testament teach us to understand those of the Old.

The way of deliverance from guilt and depravity, the way of restoration to the Divine favour, image, and fellowship, has in all ages been the same. "There is" only "one God, and one Mediator between God and man;" one atoning sacrifice, one justifying righteousness, one sanctifying Spirit. I trust none of you are ignorant of the only way in which guilty man can become righteous, and depraved man holy. We are "justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "The righteousness of God is unto all and upon all them that believe." "We are washed, and sanctified, and justified through the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

It is our happiness to have the manner in which man is to be purified much more fully unfolded than David had; yet it will not be difficult to show that as the manner of deliverance from guilt and depravity has been the same in all ages, David's knowledge of it was more extensive than many suppose. The careful reader of the book of Psalms, will soon perceive that David does not consider himself capable of atoning for his sin or of transforming his nature. He asks both of these blessings as unmerited favours from God. "For thy name sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." "Have mercy on me according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." To the same source from which he expected pardon, he looked for renovation. "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

Nor was this the whole of David's knowledge on this interesting subject. He knew not only that pardon and sanctification were to be obtained from God; he also had some idea, though no doubt an indistinct one, compared with what we may now have, of the manner in which these divine blessings were to be bestowed. He declares his conviction that no ceremonial sacrifice could procure for him the pardon of his sin. "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it Thee; Thou delightest not in burnt-offering." Yet he says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." These words allude to the manner in which the healed leper was purified from ceremonial defilement, by being

sprinkled with the blood of an animal slain for a sin-offering. From these two passages, taken in connection, it is evident that while David did not expect to obtain the remission of moral guilt by means of ceremonial offerings, he was also persuaded that "without shedding of blood there could be no remission," and that his pardon was to be procured by a propitiatory sacrifice of which the Mosaic expiations were only figures. Indeed, in the following passage, we have the great mystery of the manner in which the just God justifies the ungodly unfolded, though we cannot say how far the inspired writer understood his own language. "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." In language not ambiguous, the psalmist also intimates his expectation of deliverance from the depraving influence of sin, by the Divine Spirit's influence. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not *thy Holy Spirit* from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with *thy free Spirit*." Such was the manner in which David expected to be purified, and thus fitted for acceptably compassing God's altar.

It may be urged that this view of the subject, however supported by quotations from other parts of the book of Psalms, does not very well comport with the language employed in the text more immediately under consideration, which represents David as active in his own purification. This apparent difficulty, however, is easily surmounted. In purifying man from moral guilt and depravity, God deals with him according to his rational and active nature. "It is God that justifies;" but in order to justification, man must by faith receive "the gift of righteousness." It is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies; but while he "works in us both to will and to do," he makes us "work out our own salvation." The atonement of Christ will justify none but those who believe, nor will the Spirit of Christ sanctify any but those who yield themselves to his influence. The respective uses of the atonement and Spirit of Christ, and our employment of the appointed means, are in some measure shadowed forth by the figure here employed. It is the water which cleanses our hands

—the purifying efficacy resides entirely in that element; but if our hands are not washed in the stream, they will not be cleansed.

The words of the psalmist imply a resolution not merely to purify himself, but to do so thoroughly, “I will wash mine hands in innocency.” With the great body of interpreters, we consider the words *in innocency*, as referring to the manner in which David was resolved to wash his hands, and as intimating its completeness. He was desirous of obtaining the pardon of *all* his sins, the mortification of *all* his corruptions. There was no sin from which he did not wish to be wholly purified. He was not disposed to say of any sin, “It is a little one.” It was his determination to “cleanse himself from *all* filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to *perfect* holiness in the fear of God.” The language of his heart was, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity.” “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins.” “I esteem *all* thy precepts concerning *all* things to be right; and I hate *every* false way.”

I only further remark here, that the psalmist’s language intimates a determination to seek purification previously to every approach to God’s altar. David had often washed his hands in innocency, and thus surrounded the altar of Jehovah; but conscious of daily contracting guilt and defilement, he resolves daily to apply to the blood of propitiation and to the laver of sanctification.

Brethren, have you made the psalmist’s resolution your own? Have you determined in the solemn services of the sanctuary to draw near to God? Have you resolved to prepare yourselves according to the due order? Are you aware of the necessity, and do you understand the nature, of preparation for Divine ordinances? Do you feel your guilt and depravity? Are you acquainted with the Divine way of justification and sanctification? Are you with unsuspecting confidence relying alone on the atoning sacrifice and all-powerful Spirit of the Redeemer? Is it your desire and determination to cleanse yourselves from all filthiness; and though you have often applied for pardon and sanctification to the atonement and Spirit of Christ, do you feel the absolute necessity of constantly applying to these in order to the acceptable performance of any duty? These are important questions. Let conscience do its work, and honestly answer them.

II. I proceed now to the *second* division of the discourse, in which your attention will be directed to a few reasons why we ought to make the psalmist's resolution our own.

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning.” The experience of David is recorded for the instruction of saints in every age, “that they may be followers of him, who through faith inherits the promises.” Numerous and cogent reasons may be adduced for our embracing both parts of the psalmist's resolution. A regard to the Divine authority, and our own real interest, call on us to resolve with David to observe the public ordinances of religion; and a consideration of the Divine character, of the threatenings denounced against, and the judgments executed upon, those who approach God unprepared, and of the promises addressed to those who draw near to Him after the due order, with the moral impossibility of our deriving any advantage from them if not thus prepared, urges us to adopt the resolution of washing our hands in innocency, before encompassing God's altar. Let us shortly attend to these motives in their order.

1st. A regard to the Divine authority and to our own real interest, ought to induce us to resolve to attend the public ordinances of religion. That it is the duty of mankind to worship God, not only in secret and in the family, but also in public assemblies, seems a dictate of reason—a part of that law originally impressed on the human mind, which ignorance and guilt have not entirely effaced. In all ages and nations, in almost every stage of society, we find some form of public worship, and meetings at stated times in honour of their deities. He who neglects public worship, discovers a conscience more insensible to the calls of duty than the benighted pagan.

In the holy Scriptures, the duty of public worship is explicitly enjoined. “O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God; and we are the people of his pasture.” “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.” “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders.” “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some

is." It is thus impossible for us to neglect public ordinances without pouring contempt on the authority of God.

In this case, as in every other, duty and interest are closely connected. The person who neglects public ordinances, not only disobeys God but also injures himself. Numerous and important advantages are to be derived from a conscientious, devotional attendance on them. They are the usual medium through which divine influence exerts itself for the conviction and conversion of sinners, and for the edification of saints in knowledge and faith, consolation and obedience. By waiting on them the ignorant may become well informed, and the fool wise to salvation. Knowledge is instilled by them into the understanding, and comfort into the heart. By these means, men become better acquainted with God's will and more disposed to do it; more active in duty, more patient in suffering; more harmless and more useful; more weaned from earth and more fit for heaven. Consult the experience of the saints, and you will find they have all found attendance on public ordinances a source of advantage and pleasure. "It is good for me to draw near to God." "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." He who neglects the public ordinances of religion despises his own mercy.

2d. A consideration of the Divine character, of the threatenings denounced against and executed on the profaners of Divine institutions, of the promises made to those who approach to God after the due order, and of the moral impossibility of our deriving spiritual advantage from them otherwise, urges us to resolve to prepare ourselves for engaging in these duties, by applying to the sacrifice and Spirit of Christ for pardon and sanctification. The God we worship is infinitely great and glorious, just and holy. Angels, when they approach Him, veil their faces and their feet with their wings. He is jealous of the holiness of his house, and will not allow him who profanes it to escape with impunity.

The threatenings denounced against those who with impure hearts and unclean hands engage in his worship, are awfully alarming. "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and

speakest against thy brother ; thou slanderedst thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence ; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself : but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts ? Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto Me : the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with ; it is iniquity even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth : they are a trouble unto Me ; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you ; yea when ye make many prayers, I will not hear : your hands are full of blood." Nor are these vain words ; He who utters them is not a man that He should lie. In many instances He has awfully proved his displeasure at the profaners of his ordinances. Nadab and Abihu, when they offered incense with strange fire, were punished with instantaneous death, by fire from heaven. The men of Bethshemesh, who dared to look into the sacred symbol of Divinity, were smitten with a great slaughter. The Corinthians, for their unprepared approach to the table of the Lord, were chastened with severe diseases, and some of them with untimely death.

If these threatenings and judgments are fitted to deter us from a rash approach to God in his ordinances, the promises addressed to those who draw near to Him according to the due order, are well fitted to persuade us to wash our hands in innocence, and so compass the altar of Jehovah. While the sinners in Zion "may well be afraid, and fearfulness surprise the hypocrites"—if the question be put "who can dwell with the devouring fire (for our God is a consuming fire), who can dwell with everlasting burnings ?" the answer follows, "He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppression, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, and stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing of evil, he shall dwell on high, his place of defence

shall be the munition of rocks; bread shall be given him, and his water shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off." "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Finally, the consideration of the impossibility of our deriving spiritual advantage from public ordinances, unjustified and un-sanctified, should lead us to resolve to wash our hands in innocence, that so we may encompass God's altar. How *can* a man "under the curse" be blessed with tokens of God's peculiar favour? How *can* the unholy have fellowship with the holy, holy, holy One?

Deeply impressed with a sense of our obligations, from duty and interest, to engage in the solemn public services of religion, and convinced that it is impossible for us to perform these in a manner acceptable to God, and advantageous to ourselves, without an interest in the atonement and spirit of Christ, let us exercise that humble, yet confident, reliance on the testimony of God concerning his Son, which is the appointed medium of our receiving all the blessings of the Christian salvation. This faith is the work of the Spirit, this holy Spirit is the gift of God, and this divine gift is promised to all who ask it. "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."—"If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask Him?"

DISCOURSE II.

THE NATURE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. ¹

LUKE XXII. 19, 20.—“ This bread is my body, which is given for you :—this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”

CHRISTIANITY is honourably distinguished, by the simplicity and spirituality of its ordinances and duties, not merely from those false religions which have in every age imposed on the credulity or the fears of mankind, but also from Judaism, the only other religion which can justly lay claim to a divine origin. By far the greater part of the Christian code is occupied with the duties which naturally arise out of the relations which man bears to the Supreme Being, and to his fellow-men. Love to God and love to man, form the two cardinal requisitions of the law of Christ ; and its particular injunctions are but illustrations or exemplifications of these two leading principles.

It is comparatively but a very small part of the Christian law that is devoted to the institution and regulation of ritual observances. Under the Old Testament economy, ceremonial institutions bore a very considerable proportion to the general mass of religious duty. On those who lived under that dispensation, were imposed numerous fatiguing and expensive observances, the meaning of which was in many cases obscure ; and the obligation of which was to be traced entirely to positive institution. The ordinances of Christianity, on the contrary, are in general such as naturally arise out of the constitution and situation of mankind, and their relations and duties to their Creator and each other ; and that part of our religion which is ritual, is in the highest

¹ A fuller view of the doctrine of Scripture as respects the nature, design, obligation, permanent obligation, and frequent observance of the Lord's Supper, may be found in the Author's "Hints on the Lord's Supper, and Thoughts for the Lord's Table."

degree simple, being confined to two ceremonies,—the meaning of which is apparent, and the observance of which is easy,—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are the only institutions of a ritual nature, which Jesus Christ has enjoined on his followers.

These ordinances are obviously of a positive nature, and derive their obligation, not from any intrinsic propriety, but entirely from the authority of Him who appointed them. On the supposition of the truth of the Gospel, it necessarily follows, on the principles of that law which binds all intelligent beings, that all who hear it ought to believe it, and that all who believe it ought to profess it; but the obligation of believers to make this profession, by being washed with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is to be resolved into a positive appointment of Heaven. On the same supposition, that we should gratefully recollect the love of the Son of God in dying for our salvation, is the dictate of reason and of conscience; but that we should testify this grateful recollection by eating bread and drinking wine, as instituted emblems of his body and blood, we could never have found out, had he not expressly said, "This do in remembrance of me."

The attentive observer must, however, have remarked, that even these positive ordinances, these ritual institutions, bear the general character of simplicity and spirituality, which marks the whole of the New Testament economy. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, though ceremonies, are by no means unmeaning ceremonies, nor is their signification either doubtful or obscure. They are striking emblematical representations of the peculiar and most important principles of our holy faith. The Author of our religion, who "knows our frame, for He hath made us," has, in kind condescension to our weakness, embodied, as it were, the abstract principles of his institution in these ordinances, and thus made use of our senses, the more deeply to impress our minds with the invisible realities of religious truth. In both of these ordinances, we are taught the doctrines of man's guilt and depravity, and of salvation through the atoning sacrifice and transforming Spirit of Jesus Christ. The baptism of water is a symbol of internal purification; and who but the polluted require to be cleansed? The Lord's Supper is a commemorative representation of a propitiatory sacrifice; and who but the guilty stand in need of expiation and forgiveness? This ordinance proclaims

the necessity and efficacy of the Redeemer's sacrifice,—that, the power and sufficiency of the Redeemer's spirit. Both are calculated to suggest the most important truths to the mind, as well as to excite the most devotional affections in the heart; and thus, though positive observances, and ritual institutions, they are “spiritual sacrifices,”—“reasonable services,”—“rational worship.”

No employment can be more appropriate to our present circumstances, in the immediate prospect of observing the Lord's Supper, than an inquiry into the meaning of the holy service we have in view; and nowhere are we likely to find more satisfactory information on this subject, than in the words of the Master himself, when he instituted this holy ordinance. “This bread,” said he, “is my body which is given for you:—this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”

The force of our Lord's words may, I apprehend, be expressed in the following proposition:—“The religious ceremony which we term the Lord's Supper, is an emblematical representation of this truth,—that the incarnate Son of God, by his sufferings and death, made atonement for the sins of his people.” It teaches us, that the Son of God had a body and blood,—or in other words, that he was incarnate; it teaches us, that this body was broken, and this blood shed,—or in other words, that he suffered and died; and it teaches us, that this body was given for his people, and this blood shed for them,—or in other words, that he offered himself as an expiatory sacrifice in their room. The illustration of this general remark, which thus naturally divides itself into three parts, shall occupy the remaining part of the discourse.

I. In the Lord's Supper, we have an emblematical representation of our Saviour's *incarnation*. The bread and the wine are symbols of his holy humanity. “This bread is my body,—this cup is the New Testament in my blood;”—or, as it is expressed in another of the gospel histories, “this is my blood of the New Testament.”

Nothing is of greater importance to the formation of just conceptions of the system of human redemption, than correct notions of the pre-existent glories of Him who came in the name of the Lord to save us. He whose death is represented in the Lord's Supper, did not begin to exist when he was born of the

Virgin. "His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." "He was in the beginning with God,—he was God." His name is "the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and the living One."¹ He is "God over all, blessed for ever." "By him were created all things that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things subsist."

This illustrious person, to obtain our salvation, became "the man Christ Jesus." "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and of truth." "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same."

The facts of the case are thus stated by the evangelical historian:—"And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man, whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon

¹ Rev. i. 17, 18.—Nowhere, perhaps, has the division of the New Testament into verses produced a more unhappy effect on the translation, than in the passage here referred to. Instead of rendering—*ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος καὶ ὁ ζῶν, καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς κ. τ. λ.* "I am the first and the last, and the living one,—and I was dead," &c., our translators, following the Stephanic division of the verses, which is of no authority, have rendered it, "I am the first and the last, *I am* he that liveth;" thus omitting the second *καὶ* altogether, and inserting the very needless supplement "I am." The division of the Bible into chapters and verses is a great convenience for reference; but this is not a solitary instance, in which an undue regard to this division has led to an obscure or even incorrect translation.

thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”¹ “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria). And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapt in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God, in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.”² Thus was the Word made flesh.

The doctrine of the Scripture on this confessedly mysterious

¹ Luke i. 26-38.

² Luke ii. 1-16.

but obviously most important, subject, seems reducible to the following proposition, which I shall endeavour, as briefly and as plainly as I can, to illustrate. "That the Only-begotten of God equally with the Father and the Spirit, the possessor of the essential perfections and rights of the one Divine nature, assumed a human nature, consisting of a material body and a rational soul, free from moral guilt and defilement, yet subject to the innocent infirmities of humanity in its present state, into a personal union with his Divine nature, so that, while the natures are for ever distinct and unmingled, they are inseparably and eternally united in his person, as "the mediator between God and man."

The Son of God, when he came into our world to procure our redemption, did not, as some ancient heretics taught, merely assume a human form as he had repeatedly done under former dispensations. He took unto himself a material body formed of the same kind of substance as the bodies of other men. "When he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me." In this body he was "born of a woman;" and, like the bodies of other men, it was nourished by food and increased in size. He was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. In his own body, he, his own self, bare our sins to the tree, and by the shedding of his own blood did he make expiation for the transgressions of his people. "Handle me and see," said he to his disciples, who were in doubt as to the reality of his resurrection, "for a Spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have."

But our Lord assumed not only a human body but a human nature, consisting both of matter and mind, soul and body. The Divine nature was not the immediate animating principle of the body of Jesus. In this case he had not been our kinsman, our brother, the man Christ Jesus. Jesus increased in wisdom as well as in stature, but the second person of the Trinity, who is the all-wise God, can acquire no new information. It is plain from this single fact, that our Saviour possessed a human understanding, limited in its capacities and susceptible of improvement. The Divine nature is incapable of suffering, but the soul of Jesus was exceeding sorrowful even to death. The will of the Divine Father and Son is necessarily one, but Jesus possessed a will distinct from, though completely subject to, the will of God. "Not my will but thine be done."

Indeed, had not the Son of God assumed a complete human nature, he would have been incapable of death, which in man consists in the dissolution of the union between the material and spiritual parts of his complex frame. The death of Jesus was in every thing essential like the death of other men. "Father," he said, "into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said this, he yielded up the ghost."

Nor are we to conceive of our Lord's incarnation as merely the communication to the man Christ Jesus of a Divine influence, superior in its nature, larger in its measure, more constant in its operation, and more permanent in its continuance than was ever conferred on any other man. The language of Scripture necessarily involves in it the idea of personal union.

"The Word was made flesh." "God was manifest in flesh." Yes, the invisible God was so manifest in the flesh, as to be the object of men's bodily senses. The eternal living one who was with the Father, was seen and looked on and handled. "He who saw him, saw the Father." The command was, "Behold thy God." "The child born," and "the mighty God," was the same person. "He who was found in fashion as a man," was "He who was in the form of God."

The human nature thus assumed by the Son of God, into union with his Divine person, was completely free from moral stain. "Jesus was such an High Priest as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." That which was born of the virgin was "a holy thing."

Indeed, though this truth had not been so distinctly stated, the well informed mind would instinctively have recoiled from the idea that the thrice Holy Divinity in the person of the Son should be united to what is sinful, morally impure, as the very supremacy of incongruity and absurdity. Besides, the very design of the incarnation, which was to furnish him with "somewhat to offer" as a sacrifice, required that he who was to expiate the sins of men should have none of his own. The doctrine of our Lord's fallen humanity, however modified, is one of the "strange doctrines" against which the apostle warns the Hebrews. It appears to be held in three different forms. With some it is merely a paradoxical mode of expressing the doctrine of the Christian church from the beginning, that human nature, as existing in our Saviour, was liable to those evils which are the result of the first

sin of the first man, and in other men are connected with original depravity. With others it seems to be a name for the following principle—that had the human nature of our Lord not been, from the first moment of its existence, in connection with the Divine nature, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, it would have been like human nature in other men—a principle which, stripped of its phraseology, having a show of wisdom, is equivalent to the proposition—Had Jesus been a man like other men, he would have been a man like other men—a most undoubted truth, but one which it would be difficult to turn to any account, either in doctrinal theology or practical godliness. By a third class, if their language have any meaning, the doctrine is taught, that the man Christ Jesus, in union with God, had in his nature those tendencies to sin which characterise all mankind, and that they were repressed and subdued in him only by the overpowering influence of the Holy Spirit. This is a doctrine obviously directly opposed to the plainest declarations of the word of God, revolting to the feelings of natural, as well as of Christian piety, and striking at the foundation of the sinner's hope in the reality and efficacy of the atonement made by the perfect offering of an unblemished victim of infinite value, when the Just and Holy One of God give himself a sacrifice in the room of the unjust. The only remark having even the *semblance* of an argument in support of this doctrine, is, that had he not taken such a nature, he could not have been our “kinsman Redeemer.” On the same principle, the supernatural conception of our Lord may be denied and attempted to be disproved, by saying, because he had no human father he could not be our kinsman-Redeemer. The truth is, all such speculations about the mode of the incarnation are useless, or worse than useless.

My hope as a sinner does not depend on my understanding of, what very likely no created being understands, the manner in which human nature is connected with the Divine in the passion of the Saviour, so as that he is my kinsman Redeemer, but on my believing the fact plainly stated to me on Divine authority, that the Son of God did become a true man, and suffered and died in the room of men, and is set forth an all perfect and accepted propitiation, on which I may and ought to rely for the redemption that is in him through his blood, according to the riches of Divine grace.

While the humanity of Jesus was perfectly free from stain, it was subject to all those infirmities, which, though in themselves sinless, are the consequences of transgression. "He was made like unto his brethren." "He was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin." He was liable to hunger, thirst, exhaustion, distress of mind from the experience or the apprehension of suffering, to fear and sorrow, to agony both of body and soul, and to death. He thus took on him not only the form of a servant, but the nature of a man, the likeness of a sinner.

But though our Lord so assumed human nature as that the Word became flesh, and the Son of God became the man Christ Jesus, yet were not the two natures confounded or commingled. Though such a commixture had been possible, it would not have answered the design of the incarnation; for in this case, the Redeemer, instead of being of the nature of God and man, and thus a fit mediator between them, would have been of a nature different from both. That man must have very gross and unworthy ideas of the eternal and independent Spirit who can suppose that his nature can be commingled with what is material and created, and as there is not, as there could not be, any mixture of the natures of our Lord, so neither is there mutual conversion. The divine nature does not become human, the human nature does become divine, in the person of the incarnate Son of God. Divinity cannot be converted into humanity, for immutability forms one of its essential attributes. He who is God cannot cease to be God, for He is the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. Humanity cannot be converted into divinity. That which was called into existence and continues to exist by the will of another, cannot become essentially independent—that which came into being yesterday can never become eternal—that which is essentially limited cannot become infinite. The human and divine natures in the person of Christ continue for ever distinct, each possessed of its peculiar and incommunicable attributes.

Yet while the divinity and the humanity of our Saviour are for ever distinct as existing in him, they are inseparably united and constitute one person. "God was manifest in the flesh. He who was in the beginning was made of a woman." He whose goings forth have been of old from everlasting, was born in Bethlehem, in the days of the emperor Augustus, and Herod the

king. He who is of the seed of David according to the flesh, is God blessed for ever. He by whom God made the world, and who upholds all things by the word of his power, purged our sins with his own blood.

The doctrine of the Scripture on the incarnation which we have endeavoured briefly to unfold, is happily expressed by an ancient council in four words. The two natures are united, without commixture, without conversion, undividedly, inseparably; or, in the well-considered words of our Shorter Catechism, "Jesus Christ was and continues to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever;" and though to some these statements may appear to be scholastic niceties or matter of doubtful disputation, yet in truth, to borrow the words of a very sound thinker—"They are necessary verities and certain truths, without which we cannot interpret sacred Scripture nor understand the history of our Saviour."¹

"This bread is my body—this cup is my blood." These are the words of the eternal Son of God. "Great without controversy is this mystery of godliness!" Let us contemplate it with devout admiration and fervent gratitude. "He who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, empties himself, takes on him the form of a servant, and is found in fashion as a man!" Astonishing condescension! The angelic hosts stand confounded at this voluntary abasement; they "desire to look into" it, and every new discovery produces deeper wonder, and calls forth louder halleluiahs. And should we be unaffected—should we be silent, who are so deeply interested in this miracle of kindness? Surely no. "Our spirits will magnify the Lord, our souls will be glad in God our Saviour." Our hearts will adore, and our lips praise him.

This is the true dignity of human nature. Man is now made higher than the angels. "Human flesh," to borrow the energetic language of a truly great man, "has become adorable as the true Shechinal, the everlasting palace of the supreme Majesty, wherein the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily, the most holy shrine of the Divinity, the orb of inaccessible light, as this, and more than all this, if more could be expressed, or if we could explain that text, 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us.'" ²

¹ Pearson,

² Barrow.

II. In the Lord's Supper we have an emblematical representation of the *sufferings and death* of the incarnate Son of God. "This is my body *given*"—or, as the apostle Paul relates our Lord's words—"broken for you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is *shed* for you." The breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine, figuratively represent the severe sufferings and violent death of our Saviour. As the divine nature is not susceptible of pain, the Saviour could suffer only in his human nature. "Christ suffered for us in the flesh." The Deity, who is immutable, cannot suffer change; nor can that essence, "which alone hath immortality," become subject to death. Yet still it is true, that He who is God suffered and died;—not that the divinity of Christ was passible and mortal, any more than his humanity was immutable or eternal, but because the Son of God was also the son of man, HE was at the same time, *though in different respects*, passible and mortal, immutable and eternal;—passible and mortal in respect of his humanity—immutable and eternal in respect of his divinity. There is much that is wonderful, much that is incomprehensible, here: but there is nothing that is self-contradictory, nothing that is incredible.

While the sufferings of our Lord were necessarily confined to his human nature, they were, in both of its constituent parts, in the highest conceivable degree intense and severe. In his body he felt weariness and languor, hunger and thirst, sickness and pain. "His visage was more marred than any man's, and his form than the sons of men." How sharp must have been the pain produced by the merciless Roman scourge, when "the plowers plowed upon his back, and made long their furrows!" We shudder to think of the excess of agony occasioned by forcibly wreathing the crown of thorns around his bleeding temples; and though the spear, directed by wanton barbarity, inflicted no pain on the breathless corpse which it wounded, it was far otherwise, when large bolts of rugged iron were forcibly driven through the hands and the feet, parts endued with the keenest sensibility; and the whole weight of the body suspended for some hours on these mangled wounds.

But though the words in the text, and the emblems in the Lord's Supper, lead us more directly to reflect on the bodily sufferings of our Lord, "the breaking of his body and the shedding

of his blood," yet by that figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole—what is seen for what is unseen—we are to consider both the one and the other as representing the whole of the Saviour's passion. He suffered in his soul, as well as in his body. Indeed, to use the expressive, though somewhat quaint, language of an old divine, "the sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings."—"The spirit of a man can sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Evil apprehended as future, tormented his soul with fear;—evil felt as present, tormented it with sadness, and sorrow, and anguish.

Of the nature and extent of our Lord's mental sufferings, we are able to form but very indistinct ideas. But the awfully energetic language which is used in describing them, is sufficient to convince us, that they exceeded not only all that we can experience, but all that we can conceive. "He began to be sorrowful," says Matthew; "he began to be sore amazed," says Mark; "he began to be very heavy," says both these evangelists. I do not know that our translators could have found more appropriate and expressive terms in our language than those which they have employed; yet powerful as they are, they come far short of the energy of the original phrases. They are explained by one who well knew their force, as representing him as "on a sudden possessed with horror and amazement; encompassed with grief, and overwhelmed with sorrow; pressed down with consternation and dejection of mind; tormented with anxiety and disquietude of spirit."¹

If the language of the evangelist be expressive, still more fearfully significant are the words of our Lord himself: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." What dreadful emphasis is here! "I am sorrowful—my soul is sorrowful—my soul is *exceeding* sorrowful—my soul is exceeding sorrowful, *even unto death.*" And let it not be forgotten, that he who thus heaps superlative upon superlative in expressing his own anguish, was, as all his history proves, distinguished not less by magnanimity than by mildness,—not more by activity in duty, than by patience in suffering. Again and again, "with strong crying and tears, he made supplication to Him who was able to save him," for

¹ Matth. xxvi. 37; Mark xvi. 33.—Pearson's note on these passages is well worth the notice of the pious critical reader of the New Testament.—*On the Creed*, p. 198. fol. Lond. 1676.

deliverance, if it was possible, from the sorrows of that hour. And, as if his cries and tears were not sufficient evidence of his inward sufferings, the innumerable pores of his body pour forth a still more lively representation of the bitter anguish of his soul. "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." The heart of our Saviour was as it were "melted like wax in the midst of his bowels," and all the parts of his body inflamed with anguish and agony. But time would fail us, to tell what he suffered from his infernal and human foes; what he suffered from his friends; and, severest of all his agonies! what he suffered from his Father. That was a cry of deepest anguish, "My God, my God! why hast *Thou* forsaken me?"

These sufferings were sufferings unto death. The body is not only bruised, but broken; the blood is poured out till the vital current has ceased to flow. "He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." His course of suffering did not terminate till the constituent parts of his human nature were disunited; not did he rest from his toils, till he fell asleep in death.

Such is the scene of suffering and death emblematically represented to us in the Lord's Supper. Thus did the Saviour suffer and die. He suffered in his body by infirmities and external injuries—in his soul by fears and sorrows, by unknown and inexpressible agonies. The emblems are expressive, but they are not too expressive; they fall short, infinitely short, of a complete representation: for, "if sorrows and agonies, if stripes and buffetings, if condemnation and crucifixion be suffering, Jesus suffered. If the infirmities of our nature, if the weight of our sins, if the malice of man, if the machinations of Satan, if the hand of God could make him suffer, our Saviour suffered!"¹

What an astonishing scene is here, my brethren! Turn aside, and behold this great sight. The incarnate Son of God toiling and weeping, bleeding and dying! "Behold God accused by men of blasphemy, the eternal wisdom aspersed with folly, truth itself impleaded of imposture, essential love made guilty of mischief, and supreme goodness styled a malefactor; infinite power beat down and trampled on by impotent malice; the Judge of

¹ Pearson.

all the world, the fountain of all authority and right, arraigned, condemned, and executed, for injustice ; the desire of all nations rejected by his own countrymen and kindred ; the joy of paradise, whose smile brightens the glories of the blessed, overwhelmed with grief, uttering lamentable groans, tortured with grievous agonies—the very heart of God bleeding, and the sole Author of life expiring.”¹ All this the words of institution, and the sacred symbols, are intended and calculated to suggest to the understanding, and to impress upon the heart.

III. In the Lord's Supper, we have an emblematical representation of *that atonement for the sins of men*, which the incarnate Son of God made by his sufferings and death. “This is my body given” or devoted “*for you* :—this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed *for you* ;” *i. e.*, the blood of the expiatory victim, by which the new covenant of grace and salvation is ratified and confirmed. There can be no reasonable doubt, that these expressions of our Lord are borrowed from the sacrificial language of the Jews, and intimate this important truth, that his human nature was presented to God in our stead, as a sin-offering, to obtain for us the pardon of our sin, restoration to the Divine favour and image, and the enjoyment of everlasting happiness.

This doctrine of our Lord's vicarious and expiatory sacrifice, is one of the first principles of our most holy faith. Remove it, and you rob Christianity at once of almost all its peculiarity and glory. Remove it, and the Mosaic ritual appears not only burdensome, but unmeaning. Remove it, and the Christian system becomes a mass of inconsistency and confusion. Remove it, and you overturn the foundation of man's hope, and involve the prospect of his eternity in the “blackness of darkness.”

The substitution of our Lord is a doctrine which unprejudiced reason naturally deduces from the facts connected with the dispensation of mercy to mankind. We perceive an infinitely just and merciful God, inflicting sufferings, unparalleled in their number and severity, on a person perfectly innocent, infinitely meritorious. We see the same God dispensing pardon and salvation to the guilty and depraved. How then is the justice

¹ Barrow.

of God, to say nothing of his goodness, to be vindicated in these dispensations, but on the supposition of transference of guilt in the one case, and of merit in the other! We have been told, indeed, that the humble life, the severe sufferings, and the accursed death of the Son of God, were intended merely as attestations of the truth of his doctrines and the divinity of his mission, and as illustrations of the passive virtues of fortitude and patience in the most trying circumstances. We willingly concede that these ends were gained by our Saviour's incarnation, sufferings, and death; but they were not the only, they were not the principal, designs of these most astonishing events. That these confessedly important objects were gained by these means, is most true; but we must renounce our belief in the moral perfections of the Divine character, before we can persuade ourselves, that the plainest principles of justice were violated, to obtain these blessings for men. The only satisfactory account of these wonders, is to be found in the scriptural doctrines of substitution and expiation.

We are not left, however, to deduce this principle from other facts by a train of reasoning, however short and conclusive. It is revealed in Scripture with a clearness and an abundance of evidence corresponding to its importance. "The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all." "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but herein God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us." "He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

Let us endeavour to collect the force of these passages of Scripture, the number of which might easily be increased, into one short argument. He who suffers the punishment to which another is ^{exposed} ~~obnoxious~~, in order that that person may escape punishment, suffers in his stead. No person who understands the meaning of the terms, will question the truth of this proposition. Now this is a plain statement of the doctrine of Scripture respecting Christ and sinners. That our Lord endured the sufferings to which sinners were ^{exposed} ~~obnoxious~~, is as clear as language can make it. "He bare our sins. He was made a sin-offering in our room,—the chastisement of our peace was upon him." That he underwent these sufferings that men might be delivered

from them, is equally obvious. "He was made a sin-offering in our stead, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "By his stripes we are healed." "He gave himself for us, a sacrifice and an offering, that he might bring us to God."

Indeed, though the enemies of the doctrine of our Lord's atoning sacrifice were to succeed in their favourite work of expunging or explaining away all those passages of the Holy Scriptures, which *directly* teach it, their labour would be in a great measure lost, for it is interwoven throughout the whole contexture, both of the Law and the Gospel. Like the ancient artist who so inscribed his name on the temple he built, that it was impossible to erase the one without destroying the other, the great Author of revelation has so constructed the revealed system, that without a total relinquishment of its authority, it is impossible, with any degree of consistency, to deny the vicarious nature and expiatory efficacy of the sufferings and death of Jesus. So long as the Lord's Supper continues in the church; so long as the words of institution are repeated, and the instituted symbols displayed; there shall never be wanting to the church a clear demonstration, that the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin, was a doctrine of the primitive age of Christianity.

The truth which we have now been considering completes the important proposition of which we consider the Lord's Supper as an emblematical representation. And of all the wonderful truths which it implies, this is questionless the most wonderful. That the Son of God should become incarnate, is strange; that the incarnate Son of God should suffer and die, is still stranger; but most strange of all is the fact, that the incarnate Son of God should suffer and die in the room of sinful men, to obtain their salvation. "O the depth both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

But while we are amazed with the strangeness, and confounded by the grandeur, of the truths thus taught us, let us rejoice that the proposition is not more strange and overwhelming, than true and consolatory.

The view which we have now taken of the Lord's Supper, as an emblematical representation of the leading principles of the Christian system, is calculated to suggest to the reflecting mind,

much important practical truth, in reference to the proper mode of observing this holy ordinance. The Lord's Supper teaches by emblems, what the preaching of the Gospel teaches in express terms; and our duty in reference to both is substantially the same—to yield a ready assent to the truths made known, and a hearty acquiescence in the plan of salvation exhibited,—and to cherish a state of feeling correspondent to this assent and acquiescence.

It is ever to be remembered that a mere mental contemplation of the truths emblematically represented, is by no means all that is required in order to observing the Lord's Supper with acceptance and advantage. Something more is necessary. We must not merely survey with attention the symbolical representation; we must take a part in it—we must “take—and eat.” In other words, we must rely on the atoning sacrifice of the incarnate, suffering, and dying Saviour for salvation. This is “to eat the flesh, and to drink the blood of the Son of man;” and without this there can be no fellowship with him in his righteousness and spirit. As it is not enough for our salvation, that the Son of God has become incarnate, suffered, and died as an atoning sacrifice, unless we, by believing the record of God, “set to our seal that God is true;” so it is not enough in order to worthy communicating, that we admit the general truth of these principles,—we must also receive “Christ Jesus” as thus exhibited, “made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

DISCOURSE III.

THE DESIGN AND OBLIGATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

LUKE XXII. 19.—“This do in remembrance of me.”

SOMEWHAT more than eighteen hundred years ago, thirteen Jews assembled together in an upper room in the city of Jerusalem to observe the Passover—a solemn religious festival divinely appointed to commemorate the miraculous deliverance of their forefathers from Egyptian bondage, and to foreshadow the more wonderful redemption of mankind from a deeper and more degrading slavery.

Judging from external appearances, there was nothing remarkable about these thirteen individuals. They seemed to belong to the humbler orders of society, and nothing betokened the probability of their ever becoming the objects of general interest. Yet in truth this little company, with a single exception, was an assemblage of the most illustrious and worthy personages who ever trod the theatre of our world. One of them was far elevated above the rest by the dignity of his nature, the perfection of his character, and the importance of his office. His name among men was Jesus of Nazareth, and he was the reputed son of a Galilean carpenter; but he was in truth, an incarnation of the Divinity, he was “God manifest in flesh,” the Divine, and the divinely appointed and qualified, Saviour of mankind. His attendants formed a motely group;—men of different dispositions, educations, and habits; men at this time obscure and unnoticed, but destined ere long to secure for themselves an everlasting remembrance as benefactors of their species, as the principal human agents in establishing that religion among mankind, the natural tendency, and the uniform effect of which, is to make all who receive it truly, wise and good and happy.

The purpose for which they were met, was of itself calculated to produce in devout minds a solemnity of feeling; and the hearts of the disciples were more than usually agitated by the intimation which their Master had lately given them of a scene of extreme suffering, in which, for their sakes, he was soon to be involved. The impressive silence which such a state of mind naturally produces, was at last broken by the Saviour in these words—words full of solemn anticipation in reference to himself, and of affectionate tenderness towards his disciples: “With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” During the paschal feast, he discoursed with them of the decease he was about to accomplish; and at its conclusion, taking the cup of thanksgiving, he gave it to the disciples, saying, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves;” for “I say unto you, that I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, till I drink it new with you in the kingdom of God.”

Such were the interesting external circumstances in which the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper was instituted.

To form, however, any adequate idea of the solemnity and interest of the scene, we must look farther than outward appearances; we must take a view of the varied feelings which then agitated the Saviour's heart. The cloud of sorrow which had darkened all his days, had now assumed a portentous blackness, and threatened immediately to pour forth its wrathful contents on his devoted head. To his comprehensive mind, the whole scene of his sufferings lay full disclosed. The treachery of Judas, and the cowardice of the rest of the disciples; the insults of the populace, and the cruelties of the soldiers; the systematic malignity of the Jewish rulers, and the inhuman selfishness of the Roman governor; the shame of the scourge, and the pain of the cross; the dereliction of Divine comforts, and the inflictions of Divine wrath;—all these, and a thousand other terrific anticipations, were present to his thoughts.

Possessed of an acuteness of sensibility proportioned to the power of his understanding, the Saviour, even then, must have been subjected to a degree of suffering ineffable, inconceivable. It might have been expected that personal suffering so severe, should have occupied all his thoughts; and that the sorrows of an hour so awful, should have precluded all sympathy with the

comparatively light afflictions of his friends. But rising above the difficulties of his situation, with a magnanimity altogether godlike, he seems to forget his own sufferings, and occupies himself chiefly in alleviating the griefs of his disconsolate followers.

Such were the feelings of the Saviour when he instituted the ordinance of the Supper.

In that night in which he was to fall a victim to the treachery of a professed friend, and the fury of open enemies,—to endure the united pressure of human malignity, diabolical rancour, and Divine wrath; in that night, ever attentive to the happiness of his people, the Saviour took bread. Lifting up his heart with his hands to God in the heavens, he gave thanks in the near prospect of the completed redemption of the world. And when he had thus given thanks, he brake the bread, and distributed it among his weeping attendants, whose bosoms must have throbbed with a strange mingled emotion of wonder, and gratitude, and sorrow, and love. In like manner he presented them with the cup after a second benediction. These solemn and endearing actions he accompanied with words not less solemn and endearing. “This is my body which is given for you.” “This is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” “This do in remembrance of me.”

In this most affecting scene, the apostles of our Lord are not the only persons who are interested. In the redeeming love, in the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, we have an interest as deep as they. The ordinance then instituted was intended to be perpetual; and the command, which is the subject of discourse, is addressed to us as well as to them. “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,” says an apostle, “ye do show the Lord’s death until he come.” As we have, in the good providence of God, the near prospect of observing the Lord’s Supper, I conceive our time at present can scarcely be more appropriately, usefully, and agreeably employed, than in,—

I. Attending to the import of our Lord’s command, “This do in remembrance of me;” and,

II. Considering the obligations under which Christians lie to comply with this command.

I. The command of our Lord, “This do in remembrance of me,” may be considered in two points of view: as intimating the

design of the Lord's Supper : and as teaching us the manner in which it ought to be observed. Let us shortly attend to these two views of the text.

1st, The command, "This do in remembrance of me," intimates the *design* of the Lord's Supper. It is intended to commemorate the Saviour. To perpetuate the memory of illustrious men and important events, various methods have been adopted by mankind. One of the most common of these has been to institute a festival, stated or occasional. Festivals of this kind have usually formed a part of the religious worship of those among whom they existed. They were numerous among the pagan nations, and have found a place in both those Divine dispensations, of which the Scriptures give us a detailed account, the Mosaic and the Christian.¹ Under the former, there were a variety of feasts, such as the Passover, Pentecost, etc., commemorative of remarkable national blessings. Under the latter, we have the Lord's Supper, in commemoration of the redemption of mankind by the death of the Son of God.

That this event well deserves to be commemorated, who can doubt? If the display at once of all the more amiable, and all the more awful, virtues of which human nature is susceptible, the most exalted piety and the most fervent benevolence, the most tender pity and the most undaunted fortitude ;—if the illustration of the glories of the Divinity, and the vindication of the honours of his violated law ;—if the deliverance of countless millions from moral degradation and inconceivable misery, and their elevation to a state of perfect purity and everlasting happiness ;—if these ought not to be forgotten, it is most meet that the death of Jesus, in which all these virtues were displayed, by which all these events were accomplished, should be held in everlasting remembrance.

That a particular institution should be required to preserve the memory of an event so illustrious, will not appear strange to him who has reflected with care on the present state of human nature. When a sinner first obtains, and knows that he has obtained, an interest in the blessings procured by the sufferings and death of

¹ The strong evidence of the truth of Christianity, which may be deduced from the general prevalence of such an institution as the Lord's Supper in the Christian Church from the earliest ages, is admirably illustrated in Leslie's *Short and Easy Method with the Deists*.

Jesus ; when he begins “to comprehend with all saints, what is the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,” so deeply do the Redeemer’s excellences and benefits impress his heart, that to forget HIM seems an event scarcely within the limits of possibility. With a heart all glowing with admiration, and gratitude, and love, he adopts the language of the pious and patriotic psalmist, when weeping over the ruins of the temple of his God, and the desolations of his father’s sepulchres, and applies them to a subject still more interesting : “If I forget thee,” O Jesus, “let my right hand forget her cunning : let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer thee not above my chief joy.” But the imperfections of our nature forbid such an elevated state of devotional feeling to be perpetual. Surrounding objects steal away the thoughts and the affections from the Saviour, and we too often act as if we had never known his love. Most wisely, then, as well as most graciously, did the Saviour, “who knows our frame, and remembers we are dust,” appoint a positive institution, by which an affectionate remembrance of his dying love might be perpetuated among his followers to the most distant ages.

The ordinance of the Lord’s Supper is well calculated to answer the end for which it was instituted. The whole of the institution is emblematical, and the symbols employed are at once simple and significant. Our senses are called in to the aid of our faith, and “Christ Jesus is evidently set forth crucified.”

As the bread is broken in order to its being eaten, so was our Redeemer “wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.” As the wine is poured out in order to its being drunk, so was the blood of the Saviour “shed for the remission of sins to many.” The actions are equally significant with the elements. The giving the elements into the hands of the receivers, is emblematical of the Father’s gift of his Son, and the Son’s gift of himself to his people ; and their reception of the elements is significant of that personal reliance on the Saviour, and that personal interest in his blessings, which characterise all true believers, and which in Scripture are represented as an “eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God.”

But while we consider the Lord’s Supper as commemorative, while we acknowledge that it is a necessary and most suitable memorial, let us never forget that it is nothing more than a

memorial. In the Supper of the Lord there is no new sacrifice offered, to procure the forgiveness of sin, and the salvation of the soul. This ordinance is not a sacrifice, but a feast upon a sacrifice. It is not the repetition of the atonement made on Mount Calvary, but only its symbolical representation. The perfection of the Redeemer's sacrifice precluded the necessity of its repetition. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;" and all that remains for us, is by faith to rely on this all-perfect sacrifice, to improve it for the purposes of holiness and comfort, and by observing the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, to yield our feeble assistance to render its memory permanent among mankind, and influential on our own tempers and conduct.

2d, The command of our Lord, "This do in remembrance of me," teaches us the *manner* in which the ordinance of the Lord's Supper should be observed. We have seen that the Lord's Supper is intended to be a memorial of Christ. It follows of course, that he who engages in it, should view it in this point of light, and have his mind wholly occupied with affectionate recollections of the Saviour. To remember Christ is by no means to be considered as merely an occasional duty, to which the Christian is called only when he enjoys an opportunity of observing the Lord's Supper.¹ "Whatsoever he does, whether in word or in deed, he does all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father, through him." "He always bears about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in his body." Yet it is certainly the duty of the Christian, when he engages in this holy ordinance, to fix his mind with peculiar intensity on the recollections of his Saviour, and to stir up within him all those pious affections, which these recollections are calculated to awaken. There are here two inquiries which deserve our notice. What are those recollections which on such an occasion should occupy our thoughts? and what are those dispositions of heart with which these recollections should be accompanied? In other words, *what* about Christ are we to remember? and *how* are we to remember him?

(1.) The grand object of our remembrance is without doubt, Jesus Christ—"This do in remembrance of ME." And what

¹ This thought is expanded in the first of the concluding exhortations. Part ii. Sect. iv.

about our Redeemer are we to remember? We are to remember who he is. The only-begotten and beloved Son of God;—"the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;"—the Creator and Lord of angels;—the preserver and governor of the universe;—"in the form of God, and thinking it no robbery to be equal with God;"—"God over all, blessed for ever." A recollection of his original dignity, is necessary to our forming just conceptions of the depth of his condescension, the efficacy of his atonement, and the greatness of his love.

We are to remember what he became for us. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "God was manifest in flesh." "Verily he took not hold of angels, but he took hold of the seed of Abraham: forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same." Astonishing condescension! "The mighty God," a feeble babe! "The Father of eternity," a child, whose duration is measured by days and years!

We are to remember what he did. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." "He did always the things which pleased the Father." "He went about doing good, healing diseases, and teaching the people." "He finished the work which the Father gave him to do."

We are to remember what he said. We are to think of the many "gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth;" which made even unbelievers to marvel, and acknowledge that "never man spake like this man." We are to call to mind "the glad tidings of great joy" which he proclaimed, the doctrines which he taught, and the laws which he promulgated. We ought especially to remember, the precious instructions and consolations which he administered to his disciples immediately after the original institution of the Lord's Supper.¹

We are to remember what he suffered. What he suffered from God, from devils, from men, both his friends and his enemies: what he suffered in his body, in his soul, in his re-

¹ I must here be permitted to remark by the way, that few exercises are, by the blessing of God, better calculated to prepare us for communicating, than a careful and devotional perusal of those discourses recorded in the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth chapters of the Gospel by John. These chapters not only furnish us with proper subjects of meditation when at the table of Jesus; but they breathe so pure and fervent a spirit of piety and benevolence, as, could we but catch a portion of it, would make us at once acceptable and happy communicants.

putation, in his external circumstances. We are to recollect how infinitely varied, how inconceivably severe, how awfully violent,—how early in their commencement, how close in their succession, how permanent in their continuance, were his sufferings.

We are to remember that he died, and how he died. We are never to forget that his death was that of a traitor and blasphemer, a felon and a slave,—exquisitely painful, peculiarly shameful, divinely accursed. And while we recollect the Saviour's sufferings and death, we must not be unmindful of their cause. Useless are the tears of mere human sympathy for the sorrows of the Saviour. We must remember how deeply we are interested in these sufferings; that his body was broken, and his blood shed, for our benefit and in our stead; that "he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and that by his stripes we are healed."

We are to remember the important consequences of his sufferings and death. And what are these? The expiation of the sins of men, the turning away of the wrath of the Almighty, the magnifying and making honourable of the Divine law, the answering of the demands of justice, the securing of the honours of the Divine character, the vindication of the rights of the Divine government, the ratification of the everlasting covenant, the unfolding of the gates of paradise, "peace on earth, and good-will towards men," rapture to the angelic millions, and "glory to God in the highest." But this is an endless theme.

I only add, that we are to remember what Jesus is now doing, and will yet do, for us. We are to commemorate the death of Christ as the death of him who "was once dead, but is now alive, and liveth for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death." We are to remember that "he is ascended up far above all heavens, and set down for ever on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" exalted "far above all principalities, and powers, and thrones, and dominions, and every name which can be named, either in this world, or that which is to come;" that the difference in his circumstances, has caused no alteration in his affections; that he loves his people with an unabated and unchangeable attachment; that as he bled for them on earth, so he intercedes for them in heaven; that he is preparing a place for them, and that "he will come again and take them to himself, that where he is, there they may be also."

Such are some of the recollections which ought to employ the mind of the Christian, when eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of his Saviour.

(2.) Let us now shortly inquire *how* we are to remember the Saviour, or what are those dispositions with which our recollections respecting Christ should be accompanied. The Saviour is to be remembered with faith, love, reverence, penitence, and joy.

We ought to remember the Saviour with faith. With the nature of this heavenly grace, I hope none of you are unacquainted. With its importance, use, and necessity in religious duties, you cannot be too deeply impressed. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." Necessary in all duties, it is peculiarly so in the Lord's Supper. Without it, the Lord's Supper is a useless ceremony; without it, we cannot "discern the Lord's body," we cannot "eat his flesh nor drink his blood;"—to speak without a figure, we cannot understand the truth emblematically represented in it, nor participate in the blessings shadowed forth by the instituted symbols,—we cannot have communion with him in his righteousness and spirit. Sensible of the importance of this grace, let us, in the prospect of observing the Lord's Supper, use every appointed method for strengthening our persuasion of the truth as it is in Jesus; and let our prayer be, "Lord, increase our faith."

Love is another disposition of heart with which we should remember the Saviour. And is it possible to remember him without love? Can we think of his essential excellences, his mediatorial qualifications, and his invaluable benefits, without feeling the fire of ardent affection burn within us? Ah! my friends, we know little of ourselves, if we are not ready to complain of the languor of our devout affections, even in those exercises which are best calculated to excite them. There is more than a possibility of a good man's observing the Lord's Supper with a coldness of heart miserably unworthy of those wonders of love which he is commemorating. In the prospect, therefore, of engaging in this service, let us employ every means, in order to fan the "smoking flax" into a flame. Let us think much of our Redeemer. Our meditation, if it is characterised by faith, will be sweet, and productive of love. Let us contemplate him in the glories of his divine perfection, and in the milder beauties

of his mediatorial character. Let us think of his love,—how unmerited, how unsolicited, how early in its commencement, how seasonable in its display, how uniform in its exercise, how lasting in its duration, how rich in its consequences! Contemplating the “unsearchable riches” of the Saviour’s love, let us earnestly beseech the Spirit of love to enable us to love him who so loved us; and, convinced that the warmest affection we are capable of entertaining, is utterly disproportioned to the Saviour’s loveliness and love, “let us cast ourselves at his feet, and sigh, and weep, that we can love him no more.”

We ought to remember the Saviour with reverence. We must not forget, that while Jesus is our Saviour, he is also our God. “He is our Lord, and we ought to worship him.” “He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.” Though, with ineffable condescension, he calls us, “not servants, but friends,” we must always remember the infinite distance which subsists between him and us. The affection to be cherished towards our Lord is altogether of a different character from human friendship. It ought to have more than all its fervour; but the confidence of devotional intercourse must not be allowed to degenerate into indecent familiarity. The Lord’s Supper is an act of worship. “Having therefore received a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and with godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire.”

We must remember the Saviour with penitence. Looking at “him whom we have pierced,” we must “mourn” for our sins. The incarnation and obedience, the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, are the strongest evidences which the world has ever received, or ever can receive, of the inconceivable malignity of human transgression: and it is surely impossible for a Christian mind to recollect those wonderful events, without feeling at the same time a deep sorrow for his own sin, and an unconquerable and continually increasing abhorrence of all sin, as that “evil and bitter thing” which fixed the Lord of glory to a cross, and laid him low in the dust of death. Never are we in a better frame for communicating, than when thus “sorrowing after a godly sort.” The genuine penitent is uniformly an acceptable communicant.

In fine, we ought to remember the Saviour at his table with joy. It certainly is not natural to reflect on the sufferings and death of a dear friend with pleasure; and could we have said no more than, "we trusted that this had been he who should have redeemed Israel," the remembrance of Jesus would have been a joyless exercise indeed. But when we look into his tomb, we behold it empty. The death of Christ ought never to be viewed as disconnected with its consequences—his own glory, and the happiness of his followers. In celebrating the Lord's Supper, we commemorate the victory of the Saviour over the foes of man. "Through death he has destroyed him who had the power of death." On the cross he "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them, triumphing over them in it." If deliverance from ignorance and guilt, depravity and ruin; if the forgiveness of sins, the favour of God, and the privileges of his children; if the gifts of the Spirit, and the heavenly inheritance, be valuable; if the present possession of many of these blessings, and the complete security, and certain prospect of all the rest, be calculated to produce joy,—surely Christians should rejoice while observing that ordinance in which is represented the ratification in the blood of the Redeemer, of that everlasting covenant, in which all this blessedness is secured to them. Nor are Christian joy and true penitence incompatible feelings. Every saint knows that in his experience they are conjoined, and that he is never more disposed to mourn for his sins, than when he is enabled to "joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement."

Such, then, are the recollections which should engage the thoughts of the Christian at the Lord's table; and such the sentiments which should warm his heart. By giving himself up to them, under the influence of the Divine Spirit, he will acceptably obey the command, "This do in remembrance of me."

II. Having thus illustrated the command of our Lord, as intimating the design of the Lord's Supper, and teaching us the manner in which it ought to be observed, let us consider the obligations under which Christians lie to comply with this injunction. In illustrating this part of the subject, I shall content myself with showing that it is the express command of Christ to

us, to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him ; and that it is at once a pleasant and an advantageous exercise.

1st, We ought to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ, for he has expressly commanded us to do so. There is no precept in the whole volume of inspiration delivered in terms more explicit than the command to Christians to observe the Lord's Supper. The command, "Thou shalt not steal," is not more unequivocal than the command, "This do in remembrance of me."

It has indeed been urged by some, that this command was but temporary in its obligation, being addressed only to the apostles and primitive Christians. But of this restriction in the extent of the precept, there is not the slightest trace in the language in which it is expressed. The injunction is completely free of every thing that looks like exclusion or limitation. Indeed, in the very nature and design of the Lord's Supper, we are furnished with an irrefragable proof that it is an usage not peculiar to any particular age of the church, but belonging to Christianity, wherever and whenever professed. The great intention of this institution is, as we have already seen, to preserve an affectionate remembrance of the Saviour's sufferings and death on the minds of his followers. Those individuals who had themselves been witnesses of these most interesting and important events, or who had received their information from those who had seen them, and whose testimony was confirmed by miracles, were, comparatively speaking, in little danger of forgetting them. An impression must have been made, too deep to be easily effaced by secular and sensible things. It was to those who should live in a period remote from that in which the Saviour lived and died, that such an emblematical representation was peculiarly necessary. This ordinance of commemoration, accordingly, has obviously a reference to coming ages, and may be considered as acquiring every hour new importance, as the hand of time is obscuring the memory of events which are past.

Besides, there is nothing in the truths shadowed forth by this symbolical institution, exclusively interesting to the primitive believers. The body which was broken, was broken for us as well as for them,—the blood which was shed, was shed for the remission of our sins as well as theirs ; and, reasoning abstractly, it would appear to be as much our duty as theirs, to observe an

ordinance, one great object of which is to call forth gratitude for these most important favours. But in the absence of all other evidence, the language of the apostle, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, would of itself have been sufficient to set this question at rest. "As often," says he, "as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death until he come." In these words, the apostle obviously intimates, that it is the duty of the Christian church to observe this ordinance till "the coming of Christ;" a phrase which certainly usually, if not uniformly, refers to his "coming the second time, without sin unto salvation."¹

Taking for granted, then, that the command contained in the text is the command of Jesus Christ to his followers in every age, it will require little reasoning to show that they are bound to obey it. All the injunctions of Christ Jesus are entitled to the implicit obedience of all intelligent creatures to whom they are addressed. He is constituted by his Father the supreme governor of the moral world. "All power is given to him in heaven and in earth; all judgment is committed into his hand;" and it is the clearly revealed will of God, "that all should honour the Son as they honour the Father." "God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Whatever then he, as the accredited messenger of Deity, enjoins, is to be received with the same reverence, and obeyed with the same implicitness, as if it were the declaration of his Divine Father.

But Christ Jesus is entitled to obedience, not only as a divinely authorised legislator; his claims on the entire subjection of all our faculties, intellectual and active, are founded on that divine nature, of which he is, equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the possessor. "He is the true God, and eternal life." The commands of Jesus are, in the strictest sense of the word, the commands of God: and he who disregards them, exposes himself to all the evils which are included in the unqualified displeasure of

¹ Heb. ix. 28.—Bp. Horsley's attempt to prove that this is the uniform sense of the phrase "the coming of Christ" in the New Testament, though distinguished by his usual ingenuity and learning, is certainly unsuccessful. He sufficiently establishes, however, that the exceptions from the common use, are not by any means so numerous as has been supposed.

Deity. To neglect compliance with the commands of the Supreme Being, must be, in the very highest degree, criminal and dangerous. "He who despised Moses' law" relative to the passover, "died without mercy;" and shall the despiser of Christ's law relative to the Lord's Supper, escape unpunished? The Israelite who, without a proper excuse, neglected to commemorate the deliverance from Egypt along with his brethren, was "cut off from the congregation, and bore his sin;" and is his sin who trifles with a Divine injunction to commemorate a far more glorious deliverance, less aggravated? shall his punishment prove less dreadful?

"This do in remembrance of me," is as certainly and plainly a command of God, as any of the precepts of the decalogue; and he who refuses to obey it, virtually assumes to himself a power of dispensing with the Divine authority—a power superior to his to whom all power is committed in heaven and in earth. Those professors of Christianity assuredly mistake the matter most palpably, who conceive that it is in their option to observe the Lord's Supper, or not to observe it. It is the command of the Supreme Sovereign, and it is at the hazard of their eternal interests if they disregard it.

The Supreme authority of the Redeemer is, however, by no means the only consideration which should incite Christians to comply with his injunction. When we call on them to obey the commands of Jesus, we appeal to the principle of gratitude, as well as that of duty. It is the command, not merely of Jehovah their Sovereign, but of Jesus their Saviour. That they might be righteous, he became a curse; that they might live, he died; that they might be happy, he voluntarily became most miserable. And shall they refuse to yield to the request of this kindest of friends, this most generous of benefactors? If they do, they incur most justly the charge, not merely of the most daring disobedience, but of the basest ingratitude.

The command was not given from a weak desire of posthumous honours, but from the most disinterested regard for our happiness. The Lord Jesus, far exalted above every created dignity, the object of angelic homage, stands in no need of the services of mankind. It was for our benefit that he appointed this institution; and shall we carelessly neglect, or contemptuously spurn, the boon his generous friendship offers?

It is one of the Redeemer's dying commands. The last advices of a venerated parent or dear friend are usually listened to with eager attention, laid up in the inmost recesses of the heart as a precious treasure, frequently reviewed with a delicious kind of melancholy, and followed with a scrupulous and religious care. And ought we to be regardless of the last advices of that best of all friends, who "loved not his life to the death" for our sakes? Should a generous friend, who, in order to shield us from some important danger, had died in our defence, with his last breath have bequeathed to us a miniature picture of himself in the act of expiring, and conjured us, as we loved him, frequently to contemplate this last token of his friendship,—where, in the whole compass of language, could we find terms sufficiently expressive of baseness, to paint our conduct, should we allow the precious relict to lie uninspected for days, and months, and years, feel reluctant when called on to give so easy a proof of our gratitude, and even urge that we showed greater respect for our friend, by preserving his gift locked up from view, and contemplating it only at very distant intervals? To too many professors of Christianity, I might safely use Nathan's language to David, "Thou art the man."

This command was given on the night in which our Lord was betrayed. Even then he found both time and inclination to think on us and our interests; and shall we refuse to devote a few of our hours of health and comfort to the preserving such matchless love in everlasting remembrance?

The duty to which this command calls us, is by no means a burdensome one. Had he enjoined some tedious and difficult task,—had he appointed a ceremony painful as the self-inflicted tortures of the votary of Juggernaut, fatiguing as the Mohammedan pilgrimages, or costly as the sacrifices of the Jews, still reverence for his authority, and gratitude for his goodness, should have produced a ready and cheerful compliance. How much more readily, how much more cheerfully, ought we to engage in the simple, easy, significant ordinance, which he has instituted in commemoration of his dying love?—Such, then, are the most powerful and diversified obligations under which Christians are laid to observe the Lord's Supper, originating in the command of our Saviour.

2*d*, We ought to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ, for this is a pleasant employment. Nothing more satisfactorily proves the essential benignity of the Divine Being, than his connecting in indissoluble union, man's duty and happiness. "In the keeping of God's commandments, there is great reward." This general remark holds true with respect to all those duties which are strictly of a religious nature. The indulgence of devotional contemplation and feeling, affords the most exalted employment both for the understanding and the heart, and is a source of pure, refined, exquisite enjoyment.

None of the institutions of Christianity are better fitted to draw forth those principles into exercise, and present them with appropriate objects, than the Lord's Supper. All the most striking peculiarities in the Christian system of doctrine, and all the most affecting incidents in the history of its Author, are at once brought before the mind, in a form peculiarly calculated to fix attention, and excite emotion. Merely to witness a ceremony so solemn, so significant, so interesting, so useful, must excite agreeable feelings in every well-regulated mind. Even those pure spirits, who have no direct interest, so far as we know, in the economy of reconciliation, but as an admirable display of the Divine excellences; even they may, without improbability, be conceived as contemplating the eucharistic feast with a combined emotion of wonder and joy.

But how pure must be the pleasure, how exalted the enjoyment, of the Christian, who, with proper dispositions, engages in this sacred institution! "Speak ye who best can tell." Say, Christians, have not your understandings and your hearts been equally delighted, while eating bread and drinking wine, in obedience to your Lord's authority, and in affectionate recollection of his dying kindness? Have you not tasted delights, compared with which the pleasures of the world were vapid and worthless? Contemplating that most interesting view which the institution exhibits of your unseen Saviour, have you not felt the fire of Divine love kindling within you, and under the united influence of faith and affection, have ye not "rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory"? Has not "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding," taken possession of your heart, and diffused universal and ineffable tranquillity through the soul? I speak a language at present, which, though to many it may

appear the effusion of a wild enthusiasm, is not I trust altogether unintelligible to some of my audience. They know, for they have "the witness in themselves," that "I speak forth the words of truth and soberness."

Far be it from me to affirm, that the observance of the Lord's Supper uniformly produces such high degrees of spiritual delight, even to the worthy participant. There is a great variety in the degree of susceptibility of devout impression and religious pleasure, in different minds, and in the same mind at different times; and it is a wise and merciful ordination of Heaven, that the mode of conveying spiritual improvement and pleasure should vary, lest we should trust more to religious institutions than to their Author, lest in the means of grace and comfort, we should forget the Spirit of grace and comfort. Still, however, it is a truth which cannot well be controverted, that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is intended, and is calculated, to communicate much pleasure to the genuine Christian, and that in the experience of the saint, it has actually been the means of producing much devotional delight and holy joy. The command, "This do in remembrance of me," is the reverse of grievous; to obey it is a pleasure and privilege, as well as a duty.

3d, We ought to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ, for this is a very advantageous exercise. Numerous and important are the advantages derived by a saint from a dutiful observance of the Lord's Supper.

The preparatory services are in themselves highly useful. Careful self-examination, fervent prayer, and deep meditation on the leading truths of the Gospel, are employments peculiarly fitted for preserving the life of religion in a healthy and vigorous state, for guarding against the formation of unholy habits, and for counteracting that spiritual langour which is so apt to diffuse its enervating influence over the regenerate mind.

The ordinance itself is well fitted for strengthening our faith, animating our hope, elevating our affections, and strengthening our holy resolutions. The view of a dying Saviour, a reconciled God, a confirmed covenant, a finished salvation, an unstinged death, an illuminated immortality, an opened paradise,—is certainly fitted to rouse every energy of the soul into action, and urge to activity in doing, and patience in suffering, the whole will of God. The love of Christ as manifested in this ordinance,

awakens a reciprocal affection in the soul of the saint; and we know that the love of God and Christ shed abroad in the heart, is the only and abundant source of Christian virtue. As it is fitted to increase our love to the Saviour, it is also calculated to strengthen the bonds of Christian affection and charity. We learn to love all who love our common Lord, and whom our common Lord loves. Seated at the same table, eating the same bread, drinking the same cup, acknowledging one God, one Saviour, one Spirit, one faith, one hope, one joy,—we at once declare and increase the unity of our minds and our hearts. The malignant passions die within us, and the benevolent affections are at the same time exercised and strengthened.

The recollection of the solemn obligations which we voluntarily recognise when seated at the Lord's table, is also followed by the most salutary consequences. It suggests numerous and powerful motives to perseverance and activity in the service of God. It is peculiarly useful in the day of temptation, and suggests a ready and most satisfactory answer to those who would seduce us from the ways of holiness. “I am not my own, I am bought with a price.” I have publicly acknowledged the justice of the claims of my God and Saviour. Over the instituted symbols of the holy suffering humanity of my Redeemer, I have solemnly declared, that I will be his, his only, his wholly, and his for ever. “Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.”

Such is a hurried sketch of the advantages to be derived from the observation of the Lord's Supper. Let the Christian deeply reflect on them, and consider how strong a motive they suggest for complying with our Lord's command. Let him recollect that this institution is an appointed mean of strengthening his faith, animating his love, and increasing his holiness; and that by neglecting it, he provokes God to withhold from him that divine influence, without which he can do nothing. To expect spiritual blessings, while we neglect the use of the means which God has appointed for procuring them, is gross presumption. If we wish to grow in grace, let us not forget to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Christ.

To this illustration of the motives which urge us to compliance with our Lord's command in the text, it may not be without its use to subjoin a brief notice and exposure of the excuses, pallia-

tions, and even defences, which professors of Christianity, who live in the habitual neglect of the Lord's Supper, make for their conduct, in so directly opposing the authority of Christ.

One of the most common of these excuses is, a want of due preparation for this solemn service. It is much to be feared that many participate in the Lord's Supper unprepared, and of consequence derive no advantage from the observation of this ordinance; but it is not to be forgotten, that want of preparation is itself a sin, and surely one criminal action cannot be sustained as an excuse for another. In order to ascertain whether any regard is to be paid to this excuse, it is necessary to consider what is requisite to prepare us for the Lord's Supper.

That man is *habitually* prepared for the Lord's Supper, who is a believer in Christ Jesus, and a partaker of his Spirit. If these characters do not belong to you, then are you indeed unprepared, and it is hazardous for you to engage in this sacred institution. But in this case, you are not only unfit for the Lord's table, you are unfit for death; and should you leave the world in your present circumstances, you are undone for ever. Were you properly affected with a sense of your situation, instead of coolly urging it as an excuse for not eating the Lord's Supper, you would feel it as an irresistible motive to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may be saved. This is your first duty;—and having believed, then hasten to his table, “take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.”

There are, however, many true saints, who, under the influence of mistaken notions on this subject, occasionally abstain from eating the Lord's Supper for want of preparation. If they have wilfully neglected the appointed preparatory services, they are no doubt much to blame, and ought penitently to acknowledge their sin. Yet even in this case, one omission of duty cannot surely sanction or render necessary and proper another. But by want of preparation, these good people often mean something quite distinct from this. They are not in a good frame. Their faith is weak, their hope is dead, their affections are languid; and for these reasons, they deem it warrantable and reasonable to neglect communicating. This is just as rational conduct as it would be in a fatigued traveller to refuse a cordial because he was faint, or in a person perishing for want to refuse bread because he was hungry.

There are others who urge, that they are terrified lest they eat and drink unworthily, and thus seal their own condemnation. In order fully to show the futility of this objection, it would be necessary to enter more at large than your time at present admits, into an examination of the meaning of the passage of Scripture, on a mistaken view of which it is founded. I intend to take an early opportunity of illustrating that subject at large.¹ Suffice it at present to observe, that on the same principle on which they profess to be afraid of the Lord's Supper, they ought to refrain from all religious exercises, and even the ordinary business of life, for "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," and even "his plowing is sin."

Another reason which has been offered for neglecting the dying command of Christ, is the fear of that increased guilt which will be incurred by sins after communicating. There is no doubt that sins after communicating have peculiar aggravations. But these offences, though very foul, are not unpardonable. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;—and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin." Besides, if we fear sin, we ought carefully to employ the means God has appointed for the mortification of sin. Frequent communicating is one of these means. We must "wait on the Lord," if we would "renew our strength." He who acts on the principle we have been exposing, is like the man who will not take nourishing food, lest, if attacked by a fever, he should suffer more than if his constitution were less robust.

It has been urged sometimes as a reason for not observing the Lord's Supper, that no denomination of Christians are to be met with, so conformed to the primitive standard, as to make it safe to hold communion with them. The objector certainly does not see where this principle leads him. It is an implied denial that Christ has now a church upon earth,—an implied assertion that the faithful and true Witness has failed to perform his promise. The divided state of the church is deeply to be lamented; and the accurate observer will find many faults in every body of professors of Christianity. To look for a perfect church on earth, is a foolish and unwarranted expectation. Let such persons

¹ *Vide* Disc. IV.

reflect, that our Lord, in his command to observe the Lord's Supper, has made no provision for this supposed case; and that if there is a danger of being unscripturally lax, there is also a danger of being unscripturally rigid. Those men have certainly learned their religion somewhere else than in the New Testament, who, in the great variety of denominations of Christians, can find none to whom they can conscientiously attach themselves. Let them beware lest they mistake humour for conscience, and be found at last guilty of "making the commandment of God of none effect through their traditions."

Custom is pled by others as an excuse for neglecting this ordinance. Many omit this duty, and why may not we? Custom cannot make that right, which is in itself wrong. The sins of others will form no excuse for ours before the tribunal of God. They who follow the multitude to sin, must follow them to punishment. If this ordinance is neglected, there is the greater necessity of our being nobly singular. Let us never forget our Lord's declaration: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven."

To mention only one excuse more. Some urge that they do not refuse, they only delay, compliance with this command of the Saviour. But do they not know, that to refuse immediate compliance with an injunction which requires it is disobedience? Procrastination is the thief of time, and the murderer of souls. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." Neglect not the present opportunity. It may be the last afforded thee of manifesting thy regard for the Saviour's authority, and thy gratitude for his goodness.

What now remains, but that we, with united hearts, supplicate "the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," that He would graciously render these views of the Lord's Supper useful for preparing us for engaging in this solemn observance, "opening our understandings to understand the Scriptures," and "opening our hearts, that we may receive the love of the truth, that we may be saved." Amen.

DISCOURSE IV.

UNWORTHY COMMUNICATING.

1 Cor. xi. 27, 29.—“Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. . . . For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.”

THE inspired account of the church of Christ during the primitive age, is, of all historical records, the best fitted for interesting and instructing the Christian mind. It contains a narrative of the most important revolution which ever took place in the situation of mankind, and exhibits numerous and striking displays of the Divine power, wisdom, and goodness. It holds up to our view examples, on the one hand, of human folly and crime, to detest and avoid; and on the other, of faith and patience, zeal and charity, to admire and imitate. That man must be strangely deficient in the powers of thinking and feeling, or he must wilfully have neglected to exert them, who can rise from the perusal of this sacred record, without being at the same time interested and instructed, delighted and improved.

Of the lessons taught us by the history of the primitive church, none are more prominent, and few more important, than this, that the conduct of Providence towards the church is at once mysterious and wise. Imagination can scarce delineate a scene more amiably interesting, than that which the infant church in reality displayed. Bound together by the fellowship of sentiment, feeling, and affliction,—having one Lord, one faith, one baptism,—the believers in Christ found more than a compensation for the contempt, and hatred, and persecution of the world, in their common hopes, and mutual offices of kindness. Around them was a scene of rude agitation and wild confusion; but within the little circle of their society, all was union, harmony, and love.

This enviable state of serenity and peace was, however, unhappily but of short duration. "When men slept, an enemy came and sowed tares." Differences of opinion soon made their appearance among the disciples of Christ, and were speedily followed, where they were not preceded, by alienation of heart. Irregularities of conduct conduced still farther to disturb the peace of the primitive church.

To the limited view of mortal wisdom, on the supposition of Christianity being the object of Divine patronage, the conduct of Providence in permitting these disorders, must appear strange, and indeed unaccountable. The house, apparently built of no very durable materials, assaulted by external violence, and now divided against itself, seemed destined to a speedy and total destruction. But let us beware of rashly arraigning the wisdom of the Divine government. On a closer inspection, these mysterious dispensations appear to bear broad and deep signatures of infinite wisdom. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." Most wisely and most mercifully did God permit almost every heresy and abuse, which in later ages have tarnished the purity and disturbed the peace of the church, to make their appearance in her primitive age, while yet there remained infallible teachers to oppose these errors, and establish the opposite truth.

These observations, though applicable to the history of the primitive church in general, have been suggested by, and certainly receive illustration from, those occurrences in the history of the Corinthian church, which gave occasion to that detailed account of the origin, nature, and design of the Lord's Supper, of which our text forms a part. A variety of abuses had crept into their mode of observing this holy institution,—abuses of a nature so gross and so shocking, as nothing but a consideration of their former habits as heathens could have made credible. The anger of God was kindled, and the arm of his power was raised, to vindicate the importance and purity of the Divine ordinance. Many of the offending Christians were afflicted with severe bodily distempers, not a few of which terminated in mortality.

But while we can scarcely too severely reprobate, while we cannot too carefully avoid, those errors and crimes which stained so foully the character of the Corinthian church, it is certainly not only allowable, but dutiful, to observe, admire, and bless the operation of that wisdom and goodness, which, in the present

case, brought good out of evil, and made use of those unhappy occurrences, as the occasion of giving us a more extensive account than is anywhere else to be met with, of the nature and design of the Lord's Supper. It scarcely admits of a doubt, that the permission of those disorders at Corinth, when taken in connection with the epistle to which they gave occasion, has, in unnumbered instances, prevented the occurrence of similar enormities. The paragraph of which our text is a part, though written in reference to the peculiar circumstances of the Corinthian church, forms a complete and most luminous directory for Christians in all ages, in observing this sacred institution. It teaches us its design,—to keep up the memory of the Saviour's death; the preparation which is necessary in order to observe it aright,—“let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread and drink of this cup.” And in the passage more immediately under review, this exhortation is enforced, from a consideration of the guilt and danger of profaning so holy an institution: “Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord: for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.”—This passage naturally calls our attention,

I. To the mode of conduct which the apostle condemns—“Eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord unworthily.” And,

II. To the consequences which he represents as flowing from it: They who do so “are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord;” and they “eat and drink judgment to themselves.”

These shall therefore form the leading topics of the sequel of the discourse. And may God enable us so to declare his will on this subject, as that, while the guilty are deterred from intruding themselves into a situation to which they have no right, the humble self-diffident Christian may be encouraged to engage in a service, which is not less the enjoyment of a privilege, than the performance of a duty.

I. The mode of conduct which the apostle condemns, is “eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord unworthily.” A consideration of the behaviour for which the apostle reproves the Corinthians, will be of some service in enabling us to ascertain

the nature of unworthy communicating. Of this we have an account in the 20th, 21st, and 22d verses of this chapter: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper: for in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry and another is drunken. What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."

From this account, it appears that their mode of observing this sacred institution was marked by the utmost irregularity and irreverence. A religious festival was converted into a riotous banquet. Their whole behaviour savoured more of the religion they had abandoned, than that which they had embraced; and bespoke them rather the votaries of Jupiter or Bacchus, than the worshippers of Jehovah, and the followers of Jesus. Such was the manner in which they ate the bread and drank the cup of the Lord unworthily. Into disorders of this nature, the manners of the age, and the customs of all Christian churches, preclude almost the possibility of falling. But does it follow, because we cannot exactly imitate the Corinthians, that it is impossible for us to incur the guilt of unworthy communicating? Far from it. Their external conduct is not likely soon to be followed; but the principle which dictated their behaviour is but too prevalent. The crime seldom wears that unsightly form which it assumed at Corinth; but under a more plausible exterior it exists, it abounds, I fear, in every Christian church.

Let us endeavour, then, to explain in what unworthy communicating consists, fixing our attention rather on what is distinctive of the crime in all circumstances, than on the particular forms under which it presents itself, which are liable to considerable variety. In whatever age of the church he may live, and however solemn and decorous may be his external demeanour, that man is an unworthy communicant, who engages in this religious service, from improper motives,—ignorant of its nature and design,—destitute of faith in the doctrines which it symbolically teaches,—unactuated by those holy tempers which it is intended to exercise and improve,—or with a view to gain unworthy ends. We shall shortly illustrate the different parts of this description.

1st, That man eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord

unworthily, who engages in this service from improper motives. No maxim in morals is more universally admitted than this, that "actions are good or evil, chiefly according to the nature of the motives from which they proceed." Though no excellence of intention can render an action right that is materially wrong, it may, it will, be considered as a palliation of its guilt; and a motive criminally defective, or positively wrong, robs actions, however good in themselves, of all their moral worth. In cases where man is the immediate object of our conduct, an action may be very acceptable, while the motive is very unworthy; but the cause of this is merely, that as man can judge of principle only by conduct, he presumes that where the outward act is right, the inward principle is not wrong. He is pleased only because he is mistaken. Inform him of the truth, and the action, previously highly esteemed, will be contemned as utterly void of value. In religious services, we have to do with God, who "seeth not as man seeth, for man looketh on the outward appearance, but God judgeth the heart." If the heart be not right, in his estimation all is wrong. So long as the source of action continues unpurified, the streams which flow from it, however pellucid in appearance, are in God's judgment polluted.

That many engage in the Lord's Supper, whose motives are by no means pure, is a fact too notorious to require a laboured proof. It is to be feared, that the mere force of custom is the most ordinary motive to the observance of this sacred institution. Multitudes have received their religious ritual like their religious creed, "by tradition from their fathers." They follow the multitude. They crowd to the table of the Lord, for the same reason that they would have joined in an idolatrous procession, had they been born in the regions of Paganism; or taken part in the services of the mosque, had their lot been cast among the nations who follow the Arabian impostor.

A regard to Christianity as a political engine,—the religion of the state,—induces another class to attend to this part of its external worship. It is probable that they have never seriously investigated the question respecting its claims to a divine origin; it is not unlikely that they may be sceptical about them; it is even possible that they may openly deny and ridicule them; yet still they consider it as decent and wise to pay an easy homage to a religion which has the approving sanction of the civil

authorities, and which is of obvious use in maintaining good order among the middle and lower ranks of society.

A third, and perhaps a larger class of men, observe the Lord's Supper, because (depraved as the state of religion and morals among us confessedly is) it is, at least among the middle orders, still reckoned discreditable to be openly infidel and irreligious, and a man's Christianity is apt to be doubted, who habitually neglects its ritual institutions.

A vague expectation, and in some cases a real though most mistaken conviction, that the pardon of sin is to be procured by an approach to the Lord's table, are not without their influence in increasing the number of communicants. It is really pitiable, that persons calling themselves Protestants, should thus substantially cherish one of the most dangerous errors of Popery,—the doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass, which transfers our confidence from the Saviour's atoning death, to our commemoration of it; but the evidence in support of the lamentable fact is too abundant to leave room for doubt.

It were endless to specify all the unworthy motives which urge men to attend to this holy ordinance. Suffice it to remark, that a desire to gratify the wishes of relations and friends, a principle in itself by no means unamiable, or to satisfy the demands of an awakened but unenlightened conscience, or to promote the interests of a party, by thus enlisting themselves in its ranks;—that these motives, and such as these, have been the actuating principles of countless numbers, in seeking a place at the table of the Lord.

It surely does not need much reasoning to prove, that the person who is not animated by higher motives than these, in observing the Lord's Supper, must be an unworthy communicant. Is a regard to custom, political constitution, respectability of character, the opinion of friends, the demands of an erring conscience, or the interests of a party;—is a regard for any of these, or all of them conjoined, a worthy motive to the performance of a religious duty? No. Service proceeding from such principles, the Supreme Being considers not as worship, but as insult. "In vain," says He, "do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Indeed, we may observe in general, that no motive can be sustained as pure and worthy, except a regard to the Divine

authority, instituting this ordinance, and requiring us to observe it. It is only in this case that communicating can be considered as a religious service,—a part of Divine worship. Of consequence, it is only in this case that it can be acceptable to God.

2*d*, That man eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, who engages in the Lord's Supper while ignorant of its nature and design. Our God expects rational worship from his rational offspring. The radical part of true religion lies in exercises of the understanding and the heart, in which it is impossible to engage without knowledge; and even the external and ritual part of religion is then only acceptable when it is a reasonable service. That the mere reception of the Lord's Supper, without any reference to the intelligence or devotion of the recipient, is accompanied with saving virtue, is justly numbered among the most pernicious as well as absurd dogmas of the Roman Church.

The Lord's Supper does not act as a charm on those who engage in it. Its manner of operation is substantially the same as the ordinance of preaching the Gospel. It is by a representation of truth and its evidence to the mind—in the one case by symbols—in the other by words, that a salutary impression is made on the heart. How is it possible, then, that a person should observe this ordinance either acceptably or profitably, who is ignorant of the first principles of Christianity,—who does not know who Jesus Christ is, what he has done for our salvation, and how we are to obtain an interest in the blessings of his redemption? He who does not understand the symbols in the Lord's Supper, can derive no advantage from it. He cannot, to use the apostle's language, “discern the Lord's body.” Ignorant of the truths emblematically taught, he cannot take up the elements, nor perform the actions, as representations of doctrines most sublime and interesting. To him the consecrated elements are mere bread and wine, and all the venerable solemnities of the eucharist unmeaning ceremonies.¹

¹ In using such language as is adopted in this sentence, the author wishes it distinctly understood, that he considers the elements in the Lord's Supper as consecrated or set apart, not by what is usually termed the consecration prayer, but by the original institution of Jesus Christ. He thinks it, to say the least, very incautious language which is often used by ministers on such occasions, “We hereby set apart from a

It might reasonably be expected that, in a country like ours, so long Christian by profession, and possessing *unparalleled* advantages for religious instruction (I mean no hyperbole when I use this expression), there should be few unworthy communicants from ignorance. Would to God it were so! I am deeply persuaded, however, that the reverse is the truth. Owing to the highly criminal neglect of their parents in the precious season of childhood and youth, and their own equally criminal neglect when they arrive at riper years, there are thousands, ay, and tens of thousands of our countrymen, who are “perishing for lack of knowledge.”

That persons of this description so frequently find their way to the table of the Lord, is partially, no doubt, but not wholly, nor perhaps chiefly, to be attributed to the unprincipled or negligent conduct of those whom Christ Jesus has constituted “stewards of the mysteries of his kingdom.” In many cases, men have a vocabulary of religious terms in their memories, who have but little knowledge of religious truth in their understandings; and what conscientious ruler of the church has not often trembled, lest, when he meant merely to prevent the ignorant from profaning a Divine institution, he might inadvertently exclude some weak but sincere Christian, some “babe in Christ,” from that rich and suitable provision, which, in this ordinance, is prepared for him by his Father? It is, however, abundantly evident, that the grossly ignorant person cannot participate in the Lord’s Supper with acceptance or advantage. If he eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord at all, he must eat and drink unworthily.

3d, That man eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, who engages in the Lord’s Supper while destitute of faith in those doctrines which are symbolically represented in this ordinance. The Lord’s Supper, as we have endeavoured to show at length,¹ is the Christian religion under a figurative representation. It holds up to the mind, under sensible signs, some of the characteristic peculiarities of that system, and has

common to a sacred use, so much,” &c. All that a Christian minister can do, and all he ought to attempt to do, is to give thanks for the great blessing of redemption through the death of Christ, and for this divinely-appointed representation of it; and to supplicate the Divine blessing on the ordinance administered according to the original institution.

¹ Discourse II.

perhaps in this view contributed much to preserve unsullied the purity of evangelical truth.¹

The leading principle, symbolically represented in the Lord's Supper, is this, that by the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God, human redemption was obtained. With this doctrine, all the peculiar principles of Christianity are connected by an indissoluble bond. It is the key-stone of the arch of Christian doctrine, with which all the rest stand or fall. That this truth is symbolically taught in the Lord's Supper, cannot be reasonably doubted. On any other supposition, it is an unmeaning service. The words of our Lord place this truth beyond all question: "This is my body given for you.—This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you." The reception of the Lord's Supper is certainly, therefore, an implied acknowledgment of a belief in this article, and in all that is necessarily connected with it.

It follows, of course, that no man can worthily communicate who does not sincerely believe the doctrines of the divinity and atonement of the Saviour. I can scarcely conceive on what principles the man who holds the doctrine of the mere humanity of Jesus Christ, who considers him as the son of Joseph and Mary, and who sees in his obedience no efficacy towards obtaining the salvation of mankind, different from and superior to that which they possess as proofs of doctrine and examples of virtue, —I can scarcely conceive on what principles such a man can satisfactorily account for the original appointment of this ordinance, or justify his own individual observance of it.²

But besides this accuracy of speculative apprehension of the cardinal articles of Christian doctrine, something more is necessary, to avoid the guilt of "eating the bread and drinking the

¹ Witherspoon.

² The Socinians seem to feel this difficulty themselves. In a late periodical publication, conducted by one of the most respectable of that body, we have the following curious remark on this subject, which strikingly illustrates the observation just made. "If the Unitarian Society, on their English Anniversary Festival, were to consecrate the first goblet to the immortal memory of the great founder of their faith, they would more faithfully copy the spirit of his institution, than any rival creedsmen, and would accomplish the association of religion with the natural and habitual pleasures of mankind."—*Synonymic Elucidations, Athenæum*, vol. iv. p. 497. It is plain that this writer finds something not very agreeable in the usual modes of observing the Lord's Supper. No doubt, were his proposal accepted, his brethren would avoid the apparent sanction of a doctrine they abhor; but they would no longer observe the Lord's Supper.

cup of the Lord unworthily." A man whose professed creed is rigidly orthodox, and who is zealous, even to rancour, in defence of it, may yet notwithstanding be an unworthy communicant. A faith of these truths producing a reliance on the Saviour for pardon, and acceptance, and purity, and consolation, and eternal life, and a submission of the understanding and affections to his authority, is absolutely necessary for advantageously and acceptably observing the Lord's Supper. We must be under the influence of that divine principle, which gives as it were a present existence to past and future events, and a palpable form to unseen and immaterial objects. Without this, we may eat the bread and drink the wine; but, without it, we cannot "eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God."

4th, That man eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, who engages in the Lord's Supper without duly corresponding affections of heart. The value of a moral or religious action depends very much on the *manner* in which it is performed. This remark may be applied with advantage to the subject now under consideration. This ordinance is calculated and intended to call forth into exercise many holy affections, particularly reverence and love, penitence and charity; and whenever it is observed without these sacred principles, it is observed unworthily.

Deep veneration should characterise the worshippers of God in every office of devotion, and the customs of our church strictly prohibit every approach to external irreverence,—but no human inspection can secure the reverence of the heart. This, however, is absolutely necessary. If Jacob, on recollecting the visions of Bethel, exclaimed, "How dreadful is this place! it is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven!" if Moses approached the burning, yet unconsumed bush, the symbol of the presence of Divinity, with visible tokens of religious awe,—surely it must be highly criminal to contemplate, with an unimpressed mind, the instituted symbols of the holy suffering humanity of the Son of God—to survey with a careless heart these mysteries "into which the angels desire to look." This fear, which is necessary to worthy communicating, is not slavish terror, arising from alarming apprehensions of the Divine vengeance, but that childlike awe which is produced by enlightened conceptions and overwhelming impressions of the Divine excellence, which, so

far from being inconsistent with supreme love, is its necessary accompaniment.

That the person who does not love our Lord Jesus cannot be a worthy communicant, is too evident to require an extended illustration. If he continues in this state, he must be "ANATHEMA MARANATHA," accursed at the coming of the Lord; and for him to observe the Lord's Supper, is but to re-act the treachery of Iscariot—to betray the Son of God under the mask of kindness.

The impenitent person who approaches the Lord's table must be an unworthy communicant; and, in the estimation of Scripture, every man is impenitent who lives habitually in the neglect of any known duty, and in the commission of any known sin. It is to be feared, many persons of this description observe the Lord's Supper, in the fond expectation of its being a kind of expiation for past transgressions, if not a license for future ones; but all such plainly involve themselves in deeper guilt, by profaning a Divine institution.

I only farther observe here, that he who engages in the Lord's Supper, without charity, eats and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily. The Lord's Supper is termed "the communion," not merely because it is a medium of intercourse between saints and God their Father, and Christ their Saviour, but also as it is a bond of fellowship among saints themselves. Here we all sit at the same board, and as a token of the unity of our sentiments and affections, eat of the same bread and drink of the same cup. Far hence, then, be the malignant and injurious, the wrathful and unforgiving, the unfeeling and ungenerous. They cannot approach without profaning the holy table; they are incapable of relishing the benevolent delights of this fraternal feast. How can we properly commemorate the love of "God, who for Christ's sake forgives us," if we are incapable of forgiving an offending brother! Our Lord's injunction with respect to sacrifices ought to be observed with equal care in reference to the Lord's Supper: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."¹

¹ Matth. v. 23, 24.—The illustration of this particular has been intentionally curtailed, as many of the remarks made on the second division of the first general head of the second discourse are equally applicable here.—*Vide* pp. 31-34.

5th, That man eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, who engages in the Lord's Supper in order to gain unworthy ends. The primary object of all our pursuits, whether religious or secular, should be the advancement of the Divine glory. "Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God." This is the end which we should chiefly seek in observing the Lord's Supper. We are to eat bread and drink wine, that the matchless love of God our Saviour may be held in everlasting remembrance, that the transcendent display of the glories of the Divine character in that event, of which this ordinance is commemorative, may never be forgotten, either by ourselves or others; and may never be remembered, but with sentiments of admiration, gratitude, and love. In subservience to this great end, we are to seek in the Lord's Supper our own spiritual improvement, and that of our Christian brethren; we are to come to the table of Jesus, that our faith may be strengthened, our hope enlivened, our love inflamed, our devotional affections elevated, our good resolutions confirmed, and that the hearts of our fellow Christians may be comforted, and their hands strengthened in the good work of the Lord.

Such are the ends which the worthy communicant keeps steadily in view. But how different from, how inconsistent with these, are the designs to promote which, many professors take their seats at the communion table!¹ Do none take their place at the Lord's table to be seen of men? to obtain, preserve, or increase, a reputation for sanctity of character, and to serve secular ends by a character thus supported? All such ends, indeed

¹ In the former editions the following paragraph occurs. It is with devout gratitude we record the important fact, that the shameful prostitution referred to no longer exists. "In a sister country, it is no uncommon practice to receive the Lord's Supper as a qualification for holding situations of honour, or emolument, whether civil or military. This custom, though sanctioned by law, deserves no better name than sacrilege. On the general subject of test laws, good and wise men have long differed in opinion, and perhaps may long continue to differ; but surely no Christian who feels for the honour of his religion and his Saviour, can help earnestly wishing, that if an attachment to a peculiar mode of Christianity be necessary for fitting men for filling certain situations, some other plan of ascertaining this attachment could be devised than the prostitution of one of the venerable institutions of our holy faith. From our local situation, as well as from the circumstances in which an all-wise Providence has seen fit to place most of us, we are happily not exposed to any temptation to this gross abuse of the Lord's Supper,—but I could not allow so fair an opportunity to pass unimproved, of strongly reprobating a practice which forms no inconsiderable part of our national guilt, and which has contributed largely to the growth of impiety and profaneness."

all ends except those above specified, when sought by the observance of the Lord's Supper, are highly unworthy, and stamp the person who prosecutes them, with the character of an unworthy communicant.

II. The consequences which the apostle represents as flowing from eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord unworthily, come now to be considered. These are two:—The unworthy communicant contracts much guilt,—“He is guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord;”—and he exposes himself to severe punishment,—“He eats and drinks judgment to himself.”

1st, The unworthy communicant contracts much guilt: “He is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” These words have been variously interpreted. Perhaps the most ordinary way of explaining them, is to represent them as synonymous with ‘He is guilty of a profanation of the symbols of the body and blood of the Lord.’¹ This appears to be using an undue freedom with the language of the inspired writer. It is to suppose an ellipsis of a kind unexampled, so far as I know, in the New Testament. Besides, it strips the declaration, obviously intended to be alarming, of much of its terror. It makes the apostle say little more than that he who communicates unworthily, is guilty of unworthy communicating.

The most rational way of ascertaining the meaning of a scriptural phrase, is carefully to consider those passages of Scripture in which either the same expression or a similar one occurs. The phrase under consideration is, I believe, a singular one. But in the Old Testament, we find the phrase “guilty of blood,” used to signify murder. The murderer is said to be guilty of the blood of the person murdered.² In like manner, “to be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,” seems to signify a participation in the guilt of the Saviour's death.

In a literal sense, indeed, this guilt belongs exclusively to the Jewish rulers who plotted his destruction, the Roman governor who sentenced him to death, the Jewish populace whose sanguinary outcries tempted the timid judge into a compliance with their wishes, and the Roman soldiers who nailed him to the

¹ Vide Doddridge and Macknight *in loco*.

² Numb. xxxv. 27.

cross. The tragic scene of Mount Calvary can never be re-acted. The human nature of the Saviour is placed for ever beyond the reach of injury and insult. He is "passed into the heavens, and is sat down for ever on the right hand of the Majesty on high." A diadem of glory now surrounds the temples which were bound by the crown of thorns, and the sceptre of the universe is swayed by the hands which were nailed to the cross. But is the language of the apostle, therefore, unmeaning? By no means. Though understood literally it would be absurd; considered as a figure it conveys, in a manner the most impressive, a truth the most important. It teaches us, that the unworthy communicant is under the influence of the same malignant dispositions which animated the murderers of our Lord; and that, placed in their circumstances, he would have imitated their conduct.

The truth contained in the text, even when thus explained, may appear to many a hard saying. That the person who observes a religious ordinance, however solemn, in an irreverent manner, should discover dispositions of the same malignant nature as those displayed who hated, persecuted, and slew the Son of God, may seem a very paradoxical assertion—"No," says the mere worldly and wicked professor of Christianity, "it cannot be; had we lived in the days of our Saviour, we would have received and honoured him as the Lord from heaven; we would have listened with eagerness, faith, and reverence, to his instructions; we would have treated his person with veneration and kindness; we would have protected him from violence, or died in his defence." I do not despair, however, of proving, to the satisfaction of every attentive unprejudiced hearer, that, in the sense in which I have explained it, the unworthy communicant is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

Our attention is more strongly arrested by the body, if I may use the expression, than by the spirit of the crime of our Lord's murderers. Our imagination is more occupied with the injuries and insults heaped upon the Saviour, than our judgment with the principles from which they proceeded. Yet there is not a more incontrovertible principle in morals than this, that criminality is more properly a quality of motive than of action. It is also to be remembered, in order to our forming a right judgment upon this subject, that the same principle operates very differently in different circumstances. If, then, the motives which actuate

the profaner of the Lord's Supper be substantially the same as those which animated the murderers of the Saviour, it will follow, of course, that they are partners in their criminal principles; and if circumstances had allowed, would have been imitators of their criminal conduct. Now, why did the Jew and the Gentile unite in hating, and persecuting, and slaying the Saviour? Was it not because they disbelieved his Messialship, rejected his sacrifice, and contemned his authority? And to what other principles can unworthy communicating, as explained in the former part of the discourse, be traced? Human nature is much the same in every age. The Jews were not the monsters we are apt to suppose them. Their wickedness, indeed, can scarcely be exaggerated, though described in the strongest language; but place irregenerate men of any country or age in the same circumstances, possess them with the same sentiments, prejudices, and prospects, and they will act substantially the same part.

But it may be said this is the character of other sins as well as of unworthy communicating: We readily admit that it is, for the apostle does not assert here that this is the distinguishing peculiarity of the crime. Obstinate rejection of the Gospel, and apostasy from its profession, are described in very similar language. The rejector of the Gospel, is said to "trample under foot the Son of God," and to "account the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing." And the apostate is said to "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." It seems to follow, from these remarks, that the guilt of unworthy communicating, though highly aggravated, is not singular. May God grant that this exhibition of its deformity may make us all cautious how we incur it!¹

2*d*, The unworthy communicant exposes himself to severe punishment. He "eats and drinks judgment to himself." The mode of expression is remarkable. So far as I have observed, it is singular. Its meaning is not, however, in any degree obscure. The words plainly signify, that by thus eating and drinking he exposes himself to condemnation. From this passage some have rashly concluded, that unworthy communicating is uniformly and necessarily connected with everlasting destruction. This is

¹ Without speaking dogmatically on a doubtful question, I think it right to say,— I am less averse to the first mode of interpretation, and much less sure in reference to the second, than I was when, thirty-five years ago, I wrote this discourse.

certainly a very unwarranted inference. Great as is the guilt of this crime, and severe as is its punishment, we have no reason to think the former irremissible, nor the latter uniformly eternal. We know from the apostle John, that "there is but *one* sin unto death;" and from our Lord, that that sin is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Whatever this irremissible sin may be, we have no reason to think that it is unworthy communicating. *That* is obviously a crime directed immediately against Christ; and we know that "all sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; and if a man speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven to him."

But apart from these general considerations, the passage itself contains abundant evidence, that eternal destruction is not the evil which the apostle here declares to be incurred by unworthy communicating. The word translated "damnation" in our version, is much better rendered in the margin "judgment." It is thus translated in many other passages of Scripture. We shall quote two of them. "He that troubleth you shall bear his own *judgment*, whosoever he be."—"The time is come when *judgment* is begun at the house of God." Even a mere English reader must perceive, that it would have been exceedingly harsh to have rendered the word *damnation* in these passages.

The nature of the judgments to which unworthy communicating subjects those who are guilty of it, may be learned from that which befell the offending Corinthians: "For this cause," says the apostle, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." In their case, bodily diseases and untimely death were the judgments inflicted.—But were not these merely the forerunners of more dreadful evils, of more lasting pains? We have no reason to think so. On the contrary, a phrase is used to express their death, which is never in the New Testament applied to the death of the wicked. They are said "to fall asleep;" and so far from being the earnest of everlasting punishment, we are informed that they were intended for this very purpose, that they might escape the condemnation of the wicked. "When we are judged," says the apostle, "we are chastened, that we should not be condemned with the world." These observations will not be useless, if in but one instance they serve to dissipate those distressing fears which are apt to arise in weak, perhaps, but tender minds, from the very strong phraseology which is employed in our

translation of the Scriptures, and which frequently prevent them from receiving that unmingled satisfaction from this ordinance, which it is certainly intended and calculated to communicate.

Let no man, however, conclude, from what has been said, that the punishment to which unworthy communicating exposes, is but common and trifling. Like every other sin, it is damning in its own nature; and if unrepented of, will doubtless form one of the grounds of that sentence of condemnation which dooms the sinner to unending destruction. Besides, it is not for us to determine how often, or in what instances, this crime in irregenerate men is, even in the present state, punished by mental and bodily diseases.

Nor is the punishment slight to which the Christian (for even he may be guilty of some of the forms of this crime) exposes himself, when he eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily. The severest and most apparently wrathful afflictions with which God visits his people, will ultimately be salutary; but during their continuance, they may all be intolerable. The judgments of God, even when we except the most dreadful of them, are infinitely varied, and may be awfully severe. Say, Christian, is it a small affliction to be deprived of all sensible communion with thy Saviour and thy God,—to be given up to be the sport of the malignant ingenuity of thine infernal foes,—to be allowed to fall into some gross sin, which must deeply wound thy conscience, indelibly stain thy character, and totally destroy thy usefulness,—to have thine understanding clouded with perplexity, and thy heart tortured with fear,—to lose, though not thy security (for that cannot be lost) yet the knowledge of thy security, of the everlasting inheritance,—to be “chastened with sore pain upon thy bed,” while no comforting influences are vouchsafed from above,—to be terrified with the prospect of spending an eternity—an eternity, too, apparently at hand, in the society of devils and damned spirits, under the hopeless dominion of depravity,—to be haunted with the idea that the unrelaxing frown of an offended Judge is fixed on you, instead of the benignant smile of a reconciled Father,—in fine, to die without comfort and without hope, unable to give a testimony to the power of the religion of Jesus, to support the mind under the pressure of affliction, and in the prospect of death? Say, Christian, are these light evils, or canst thou form an idea of misery

more exquisite, without borrowing the notion from the regions of despair? Yet all these judgments may be inflicted on the saint who is guilty of unworthy communicating.

It would be extremely rash to assert, for Scripture warrants no such affirmation, that all these judgments were ever, in any instance, inflicted upon an erring saint. In dispensing chastisements to his people, God is sovereign and merciful. But let us beware of presuming on his mercy. To all these evils does the unworthy communicant expose himself; and were they inflicted on him in all their variety and severity, who durst say that the Almighty was either unmerciful or unjust? If the true Christian, when he communicates unworthily, *may* be thus chastised, oh how severe *must* be the punishment of the impenitent, irregenerate profaner of the body and blood of the Lord!

Before concluding the Discourse, it may be proper to guard you against misimproving these truths—and to urge you to apply them to the practical purposes which they are fitted and intended to answer.

The doctrine of the deep guilt and the great danger of unworthy communicating, is misimproved by two classes of men of very different characters. It is often urged as an excuse for neglecting this ordinance, by men who are in reality careless about Christianity and its institutions; and it is sometimes felt by the sincere, but timid believer, as a real obstacle in the way of his enjoying the privilege and performing the duty of eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of the Saviour's dying love.

The conduct of the first class of persons is highly criminal and foolish;—it is to pervert the doctrines of the Gospel from their true design, and to extract from them an apology for neglecting its duties. Are such persons serious in their objection? If they are not, let them know, that the will of God, and the salvation of the soul, are much too serious subjects for quibbling about, and that “God is not deceived, and will not be mocked.” In very many cases, the real cause of their not communicating is their insensibility to the obligations of Christianity altogether, or the love of some sin which they are determined not to abandon. The profession of a fear of communicating unworthily, is but the pretext under which they endeavour to cloak from others, and perhaps from themselves, their latent infidelity and supreme love

of iniquity. For if they are so much afraid of condemnation, why are they not careful to avoid every sin? Unworthy communicating is not the only damning transgression. Every sin exposes to the displeasure of God, and among the rest neglect of the Lord's Supper.

Let such persons remember, if they are indeed unprepared for communicating, they are in a state of extreme hazard. They are enemies of God, unfit for every religious exercise, condemned already; and, should they die in their present situation, they must be miserable for ever. To invite such persons, *in their present state*, to the Lord's table, would be highly improper. But we would beseech them, by the "terrors of the Lord," and by the compassions of the Redeemer, to "flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel." Let them "believe in the Lord Jesus, that they may be saved;" and then let them hasten to the Lord's table, to express their gratitude for his redeeming kindness.

But there is another class of persons who are apt to misimprove the doctrine of the guilt and danger of unworthy communicating, possessed of far different characters, and to be regarded with far different sentiments—objects at least as much of pity as of blame. I allude to those really religious persons, who, partly from a peculiarity of bodily constitution, partly from a timidity of disposition, and partly from far different causes, the power of remaining corruption, and the suggestion of evil spirits, refrain from communicating, lest they should incur the guilt of eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord unworthily.

With an individual of this kind I would use the language of friendly remonstrance. My dear Christian brother,—Do not these fears argue very unworthy conceptions of the Saviour? Do you not think of him rather as a hard master, a suspicious tyrant, who is strict to mark every offence, even in those who are sincerely attempting to please him, than as an affectionate, condescending Redeemer, who "knows your frame, and remembers you are dust"? Will such fears be sustained as an excuse at the tribunal of God, for the neglect of a plainly commanded duty? Will not the recollection of slighted communions embitter the cup of death? How canst thou answer to thy conscience now, and how on a more solemn day wilt thou answer to thy Lord, for in reality offering disrespect, though under the appear-

ance of extreme regard to the instituted memorials of his dying love? There is guilt and danger in unworthy communicating, but is there less guilt or danger in refusing compliance with an explicit and most peremptory command of thy God and Saviour? —“But I am unworthy to sit down at the Saviour’s table.” And were we to wait till the table was surrounded with worthy guests, in your acceptation of the term, when would the feast be celebrated? The holiest man on earth is not worthy to be admitted to so great an honour—so rich a privilege. To know, and be duly affected with our own unworthiness, is a clear evidence that we shall be acceptable communicants. Caust thou appeal, Christian, to thy God, that it is nothing but a fear of offending Him that keeps thee from his table? In the consciousness of this sentiment of complete acquiescence in the will of God, thou hast a proof of thy saintship, and of thy right in his estimation to a place at his table.

But while we guard thus against the misimprovement of these doctrines, let us also use them as powerful motives to a careful attention to the preparatory duties of meditation, prayer, and self-examination, and to the state of our thoughts and feelings when engaged in observing the Lord’s Supper. “God is greatly to be feared in the meeting of his saints, and He is to be had in reverence by all who are about Him.” To serve Him acceptably, we must “serve Him with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire.” “Holy and reverend is his name.”

Let us then devote ourselves to deep serious thought on the great truths represented in this ordinance, let us be frequent and fervent in our addresses to the throne of mercy, and let us be impartial and diligent in our researches into our own hearts. And when in the multitude of his mercies the Saviour brings us to his table, let us, in humble diffidence of our own wisdom, righteousness, and strength, but in unshaken confidence in “the grace which is in Christ Jesus,” exercise a holy reverence, a firm faith, and an ardent love. Let us give ourselves entirely up to the holy service. Shutting out the world and its vanities, let Christ and his love, heaven and its glories, possess all our souls. Let faith present us with the view of the unseen Saviour, and let love and joy, admiration and gratitude, penitence and hope, hold the united empire of our hearts. Let a reflection on those sins, which were the cause of our Saviour’s matchless sufferings,

heave the breast with the sigh of regret, and moisten the cheek with the tear of penitential sorrow ; while the delightful assurance, that by these sufferings that guilt was expiated, and the ultimate extinction of the principles of depravity secured, removes every thing painful from these emotions, and fills the heart with a “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Thus, instead of eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord unworthily, we shall observe this holy ordinance in a manner pleasing to God, honourable to our Redeemer, useful to ourselves, and edifying to the church of Christ. Instead of eating and drinking judgment to ourselves, we shall enjoy a foretaste of the “hidden manna,” and of the “new wine of the kingdom of God.”

DISCOURSE V.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

1 Cor. xi. 28.—“ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

THE religion of the Bible is, like its great Author, spiritual in its nature. Its business is with man, as a rational, active, and immortal being. The word which reveals it is “quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, the soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;” and while it by no means overlooks external and ritual duties, its grand leading requisition is rectitude of principle, and its great object is, by purifying the heart, to purify the conduct. The God whom the Scriptures reveal is the God “who searches the heart,” and his acceptable votaries are those “who worship Him in spirit and in truth.” With Him “bodily service profiteth little:” it is “a living sacrifice” that alone rises in acceptance before Him.

From this peculiarity of the religion of the Bible flow a variety of duties, to which nothing analogous is to be found in the systems of superstition. “Keep thy *heart* with all diligence,” is a radical law of the scriptural system. The principal object is not that a certain round of visible services be regularly performed, though this is not neglected, but it is to have the understanding enlightened in all necessary truth, to have the conscience well informed and honest, to have the affections properly directed, to have the passions rightly regulated,—in one word, to have the tone of thinking and feeling rendered perfectly accordant to that revelation of truth contained in the Holy Scriptures. In these consists true religion; all else is merely the expression of it. Hence also

arise the necessity and obligation of such duties as self-knowledge and self-examination. In a religion entirely ritual and external, a man can scarcely mistake as to the question whether he is or is not religious. In a religion which is spiritual and unseen, it is far otherwise: there is much room for self-deception, and of course there is much need of self-inquiry. Where religion consists in the general state of the mind, and heart, and conduct, there is an obvious necessity of thorough self-knowledge, in order to ascertain our religious character; and in order to thorough self-knowledge, deep reflection and impartial inquiry are requisite.

To the proper performance, even of the ritual and external duties of religion, under such a system, self-examination is necessary. In order to be acceptable, these must be expressive of a certain mode of thinking and feeling; in any other case, they are not merely unprofitable as bodily services, but they are detestable as hypocrisy; and therefore it is very necessary, that by self-inquiry we should ascertain that our hearts are right with God, previously to our engaging in them. It is plainly on these principles that the apostle in the text so strongly enjoins self-examination in the prospect of engaging in the Lord's supper. If we would observe that ordinance acceptably, we must not only eat bread and drink wine, but do this as expressive of certain sentiments and feelings; and, therefore, previously to our observing it, we must inquire whether we possess these sentiments, whether we cherish these feelings. We have the prospect of soon observing the Lord's Supper. Self-examination is in our present circumstances a most appropriate and necessary duty. In order to facilitate its performance, I shall endeavour,

I. To direct your attention to some of the subjects about which a man ought to examine himself, previously to his eating the Lord's Supper.

II. To point out the manner in which the exercise of self-examination ought to be conducted. And,

III. To bring forward a few motives which should stimulate Christians to engage in this exercise.

I. To engage in the Lord's Supper with acceptance and advantage, it is necessary that a man should be a true Christian, "reconciled to God through the death of his Son," and "renewed in the spirit of his mind" by the effectual operation of the Holy

Ghost ; and a Christian, too, whose faith and love, and penitence are in lively exercise. The requisite inquiry seems thus naturally to resolve itself into two parts. What is my state as a man ? Am I converted or unconverted ? And what is my character as a Christian ? Am I a “ babe in Christ ” ? or am I arrived in some measure at maturity ? Am I “ carnal or spiritual ” ? Am I a backslider ? or am I “ growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ” ? To use a somewhat antiquated but sufficiently accurate phraseology—The design of self-examination, before we engage in the Lord’s Supper, is to discover both whether we are *habitually*, and whether we are *actually*, prepared for it. The two inquiries may, however, with sufficient propriety, be conjoined ; and the subjects about which a man ought to examine himself, may be reduced to three : his *sentiments*, his *affections*, and his *conduct*.

1st, In the prospect of observing the Lord’s Supper, a man ought to examine himself with respect to his sentiments. Opinion is, in a good degree, the guide of human conduct ; and our sentiments have a direct and powerful influence in forming our character. To discover the latter, we must be acquainted with the former.

A great proportion of mankind, even of professed Christians, are so ignorant as to have, properly speaking, no sentiments on religion at all. If we belong to this class, there is no need of our prosecuting the inquiry any farther. We have already seen, that the grossly ignorant person must be an unworthy communicant.¹ The great body of you, however, who have been admitted into church-fellowship, must, in charity, be presumed to be not ignorant. It is to be supposed that religious truth has been a subject of thought with you, and that you have formed something like a fixed system of opinion. Now, what are your sentiments about religion ?—To assist you in your inquiries, I shall class the leading subjects in religion under general heads, and propose a few plain questions in reference to each of them.

What are your opinions respecting God ? Do you believe that there is a God ? Have you a realising, impressive conviction of his existence and presence, his providence and power ? Or are you “ saying in your heart with the fool, There is no

¹ Discourse IV.

God"? Do you believe God to be possessed of all the attributes ascribed to Him in the Holy Scriptures; infinitely great and powerful, wise and good, holy and just? Or do you conceive of Him as "one" if not "altogether" yet very much "like yourselves"? Do you believe Him to be so severely strict as to be tyrannical, or so "all mercy" as to be unjust? or, do you consider Him as inflexibly just and immaculately holy, yet at the same time infinitely benignant and inconceivably gracious?

What are your opinions concerning yourselves? Do you not only believe in human guilt and depravity as a general doctrine; but do you believe yourselves to be guilty and depraved, and to be as guilty and depraved as the Scriptures represent you to be? Do you believe that "the imagination of the thoughts of your hearts are only evil, and that continually;" that your "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" that your violations of the Divine law have been infinitely numerous, dreadfully aggravated, and altogether inexcusable; that you are "by nature children of wrath;" and that, being "dead in trespasses and sins," it is physically impossible for you to make atonement for your sins, and morally impossible for you to restore yourselves to a state of rectitude? Or, though you admit that you have sinned, do you consider yourselves as still capable of securing for yourselves pardon, restoration to the favour and image of God, and final happiness, by repentance and amendment?

What are your sentiments in reference to the Saviour? Are you thoroughly persuaded that the Saviour Jesus Christ is the great God; that he voluntarily assumed the human nature, and the mediatorial character; that he offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of men; that he "ever lives to make intercession;" that he is the all-sufficient and the only Saviour? Or do you conceive of Jesus Christ as a mere man, or as an incarnate angel, who contributed much, by his doctrine and example, to the promotion of human happiness?

What are your sentiments respecting the way of salvation through Christ? Are you persuaded that "eternal life is the gift of God through Christ Jesus," not to be purchased by works, but received by faith; that this "faith is the gift of God," and the work of his Spirit; that the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" forms as essential a part of the Christian salvation

as the atonement of the Son of God; that there is no other way of deliverance for man; and that this method is most wise, just, and good? Or do you expect an interest in the blessings of salvation as the reward of some exertion made by yourselves; or conceive it possible to be saved while unrenewed by the Spirit, and the servants of iniquity?

What are your sentiments with respect to the invisible realities of a future state? Are you deeply persuaded that there is a heaven and a hell, and that you must be for ever an inhabitant either of the one or the other?

What are your opinions with regards to the Lord's Supper? Do you view it as a species of propitiation for your sins, or merely as a testimony of your grateful reliance on the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ? What are your sentiments as to its nature,—its obligation,—its design?

On what are your sentiments on all these various subjects founded? Have you received them merely "by tradition from your fathers"? Are they only the prejudices of education? or have you seen them with your own eyes in the Scriptures of truth, and received them on the ground of the Divine testimony, discerned in the exercise of your rational faculties, under the enlightening influence of the Divine Spirit? And are you ready to "give every one who asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"? Such is a specimen (our limits admit of nothing more) of the questions, by putting which to himself, a man may discover the real state of his sentiments, and their accordance, or discordance, with that system taught in the Holy Scriptures.

2d, In the prospect of observing the Lord's Supper, a man should examine himself as to the state of his affections. The head may be clear, while the heart is cold. The professed creed may be orthodox, while the affections are disordered. In order to know what we are, we must know not merely what we think, but how we feel. In inquiring into the state of our affections, we may follow two different methods: we may either attend to the different affections, such as love and hatred, hope and fear, joy and sorrow; or the different objects of affection,—as God, his law, Christ Jesus, sin, the world, ourselves, and our neighbours. Either mode will serve to lead us into a knowledge of the real state of our affections. We shall adopt the latter. We call,

then, on every person who proposes to observe the Lord's Supper, to attend seriously to the following questions :—

What is the state of your affections towards God? Do you, under the influence of "the carnal mind," cherish sentiments of "enmity against God"? or do you "love Him with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind"? Is He the object of your supreme esteem and affection? Do you love God for what He is in himself, as well as for what He has done for you in the gifts of providence, and the blessings of grace? Do you "sanctify the Lord your God in your heart, and make Him your fear and your dread"? Does your fear of God arise from alarm of the effects of his vengeance? and is it productive of torment? or does it flow from enlarged views of his venerable excellences? and does it sweetly harmonise with the emotions of esteem and love?

What is the state of your affections with respect to God's law? Do you feel dissatisfied with the extent and spirituality of the Divine law; with the strictness of the precept, and the severity of the penalty? or do you account "the law holy, just, and good"? Do you "delight in the law of God after the inward man"? Do you heartily approve of these injunctions of the law that most directly oppose the strongest impulses of your corrupt nature? And is it your desire, not that the law were brought down to your weakness, but that you were conformed to the law's perfection? Do you "esteem God's commandments, concerning *all* things, to be right"?

What is the state of your affections towards the Saviour? Is he the object of your indifference or dislike? Does he "grow up before" you in the revelation of the Gospel, "as a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness"? and, when you see him, do you perceive "no beauty why ye should desire him"? Or do you regard him as the loveliest of all beings, and the kindest of all benefactors? Do you love him supremely, not, indeed, as he deserves to be loved, not as you wish to love him, but still far better than the most valuable earthly possession, or the dearest earthly friend? Can you enter into the apostle's feelings, when he says, "Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"? Do you feel communion with him to be absolutely necessary to your happiness?

and do you earnestly desire and humbly hope to be for ever "with him, and to behold the glory which the Father hath given him"?

What is the state of your affections with respect to sin? Do you account it the most malignant and detestable of all things? Do you dislike it, merely or chiefly on account of its baneful effects on your conscience, constitution, character, or fortune; or on account of the dreadful punishment to which it subjects the sinner in the world to come? Or do you hate it on account of its opposition to the Divine character and will, and because it rendered necessary the sorrows, and agonies, and death of your dear Lord? Do you hate all sin, even that to which, from constitution, habit, or interest, you are most strongly inclined? Do you consider liableness to sin as the greatest evil of your present situation? and are you disposed to exclaim, with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?"

What is the state of your affections with regard to this world? Do you "love the world and the things that are in the world"? Is the love of pleasure, of honour, or of wealth, the animating principle of your conduct? Are your chosen companions the men of the world? Or is the "world crucified to you, and are you crucified to the world"? Are you "mortifying your members, which are upon the earth," and crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts? Do you regard the world as a state you are to fly from, and a place in which you are to have no settled rest, no continued abode?

What is the state of your affections with regard to yourselves? Are you "lovers of your own selves," disposed to make your own gain, or pleasure, or honour, the grand ends of your existence? Or have you learned to sink your own secular interests in the more important concerns of the Divine glory, and the general happiness of mankind? Are you so loving yourselves so as to make the salvation of your soul your principal object, in subservience to the glory of God?

What is the state of your affections with respect to your fellow-men? Do you love and honour all men? or are you still "hateful and hating each other"? Have you an enlightened and fervent benevolence for all who wear the nature of man; a deep-felt pity for all the miserable, and especially the morally

miserable; and a peculiar love to all who bear the image of our Redeemer?—"We know," says the Apostle John, "that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." Do you account the truly pious the "excellent ones of the earth"? and do you prefer the poor despised child of God, though learned only in his Bible, and wise only for eternity, to the accomplished but depraved possessor of riches, learning, and genius? Are your religious affections not transient feelings, but fixed principles?—By allowing conscience to answer these and similar questions, you may easily ascertain the true state of your affections.

3d, In the prospect of observing the Lord's Supper, a man ought to examine himself respecting the state of his conduct. A man's general deportment is, of all species of evidence, the most satisfactory, both to himself and others, as to his real character. Following a plan similar to that adopted in the preceding subjects of inquiry, I shall suggest a few questions respecting conduct, by giving honest answers to which you may be assisted in acquiring the knowledge of yourselves.

In what manner do you conduct yourselves towards *God*? Are you regular and conscientious in the discharge of the duties of religion,—public, domestic, and secret? Dare you not "forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of too many is"? Is there an altar erected in your dwelling? and is the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and praise regularly presented? And do you frequently and regularly "enter into your closet," and pour out your hearts before your God? Is your attention to religious duty the effect of principle, or of habit merely? Does the external performance of such duties satisfy you? or are you uneasy unless, through their medium, you enjoy fellowship with God? Do you walk before God "with a perfect heart, and serve Him with a willing mind"?

In what manner do you behave yourselves in what directly regards *your own personal concerns*? Do you consider your body as a temple of the Holy Ghost? Do you attend to the apostolic injunction, "Be sober"? Do you refrain "from wine, wherein there is excess"? Do you "use this world as not abusing it"? Are you following out that first law of our nature, self-love, according to the directions given in Scripture; seeking your true happiness next to the Divine glory; preferring the improve-

ment of the mind to the gratification of the body; and, while not neglecting the concerns of time, prosecuting, with supreme ardour, the interests of eternity?

In what manner do you behave towards your *fellow-men*? Is your conduct regulated by the laws of justice and benevolence? Do you “render to all their due”? and do you “do good to all as you have opportunity”? Are you, according to your different stations and talents, relieving the distressed, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, instructing the ignorant, warning the unwary, and comforting the afflicted? Do you “look, not only at your own things, but also at the things of others”? Is there, in one word, a general conformity between your conduct, and that enjoined by the Divine law?

What are the *principles* of your conduct? Does the principle of regard to interest or reputation, form your chief motive? or is it respect to the Divine authority, and love to the Divine law? What is the *rule* of your conduct? Is it the opinion of the world, or your own inclinations? or is it the unerring law of God? What is the great *end* of your conduct? Is it self in some form or other? or is it the Divine glory in your own true happiness, and that of others? Particular questions might easily be multiplied; but to a mind, even of very ordinary powers, these are sufficient to suggest a train of reflection, which must, if honestly pursued, lead to a discovery of the true state of character.

II. The *manner* in which the exercise of self-examination should be conducted, is the second topic to which your attention is to be directed. Here we shall shortly consider, in order, *the criterion* by which our judgment is to be guided; *the temper* in which the examination should be conducted; and *the assistance* which is necessary to its being carried on with success.

1st, The word of God is the criterion according to which we ought to form our judgments of every subject of a religious or moral nature. It is the infallible test by which we are to try doctrines and practices. It is the sure touchstone by which we ought to examine ourselves. In the Holy Scriptures we have the characters of sinners and saints drawn by the pencil of inspiration. The distinguishing features of these two classes are very distinctly marked; and were it not for the prevalence of

inconsideration, and the strange influence of self-love, it would be impossible for any man to read the Scriptures without discovering his own moral likeness.

In judging of their own characters, men often fall into important and fatal mistakes, by taking up with a false criterion, adopting the general run of human character, or, at any rate, of the character of professional Christianity, as the standard by which they try themselves; and they think well or ill of themselves, as they rise above, or fall below, this standard. "They measure themselves by themselves; they compare themselves among themselves," and, in doing so, "are not wise." In religion, we have to do with God. In endeavouring, then, to ascertain our religious character, the prime object ought to be, to discover whether it correspond to what is right, not in man's estimation, but in God's.

There is a very large portion of the word of God characteristic; indeed there is comparatively but little of it which may not be improved for leading us into a more extensive and accurate acquaintance with ourselves. There are, however, some passages peculiarly fitted for answering this purpose. I shall mention a few of them, which you can consult in your retirements: The law of the ten commandments; the fifteenth, and twenty-fourth, and twenty-sixth Psalms; the beatitudes, and indeed the whole of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount; and the practical parts of the apostolical epistles. In this point of light, the First Epistle of John possesses uncommon value. It may, indeed, be termed an inspired directory for self-examination. It is scarcely conceivable how a person, wishing to know his real character, can attentively read that epistle without coming to a decided opinion before he concludes the perusal.

2*d*, The tempers which are absolutely necessary in order to conduct a course of self-inquiry with the probability of final success, are principally seriousness and impartiality. It is well remarked by a pious writer, that half the difficulties that are met with in the prosecution of religious inquiry, and the performance of religious duty, would vanish, if men would but attend to the advice, "BE SERIOUS."¹ Without this, nothing can be done to purpose in self-examination. This will appear if

¹ Milner.

we attend, either to the importance, or to the difficulty of the exercise.

The point at issue is of inconceivable importance. In an inquiry, on the result of which our property or life depended, we would naturally be serious; but here the subject of inquiry is far more important. It involves our everlasting welfare. The question is nothing less than, 'Are we the friends or the enemies of God; the children of his love, or the objects of his indignation?' It is, as it were, an anticipation of the proceedings of the general judgment, so far as refers to ourselves; and if this does not require seriousness, what does?

But the exercise is not only important, but also difficult. The difficulty of the duty arises partly from natural, but principally from moral causes. The study of ourselves is attended with a variety of obstacles. It is with the mind as with the eye: with perfect ease it observes external objects; but it is not without a good deal of contrivance and exertion that it can be rendered the object of its own contemplation. The physical difficulties are small, however, compared with the moral ones. We are disposed to think too favourably of ourselves, and are unwilling to be persuaded of disagreeable truth. Evidence, which would prove quite conclusive in another person's case, is considered as by no means satisfactory in our own. We easily assume that to be true which we wish to be true, and conclude that to be false which we wish to be false.

Hence the necessity of the second temper which we mentioned, *impartiality*. This is a qualification essentially requisite in a judge. We must be willing to hear all that is against us, as well as all that is for us. We must not allow ourselves to act the part of an advocate, by bringing forward palliations, excuses, or defences. We must not, when the evidence wears an alarming appearance, desist from the inquiry. We must determine, at all events, to get at the truth, the whole truth. A partial self-examination is worse than no self-examination at all. It hardens prejudice; it perpetuates delusion.

3d, In order to carry on with success a course of self-inquiry, the assistance of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary. It is a radical principle of the Christian institution, that all right thinking and feeling, in reference to religion and morals, originate in the operation of the Spirit of God. We cannot think a

good thought as of ourselves. "Without Christ" and his Spirit, "we can do nothing." The reason why so many of our attempts at religious duty turn out to no purpose, or worse than no purpose, is, that we are not duly impressed with a sense of the necessity of Divine influence, and not sufficiently attentive to the appointed means of obtaining it.

The assistance of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary, in order to successful self-examination. He alone is perfectly acquainted with our character. He knows not only our actions, but their causes. He sees the forming thought, the rising desire, the latent intention. "He searches all things." He has, in the Scriptures, furnished us with the means of trying ourselves; but he must fix our attention, and irradiate our judgment, to enable us to make a right use of these means.

To obtain his assistance, we are commanded to be instant in prayer: "If ye, being evil," says our Lord, "know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" Let then our prayers ascend frequent and fervent before the throne of God, for the enlightening influence of the Holy Ghost; which alone can dissipate the clouds of prejudice and self-deception so apt to envelop the mind when engaged in the investigation of its own moral state. "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."

III. A very brief illustration of a few of the motives which urge to the performance of the duty of self-examination, shall conclude the discourse. The express command of God, the reasonable nature of the exercise, and its advantageous consequences, all urge us to engage in it.

1st, The authority of God requires us to engage in self-examination. A clear revelation of the will of God is the most powerful motive to duty which can be urged on a rational, dependent, immortal being. This is not wanting in the present instance. The words in the text are most express: "Let a man examine himself." Nor less explicit are the words of the same inspired writer upon another occasion: "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, try your own selves. What! know ye not your own selves, that if Christ Jesus be not in you, then

are ye reprobates?" Besides these explicit injunctions of self-examination, its obligation is implied in almost every precept which has a reference to religious duty. How can we repent, how can we turn from our backslidings, or grow in grace, unless we know our own state and character? and how are we to acquire a knowledge of these but by self-examination?

2*d*, Can anything be more reasonable than that a man should examine himself? What exercise is more suited to his nature as a rational being? "The proper study of mankind is man." Even the Heathen sage was so impressed with a sense of the reasonableness and importance of self-knowledge, that he asserted that the maxim "KNOW THYSELF" was the suggestion of the Divinity.¹ Why was the power of reflection given to man, but that it might be improved?

It is reasonable that a man should examine himself, not merely because he is by his nature fitted for this exercise, but because it is absolutely necessary to prevent him from falling into dangerous mistakes. Vast multitudes, from neglecting this duty, not only impose on others, but deceive themselves. While strangers to the Christian character, they lay claim to the present consolations and the future rewards which belong exclusively to its possessors. Lulled asleep in false security, they dream of nothing but peace and happiness, till "in hell they open their eyes, being in torment." Does not the very possibility of our committing such a mistake, make self-examination in the highest degree reasonable?

3*d*, Numerous and important advantages naturally flow from self-examination. In the Holy Scriptures we find appropriate instructions given to mankind, according to their various characters; but to derive advantage from these instructions, we must know under what class we are to rank ourselves. To a man who knows himself, the word of God must be very useful. To a man who does not know himself, it can be but of little, or rather of no, use.

Self-examination can do no harm. If all is safe, the knowledge of this cannot produce insecurity. If we are in hazard, the knowledge of this does not increase the danger. But this is not all. Self-examination is in every case calculated to do good.

¹ Γνωθὶ σεαυτὸς descendit a cœlo.

Are we still strangers to the power of religion? A conviction of this is a probable means of rousing us to consider the things which belong to our peace. To be convinced of danger, is requisite in order to our "fleeing for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us in the Gospel." Multitudes are thoughtless about conversion, because they flatter themselves they are converted already; whereas a sense of their awfully hazardous situation, resulting from an impartial and honest inquiry, is of all things the most likely to produce that serious concern, which, by the blessing of God, often issues in "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."

Are we really religious? Surely it must be good for us to know that we are so. To make our calling and election sure, is equally our interest and our duty. A good man, uncertain about his state, must be unhappy, and unhappy in proportion to his goodness. On the other hand, how delightful to know that God loves us, and that nothing can separate us from his love; to know that all the blessings of grace, and of glory, are secured to us by an inviolable tenure; to know that "all things are ours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, all are ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's!" Neglect of self-examination is a sin, which to a Christian carries its punishment in its bosom; and "in keeping the commandment" in the text "there is great reward."

Never is self-examination more necessary than in the prospect of observing the Lord's Supper. From what has been said in a former discourse, it is plainly requisite to enable us to resolve the question, whether or not we have a right to engage in this service,—whether an approach to the Lord's table on our part, would be honourable to our Saviour, or advantageous to our own souls? "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," says the apostle. Communicating then is sin to every one who engages in it, without an enlightened conviction of its being his duty to do so,—and this he cannot have, unless by serious self-inquiry he has discovered that he is indeed a Christian.

Self-examination is expressly required as a preparatory duty to observing the Lord's Supper. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of this bread, and drink of this cup." I dare not say that God never meets in mercy at his table, those who have been negligent in this appointed preparation; but I will

say, that to expect favourable fellowship with God at his table in such a case, is most unwarrantable. Christians are apt enough to complain that they derive little benefit from observing this ordinance; but it is to be feared that one reason is, they are not careful to draw near to God according to the due order. Let us, my brethren, neither neglect nor trust to our preparation. To neglect it is gross presumption,—to trust in it is deplorable superstition.¹

¹ In a single discourse on Self-Examination, to which his plan restricted him, the Author found it impossible to do more than merely give a general outline, which, however, a well-informed Christian will find no difficulty to fill up in his religious exercises. To persons who feel that they need assistance in managing their inquiries into their state and character, Mason on "Self-Knowledge," Darracot's "Scripture Marks of Salvation," and Walker's (of Truro) "Familiar Introduction to the Knowledge of Ourselves," in his three Tracts, may be very useful. There is a very judicious tract by the late Mr James A. Haldane, on "Self-Examination," well fitted to prevent and correct both doctrinal and practical mistakes on that subject.

The self-examination required in the text, has a reference to that which is necessary to the prevention of unworthy communicating. It is the not discerning the Lord's body which leads to this "being guilty in reference to the Lord's body and blood." Let a man, then, examine himself whether he indeed discerns the Lord's body—whether he really understands and believes the truth emblematically represented in this ordinance, and let him *obvius, thus* eat and drink, for if he do not *thus* eat and drink, he *will*—he *must*—eat and drink in an unbecoming manner, just because he does not discern the Lord's body. He who discerns the Lord's body is of course a worthy communicant, and self-examination is necessary to ascertain whether a man does indeed discern the Lord's body.

PART II.

DISCOURSES

AT THE

ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

SECTION I.
ACTION SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

MATT. XXVI. 36-46.—“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou *wilt*. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.”

MARK XIV. 32-42.—“And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things *are* possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour? Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: the spirit truly *is* ready, but the flesh *is* weak. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again; (for their eyes were heavy;) neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take *your* rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.”

LUKE XXII. 39-46.—“And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the Mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them

about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from me : nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly : and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, and said unto them, Why sleep ye ? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

JOHN XVIII. 1.—"When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples."

"HOLY brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," we are come together on this first day of the week, to "break bread ;" and my object during the short season that is to elapse before our engaging in that religious commemoration of those expiatory sufferings by which atonement was made for our sins, is to fix your attention on what is perhaps the most extraordinary part of our Lord's passion—that which is commonly denominated his AGONY—that which the ancient church called "his unknown sufferings." In this we have a realisation of the emblem presented to the sight of Moses in the mountain of God—"a bush burning with fire, yet not consumed." "The plant of renown," which sprung "from the stem of Jesse," appears enveloped in flame, but being "the branch of Jehovah," as well as "the fruit of the earth," it remains not only unconsumed but unshrivelled, and the strange process hastens on the ripening of those fruits which are for the "healing of the nations." Jehovah is in the bush—therefore, though burning, it is not consumed. "Let us turn aside and see this great sight"—and let us approach with reverence, for "the place whereon we stand is holy ground."

Our Lord having instituted that holy ordinance which we are this day met to observe, seems, after singing a hymn, to have gone with his disciples to the Mount of Olives, where, having in some retired place addressed to them such instructions and consolations as their circumstances peculiarly required, and in a most affectionate and fervent prayer, commended them to the protection and guidance and blessing of his Father and their Father, his God and their God, he crossed the brook Cedron, which ran at the bottom of the mountain, and entered into a garden on its banks called Gethsemane, probably belonging to some of his followers, to which he and his disciples, when residing at Jerusalem during the solemn feasts, had been in the habit of retiring for the purpose of undisturbed intercourse and

solemn devotion. On entering this garden, hallowed in the Saviour's mind by many sacred recollections, and destined now, as he was well aware, to be the scene of some of the most mysterious and agonising of his expiatory sufferings, as well as of his being betrayed into the hands of his enemies by a traitorous disciple, he left eight of his disciples behind him, and proceeded onward to a place of deeper retirement, in the recesses of the garden, accompanied only by his three bosom friends, Simon Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, "the disciple whom he loved."

It was now night—probably midnight—and the shadows of Gethsemane's groves deepened its gloom, by intercepting the rays of the full moon. The natural darkness was, however, but an imperfect figure of that deep spiritual gloom, that horror of great darkness, which now settled down on the Saviour's mind. It was a darkness that might be felt. "The Man of Sorrows" becomes more sorrowful than ever. "The waters came in into his soul. He sunk in deep mire where there was no standing. He came into deep waters, where the floods overflowed him." He became pre-eminently "sorrowful, sore amazed, very heavy." The terms employed by the sacred historians to describe these purely mental sufferings are peculiarly striking. I do not know that our language affords more appropriate and expressive words, than those which our translators have employed to convey their meaning—yet, powerful as they are, they come far short of expressing the energy of the original phrases—words, indeed, instinct with anguish. They are explained by one who well knew their force, as describing our Lord as "on a sudden possessed with horror and amazement, encompassed with grief and overwhelmed with sorrow, pressed down with consternation and dejection of mind, tormented with anxiety and disquietude of spirit."

It is a natural and a highly momentous question, "What was—what could be—the cause of this deep mental suffering, this unutterable, inconceivable inward agony? How comes the soul of the spotlessly innocent, the absolutely perfect man Christ Jesus, to be thus agitated and tortured?" It was not, it could not be, the effect of remorse. His conscience, thoroughly enlightened and exquisitely sensitive as it was, could not find in the retrospect of his whole life a single action or word, no, not a single

thought or feeling, on which it could ground self-condemnation, as not having been in perfect accordance with the will of God. He had the inward consciousness that he had always done that which was pleasing in the eyes of his God and Father. It was not, it could not be, the fear of his impending bodily sufferings, severe and agonising as these were, and distinctly as they were in their minutest circumstances anticipated by him. For not merely did he know that, however sharp and excruciating they might be, they would soon be over—over for ever—and that they would be infinitely more than compensated in the felicities and glories of that state into which they were the appointed means for introducing him, but we find, when the season of torture and death did arrive, that he was perfectly self-possessed, and met them with unexampled composure and firmness. He discovered no weakness, no fear *then*. “He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to those who plucked off the hair; he hid not his face from shame and spitting. . . . He set his face as a flint.” He uttered no weak complaints against the cruelty of his enemies—he sunk not under the accumulated weight of contumely and torture they heaped on him. “He endured the cross—he despised the shame.” It is natural to inquire, Why was it so different *now*? It is surely, then, in the last degree improbable, that the bare prospect of those sufferings which he so magnanimously sustained, should have so convulsed his inmost soul with terror and agony. No—no, my brethren, such attempts to account for the agonies in Gethsemane, are insulting to reason, as well as dishonouring to the illustrious Sufferer.

There is but one satisfactory mode of accounting for these strangest of all events in the strangest of all histories—these intense mental sufferings of the all-perfect God-man. An invisible arm was now smiting him, and that arm was the arm of the Omnipotent. “Who knows the power of his anger?” On the head of that spotless, perfect Man—that Man who is “God manifest in flesh”—the Man Jehovah’s fellow—made strong for this very purpose, Jehovah has “made to meet the iniquities”—the responsibilities—of our guilty race. Exaction is now making, and he is answering it. Jehovah, the judge, is doing his work—his strange work—in punishing sin on One who was no sinner. The victim is laid on the altar—the fire of heaven is burning what it cannot consume. “Behold the Lamb of God”—bearing, and

bearing away towards the cross, the sins of the world. These sins, in all their odiousness and malignity, were present to his mind, present to his mind as the sins of those to whom he is so nearly related as to be considered and treated as if identified with them. He was deprived for a season of all sensible manifestations of his Father's complacency in him—the very life of his life, the element of his soul's happiness. The sun of consolation was to him totally eclipsed. The whole sphere of his vision as a man was filled with Jehovah, who cannot clear the guilty, inflicting on him, the victim for men, those evils which were an adequate manifestation of his displeasure at their sins. He could see nothing but this—the most tremendous sight in the universe—"the most terrible of all terribles." God was now making him who knew no sin, sin in our room. He was enduring, so far as a perfectly holy being can endure them, the full penal consequences of sin. Jehovah was bruising him, crushing him to death—putting him to grief. The terrors of the Lord were set in array against him, and the arrows of the Almighty within him were drinking up his spirit. He felt the pressure of Almighty vengeance, a pressure which no mere created being could sustain. The fire of the altar, in the midst of which he now lay, would have entirely consumed any other victim. This—this was the true cause of these deep sighs—these bitter tears—this unutterable anguish.

In connection with this, it must be recollected that this also was "the hour and power of darkness." Then the prince of the world came to him, attempting to shake by terror him on whom he had found allurements could make no impression. Every method which satanic ingenuity and activity could devise and execute, to harass and perplex, to depress and unnerve, to torture and agonise the victim, was then in active operation. The mind labours under such a subject of contemplation as this. Its greatness oppresses. Its strangeness confounds us. The thoughts strive in vain to form a distinct idea of such suffering, to comprehend the immensity and variety of the anguish springing from such sources. "Such knowledge is indeed too wonderful for us. It is high, we cannot attain to it."

For some time our Lord bore this fearful load in uncomplaining silence—"he is dumb, not opening his mouth," for GOD is doing it. At last his sorrows find utterance in words of fearful import—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;"

words which seem to intimate, that in his consciousness, the intensity of mental anguish was such, as, if augmented but a little more or continued a little longer, it would extinguish life.

In the hour of his trouble he sought the Lord. Requesting his three beloved friends to remain where they were, and to watch with him, and pray that *they* might not enter into temptation, he proceeded forward a little way farther into the garden, and first kneeling down, and then, as the ardour of devout feeling increased, falling prostrate on the ground, he presented this prayer to his Father in heaven:—"Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee;" "O, my Father, if it be possible, take away this cup and let it pass from me; nevertheless, O, my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, not my will, but thine, be done." We must not for a moment suppose that in these words our Lord expresses a disposition to shrink back from finishing the work which the Father had given him to do, in "the offering of his body once for all"—from becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." We are not to view them as a prayer to be excused from further suffering. Such a petition would have been utterly inconsistent with that steady constancy which he uniformly showed, and with his language on a former occasion, in which he expressly disowns the wish of being saved from the hour of expiatory suffering, for which he had come into the world. "Now," said he, "is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? Shall I say this? No, I *will* not, I *can* not say this." "For this cause came I unto this hour—I will rather say, 'Father, glorify thy name.'"

The cup referred to in our Lord's prayer in the garden, does not seem to be the cup of suffering generally, nor the cup of death in particular, but it was "that cup" of mental anguish—arising from the united influence of the desertion of Divine comforts, the deep inward sense of the Divine displeasure against the sins of those whose place he occupied as an expiatory victim, and the suggestions and assaults of evil spirits—of which he was at that moment drinking, that he prays so earnestly to have removed from him. It was that deep, deathful anguish which he was then experiencing, and which he felt was threatening to dissolve the connection between the soul and the body, before all that was written of him in the Scriptures respecting

his last sufferings, was fulfilled—it was this that he so earnestly desired to be delivered from.

What a prayer was this, my brethren! How deeply imbued with holy reverence and filial confidence! how instinct equally with ardent desire and humble submission! Yet this prayer was not immediately answered. The cup was not immediately taken away. The sense of utter mental desolation continued.

Rising from the ground, the Saviour retraced his steps to the spot where he had so lately left the three disciples—left them with so solemn, so urgent, a charge to watch and pray; but instead of finding them watching and praying, he found them asleep. The human feelings of the man Christ Jesus could not but be deeply wounded by such a manifestation of apparent want of sympathy from those for whose sakes he was enduring all this agony, and he expressed this sentiment very touchingly in the words in which he addressed Peter, who had been so lately boasting of the fervour and firmness of his attachment to his Master, “I am ready to go to prison and to death with thee. Though I should die, yet will I not deny thee.” “Simon, sleepest THOU. Couldst thou not watch with me one hour?” *q. d.* ‘I did not ask thee to go to prison or death with me. I did not ask thee to die for me—I only asked thee to watch with me—to watch with me one hour. Even this seems too much for thee, for thou art asleep. Is this thy kindness to thy friend—this thy regard to thy Master?’ And he added, speaking to them all, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation,”—you are ill prepared for it—“the spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

These last words have very generally been considered as a kind, generous apology on the part of our Lord for the disciples: *q. d.* ‘I know your falling asleep does not indicate want of affection for me, but bodily infirmity;’ and, in this point of view, it is a beautiful illustration of the transcendent loveliness of the Saviour’s character. His mind, discomposed by sorrow, must have deeply felt the seeming want of sympathy on the part of his dearest friends. Yet how gentle the rebuke—how kind the apology! When we make bodily affliction or mental harassment an excuse for peevishness, as we are very apt to do, the mind that was in him is not in us—we are not in the world as he was in the world.

I cannot help thinking, however, that the words of our Lord

under consideration, refer rather to himself than to his disciples : *g. d.* ‘My spirit is willing. I am ready to be offered. I am ready to bear—I am desirous of bearing—everything that is necessary to the completion of the great work of atonement. But my flesh is weak. My body seems incapable of sustaining the weight of suffering imposed on me. It threatens to give way, and sink under it. This is the hour of my temptation—my trial, and I feel it to be an awful one. Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation.’

Finding that there was no relief, and but very imperfect sympathy, to be found on earth, even from those who most sincerely loved him, but who could not sympathise with him, for they could not at all comprehend his present sufferings, he again turns to heaven, and to his Father there, who knew all his sorrows—who could, and who would, sustain him under them, and deliver him from them. Retiring again to a little distance from the disciples, he again poured out his bursting heart into that Heavenly Father’s bosom—in the same words so full of sorrow and desire. Yet still no complacent smile beamed on him. Jehovah had turned aside the face of his throne, and a thick cloud covered it. Still—still He seemed to lend a deaf ear to the Sufferer’s prayers.

With that restlessness which characterises deep mental distress, he again arose from the ground, again retraced his steps to the spot where he had left his disciples, and again found them sunk in slumber. Leaving them for the third time, he a third time prostrated himself on the ground, and a third time in the same words, “in prayer and supplication, with strong crying and tears,” made his request to “Him who was able to save him from death.’

The intensity of our Lord’s continued mental anguish was manifested in a very remarkable manner by its effects on his bodily frame. “Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly ; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Though the night in that country, at that season of the year, is often intensely cold, and he was stretched on the cold earth, he perspired profusely ; nor does this seem to be all—for the most natural interpretation of the words leads us to conclude that the sweat became ensanguined. The big drops which we sometimes see, even in the coldest weather, in cases of

extreme bodily or mental suffering, stand on the forehead, are among the most striking indications of agony or anguish; and physicians have recorded a few instances in which extremity of pain has been manifested by the sweat becoming tinged with blood.

The species of suffering to which our Lord was exposed, seems to have been carried as far as human nature could sustain it. A little more, and death must have intervened. This temptation was now over—this trial had been undergone.¹ The prayer of the Saviour was heard. Which of *his* prayers was ever unheeded or unheard? “Him the Father heareth always.” “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.” “In the day when I cried, Thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.” “And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.”

Among the mysteries of godliness connected with “God manifest in the flesh,” the apostle enumerates his being “seen of angels.” These were made visible to others at his birth, and to himself after his temptation in the wilderness. After another, a severer temptation, it was deemed fit that one of these heavenly messengers should now appear and minister to their incarnate Lord and King. In what way this angel strengthened our Lord it is needless to inquire. We cannot know, for it has not been revealed. He may have raised his enfeebled body from the ground and offered a sympathising bosom on which he might rest his aching head or throbbing brow. Or, perhaps, the mere appearance of the angel may have afforded all the invigoration that our Lord required. It was a very distinct expression of the approbation of his Father, and of the lively interest which the holy part of the intelligent creation were taking in his wondrous work; and a foretaste of that celestial welcome and triumph which was ere long to recompense his labours and sufferings in the cause of God’s glory and man’s salvation. The very sight of the angel was fitted to comfort; and he probably said—he possibly did, something still more fitted to comfort and strengthen. He will be ready to tell us all about it when we meet him in

¹ “The victory of his soul was gained; the struggle was over until the busy conflict of the parting pang.”—NEANDER

heaven. How highly honoured was the angel, though he had been the highest in the celestial hierarchy, who was sent on such an errand! What a delightful thought to all eternity to such a pure spirit, must it be, that he had been the instrument of sustaining the strength and soothing the sorrows of his incarnate Lord. We never can share his joys, but we may approximate to them if we comfort and strengthen those in their weakness and sorrow, of whom our Lord himself says, "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it to me." But oh, how low was the Lord of angels sunk, when one of his own creatures, one of his own ministers, must come down and raise him from the earth and strengthen him! Yes, he was indeed for a little season made lower, much lower, than the angels. But how blissful the thought,—“Now for these sufferings he is crowned with glory and honour”; “Angels and principalities and powers are made subject to him”; “Thousands of angels minister to him; ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him.” And the command that has gone forth, while God is bringing in his First-begotten into the world—putting him in actual possession of his blood-bought kingdom—“Let all the angels of God worship him;” is most gladly obeyed. “And I beheld,” says John the divine, “and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

Thus delivered from this most oppressive sense of the weight of human guilt, the bitterness of Divine dereliction, and the horrors of satanic conflict, and restored to composure and self-possession, the Saviour returned once more to his disciples, and again found them “sleeping for sorrow.” The slumbrous influence which on this occasion affected the disciples, seems so strange, as almost to lead us to seek for its cause in something supernatural; we are tempted to ascribe it to satanic agency, put forth for the purpose of increasing our Lord’s sufferings by the apparent insensibility of his dearest friends. Yet, at the same time, we know that the power of sleep is often irresistible in circumstances which at first sight might seem to make

it impossible. The certainty of impending death will not prevent persons benumbed with cold in a snow storm, from giving way to a sleep from which they know they are not likely ever to awake. The Earl of Argyll was found sleeping sweetly an hour or two before his execution; and the venerable Lady Lisle, who, for an act of humanity to a fellow-Christian, was tried for her life by the infamous Lord Jeffries, was so overcome with the fatigues of her protracted trial, that she sunk into a peaceful slumber, from which she had to be awakened to receive sentence of death;—and I believe most persons who have seen severe affliction in the shape of bereavement of dear friends, after the anxieties and fatigues and watchings of a lingering illness, know by experience what sleeping for sorrow, as well as waking for sorrow, means.

Instead of urging them any more to watch, our Lord said to them, “sleep on now and take your rest”; *q. d.* ‘You may now sleep if you can, and take your rest as long as you please. My warnings are no longer needful to keep you awake. An event is now just about to take place which will effectually rouse you. The time is at hand of which I have repeatedly warned you, when I am to be betrayed, by a false disciple, into the hands of my enemies. “Rise, let us be going—he that betrayeth me is at hand.”’

The uses which ought to be made of these illustrations of one of the most wonderful and instructive parts of our Lord’s holy passion, must be apparent to every reflecting mind.

Careless and impenitent sinner, if there be any such within reach of my voice, this subject should deeply alarm thee. The woes which J esus endured in Gethsemane, were for sin—in the room of sinners. But if thou continuest ungratefully to reject his finished sacrifice as the expiation of your guilt, and as your redemption from sin and Satan, rest assured you must in your own person suffer those evils which are the manifestation of the displeasure of God against sin—suffer them for ever. “If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” The cup full of the wrath of Almighty God, when once put into thy hand shall never pass away from thee. No angel will be ever sent to comfort thee. Oh, ere it be too late—by the faith of the Gospel, become one with Christ, who has

drunk that cup, and then his sufferings will be as if they had been thine; and because he became a curse for thee, thou shalt be redeemed from the curse,—because he for thee was very sorrowful—sorrowful even to death—thou through him shalt have fulness of joy, and be made most blessed at his Father's right hand for evermore.

Believer in Christ, in the anguish of Jesus' soul see the foundation of thy joy, the security of thy happiness. Because he has suffered, thou shalt not suffer. The height to which he will raise you will bear some proportion to the depth to which he descended to deliver thee; your joys shall correspond to his sorrows. How great, how glorious, then, must they be! Never forget his kindness in for you agonising in Gethsemane; let this embitter your sins,—let this deepen your repentance,—let this alleviate all your burdens—let this sweeten all your sorrows. Behold how he loved you. It was love to you made him drink of that cup of trembling and astonishment. If he had not, you must have, drunk of it. These heavy blood-stained drops are the costly tokens of his love. Love the Saviour, who so loved you as willingly to submit to unspeakable anguish of spirit, as well as extreme bodily pain, to obtain your salvation. In your hours of deep mental suffering, and few Christians are entirely strangers to these, seek relief in the sympathy of Jesus. "He knows what strong temptations are, for he has felt the same." He has been in the lowest depths, and can sympathise with those over whom all God's waves and billows seem passing. Trust in him, and in the faith of his atoning agonies, you shall be enabled, with Christian at the sepulchre into which his burden fell, to say with a merry heart, "He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death." The angel of the covenant will sustain and comfort you. Under all affliction endeavour to manifest the calm, self-possessed, pious, benignant, self-sacrificing spirit with which Christ bore his heaviest afflictions, his soul-sufferings; seek relief in prayer as he did, and in prayer like his; and never lose entire resignation to the will of God.

"Go to dark Gethsemane,
 Ye that feel the tempter's power;
 Your Redeemer's conflict see—
 Watch with him one bitter hour.
 Turn not from his griefs away—
 Learn of Jesus how to pray."

And now let us hasten to the communion table, and with thankful hearts, taking the cup of blessing into our hands, in his appointed way proclaim to God and men, angels and devils, how deeply we feel his kindness, and how determined we are in the strength of his good Spirit, to present ourselves to him a living sacrifice. O, may we so perform this act of worship, and so fulfil all the duties and sustain all the trials of our Christian course, as that in us "he may see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." "Now unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father: unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

SERMON II.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

MATT. XXVII. 50.—“Jesus yielded up the ghost.”

THE importance of an event cannot be accurately estimated by the degree of interest which it immediately excites, or the magnitude of the consequences which it immediately produces. Events which, on their occurrence, excited deep and general interest, and seemed big with the fates of many nations and generations, have sometimes failed of producing any important or permanent result. They have passed by, and are forgotten; or if remembered, the recollection is accompanied by a sentiment of wonder, that incidents which have been proved by the event to be so trivial, should ever have attracted so much regard. On the other hand, the most extensive and lasting revolutions in human affairs have often flowed from incidents obscure in their origin, casual in their occurrence, and apparently trifling in their importance. Thus, when the atmosphere, overcharged with watery vapour has threatened a deluge of rain, we have sometimes seen the black clouds dissipated by the winds, or exhaled by the solar heat, till no trace was left of the apparently impending tempest; while at other times, a cloud scarcely bigger than a man's hand, and merely staining the pure ether, has rapidly enlarged and thickened, till it has overspread the firmament with darkness, and poured out unexpected and desolating torrents upon the earth.

A moderate acquaintance with the history of past ages, or even an attentive survey of the events which have given so peculiar a character to the times in which we live, will readily suggest proofs and illustrations of the remarks which have now been made. There is not, however, to be found in the history of the human race, from the commencement of time to the present

moment, an instance in which the apparent insignificance of an event was more strongly contrasted by its real importance, than that which is so simply recorded in our text, "Jesus yielded up the ghost."

In this event, if we look merely at its external circumstances, there is nothing to merit record, or to secure remembrance. Man's giving up the ghost is an event of daily—of hourly—recurrence. There was indeed something peculiar in this case, for Jesus died upon a cross. But is there anything uncommonly interesting in the fact, that a poor and unfriended Jew, accused by his countrymen of violating the law of their fathers, and aspiring to temporal rule or Divine honours, should fall a victim to their hatred, and expiate his supposed crimes by crucifixion? The severity of his punishment, especially when contrasted with the deficiency of the evidence on which he was condemned, might, indeed, be supposed likely to excite some degree of sympathy in the spectators; but certainly the probability was, that his life and death, his guilt or his innocence, would soon cease to be an object of interest, and that every vestige of his existence would, in the course of a very few years, perish from the earth.

As the interest which this event, considered in itself, was calculated to excite, was but slight and transitory, so nothing could be more unlikely than that it should be followed with any important or permanent effects. Had the sufferer been a favourite of the Jewish people, and sacrificed to the jealousy of the Roman government, his violent death might perhaps have occasioned a rebellion, which must, however, have terminated in the chains of servitude being rivetted more strongly on that turbulent and unhappy nation. But when he who was crucified was the object equally of hatred to the Jews, and of contempt to the Romans, what was to have been expected but that his few followers should be speedily dispersed, and his name and pretensions soon lost for ever amid "the wreck of things which were"?

Yet, my brethren, this event, so apparently trivial and inconsiderable, formed the grand and concluding action in a scene the most interesting and important which ever was, which ever will be, which ever can be, exhibited on earth. Amid apparent meanness, there was real grandeur; amid seeming insignificance, there was infinite importance. That Jesus who on the cross yielded up his Spirit, was the only-begotten Son of God in human

nature. That life which he there voluntarily laid down, was the ransom of men innumerable. Heaven, earth, and hell, felt the Saviour's dying groan. From that event, consequences infinitely numerous, immensely important, and unspeakably interesting, have flowed. Revolutions in this world, deeply affecting the present and the immortal interests of mankind, have been its result; while among its consequences in the invisible state, faith beholds the rights of the Divine government vindicated, the everlasting covenant ratified, the gates of paradise set open, and the salvation of an innumerable multitude of otherwise hopelessly lost men secured.

While thrones the most ancient and stable have been crumbled into dust, and their proud possessors forgotten among men; while the renown of the warrior, and the statesman, the philosopher, and the poet, has passed away, the death of Jesus on a cross is not merely remembered, but remembered with the deepest interest and the profoundest veneration. And now, at the distance of nearly two thousand years since this decease was accomplished in Palestine, we, the inhabitants of a remote district in a distant island of the sea, have met together to celebrate a religious rite instituted for its commemoration, and thus to testify our sense of its importance, and our wish that it may be held in everlasting remembrance.

How then, my brethren, can we employ, in a manner more appropriate and agreeable, the moments which are to elapse before we, according to our Redeemer's institution, commemorate his dying love in the holy Supper, than in attentively and devoutly considering those circumstances which rendered his death so transcendently important and interesting?

The most important of these circumstances are summed up in the following proposition. When Jesus yielded up the ghost, an expiatory sacrifice was offered up to God for the sins of men,—the most satisfactory evidence was given of the divinity of his mission, and the truth of his doctrines,—and a most impressive and exemplary exhibition of active and passive virtue was presented to the world. In other words, Jesus died as a *sacrifice*, as a *martyr*, and as an *example*. To these three views of that most important event, the commemoration of which is the principal design of our present assembling, your attention shall be successively directed in the sequel of the discourse.

I. When Jesus yielded up the ghost, he offered himself as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men.

The universal guilt and depravity of mankind are attested by observation, experience, and Scripture. The general appearances of things evince a disorder in the intelligent creation of God, which could have originated only in a violation of those laws which He had enjoined, and by a careful observance of which alone it could be preserved in its primeval harmony and beauty. Every man who has reflected at all on the workings of his own mind, will readily acknowledge he is a sinner,—conscious of guilt, and afraid of punishment; and the explicit declaration of Scripture is, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

In these circumstances, without doubt, the most important objects of inquiry which can engage the attention of the human mind are, the practicability of restoration to the Divine favour, and, on the supposition of such a restoration being practicable, the mode in which this most desirable object is to be gained. Now, it is a curious fact in the history of the human mind, and seems scarcely accountable but on the hypothesis of a primitive revelation, fragments of which have been preserved among all nations—that mankind of all countries and ages, and in every various stage of civilisation, have agreed in the general outline of their sentiments on these important subjects, notwithstanding the great diversity which prevails in their manner of filling up that outline. There seems to be a universal persuasion, that the Divinity, though offended, may be propitiated; that repentance and reformation are of themselves inefficacious for this purpose, and that it can only be effected through means of an atoning sacrifice, that is, by substituting some person or thing in the room of the offender, and devoting the victim to the destruction to which the sinner was doomed.

But, while the unenlightened nations seem deeply to have felt the necessity of offering, in some form or other, satisfaction to the offended justice of Heaven, they were totally in the dark respecting what was necessary to constitute an acceptable sacrifice. The lives of the brutal creation were lavishly squandered to obtain the remission of human guilt; and not unfrequently, under the influence of a gloomy superstition, which extinguishes all sense of the more amiable attributes of Deity, in a dread of

his vengeance, have the most sacred principles of our nature been outraged, the circumstances of tender age and near relationship disregarded, and the altars of the Divinity stained with the blood of innocent infants, to expiate the crimes of their guilty parents. At the recital of these horrid rites, humanity shudders and weeps; while reason plainly perceiving their inutility, laments the infatuation of mankind in thus endeavouring to atone for one crime, by the commission of another still more foul. Yet, however absurd and criminal the mode of expression, it is easy to recognise, in these rites, the general principles of the inefficacy of repentance, and the necessity of sacrifice.

The same principles are plainly taught in the scriptural revelation. The whole of the Mosaic ritual proceeds on the principle, that, in order to render the Deity propitious to man, satisfaction, in some form, must be made to his law and justice; and an inspired interpreter of these institutions informs us, that they were intended to teach, that “without shedding of blood, there is no remission.”

The Mosaic sacrifices, though of Divine appointment, and though efficacious for the purpose for which they were instituted, were altogether incapable of making expiation for moral guilt. Enlightened reason can trace no connection between the shedding of the blood of an irrational animal, and the remission of the guilt of a human transgressor, and readily acknowledges the truth of the apostle's declaration, that “it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.” Indeed, the only way of accounting for their institution, in a consistency with the Divine wisdom, is by supposing (and the New Testament Scriptures fully authorise the supposition) that they were intended to keep constantly before the mind the doctrine of the necessity of atonement in order to pardon; and to prefigure that great propitiatory sacrifice, which, “in the end of the age,” was to expiate fully the sins of mankind.

Now that sacrifice, which unenlightened reason perceived to be necessary, but sought in vain to obtain,—that sacrifice, of which all the legal atonements were merely figures, is to be found in the course of obedience and suffering which Christ Jesus terminated on the cross when he yielded up the ghost. Accordingly, when we say that Christ offered himself an atoning sacrifice, we mean that, in consequence of his sustaining the

sufferings and death which guilty man deserved, it became consistent with the Divine moral character and government to pardon and save those in whose stead the Saviour suffered and died.

No man can read the Scriptures, with any degree of attention, without noticing the close connection which is represented as existing between the death of Christ and the salvation of men; and he must be strangely blinded by prejudice, who does not perceive that an efficiency in procuring human redemption is ascribed to that event, of a kind totally different from, and far superior to, its influence as an evidence of doctrines, and an example of virtue. At the same time, it cannot be denied that, in explaining the nature of this efficiency, some good men have attempted to be "wise above what is written." The precise manner in which the sufferings and death of the incarnate Son of God in the stead of sinners, rendered it consistent with the perfections of the Divine character, and the rights of the Divine government, to dispense pardon and salvation to the believing and penitent sinner, is a mystery which probably even angels but imperfectly comprehend. "This knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain to it." The fact, however, is most certain, that these sufferings and this death were expiatory, undergone in the room of the guilty, intended to be efficacious, and in fact found to be so, for their deliverance from guilt, depravity, and destruction.

On any other supposition we will find it impossible to account for the sufferings and death of Christ, in a consistency with the perfections of the Divine moral character, and the principles of the Divine moral government. That under the administration of a Being infinitely benignant and just, a person like Jesus Christ should not merely not be uniformly and perfectly happy, but should be visited with calamities so numerous, varied, and severe, that ordinary human misery evanishes into nothing in the comparison, is certainly a strange, and if we look no farther than to the events themselves, a most unaccountable, dispensation. It is altogether unaccountable on the principles of those who deny the doctrine of proper atonement. Suppose, for a moment, the Saviour to be a mere man, as he is admitted on all hands to have been a perfect man, how is it consistent with the Divine justice and goodness that such a person should suffer and die?

The sufferings of other men may, however good, be accounted for, on the principle that they are parts of the system of moral discipline that is necessary to purify them from their faults, and perfect their virtues. But he who is already pure, needs not to be purified. He who is perfect needs not to be perfected.

But may not the sufferings and death of the innocent—the perfect—man Christ Jesus, be sufficiently accounted for, on the principle that they attested the truth of his doctrines, and illustrated at once the practicability and excellence of his precepts? We fearlessly answer in the negative. For, in the first place, Christ's sufferings and death, though they did answer these purposes, were not absolutely necessary to answer these purposes. The divinity of his mission was abundantly proved by other evidence; and if the various duties of Christianity could not be illustrated without its Author submitting to suffering and death, this end might have been gained without his suffering so severely—without his dying on a cross. Had there not been another and a more important end in view, we may warrantably assert, there was a waste of suffering and of blood. A second consideration, which shows the unsatisfactoriness of the proposed way of accounting for Christ's suffering and death, is, that even supposing Christianity could not have been confirmed and illustrated in any other way, it accords not with the Divine character to do injustice (and in the supposed case there is obvious injustice) that good may come.

The system, which attempts to account for the sufferings and death of Christ, on the principle, that by them he merited for himself the sovereignty of the universe, in the exercise of which he bestows salvation on those who acquiesce in his terms, is equally unsatisfactory. It labours, indeed, under precisely the same difficulties as the system we have just been considering. For might not the sphere of his exertion have been so placed, as that the ultimate object might have been gained without suffering so severely—without dying accursed? And, if it could not, why should justice be violated, in order to save the guilty from destruction?

But, admit the doctrine that the sufferings and death of Christ were an expiatory sacrifice, and light dawns on the darkest of the ways of God. Man deserved to suffer extremely, and to die accursed. Standing in man's place, the incarnate Son of

God met with man's desert. It may be said, however, that this is not to remove—it is only to shift—the difficulty. Admitting the Saviour's substitution, we do not wonder at his expiatory sufferings; but is there not an equal difficulty in conceiving of the Son of God becoming man's substitute? It is true that the difficulty, though shifted, is not removed; but it is also true that, by being shifted, the nature of the difficulty is changed. In the former cases, the difficulty was to reconcile contradictions. In the present case, it is to comprehend infinities. In truth, it is just the difficulty which meets man on all such subjects, when he pushes his inquiries to a certain length, the difficulty of "finding out God to perfection." There is here no injustice. The Son of God, who is, equally with his Father, "God over all blessed for ever," had a property in, and a power over, his human nature, which no creature can have in and over either another or himself; and there is no injury done to justice, to wisdom, or to goodness, in treating him according to the character which he voluntarily assumed, when an object so great and beneficent as the remission of the sins and the salvation of the souls of a multitude whom no man could number, was to be gained by it,—an object which, so far as we can see, could have been gained in no other way, which most certainly could have been gained in no other way so well. We readily acknowledge, that we find it not only difficult, but impossible, to conceive adequately of that infinity of wisdom, benignity, and justice, which the formation and execution of such a scheme of redemption necessarily imply; and seated at the foot of the cross, we wish to look up, with adoring gratitude, and exclaim, "O the depth, both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his counsels, and his ways past finding out!"

The doctrine, that the death of Christ was the death of an expiatory victim, is not only absolutely necessary to account satisfactorily for the facts, but is stated in the most explicit terms in the Holy Scriptures: "His soul," says the prophet Isaiah, "shall make a propitiatory sacrifice."¹ "The Son of Man," says the Saviour himself, "came to give his life a ransom for many." "Christ Jesus," says the apostle Paul, "is set forth a propitia-

¹ Isa. liii. 10. Lowth.

tion through faith in his blood." "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us." "God sent his Son," says the apostle John, "to be the propitiation for our sins."¹

When Jesus yielded up the ghost, he *completed* the great work of atonement: "He finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness." It is obvious, from the passages quoted and referred to, that the expiatory influence of our Lord's obedience and sufferings is not to be considered as confined to his death, though there is a peculiar propriety of applying the term sacrifice to that event, as it was the crowning act of his obedience, and the termination and consummation of his sufferings.

That the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ were abundantly efficacious for the purpose for which they were intended, is proved by their acceptance. His sacrifice ascended before his Father as a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. Its efficacy and consequent acceptance are obvious from its results: "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Indeed, this efficacy and acceptance seem necessarily to arise out of its nature. The sacrifice offered and accepted, was, indeed, only a human nature. But it was a human nature free from hereditary and personal guilt—from natural and acquired depravity; and it was a human nature, infinitely dignified by union with the Divine, in the person of the Son of God. Accordingly, we find the apostle thus reasons: "For, if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, *how much more* shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!"

II. When "Jesus yielded up the ghost," he gave satisfactory evidence of the divinity of his mission, and the truth of his doctrine.

The divine origin of our holy faith is supported by a host of

¹ 1 John iv. 10.—The reader may also consult the following passages:—Isa. liii. 5-8; Matth. xxvi. 28; Mark x. 45; Acts viii. 32, 33; Rom. iv. 25; Rom. v. 6-10; 1 Cor. xv. 3; 2 Cor. v. 21; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Heb. i. 3; Heb. ii. 17; Heb. ix. 12-28; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; Rev. v. 9-12; Rev. xiii. 18.

arguments. The miracles which Jesus performed ;—the accurate correspondence of his character, conduct, and the events of his life, with the declarations of Old Testament prophecy ;—his glorious resurrection from the dead ;—the signs and wonders which attended and followed this event ;—the rapid and extensive propagation of his doctrines,—and the moral miracles which they have wrought on those who have believed them ;—all these afford irrefragable evidence that our religion is divine. But, distinct from these sources of proof, we apprehend that the truth of Christianity necessarily follows from the death of Christ, when that fact is viewed in its true light.

Let us fix our attention for a little on the circumstances which attended the Saviour's death. Signs in heaven and signs on earth proclaimed the importance of the event, and attested the divine mission of him who now yielded up his spirit. The vail of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom ; the earth shook ; the rocks rent ; the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints who slept arose. So strongly did these concomitants of the death of Jesus affect the mind of the Roman centurion, that he exclaimed, "Truly this was a righteous man ; truly this was the Son of God !"

It is not only, however, in the miraculous events by which it was accompanied that the death of Jesus attests the divinity of his mission, and the truth of his religion. Jesus died as a martyr. His death is a proof of the truth of his doctrines, the same in kind, but infinitely higher in degree, as that which is afforded by the death of those holy men who sealed his testimony with their blood.

We are far from considering it as a sufficient proof of the truth or excellence of any system of opinions, that men have died for it. In this case, principles directly opposed to each other, might equally be demonstrated to be true and excellent. We are, indeed, disposed to think, that to die rather than renounce a doctrine is not uniformly, though it certainly is usually, a proof that the martyr believes it. The desire of posthumous fame may have, in some instances, induced men to suffer death, rather than avow a truth which would have been fatal to their reputation. And there is no difficulty in finding abundance of examples in the history of the world, of men dying in defence of principles, which, though in reality false, they firmly believed to be true.

But, in the case of Jesus, it is impossible to account for his death, on any principle, that does not necessarily involve in it the admission of the divinity of his mission, and the truth of his doctrine. I take for granted, in the argument I am about to state, what no person will deny, that our Lord's death was voluntary, that is, that he might have avoided it, either by keeping out of the way of his enemies, or by making an open renunciation of all claims to Messiahship. Now, this being admitted, there are only three conceivable ways of accounting for the death of Jesus: He must have died in defence, either of what he knew to be false, or of what he conceived, though erroneously, to be true, or of what he knew to be true. If, then, we can prove that neither of the two former of these suppositions is tenable, it will follow that the third is the truth.

It is plain that the case of Jesus is not that of a person who died in defence of doctrines which he knew to be false. For, not to dwell on the abundant evidence to this effect, which may be drawn from the history of his life, it is enough to ask, What possible object could he in this case have had in view? It could not be worldly wealth or fame; for, even if his death could have procured these, of what use are they to the dead? It could not be posthumous honour; for, had not his death been followed by his resurrection, his imposture must have been discovered, and himself held up to the scorn and detestation of every succeeding generation.

It is equally obvious, that the case of Jesus is not of a person who dies in defence of doctrines which, though really false, he mistakingly believes to be true; for his doctrines were of a kind of which, if false, he must have known the falsehood. He died in support of plain matter-of-fact, not of abstract principles. If there was imposture in the case, he was the author, not the dupe of it. There is, however, no instance recorded (and, indeed, we may venture to pronounce it a moral impossibility) of an impostor, who had nothing to gain by his imposture, and who might easily have escaped all trouble by merely acknowledging it, persisting in his fraud in opposition to the terrors of punishment, and voluntarily exposing himself to the most excruciating tortures, and to death in its most alarming form, in preference to confessing the truth.

The only satisfactory account, therefore, of our Lord's volun-

tary death is, that he was firmly persuaded of the divinity of his mission,—was “faithful to Him who appointed him,”—and sealed his testimony with his blood. Thus did our Lord, even in the article of death, bear witness to the truth, and by ascending the cross, give a stronger proof of his Messiahship, than if, in compliance with the insulting proposal of the Jews, he had come down from it.

III. When “Jesus yielded up the ghost,” a most impressive and exemplary exhibition of active and suffering virtue was exhibited to the world. While it is evident from Scripture, that the great design of our Lord’s mission was to make atonement for the sins of his people, it is equally obvious, that it was intended and calculated to answer other important, though still subordinate, ends. Among these objects must be ranked the exhibition of a perfect pattern of that moral excellence which ought to distinguish all his followers.

Of such a faultless exemplar mankind stood much in need. Moral truth, in an abstract form, makes comparatively a weak and transient impression on the mind. It must be, as it were, embodied and exemplified, in the character and conduct of some individual to render it perfectly intelligible, and deeply interesting. This important object was gained in the completest manner by the life and death of the incarnate Son of God. Though subject to all the sinless infirmities of the nature which he had assumed, placed in circumstances peculiarly difficult, and exposed to temptations singularly severe, he, in no instance, deviated from the path of strict propriety, but exhibited an absolutely perfect example, both of the active and suffering virtues. Piety and benevolence were the principles which ruled in his heart; and his life was a uniform tenor of sublime devotion and disinterested beneficence. “He has left us an example, that we should follow his steps.” To have “the mind in us, which was in Christ Jesus,” and to “walk as he also walked,” is a comprehensive summary of those sentiments, and feelings, and habits, which ought to characterise the Christian.

It is not, however, to the example of Christ in general that I would at present direct your attention, but to the example he afforded us in the article of death. “It is appointed to men once to die.” We can die but once; and on the state in which we die,

depends the happiness or the misery of eternity. It is plainly, then, at once our duty and our interest to learn to die well; and never was this lesson so impressively taught as when Jesus, on the cross, "yielded up the ghost." We are taught by the Saviour's dying conduct, how we ought to behave in our departing hours, to our friends, to our enemies, and to our God.

The bosom of Jesus glowed with the purest fire of universal benevolence; but he was, at the same time, no stranger to the more tender feelings of consanguinity and friendship. Of the ardour of these principles he gave many a striking proof during his life; but the most interesting display of them was that made on the cross. It is, indeed, usual to feel, with peculiar force, the closeness of the bands of relationship and friendship, at the moment when they are about to be severed by the hand of death. It is impossible to relate the incident referred to, in language so appropriate and touching as that of the Evangelist John: "Now, there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home." An eloquent volume could not have taught so luminously, nor enforced so persuasively, that tender considerate regard which we owe to those with whom we are connected by the closest bands, when about to bid them a final farewell.

When "Jesus yielded up the ghost," He taught us how we ought, when dying, to behave to our enemies. Forgiveness of injuries was a virtue which our Lord not only enjoined on his followers, but in circumstances the most trying, actually exercised. With his expiring breath he prayed for the pardon of his murderers: "Father, forgive them," said he, "for they know not what they do." "Human nature, in such circumstances, is apt to harbour very different sentiments. To be persecuted for no fault, to be loaded with foul imputations which we have not deserved, to be deprived of life by the hands of injustice, and to have the last agonised moments rendered still more painful by virulent insult;—these are wrongs which not only would have irritated ordinary patience, but even seemed to excuse an appeal to the Divine tribunal, and an imprecation of vengeance

on the head of men so unreasonable and wicked." Yet, even in these circumstances, Jesus "renders blessing for cursing, and prays for them who despitefully use him, and persecute him." Can any one, then, who calls himself a Christian, depart out of the world with a heart rankling with malice against even his worst enemy? If he does so, he contemns at once the sacrifice and the example of the Saviour.

We are also furnished, in the death of Jesus, with an example of the manner in which, when dying, we ought to conduct ourselves towards our God. Jesus discovered the most perfect acquiescence in the will of his Father, with respect to the time and circumstances of his death. He betrayed no unwillingness to die, though in the prime of life; and, although the weakness of human nature shrunk back from that dreadful intensity of suffering with which he knew dissolution was in his case to be accompanied, yet he expresses the most implicit and entire resignation to the will of God: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"—Amid all the horrors of mental darkness and desertion, he maintained unshaken his confident reliance on his Father's justice and goodness. Even when complaining of dereliction, he claimed Him as his God: "MY GOD, MY GOD! why hast Thou forsaken me?" And, when just on the verge of the unseen state, he committed his departing spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Thus did the Saviour die; and, in the exercise of the same faith and hope, resignation and patience, ought all his followers to depart into the world of spirits. Thus did he "suffer for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps."

But the value of Christ's death, as an example, is by no means confined to the instruction which it gives us, of the manner in which we ought to die. It strikingly exemplifies some of those leading principles of his conduct, which ought to animate and regulate the behaviour of his followers. We see the principle of an implicit obedience to what God commands, and an implicit submission to what God appoints, most strikingly illustrated. "He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross." Disinterestedness and public spirit are also most impressively taught us, in Jesus "not pleasing himself, but seeking the profit

of many, that they might be saved." The death of Christ proclaims to the attentive Christian, "Look not every one at his own things, but every one also at the things of others." Nor does it less clearly teach, or less powerfully enforce, the love of the brethren. With the eye of faith fixed on the cross, who can resist the force of the apostle's reasoning? "Hereby do we perceive the love of God to us, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our life for the brethren."

Such, my brethren, are the chief of those circumstances, which stamp with inconceivable dignity and importance, that event, in appearance so insignificant, to commemorate which, by a religious ordinance, is the principal object of our present meeting.

Contemplate then, Christians, with faith, reverence, gratitude, admiration, and joy, the dying Saviour, in the different characters in which he has now been held up to your mind. Behold in him the victim of your sins; the only, the all-sufficient sacrifice of atonement! This is the aspect in which the sacred ordinance, in which you are about to engage, exhibits him to your faith. "This is my body broken for you; this is my blood shed for remission of sin unto many." Rely on the efficacy of his sacrifice; relinquish all dependence on your own righteousness; and when you take into your hands the symbols of his holy suffering humanity, say, 'It is most true, "he was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for my iniquities, the chastisement of my peace was upon him, and by his stripes I am healed.—Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. To him that loved me, and washed me from my sins in his own blood, and hath made me a king and priest unto God, even his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever. Amen."'

And while we rest with unfeigned and unsuspecting reliance on the Redeemer's atoning sacrifice, let us rejoice that we have such abundant evidence, that in receiving this doctrine, and the other principles of Christianity, "we have not followed cunningly devised fables." Let us study, with increasing diligence, the evidence of our holy faith, that we may not be "as children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine;" but may be enabled to "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of our hope to the end."

Nor let us be inattentive to the persuasive lessons of Christian

duty, so impressively taught us by our Saviour from his cross. Let us resolve, in a dependence on the grace of the Spirit of promise, to imitate his example. Let it be the study of our life, to learn to think as he thought, to feel as he felt, to act as he acted, to suffer as he suffered, to live as he lived, and to die as he died. Contemplating him as in a glass, let us be changed into the same image; carrying about with us his dying, let his life also be manifested in our mortal bodies.

In one word, let us consider the death of Christ, as, what it indeed is, the centre of our religion, at once the evidence of its truth, and the exhibition of its excellence, the only solid ground of the sinner's hope, and the most powerful of all incentives to the believer's duty. And "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON III.

THE MANNER AND CHARACTER OF CHRIST'S DEATH— CRUCIFIXION—OBEDIENCE.

PHIL. ii. 8.—“Christ Jesus became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

JESUS CHRIST—the Son of God—the eternal *Life* who was with the Father before the world was,—being in the form of God—the First, the Last, the Living One—the incarnate Deity,—the image of the Invisible One—the brightness of his glory, the resplendent radiance of the uncreated light,—the exact resemblance of his person,—the substantial representation of Him of whom all other representations are but as shadows,—the manifester of the Father—the revealer of Divinity—the revealed Divinity—God manifest in flesh—the Life and the Light of men—the Creator, Preserver, Proprietor, Governor of the universe—the Mediator between God and man—the Surety of the new covenant—the Expiator of human guilt—the Teacher of saving truth—the Author of spiritual life, true holiness, true happiness,—the Redeemer of men,—the Saviour of the world,—the great Shepherd of the sheep,—the Captain of Salvation who conducts all the children of God, the heirs of salvation, to glory—this illustrious person is the great subject of Divine revelation, and should be the grand theme of the Christian ministry. There is important deficiency, there is essential faultiness, in all religious teaching in which HE does not occupy the foreground, in which everything, whether doctrine or precept, privilege or duty, is not viewed in its connection with HIM.

If this should be the character of Christian teaching generally, it should especially be so of the Christian teaching immediately connected with that emblematical institution which we are this morning come together to observe. That ordinance is a representation of the truth respecting the incarnate Only-begotten, suffering and dying, the just One in room of the unjust, to obtain

for his chosen people the remission of their sins, and the salvation of their souls,—a representation made that it may be understood and believed, and which, understood and believed, gives the consciousness of a personal interest in him as the Saviour, and in the all-important blessings of his salvation. The language of the Saviour in this institution is, “Look to me—Behold me—Behold me!”—and everything that is said by the minister should, by tending to second the Saviour’s invitation, fix the mind on HIM. The substance of all “action sermons,” as they used to be called, should be, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Everything, however good in itself, which in any degree draws away the attention of the mind from the great central truth of the Christian system, which is embodied in the institution, is ill timed, and calculated to be injurious. They who come to the communion table with right apprehensions and dispositions, come saying in their hearts, “We would see Jesus”; and the minister forgets his duty both to his Master and to his brethren, who does not immediately lead them into HIS presence. This is the principle on which I have uniformly endeavoured to conduct the dispensation of Christian doctrine, previously to the breaking of bread; and I am much more desirous that my services on such an occasion, should have the character of appropriateness, than afraid lest they want the attraction of novelty.

To the dying Saviour, as he is “evidently set forth,” both in the text I have read, and in the divinely instituted emblems which once more stand before you, let us, under the impression that it may be but once more, turn our minds; and may the good Spirit open our understandings to perceive the truth, and our hearts to love it, so that we may be saved by it; finding that it makes us free—free indeed, and is the joy and rejoicing of our hearts,—“a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” The DEATH of Christ,—the MANNER of his death,—and the MORAL CHARACTER of his death,—these are the three topics suggested by the text. Christ Jesus died—he died on a cross, and he became *obedient* to death, even to the death of the cross.

I. The DEATH of Jesus Christ occupies a very prominent place in the gospel revelation. The details of it are given with great minuteness by the four evangelists, and in the apostolic writings it is very frequently introduced, and almost always in a way

which distinctly proves that they regarded it as something in the highest degree *remarkable* and *important*.

It would not be easy to account for this on the principle that Jesus Christ was merely a man of our own order. To the angelic hosts who witnessed with delight the establishment of the original terrestrial order of things, the death of a being formed for uninterrupted endless life, must have appeared a very strange and deplorable anomaly—a sad departure from the course of nature,—something not only strange but monstrous, like the sin which had produced it; and, viewed as the penalty of the Divine law, the manifestation of the Divine displeasure against sin, death is awfully important. But now that the superinduced law, “Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return,” has been for ages operating with as much regularity as the law of gravity or any of the other great laws of the material world,—the death of one of a race, all of whom are doomed to die, an event which is occurring many thousand times every day, can scarcely be counted remarkable. What is strange is, not that men innumerable die, but that any man does not die. Enoch and Elijah are the “men to be wondered at.” The circumstances of a man’s death may be remarkable—his death itself is not so; and though to the person who dies, his death, viewed as the entrance into an unchangeable endless state, is the most important event that has occurred since the creation of the world—and though to those immediately connected with him, it may have a deep and lasting interest, yet to the great body of mankind, the death of an individual excites as little notice as the setting of a single star, and is scarcely felt to be more important than the falling of a leaf amid the recesses of an American forest.

Yet without reference to its circumstances, though these too were full of interest and of import, the mere fact that Jesus Christ died, is plainly represented in Scripture as something very remarkable and important. It is worth while to inquire what made it so. What made it remarkable? What made it important?

Without seeking to exhaust the subject, we may remark, in reply to the first question,—The death of Jesus Christ was remarkable as the death of an innocent—of a morally perfect man—and of a man united to God. And in reply to the second

—that the death of Jesus Christ is important, as it was a death in attestation of truth infinitely important—and still more as it was a death in expiation of guilt otherwise irremissible.

After we learn that “death is the wages of sin—that by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned,”—we do not wonder that sinful men die. After we have heard the declaration, “the soul that sinneth it shall die,” come forth from Him who “is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent,” we should wonder if sinful men did not die. But here is one “who knew no sin,”—“without sin,”—“holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,”—who always “did the things which pleased his Father,”—who “delighted” to do His will—who found doing it “his meat and his drink”—one completely free from error, guilt, and depravity—all whose thoughts and volitions were in entire accordance with the mind and will of God—how came he to be so numbered among transgressors as to die? How was it that death dared to lay his sacrilegious hand on “that Holy thing,” born of the virgin? How came he who alone of all human kind ever did—ever could—merit eternal life, to receive from the righteous Judge—who renders unto man according to his works, and causes him to receive according to his ways—the wages of sin?

This is strange enough, but in the death of Jesus Christ there is something stranger still. This perfectly holy man was in personal union with the Divinity. The man Christ Jesus was the Son of God. He was “in the form of God,”—“he reckoned equality with God not a prey,” but his undoubted indisputable property. The idea of such a union to God, on the part of a man, is overwhelmingly strange; but, supposing it to exist, surely we should be disposed to say,—Nothing so closely connected with the living One—Him who alone hath immortality—who liveth for ever and ever—can ever die. Yet, wonder O heavens! be astonished O earth, Jesus Christ, the God-man, did die!

So strange an event surely must be an important one—such an extraordinary dispensation must be intended to gain some very valuable object. It is not our purpose to mention all the objects it was intended to gain; indeed, we are but imperfectly informed with regard to them—but we know that it was the means of satisfactorily attesting truths the most important, and

of expiating guilt which otherwise was irremissible. "To this end was I born, and for this cause did I come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." It is plain Jesus Christ needed not to have died at the time he did die, unless he had chosen. He had only to say, 'I have been misunderstood, I make no claims to Messiahship or Divine Sonship,' and his bitterest enemies would gladly have allowed him to live. The facts, rather than deny which, he submitted to death, were of a kind with regard to which it was impossible, in the nature of things, that he could be mistaken; and all the ingenuity of infidels has hitherto been unable to devise a probable account for his voluntarily submitting to death, on the supposition that he was aware that these facts were supposititious. These facts lie at the foundation of human hope, and therefore it was meet they should rest on a solid foundation.

But a higher importance still attaches to the death of Jesus Christ. His death was not only the death of a *martyr*, it was the death also of an expiatory *victim*. He died, "the just in the room of the unjust"—he died "*for us*"—he died "*for our sins*." "God made to meet on him the iniquity of us all—exaction was made, and he became answerable." When "made of a woman," he was "made under the law—to redeem them who were under the law." Now all men who are under the law, are under the curse, and could only be redeemed by Him, who took their place, being made a curse in their stead. It is *this* fact that, so far as man is concerned, stamps its highest importance on the death of Christ—a fact which, in one point of view, dissipates the cloud of mystery which hangs over it, and, in another point of view, deepens it—a fact which, by changing the cause of our astonishment, alters its nature, converting what was amazement at a dispensation which seemed incongruous, and unwise, and unjust, into admiration of one which is obviously unsearchable for wisdom, and righteousness, and benignity. It is no longer the difficulty to reconcile incompatibilities, it is the impossibility to comprehend infinities.

It is now time that we turn our attention for a little,—

II. To the account given in the text of the MANNER of the death of Jesus Christ. He died on a cross—his death was "the death of the cross."

This seems stranger still—for surely, might we think, if due

justice makes the death of the God-man surety of sinners necessary, and if his love make him willing to die, the bonds of mortality will be gently unloosed, and death in its least alarming and shocking form be the lot of the Saviour of men, the Son of God. How different the truth! He underwent death in perhaps its most repulsive shape—the death of the cross. He was executed as a malefactor, and the punishment of death was inflicted in the most agonising and ignominious manner.

In no page of the history of man is the depravity of his nature more distinctly recorded, than in that which treats of capital punishments. Whether in any case it be either lawful or expedient to take away life as the punishment of crime, is a question on which wise and good men are not agreed; but it is agreed on all hands, that the malignity and hard-heartedness of depraved man have been strikingly displayed in multiplying unnecessarily the offences which expose to this extreme punishment, and in attaching to its infliction many circumstances of pain, and shame, and horror, which, while they added largely to the sufferings of the individual, were of no use in promoting the only legitimate object which public justice can have in view in such infliction—the deterring others from the commission of similar enormities. Among these modes of punishment, invented rather to glut revenge than to satisfy justice, must be numbered that to which the Saviour of the world submitted for its redemption. The punishment of the cross seems to have originated among the Romans—a people remarkable for their ferocious and sanguinary disposition—and was among them inflicted only on offenders of the meanest rank and most atrocious character. After being stripped of his garments, and lacerated by rods, the criminal condemned to this punishment was fastened to the cross, which was formed of a large plank of timber, with a transverse beam near one of the extremities. To this dreadful instrument of death the miserable victim was fastened by iron bolts driven through the hands and feet—the feet being nailed to the longitudinal post, and the hands in an extended posture to the extremities of the transverse beam. The horrid machine, with its pitiable burden, was then raised and placed with violence in a hole dug for it in the earth, and being fixed there, the miserable victim was left to consume in lingering and dreadful torments. As none of the parts essential to life were immediately injured,

none of the vital actions directly impeded, and none of the larger blood-vessels set open, the death was usually slow; while the multitude of nerves which terminated in the hands and feet, giving these parts the nicest sensibility, wounded, torn, and tortured by the rugged nails, rendered the degree of suffering exquisitely severe.¹

Such was the death to which Christ Jesus became obedient. From what has already been stated, it must be obvious that this mode of death was intensely painful. During the hours the Saviour hung on the cross, he must have suffered every moment more than the pangs even of the most agonised dissolution. It was a mode of punishment as opprobrious as painful. It was appropriated to slaves, a class of men whom the ancients seem to have considered as an inferior order of beings, and scarcely, if at all, possessed of the ordinary rights of humanity—so that, when fixed to the cross, it was literally true that the Saviour was treated as “a worm, and no man—a reproach of men and despised of the people.” It is a remarkable fact, too, that suspension on a gibbet or cross was, by the Mosaic institute, the token of having suffered as a victim of public justice. The Mosaic law was too humane to authorise crucifixion; but it ordained that the body of every public criminal who had expiated his crimes by suffering death by stoning, strangulation, or otherwise, should be hung up—to announce the fact that he had died as a malefactor.

That the death of the Son of God would have been efficacious for the redemption of his people, in whatever way it had been effected, we have no reason to doubt. The efficacy of his blood depends on its being the blood of a person of infinite dignity, and shed by the appointment of the Supreme Legislator; and not on the particular manner in which it was shed. Without doubt, however, there were wise and good reasons why, out of the countless variety of violent deaths, the most painful and shameful of all should have been chosen as that by which the Messiah should glorify God, and ransom mankind. Many of these reasons may lie hid in the Divine mind; but, we apprehend, so many of them are apparent as may and ought to lead us to recognise the wisdom, as well as the sovereignty of God, in appointing the sins of the world to be expiated by “the death of the cross.”

¹ “Discourses and Sayings,” ii. 231–3.

To some of the ends, which the death of Jesus on the cross was calculated to answer, and has in effect answered, I am now for a little to solicit your attention. The death of the cross proves our Lord's divine mission,—points him out as a sufferer for sin,—illustrates the inconceivable love of the divine Father and Son,—shows the prodigious malignity of human transgression,—indicates the spiritual nature of the Redeemer's kingdom,—renders the ulterior success of the Gospel more illustrious,—and furnishes his followers with the most powerful motives for avoiding sin, and performing duty. To the different parts of this enumeration, we shall successively direct your attention.

1st, The crucifixion of Christ Jesus proves the divinity of his mission. This declaration may at first view appear paradoxical. To deduce a proof of his Messiahship from the purity of his life, the reasonableness of his doctrines, and the splendour of his miracles, may appear sufficiently natural; but how his death, and especially his death upon a cross, can afford evidence of his being a divinely appointed Saviour, may not at first view be very apparent. Without doubt, neither crucifixion nor any of the other sufferings of our Lord, are *in themselves* evidences of his Messiahship; but they are so, both as they clearly prove that our Lord himself believed in his own divine mission, which he could not have done unless it had been real, and as they are the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

No man will suffer and die in attestation of what he knows to be false, when there is no object to be gained by persisting in falsehood, and when life may be purchased by an acknowledgment of the truth. The application of this general principle to the case of Jesus is easy. In a discourse on the death of Christ, lately delivered to you, I endeavoured briefly to unfold this argument.¹ All that was said then, is equally applicable to the present subject, with this addition, that the death of the cross being of all deaths the most opprobrious and agonising, was in every respect the least likely to be voluntarily submitted to by a deceiver in support of his imposture.

It is, however, principally in the second point of view that I intend at present to consider the crucifixion of Jesus, as a proof of his Divine mission. That the Messiah was to be a sufferer in

¹ Sermon II.

an extreme degree, and that, after a life of labour and sorrow, he should die a death of agony and shame, was plainly foretold by the Old Testament prophets. But this is not all. The mode of his death, a mode of capital punishment, at the time of the publication of the prophecy, it is likely, altogether unknown among the Israelites, is particularly predicted. In the twenty-second psalm, the whole of which is a very striking prophetic account of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow," it is expressly foretold, that, when "the assembly of the wicked had inclosed him, they would pierce his hands and feet." To the same circumstances does the prophet Zechariah refer, when he says, in the person of the Messiah, "They shall look on me whom they have pierced."

The manner of our Lord's death was predicted, not only by the Old Testament prophets, but by himself; so that while it proved him to be the Messiah promised to the fathers as the fulfilment of their predictions, it also proved that he was a true prophet as the accomplishment of his own. He intimated the mode of his death at a very early period of his ministry: "As Moses," said he, "lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said," adds the evangelical historian, "signifying what death he should die." Nor did he speak of the manner of his death in figurative language merely, which it might be supposed the imagination of his followers applied to the event. On this subject he "speaks plainly, and speaks no proverb." "Behold," said he to the disciples, as they journeyed towards Jerusalem, "we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to *crucify*; and the third day he shall rise again." "Ye know," said he on another occasion, "that after two days is the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be *crucified*."

No *single* prediction, by its fulfilment, more strikingly proves the Messiahship of Jesus than that of his crucifixion. It was an event entirely beyond the reach of human foresight; and the prediction is far too circumstantial to allow of the supposition

that the fulfilment was accidental. That the Messiah, whom the Jews so long and anxiously expected, should, when he made his appearance, be put to death by his countrymen, was in itself a very improbable event. That he should be crucified, was all but impossible. Crucifixion was not a Jewish, but a Roman punishment. Stoning to death was the punishment appointed, by the Mosaic law, for the crimes of which Jesus was accused, and, but for circumstances in the highest degree contingent,—the subjugation of Judea by the Romans, and the weak and unprincipled character of the Roman governor,—this punishment, rather than crucifixion, would have been inflicted. Thus we find the Jewish rulers, in bringing about the crucifixion of Jesus, were the unconscious agents of fulfilling a prediction, by the accomplishment of which the victim of their malignity was “powerfully declared to be the Son of God.” “Wonderful catastrophe! replete with mysteries, among which the harmony of Divine providence with human liberty is not the least. Mechanical causes, governed by a single intellect, could not with more certainty have wrought the pre-determined effect. Independent beings could not have pursued with greater liberty than the persons concerned in this horrid transaction, each his separate design.”¹ “Truly, O Lord, Thou art greater than all gods: for, in the things wherein men deal proudly, Thou art above them.”

2d, The crucifixion of Christ points him out, as a sufferer for sin, the sacrificial victim for human transgression.

The sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, which terminated in his death on the cross, considered in themselves, prove nothing but that he was the object of the extreme malignity of those who inflicted them. Considered in connection, however, with his absolute innocence and perfection, they are altogether unaccountable, but on the supposition of his occupying the place of guilty man. We find no difficulty in accounting for the severest afflictions, which the best of the children of men meet with; for “all have sinned,” and every sin deserves suffering, indefinite suffering. But how shall we account for the sufferings, the apparently, the obviously, penal sufferings of the man Christ Jesus; “a just man, and a perfect;” a man whose conscience reproached him with no vice or folly; a man whose life had been piety and love,

¹ Horsley.

unaffected piety, disinterested love; a man assuredly entitled to every comfort which the consciousness of perfection, of perfect virtue, and perfect wisdom can bestow?—How shall we account for this man—this good, this perfect man; this man in union with the Divinity, being the victim of poverty and reproach, apprehended and judged, and condemned as a criminal, and executed as a felon and a slave, a blasphemer and a traitor?

Was it merely that truth might be confirmed by a powerful testimony, and patience taught by an eloquent example? Important as are these benefits, they are purchased at too dear a rate, when the order of God's moral government is deranged, and his innocent Son treated as a criminal. Besides, if Jesus died but as an example and a martyr, why was not some mode of death chosen which would have been less agonising to him, and equally, or even still more, fitted to be exemplary to mankind? The sufferings of our Lord in general, and his death upon a cross in particular, are altogether unaccountable, but on the supposition of his being the substitute of guilty men. "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all; therefore it pleased the Lord to bruise him."

Admit this doctrine, and we do not cease to wonder at the crucifixion of Christ. But the subject of our wonder is changed. We no longer wonder that Jesus, standing in man's place, should meet with man's desert; though we must wonder at the inconceivable kindness which induced him to occupy that place. The substitute of innumerable criminals, we do not wonder that he should have been treated as a criminal. And of all deaths, that which was divinely accursed, seems most appropriate and characteristic of him who "redeemed us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse in our stead."

3d, The crucifixion of Christ affords a most striking manifestation of the love of the Divine Father and Son.

That the illustration of his own excellences is the ultimate end which the Divinity proposes in all his works, is a doctrine plainly revealed in Scripture, and, when properly explained, is perfectly consistent with the deductions of enlightened reason: "God hath made all things for himself." As "of Him and through Him," so also "to Him are all things."

This is the grand end of redemption, as of all the other works of God. That economy was particularly designed to illustrate the exuberance of his mercy; or, to use the apostle Paul's most energetic language, "to show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us." To promote this great end, every part of this dispensation is calculated, and none more directly and powerfully, than that which the text brings more immediately before us, the crucifixion of the Son of God. To acquiesce in his Son's assuming humanity, and becoming the substitute of mankind, was a wonderful display of grace; to give him up to suffering, was a still more amazing display of mercy; to appoint him to death, still heightens the miracle of kindness. What language, then, shall we find for expressing that infinity of benignity, which was manifested in dooming his only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, in order to obtain the salvation of rebels—of enemies? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The crucifixion of Christ places in as strong a point of view the love of Christ Jesus himself, as that of his Father. The Son of God had an independent right over the human nature which he assumed. No man could have taken his life from him; he laid it down of himself. "Greater love hath no man, than that a man lay down his life for his friends." To submit to die even the easiest death for a friend, would be a high and most extraordinary proof of human friendship. But how much more transcendent the evidence of regard which Jesus gave for his people! He died for them when enemies; and he died for them, not an ordinary death, but a death above all others painful, ignominious, and accursed. Surely this love has "a height and a depth, a length and a breadth, which pass knowledge." Surely, when in the Holy Supper we see him "plainly set forth crucified" for us, we may adopt the language of the Jews, when they saw the Redeemer shed a few tears of natural sympathy at the grave of his friend Lazarus, and apply them with a higher emphasis—"Behold how he loved us!"

4th, The crucifixion of Christ shows the fearful malignity of human transgression.

To convince mankind, and indeed the whole intelligent creation, of the evil of sin, or, in other words, to illustrate the

purity of his character, and the rectitude of his government, was certainly one great end of the Divine Being in the economy of human redemption. That sin is inconceivably malignant, is an inference fairly deducible from the account we have in Scripture of its nature, its tendency, and its consequences. Its nature is directly opposed to the character and will of Him, who is essential holiness and truth; its tendency is to involve the whole moral system in confusion and misery; and its consequence to the individual who is guilty of it, is unqualified destruction. More deeply to impress this truth on the mind of man, which is apt to be little affected with distant and unseen objects, the Almighty has frequently given signal, and as it were palpable, proofs of his hatred of iniquity. Of this kind were the universal deluge, the fiery desolation of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the sudden destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

But all the illustrations of this truth were faint and feeble when compared with that which was given when the Son of God, as the substitute of sinners, hung on the cross. The consideration that, in order to take away sin, not only the incarnation, and labours, and sorrows, and tears, and blood, but the death, and the death on a cross, of the Son of God, was necessary,—is above all things calculated to convince us, that “sin is,” indeed, “exceeding sinful”—“an evil and a bitter thing.”

Consider who was the sufferer! The Son of God—God manifest in flesh. Consider what he suffered! Think of the shame and the pain of the cross, and of that internal agony, of which they were but the imperfect figures! Consider, in fine, who it was that inflicted these sufferings—his Father, who loved him, who knew his worth in all its infinite extent, and whose love corresponded in its fervour to the perfection of his knowledge! The Jewish rulers, the Roman soldiers, were but the unconscious instruments, though certainly the deeply guilty instruments, of his righteous inflictions. “It pleased the Lord to bruise him, He put him to grief.” And then say, how ineffably, how inconceivably evil, that must be, in order to the expiation of which it was necessary that such a Father should inflict such sufferings on such a Son.

5th, The crucifixion of Christ illustrates the spiritual nature of that kingdom which he came to erect among mankind.

The Old Testament prophets very frequently foretel the pro-

mised Messiah under the character of a mighty Prince and Conqueror. These predictions were interpreted in their literal meaning by the greater part of the Jews, without any regard to the general harmony of the prophetic system. They expected their Messiah to be a temporal prince, and that his kingdom was to consist in dominion over the bodies and estates of men,—dignified by external wealth and splendour, managed by worldly power and policy,—and affording to its subjects present safety, riches, honour, and prosperity. Such was the kind of deliverance which the Jews generally expected; and these expectations, as well as other Jewish prejudices, considerably affected the minds, even of the primitive disciples of Christ.

The whole of our Lord's appearance was calculated to dissipate this delusion: "He grew up as a root out of a dry ground." To a scribe, who, in the hope of his being the Messiah according to the Jewish signification of that term, had declared his resolution to become his follower, he honestly pointed to his circumstances as the best proof that he was no earthly prince: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." From the general tenor of his discourses, it was obvious that his kingdom was purely spiritual,—that it consisted in the government of men's minds and hearts,—that its splendours were those of wisdom and holiness,—that it was to be administered by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit,—that it was to be protected by the unseen guardianship of Divine providence,—that it was to be upheld and propagated by meek instruction, holy example, hearty devotion, and patient suffering,—that its rewards were spiritual joys and consolations here, and hereafter celestial rest and immortal blessedness. To these truths our Lord bore witness before Pontius Pilate, and this testimony he soon after sealed in his blood. On the cross, faith can discover another inscription besides that dictated by the Roman governor: MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD. Nothing could be better fitted for extinguishing all vain hopes of worldly splendour, than such an event as the crucifixion. Suffering was not the means of acquiring worldly power; nor was the cross the way to an earthly crown. It would have been well for the church and the world, if this lesson had been more carefully studied by the followers of Jesus.

6th, The crucifixion of Christ renders the subsequent success of the Gospel more illustrious.

Every Christian knows that, in the rapid and extensive propagation of Christianity, we consider ourselves as having satisfactory proof of its divine origin. The mere rapid diffusion of a religion is, however, no certain evidence of its truth. In this respect Mohammedanism stands at least on a level with Christianity. It is only by taking into view the circumstances in which the author and primitive teachers of Christianity were placed, and the means they used for diffusing it, as well as the nature of its doctrines, and the opposition with which it had to contend, that we can properly perceive the force of this most powerful argument.

Certainly the fact, that Christ Jesus was put to the death of a criminal and a slave, was in itself calculated to throw strong obstacles in the way of his being generally acknowledged as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. That Herod the Jewish king, or Vespasian the Roman emperor, should be blasphemously complimented, or even seriously considered by some as the Messiah, is no way remarkable. But certainly it must be admitted to be very wonderful, that a poor unfriended Jew who was crucified, should, in the course of three centuries after his death, without any secular means being employed to advance his claims, with the strongest opposition which could be made by deep-rooted prejudice and imperial power, be considered, by the greater part of the Roman world, and by many beyond its limits, as the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind. Can any other satisfactory account be given of this event than that which our Lord himself gave? "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. This is the doing of the Lord; and it is marvellous in our eyes."¹

The divine agency in the success of the Gospel, becomes still more apparent, if we recollect that the fact of Christ's having been crucified was by no means concealed; but, on the contrary, held a most prominent place in the preaching of the apostles. It was not only honestly avowed, but studiously exhibited, and triumphantly gloried in. It was, indeed, by this doctrine, that they subjugated

¹ Psalm cxliii. 22, 23; compare Luke xx. 17.

the world. "Christ crucified was to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness," while the first demanded a sign, and the second sought after wisdom; "but, unto all who were called, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God;" so that it was apparent to all, that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

7th, The crucifixion of Christ furnishes saints with the most powerful dissuasives from sin, and motives to duty.

What can lead an ingenuous mind more thoroughly to detest sin, than the consideration that it rendered the death of Jesus on a cross necessary, in order to human redemption? We are in some danger of indulging in malignant feeling against the human agents of our Saviour's sufferings. But if we have ever rightly contemplated a crucified Saviour, we must have perceived that our sins were indeed his murderers. "They were the traitors who, by the hands of Judas, delivered him up. We by our sins impeached him. The spiteful priests were but our advocates. Our sins cried, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' with clamours more loud and importunate than the Jewish populace."¹ He who has seen all this, cannot but hate sin, and avoid it as the worst of evils. Every sin will appear to him a re-acting of the tragic scene of Calvary,—a "crucifying of the Son of God afresh,—and a putting him to an open shame." So true is it, that

"The cross, once seen, is death to every vice."²

As the crucifixion furnishes strong dissuasives from sin, it also suggests most powerful motives to duty. What arguments to universal holiness so cogent as those deduced by the holy apostles from this source? "Knowing this," says the apostle Paul, "that our old man is crucified with him,—that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." "Forasmuch," says the apostle Peter, "then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind, that ye should no longer live the rest of your time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

¹ Barrow.

² Cowper, *Progress of Error*.

The cross ministers most persuasive motives, not only to holiness in general, but to all the various duties of the Christian life. Who dare murmur under the evils of life, when he thinks of Him who "endured the cross, and despised the shame"? It was a powerful incentive which Ignatius employed to fortify his mind against the terrors of martyrdom, "MY LOVE WAS CRUCIFIED." Who can hate or despise his brother, when he recollects that Christ was crucified for him? How is it possible to enforce humility so powerfully as the apostle does? "Let the mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Who that has the heart of a disciple can think of Christ's cross, and not be disposed cheerfully to take up his own, and follow his Saviour?

Wouldst thou, Christian, feel the sweetly compulsive force of Christian motive, in all its constraining influence? take your station, along with the beloved disciple, near the foot of the cross, behold your dying Lord, and listen to the language of his agonies! "Is it nothing to you, all ye that go by? behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." "I am wounded for your transgressions, I am bruised for your iniquities, I am undergoing the chastisement of your peace. By the yearnings of my compassion, by the wounds of my body, by the anguish of my soul, by my blood, by my death, I conjure you to take up your cross and follow me. Willingly assume, cheerfully wear my easy yoke, gratefully acknowledge my goodness, carefully imitate my virtues. Give yourselves wholly to my service, as I give myself wholly for your salvation, and live to me, who now die for you."—Who will now dare to doubt, that it became Him, by whom are all things, and to whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to devote the Saviour to the death of the cross?—I conclude this section of the discourse in the powerful language of a most eloquent preacher:

"The crucifixion of Christ was the closing scene of his sufferings. After six hours of inconceivable agony, he said, 'It is finished! placidly bowed his anointed head, and gave up the

ghost.' It is finished! Holy victim! all is finished that wicked men were wonderfully destined to contribute towards the general deliverance; what remains, infinite power and wisdom shall accomplish. The disciples, those few of them who had the courage to be present at this dismal scene, hang their heads in despondency, and seem to have abandoned the hope, that this was he who should redeem Israel. But Israel is redeemed. The high sacrifice appointed before the foundation of the world, typified by all the sacrifices of the law, is now offered and accepted. That Jesus, who, according to his own prediction, hath expired, shall, according to his own prediction, be raised again on the third day. He is raised. He is entered into glory. He has sat down for ever on the right hand of the Majesty on high. There he pleads the merits of his blood in behalf of those whose crying sins caused it to be shed. Nor does he plead in vain. All power is committed to him in heaven and on earth. The final judgment is committed into his hands; and the greatest sinner, who will but trust in him, will have no reason to fear the severity of a Judge, who has himself been touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities. On the other hand, let none deceive themselves with the hopes of salvation, while they continue impenitent. The sacrifice of the cross was no less a display of the just severity, than of the tender mercy of God. The authority of his government must be maintained. This rendered atonement and intercession necessary, in order to the pardon of sin,—the most meritorious intercession, the highest atonement. To those who despise so great a salvation, who cannot be reclaimed by the promises and threatenings of God, by the warnings of wrath and the appearances of mercy; for those who will not be reclaimed by these motives, there assuredly remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of fiery indignation, which at the last day will burn with inextinguishable rage against all those incorrigible enemies of goodness and of God. May God grant of his great mercy, that all of us may be permitted, through that crucifixion which we are this day to commemorate, to escape the everlasting horrors of the second death!"¹

Let us now for a little consider the third topic presented to our mind by the text.

¹ Horsley's Sermons, vol. ii. pp. 152-155. The author gladly acknowledges his obligations in writing this sermon to Dr Barrow. Vide Sermon on Phil. ii. 8.

III. The moral character of the Saviour's death on the cross—"He became obedient to death, even to the death of the cross."

These words seem to intimate that our Lord's death was *voluntary*. It was *an act of obedience*—and it was *the concluding, crowning act* of a course of obedience.

In the case of mankind generally, death is in no sense voluntary. They have no choice in the matter, and, in a great majority of cases, they most reluctantly yield to an irresistible necessity. It was otherwise with Christ Jesus. His death was in the highest sense *voluntary*. Human nature in him was completely free from *that* which occasioned the introduction of the law of mortality. It is not as *men*, it is as *sinful men*, that we must die. The Son of God might have assumed human nature, and yet never have died. Indeed, that seems the natural course of things, on the supposition of his assuming human nature. Nothing but a positive appointment could have made it otherwise. It is true, indeed, if he assumed human nature *for the purpose of saving man*, he *must* die; but there was no previous necessity of his undertaking our cause—of his taking on him that suretyship for strangers, for which he has so severely smarted. He willingly put himself in the condition which required his submitting to death. He died because he *chose* to die rather than that the ends which could only be gained by his death, should not be obtained.

As his death was voluntary, inasmuch as it was not the result of the great law of human mortality, so it was voluntary too, inasmuch as it was not the result of compulsion. It was indeed a violent death. He was taken and with wicked hands crucified and slain; but if he had pleased, he could easily have kept himself out of these hands. It was no vain boast—when his honest-hearted but dark-minded disciple sought to interpose his feeble arm between his Master and danger—"Put up thy sword into its place; thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels." He had but to look at the armed band—and a divine power went forth in that meek majestic glance, which laid them prostrate on the earth. No man wrested his life from him, he laid it down of himself.

But our Lord's death was not only *voluntary*—it was *obediential*. "He became obedient to death." In dying, all good men obey God—*i. e.*, they exercise the principles of patient, resigned

submission to the will of God, in appointing death, and the time and circumstances of their own death; and in this sense, no doubt, Jesus Christ was obedient in dying.

But this is not, I apprehend, the apostle's thought here. Jesus Christ was obedient unto death in a sense in which no other possessor of human nature ever can be. To die is in no degree a matter of choice to men. They must die. It is a matter about which they are not called to exercise will at all. They have nothing to do but submit. But Jesus Christ, in the voluntarily assumed as well as divinely appointed character of the servant of God as Saviour of men, was sent into the world to do a great work—of which his dying constituted an essential part. “Lo! I come,” said he, “to do thy will”—and that will was the salvation of his people by the offering, once for all, of his body. He was constituted “the great”—“the good Shepherd,” and his leading duty in that character was to “lay down his life for the sheep.” This was “the finishing the work given him to do.” He came to “give his flesh for the life of the world.” He came “to give himself a ransom for many.” His great work was to accomplish redemption in a manner consistent with, and illustrative of, all the perfections of the Divine character—all the principles of the Divine government, and this could only be done by his dying for men; and as it was not the mere dying—not the mere dying even of incarnate Divinity—but the dying in the exercise of holy zeal for the Divine honour—humble submission to the Divine will—generous love for the souls of men, which could serve that purpose, he not only *died*, but in obedience to the Divine will, in satisfaction of the demands of the Divine law on him, as the second Adam, with all the legal liabilities of those whom he represented on him, he *laid down* his life.

But the language seems obviously to import something more than even *this*. It intimates that the death of Christ Jesus was the *concluding, crowning act of a course of obedience*. Having assumed the form of servant, he was throughout obedient, obedient till he finished the work required of him in dying on the cross. The whole of our Lord's conscious existence as God-man may be viewed as one great unbroken act of obedience. This is plainly the view the apostle takes of it when he contrasts “the one offence” of the first man, with “the one (*δικαιωμα*) righteousness” of Him of whom he was the figure. When Jehovah introduces his Only-

begotten to the knowledge and admiration of men, He says, "Behold my servant;" and our Lord himself often declares that the sole purpose of his coming into the world, was to do the will of his Father who sent him. And he always did this will. Every thought, every feeling, every wish, every word, every action, was in entire conformity with the mind and will of God. Obedience absolutely perfect in principle, in extent, in continuance, characterised the Saviour; and it was this all-perfect God-man in the entireness of his holy character—in the completeness of his dutiful obedience and submission—in the perfection of the satisfaction thus yielded both to the perceptive and sanctioning demands of the Divine law—"who through the Eternal Spirit in his death offered himself a sacrifice, without spot, blameless—a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour—a sacrifice which can cleanse the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God." The death of our Lord is never to be viewed apart from the holy principles which inspired him, and the perfect obedience in which these principles found form and manifestation. Its true character is expressed in the Saviour's dying exclamation, "*It is finished.*" The mighty work is done—the ransom price is fully paid—justice is satisfied—the law is magnified; and now holy love has free course, and is glorified,—“grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.”

Such are the leading truths which this interesting passage of Scripture brings before our minds. 'Jesus Christ, a sinless—a perfect man, a man in union with God—by Divine appointment, yet most voluntarily, entered on, prosecuted, and completed, a course of perfect obedience to the demands of the Divine law upon him, as the divinely appointed expiator of human guilt—the author of human salvation—a course of obedience terminating in his dying, like a felonious slave, on a cross—dying in a manner not only in the highest degree painful and disgraceful, but indicating that he suffered as the victim of sin, that he fell by the hand of avenging justice, vindicating the rights of violated law.'

And is all this true? Has our redemption been secured? and was it secured by such abasement—such privation—such suffering—such a death on the part of one so infinitely great, and excellent, and amiable, as the incarnate Only-begotten of God? Is it not meet that such a death, and the holy love that led to it, should be kept in everlasting remembrance? He who

hung on the cross, now from the throne of his glory is proclaiming, "Do *this* in remembrance of me." Let us gladly and gratefully perform this easy, delightful act of obedience to him, who, through such a fearful series of labours and sufferings, experimentally became acquainted with the full extent of that *obedience* which had to be undergone by him, in order to secure our salvation ; and as we celebrate our feast of memorial, let us thus sing in our hearts, making melody to our Lord—"To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." "What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits ? We will take the cup of salvation—we will call on the name of the Lord—we will walk before the Lord in the land of the living—we will pay our vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem ! Praise ye the Lord !"

SERMON IV.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

“Jesus hath obtained a more excellent ministry.”—HEB. viii. 6.

IN the system of Divine revelation, as in a fine historical picture, there is one object of pre-eminent importance presented to our contemplation; and all the subordinate parts of the piece, are at once intended and calculated to give prominence and effect to the beauties of the principal figure. I need scarcely add, that the great object, to the striking exhibition of which every part of Scripture is made subservient, is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners. A more appropriate motto for the book of God cannot be found than this, “CHRIST IS ALL.” HE is indeed its “Alpha and Omega, its beginning and ending.” To HIM all the sacred writers bear witness. “The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.” The Jewish ceremonies are “shadows, of which the body is CHRIST;” and of HIM “Moses in the law and the prophets do write.” The evangelists relate to us the story of HIS actions and sufferings, HIS life and death; and the epistolary part of Scripture is employed in unfolding the unsearchable riches of HIS wisdom and grace.

To evince the necessity of HIS incarnation, and the divinity of HIS mission; to illustrate HIS personal dignity and mediatorial excellence; to show the truth of HIS doctrine, and the perfection of HIS example, the value of HIS sacrifice, and the prevalence of HIS intercession; to celebrate the depth of HIS wisdom, the extent of HIS power, the freedom of HIS love, and the wonders of HIS grace,—these are the great objects which the inspired penmen, under the guidance of the “one Spirit,” keep steadily in view, and to gain which, all the different parts of the revealed system harmoniously contribute. To the heaven-enlightened

eye, the whole of the Scriptures are an exhibition of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." To the heaven-opened ear, all the inspired writers seem proclaiming with the prophet, "Behold your God," or with the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." HE is the sun of the revealed system ; the soul of the body of inspiration.

The methods which the sacred writers employ, in order to gain this one end, the exhibition of Christ Jesus in his true character, are at once numerous and diversified. They sometimes represent him in all the insufferable radiance of uncreated perfection, dwelling in light which is inaccessible, reposing in the bosom of his divine Father, "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." At other times, they bring before the mind his voluntary humiliation ; represent him as emptying himself of that form of Godhead which he possessed ; descending into a world polluted with sin, and dark with misery ; taking to himself not merely the nature of a man, but the form of a servant ; and not merely the form of a servant, but the likeness of a sinner ; and minutely detail the wondrous history of what he did, and said, and suffered ; of how he lived, and how he died for man's salvation. They sometimes tell us what he is in himself, and at other times what he is in the estimation of those who know and love him. Here they describe his personal excellences, and there they enumerate some (for to tell them all were impossible) of the invaluable benefits which, through his mediation, are bestowed on mankind.

Finding the delightful theme too big for utterance in ordinary language, they call in to their aid the use of figurative expression. Their divinely invigorated imaginations range through the universe, and from the worlds of matter and of mind, collect all that is sublime and beautiful, fair and excellent, venerable and lovely, that these images combined, may give us some idea (a faint and imperfect one it must be at best) of his matchless glories. They tell us, that he is the "rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley, and the apple tree among the trees of the wood." He is the "rock of ages," and the "rock too of salvation." He is "the bread, the water, and the tree of life." He is "the sure foundation," "the pearl of great price," and "the hidden treasure." He is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and "the Lamb of God." He is the "Star of Jacob, the bright and the

morning Star." He is as "the light of a morning without clouds," "the sun of righteousness with healing under his wings." He is "the good Shepherd," "the faithful and true Witness," "the Prince of the kings of the earth, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords."

Another method which the sacred writers not unfrequently employ, to convey to our minds just conceptions of his transcendent excellence and absolute perfection, is by comparing and contrasting him with those objects and persons whom we have been accustomed to regard with the deepest veneration. We are told that he is "greater than the temple,"—a more dignified prophet than Moses,—a more magnificent king than Solomon,— "much better than the angels,"—"the head of principalities and powers." We have an instance of this mode of illustrating the excellences of the Redeemer, in the passage which we have chosen as the subject of the present discourse. The Redeemer, in his sacerdotal character, is compared and contrasted with the Aaronical priesthood, an order peculiarly venerable in the estimation of the Hebrew nation; and while its dignity and importance are fully admitted, it is asserted that Jesus "hath received a more excellent ministry."

In illustrating this truth, that Jesus, as the high priest of our profession, is far superior to the Aaronical priesthood, we shall have an opportunity, not merely of stating many of the most important principles of our holy faith, but of presenting you with an abstract of much of the apostle's reasoning in this elaborate epistle. In the text, a comparison between our Lord and the Aaronical priesthood is implied, and a contrast stated. A resemblance is supposed, and a superiority is asserted. In order, then, fully to illustrate the apostle's assertion, it will be necessary to attend, first, to the points of RESEMBLANCE, and then to those of CONTRAST; or, in other words, to show, that while the priesthood of our Lord possesses all the excellences of the Aaronical priesthood, it also possesses many excellences peculiar to itself. These form the two great divisions of our subject; and if we can satisfactorily prove both parts of this proposition, it will appear with the most abundant evidence, that Jesus has indeed received a more excellent ministry.

I. It will tend, we apprehend, to diffuse light over some of the

succeeding discussions, to make a few preliminary remarks respecting the priestly office in general, and the manner in which it became fixed in the family of Aaron. By the priesthood, we understand a particular class of men divinely appointed to manage the concerns of their brethren with the Divinity—by means of vicarious atonement and intercession; to avert his displeasure, propitiate his favour, and secure friendly intercourse with Him,—in the acceptance of services *from* them, and the communication of blessings *to* them. This is the apostle's account of the matter. "Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin."

Immediately after the fall, an intimation was made to man of the determination of God to redeem him; and the manner in which this was to be accomplished, was shadowed forth by the significant rite of sacrifice—a rite, which at once exemplified the death to which men were doomed for transgression, and represented the death to be undergone by the Redeemer of mankind for their salvation. Whether, during the earlier ages of the world, every man was allowed to offer up sacrifices for himself, or whether this office was from the beginning appropriated to a particular body, and, in this case, what was the body of men entrusted with this honourable function, are questions, the full resolution of which would involve us in a long discussion, which though neither uninteresting nor unimportant, would not well answer the design of our present meeting.

There seems, however, to be reason to suppose, that for some time every father of a family was the prophet, priest, and king of his own household; and that afterwards the priesthood formed an important part of that birthright which belonged to the first-born. In the book of Exodus, we read of "the priests who came near the Lord," and of "young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings to the Lord," at a period prior to the choice of the tribe of Levi, or the consecration of Aaron and his family; and it deserves notice, that the Chaldaic paraphrasts, and some of the more ancient versions, interpret "these priests and young men" of the first-born among the Israelites. At the commencement of the Mosaic dispensation, the office of the priesthood was appropriated to Aaron and his descendants, and it became sacrilege

in any other person, without a particular commission, to perform any of the sacred functions.

Considering sacrifice, as we conceive Scripture warrants us to do, to be just a showing forth the death of Christ till he came the first time, "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" and viewing the priesthood as an office originally appointed to shadow forth to mankind the character and work of their great Deliverer, it is nothing more than was to be expected, if there exist numerous and striking features of resemblance between the Aaronical priesthood, and "Jesus the high priest of our profession." That there is such a RESEMBLANCE between our Lord and the Jewish high priests will appear, if we attend to his divine constitution;—his qualifications for the office;—the nature, design, and efficacy of his functions;—and their strict appropriation to himself.

1st, Divine constitution is the first point of resemblance between Jesus and the Aaronical priesthood, to which we shall direct your attention. When we reflect that sacrifice is obviously a positive institution, there being no foundation for it in the relations between God and man, as apprehended by unassisted reason,—when we consider that such an idea as vicarious atonement could never have entered of itself into the mind of man; and that on the supposition that it had, that he could have cherished no rational hope, that such a strange rite would be acceptable to God,—we are naturally led to the inference, that sacrifice itself, and that every thing in reference both to the victims to be presented and the persons who should present them, must have been the subject of Divine appointment. This conclusion is strengthened by the apostle's statement that Abel's sacrifice was offered "in faith," which it could not have been, had there not been a Divine revelation requiring the sacrifice, and promising its acceptance if offered according to the due order.

With respect to the Aaronical priesthood, which is the more immediate subject of discussion, we have a particular account of the Divine call of Aaron and his family to this high office. "They were taken from among men, and ordained for men in things pertaining to God." "Take unto thee," said Jehovah to Moses, "Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to me in the priest's

office." "Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the Lord, to minister unto Him, and to bless in his name for ever."

"And as no man" among the children of Israel "took this honour unto himself, but he that was chosen of God, as was Aaron; so also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but He that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; as He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." The appointment of the Son of God to the office of the priesthood, is one of the transactions of eternity. The Father declared his will—the Son said, "Lo, I come to do thy will." "The counsel of peace was between them both." He was the sacrificing priest, as well as the "slain victim from the foundation of the world." "As one ordained for men in things pertaining to God," "he was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, ere ever the earth was; then was he with God as one brought up with Him; he was daily his delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men." Accordingly, in the representations given us of our Lord's character, both by himself and his apostles, a leading feature, almost uniformly, is his divine appointment to the office which he sustained. "I have," says he, speaking of the great act of sacrifice which he was about to perform, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment I received of my Father." "Christ Jesus," says the apostle, "was faithful to Him who appointed him."

2d, In his qualifications for his office as High Priest, our Saviour resembled the Aaronical priesthood.

It is not my intention here to enter at large into an account of our Lord's qualifications for the office of the priesthood; we must confine ourselves to the qualifications which he possessed in common with the Aaronical priests. The qualifications of the Aaronical priesthood were of two kinds: they were either such as were entirely ceremonial, originating not in any natural propriety, but in positive institution, or such as were in their own nature necessary to the discharge of the sacerdotal functions.

With respect to the first of these classes of qualifications, our Lord resembled the Levitical priesthood no further than that he possessed all those moral excellences of which those ceremonial

qualifications, according to the genius of the Mosaic economy, were emblematical. He was not of the family of Aaron, he did not restrict himself to certain articles of diet, he did not wear the linen robes, nor bear the Urim and Thummim on his breast; but he was the highest of that class to whom the priesthood originally belonged, and in whose place the tribe of Levi was substituted, being "the first-born of every creature, the only-begotten Son of God;" he was possessed of that temperance of which the restricted diet of the priests under the law was typical; he was clothed in the robes of unspotted purity; and he had in his heart every species of "divine light and perfection."

It is, however, to the resemblance subsisting between the Saviour and the Aaronical priests, with respect to the second class of qualifications, that our attention must be chiefly directed. The sacred writer specifies two of these qualifications,—the possession of a human nature, and a sympathising disposition. God did not appoint his "angels who excel in strength" to minister to Him as priests for men. The sons of Aaron were men like their fellow-men, Israelites like their fellow-Israelites. They were "taken from among men."

In like manner, the Son of God, when about to enter on the discharge of the duties of his priestly office, was "made *for a little while* lower than the angels." "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one" nature, "for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee; and again, I will put my trust in Him; and again, behold I and the children which God hath given me. For as much, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same." The "high priest of our profession" is "the man Christ Jesus."

This qualification, the possession of human nature, was necessary to the very existence of the sacerdotal character. The second qualification, a sympathising disposition, improved by exercise, was necessary, in order to the right discharge of the sacerdotal functions. This will appear with abundant evidence, when we come to treat of their nature, design, and efficacy. All we have to do at present is to show, that the qualification was required in the Aaronical priests, and was possessed by our Lord and Saviour.

As to the first of these points, the words of the apostle are abundantly explicit. He describes a high priest as "one who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them who are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." As to the second, that our New Testament High Priest possesses this qualification in the highest degree of excellence, we know that he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs." He experienced almost every human pain. He knows what strong temptations mean, for he has felt their force. He can soothe our sorrows, for he has himself been "exceeding sorrowful." He can dry the streaming eye, and quiet the throbbing breast, for he has wept and been in agony. He can support and console the dying, for he has died; and "by dying destroyed him that has the power of death." "It behoved him to be in all things made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour those who are tempted." Every Aaronical priest, though from his dignified station he must have been personally unacquainted with many of the sorrows of man, might have said in the language of the heathen poet, "I am a man; and nothing which concerns humanity is indifferent to me."¹ But certainly in tenderness of compassion, and extent of experience of human woe, the High Priest of our profession far transcends them all.

3d, The third point of resemblance between our Saviour and the Aaronical priests, is to be found in the nature, design, and efficacy of his priestly functions. The functions of the Aaronical priesthood were entirely of a spiritual nature. They were entrusted with the management, not of the secular, but of the sacred interests of their brethren. "They were ordained for men, *in things pertaining to God.*" In like manner, Jesus as a high priest is the authorised agent of his people with God, in reference to all their interests as moral and accountable, guilty and depraved beings.

The three principal parts of the priestly office, are the offering of sacrifice—the interceding for the people on the ground of this sacrifice—and the authoritatively blessing them in the name of

¹ Homo sum, nihil humani alienum puto.—TER.

the Lord. The Aaronical priests presented many sacrifices, expiatory and eucharistic. And, "as every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, it was of necessity that this *man* should have somewhat to offer." His human nature was intended to answer this purpose among others. "When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldst not, but a body hast Thou prepared me." This holy human nature he actually offered in sacrifice. He "gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour."

Besides offering sacrifice, the Aaronical high priests, on the ground of their sacrifice, made intercession for the sins of the people. Once a year, as the representative of those with the management of whose spiritual interests he was intrusted, the high priest, with the blood of the sacrifice of atonement, entered within the veil, and sprinkled with blood the mercy-seat, and burnt incense, as an emblem of fervent supplication. In like manner did our Lord make intercession. "In the days of his flesh he offered up prayers, and supplications, with strong crying and tears, to Him who was able to save him from death." "Christ being come, a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." "He ever liveth to make intercession for those who come to God by him."

Blessing was the third part of the priest's office. This is the only sacerdotal act that we read of as performed by Melchisedec, after whose order Jesus was a priest. "Aaron also was separated to bless the people in the name of the Lord." And we are told, when he entered on the discharge of his sacred functions, that "he lifted up his hands towards the people, and blessed them." Our Redeemer began his sermon on the mount with benediction. When he left the world, he left it in the act of blessing his people. "He led out his disciples as far as Bethany, and lifted up his hands and blessed them." And "God having raised him from the dead, has sent him to bless us, in turning every one from his iniquities."

The design of the priestly functions, in the case of our Lord and the Aaronical priests, was substantially the same. They were both appointed "to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin." To

remove guilt and its consequences was equally the design of both, —though the Jewish priesthood had a reference to ceremonial guilt and temporal punishment; and the priesthood of our Lord had a reference to moral guilt and everlasting destruction.

In the efficacy of his sacerdotal functions also, our Lord resembled the Aaronical priesthood. The declaration of the apostle, “that it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins,” has sometimes been explained as if it asserted the total inefficacy of the Levitical sacrifices; while the truth is, it only asserts their inefficacy to remove moral guilt. They indeed made no *permanent* atonement even for ceremonial offences. But so far as they were intended to be efficacious, they were so. For the offences on account of which they were offered, considered as a violation of the ceremonial law, they made a complete atonement. The person for whom they were offered, according to the due order, was, with respect to the particular offence expiated, as if he had never committed it. He was completely secured from the punishment which otherwise, according to the law, must have fallen upon him. With similar limitations, the intercessions of the Levitical priesthood also were effectual.

Now, the priestly functions of our Lord have fully answered the purpose for which they were designed. His sacrifice was “a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God.” It has “finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness.” It has “perfected for ever all them that are sanctified.” His intercession is uniformly prevalent. “Him the Father heareth always.” And he whom He blesses, is blessed indeed.

4th, In fine, in the strict appropriation of the sacerdotal functions to himself, Jesus resembles the Aaronical priesthood.

It was an act of sacrilege for any Israelite, even of the tribe of Levi, to perform any of the functions peculiar to the priesthood. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, rebelled against Moses and Aaron, insisting that all the congregation was holy, on the Divine decision being solemnly appealed to, the earth opened and swallowed these sacrilegious intruders; and their brazen censers “were made broad plates for a covering of the altar, to be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, who is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord.” When Uzziah, one of the most powerful of the Jewish kings, at-

tempted to burn incense on the altar, he was forced from the holy place by Azariah the high priest and his brethren; and Jehovah sanctioned the holy violence of his servants, by smiting the monarch with an incurable leprosy.

In like manner, no person can, without the most imminent hazard, intrude upon the peculiar functions of the High Priest of our profession. They are strictly appropriated to himself. He, and he alone, can make atonement for sin, intercede for others on the ground of his own merits, and authoritatively bless them. Whosoever attempts to substitute any thing in the place of his atoning sacrifice, and prevalent intercession, incurs the Divine indignation, and, if he persists, will draw down upon himself swift destruction. Had any Israelite attempted to substitute repentance and reformation in the room of the appointed sacrifice, or presented the sacrifice himself, instead of employing the sons of Aaron, far from gaining the remission of his sin, he would have involved himself in deeper guilt. And thus the sinner, who, instead of "submitting to the righteousness of God, goes about to establish his own righteousness," far from obtaining pardon, commits a new and most aggravated transgression. He usurps the place of our great High Priest; and if he perseveres, for him "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, which shall devour the adversaries." Such are the leading points of resemblance between Jesus as a high priest, and the Aaronical priesthood. And from the cursory view we have taken of them, it must be obvious that Jesus hath obtained a more excellent ministry.

II. The superiority of Jesus Christ as a high priest above the Aaronical priesthood, will, however, become still more apparent when we consider those points of CONTRAST which subsist between them. While our text implies resemblance, it expresses pre-eminence. Jesus, as a high priest, is contrasted to the Aaronical priesthood, in the dignity of his nature—the perfection of his character—the solemnity of his appointment and inauguration—the value of his sacrifice—the excellency of the blessings procured by it—and the duration of his office.

1st, Jesus Christ is superior to the Aaronical priests in dignity of nature. In the description of a high priest, by the apostle, in the fifth chapter of this Epistle, it is stated, that he must be

“taken from among men.” And we have seen that this requisite was by no means wanting in the High Priest of our profession. The Jewish high priests were, however, not only *men*, but they were no more than *men*. Though elevated above the rest of their brethren by their sacred and dignified *office*, as to *nature* they were precisely on a level with them.

It is, however, far otherwise with our Lord Jesus Christ. While he was, “according to the flesh,” the son of David, he was, “according to the Spirit of holiness, the Son of God.” While he was “the man Christ Jesus,” he was also “God over all, blessed for ever.” The Divinity of our Saviour is one of the first principles of our “most holy faith.” It enters into the essence of Christianity, so that to deny it, is not merely to mutilate, but to destroy the Gospel; is to degrade it from its rank as a peculiar system, and entirely to destroy its suitability to the situation and character of sinful men.

The evidence on which this principle rests, corresponds in explicitness and abundance to its obvious importance: and the “mystery of godliness, that God was manifest in flesh, which is the pillar and ground of truth, and confessedly great,” rests on the immovable foundation of the clearest Divine testimony.

There is scarcely any appellation which the Supreme Being has assumed to express the peculiar excellences of his nature, that is not repeatedly in Scripture applied to our Redeemer. Numerous are the passages in which he is termed “God, the Mighty God, God with us, the great God, the true God, our God, God over all blessed for ever, Lord, Lord of hosts;” and the name JEHOVAH, which is expressive of eternal and independent existence, and, of course, in no sense applicable to a creature, is both simply, and in connection with other titles, given to Jesus.¹

Whatever attribute is characteristic of Divinity, is in Scripture ascribed to the Saviour. How can the Supreme Being be distinguished from his creatures more clearly than by the ascription of eternity, immutability, omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence! Yet Jesus is represented as “the first and the last, and the living One.” “His goings forth have been of old

¹ Ps. xlv. 6. with Heb. i. 8; Isa. ix. 6; vii. 14; Tit. ii. 13; 1 John v. 20; Rom. ix. 5; Isa. vi. 1-9, with John xii. 39-41., etc.

from everlasting; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He is present in the numerous and widely scattered assemblies of his followers. "He needs not that any should testify of man, for he knows what is in man." It is HE who searcheth the reins and the hearts; and his power is so extensive, that "He is able even to subdue all things to himself."¹

The works peculiar to the Divinity, are represented as performed by Jesus. Who does not perceive the gross absurdity of supposing a creature capable of creating, supporting, governing, and judging the world? Yet "by Jesus were all things created that are in heaven and in earth," "by Jesus all things subsist," and before Jesus' judgment-seat must all stand, to receive their final doom.²

Those supreme honours, which are due only to God, are in the Holy Scriptures represented as due to Jesus. To him prayers are addressed, in his name Divine ordinances are administered, and it is declared to be the will of the Father, "that all men should honour the Son as they honour"³ himself.

Besides these direct proofs of our Lord's divinity, there is a great deal of implied evidence for this doctrine in the Holy Scriptures, which cannot fail to make a deep impression on every considerate and unprejudiced mind. It is quite impossible, satisfactorily, to account for the very strong language used in Scripture concerning the love of God in the mission and gift of Jesus Christ, and the condescension and kindness of Jesus Christ himself; for the depth of interest, the warmth of admiring transport and adoring gratitude, with which this subject inspired the New Testament writers; for the description given in the New Testament, of Christ's exaltation at the right hand of God; and for the high claims which Jesus himself makes on the love and obedience of his followers,—but on the principle that he is indeed "the true God, God over all, blessed for ever."⁴

Indeed, we might safely rest the decision of this important question, on the evidence adduced in that Epistle from which

¹ Rev. i. 17, 18; Heb. xiii. 8; Matth. xviii. 20; John ii. 25; Rev. ii. 23; Phil. iii. 21.

² Col. i. 16, 17; Rom. xiv. 10.

³ Acts vii. 59; Matt. xxviii. 19; John v. 23.

⁴ The reader who wishes for an illustration of the whole argument respecting the divinity of Christ, and especially of this very interesting part of it, will meet with the fullest satisfaction in Wardlaw's "*Discourses on the Socinian Controversy.*"

we have selected the subject of our discourse. In the first chapter, we find him represented as superior to the prophets, "much better than the angels," "God's only-begotten Son," the appointed heir of all things, the maker of the world, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," "upholding all things by the word of his power," and the object of worship to the heavenly host. The inspired writers are represented as addressing him in the following language: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom: and Thou, Jehovah, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hand; they shall perish, but Thou remainest; and they shall all wax old, as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." Surely if any thing can warrant the inference, this evidence does—This person is the true God.

And it is equally evident, that the possession of the Divine nature raises our Lord to an inconceivable superiority above the Aaronical priesthood. Between the smallest atom of matter and the whole universe of matter, between the meanest intelligent being and the highest angel, there is some proportion, but between the creature and the Creator, between finite and infinite, there is—there can be—none. The Aaronical priests were mere mortals. The High Priest of our profession is the God "who alone hath immortality."

2d, Jesus Christ is superior to the Aaronical priests, in the perfection of his character.

The Apostle informs us, that "the law maketh men priests who have infirmity:" and the Aaronical high priest, being "compassed with infirmity, was under the necessity of presenting a sin-offering for himself as well as for the people." The Aaronical priesthood were men subject to moral fault as well as their brethren. The history of the Jews proves, that some of their high-priests were monsters of depravity and crime; and though many of them were men of exalted piety and virtue, none of them was faultless. Aaron and Eli were excellent men; but the criminal compliance of the one with the wishes of the idolatrous people, and the equally criminal indulgence of the other towards his abandoned children, clearly show that they

were no exceptions from the general rule,—“There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.” They were “by nature children of wrath even as others,” stained by hereditary and personal guilt, by original and acquired depravity; and even such of them as were regenerated, had “flesh” as well as “spirit,” and “in their flesh dwelt no good thing.”

But in the moral character of our Lord, there were no such blemishes. He was “all fair, there was no spot in him.” Every descendant of our original progenitor and federal representative, according to the ordinary laws of nature, comes into the world a guilty creature, a “child of wrath.” “In Adam all sinned, and in Adam all died.” Our Redeemer, however, though a descendant of Adam, did not descend from him according to the ordinary laws of nature.—“The seed of the woman,” his human nature was formed by the supernatural operation of the Divine Spirit, and was born of a virgin. He was thus not represented by Adam, and of course uninvolved in the moral, and *not necessarily* involved in the natural, consequences of Adam’s fall. “The Holy Ghost,” said the angel to the blessed virgin, “shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also, that *holy thing* which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.”

Every descendant of Adam, is not only a guilty, but a depraved creature. Destitute of the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit, and exposed to the depraving influence of wicked spirits and a corrupted world, no sooner do his moral faculties unfold themselves than they are misemployed; no sooner does he become capable of moral action, than he acts wrong. But the Saviour being free from guilt, in his moral constitution there was no tendency towards transgression. “He was holy, harmless, and undefiled.”

But not merely was our Lord, like Adam, naturally free from guilt and depravity; unlike Adam, he continued free from both. He never incurred guilt, he never acquired depravity. Without the slightest hazard, he could appeal to his enemies for his innocence: “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” and, in his case, the sarcasm, “Physician, heal thyself,” had no force. Though exposed to the fiercest attacks from Satan, that enemy did not prevail against him; that son of wickedness “did not overcome him.” He retired discomfited and ashamed, for he

found nothing in him to afford fuel for his temptations. They distressed, but they could not deprave him. In a world full of seductions, though tempted both by its frowns and its smiles, its terrors and its allurements, he never, in the slightest degree, imbibed its corrupt spirit, nor imitated its improper manners. The purity of his nature and his life remained unstained, and he died as he lived, a stranger to guilt and to depravity. "He knew no sin."

But when we have said of our Lord that he was faultless, though we have raised him far above the Aaronical priesthood, far indeed above any of the children of men, we are far from having told all the truth. He was not only innocent, but excellent; not only excellent, but perfect. His mind was not merely free from any bias to evil, it was strongly and solely inclined to what was good. In his moral constitution were sown the seeds of every excellence, which, as he grew to maturity, unfolded themselves, yielding the beautiful blossoms of grace, and the rich fruits of perfection. The Spirit of God, the principle of all true goodness in created natures, took up his residence in the human nature of our Lord, in the moment of its formation, and adorned it with all the beauties of holiness. He rested on him as a spirit of wisdom, and understanding, and counsel, and fortitude, and discernment, and zeal, and benignity. His intellectual faculties, free from prejudice, were steadily directed to the acquisition of the most valuable knowledge,—the knowledge of the character and will of God. His will bowed in cheerful submission to the revelation of the Divine word, and the appointments of the Divine providence. His affections were pure, and ardent, and heavenly. All was moral beauty, order, and harmony.

As his mental constitution was thus not only free from defect, but richly furnished with all that is great and good in morals, so his conduct was not merely free of faults, but distinguished by every positive, every possible excellence, which the circumstances in which he was placed either required or admitted. "He loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and strength, and soul, and mind, and his neighbour as himself." "He did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with his God." To every institution, whether moral or ceremonial, which bore the stamp of Divine appointment, he yielded a willing and a perfect

obedience. He cheerfully did all that God commanded, and patiently suffered all that God appointed.

His obedience to the Divine law had every character of perfection. It was perfect in its principle; for it flowed from a regard to the Divine authority, and a love to the Divine law. He worshipped "God, who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth." An eager desire to finish the work assigned him, because it was assigned him, was plainly the animating principle of his conduct. It was the language of his actions as well as of his lips—"My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work." "Not my will, but thine, be done." His ultimate desire was, that God should be glorified; and even when he prays for his own glory, this is his language, "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee." His obedience was also perfect in its extent. It was as extensive as the demands of the Divine law, and the obligations which arose out of the different relations he sustained to God and to mankind. And, in fine, his obedience was perfect in its duration. He never was "weary of well-doing." He did "not fail nor was he discouraged," but became "obedient to death, even the death of the cross." His character was, in one word, a beautiful combination of the great and amiable moral qualities of all the active and passive virtues, so mixed and blended together, as to form absolute perfection and loveliness.

It deserves particular notice, and with the remark I shall conclude this part of the subject, that in this Epistle, wherever the moral imperfections of the Jewish priests are spoken of, particular care is taken to guard against any inference inconsistent with the spotless purity of the Redeemer's character. For example, just before the apostle takes notice, that "the priests under the law needed to offer sacrifice for their own sin," he assures us, that though Jesus "was tempted in all points like unto us, yet he was without sin;" and he prefaces the declaration, that "the law made men high priests who had infirmity," with the assertion, that Jesus was "such a high priest as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."—Compare the above very imperfect delineation of our Lord's moral excellence with the character of Aaron, or the holiest of his sons, and acknowledge the prodigious superiority of our New Testament High Priest: "In all things he has the pre-eminence."

3*d*, Jesus Christ is superior to the Aaronical priesthood, in the solemnity of his appointment and inauguration.

The appointment and inauguration of the Aaronical priesthood, are among the most impressive transactions which illustrated the commencement of the Mosaic dispensation. A particular account of them is to be found in the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth chapters of Exodus, and in the eighth chapter of Leviticus.

The Aaronical high priesthood was constituted by an immediate revelation of the Divine will to Moses. "Take unto thee," said Jehovah, "Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office." The ceremonies of their inauguration were numerous and imposing. Having been washed with water, Aaron was, by the Divine legislator, robed in his sacerdotal garments; "the coat and its girdle; the robe and the ephod, and its girdle; the breast-plate, inclosing the mysterious Urim and Thummim; and the mitre, with its golden front, or the holy crown." The precious oil of consecration was then poured on his head. "A bullock for a sin-offering, a ram for a burnt-offering," and a second ram, termed the ram of consecration, were all, with significant rites, presented in sacrifice. A portion of their blood was sprinkled on Aaron; and thus, by a triple baptism of water, of oil, and of blood, was he set apart to discharge all the functions of his sacred ministry.

But how does the glitter of ceremonial grandeur become dim, when compared with the sublimely simple dignity of the appointment and consecration of our New Testament High Priest! The constitution of our Saviour's priesthood, was the result, not of a simple revelation of the Divine will, but of a Divine oath. "He was made a priest, not without an oath; for the Aaronical priests were made without an oath, but this with an oath by Him who said to him, 'The Lord swear, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec.'" This is one of the subjects, which, by their vastness and strangeness, oppress and confound the human mind. In reading these words, we feel, as if, like Paul, we were "caught up to the third heavens." Our thoughts are hurried back through the course of eternal ages; and we seem to witness, though the minuter parts of the sublime scene are hid in excess of brightness, that awfully important transaction among the independent and eternal

Three in One, from which originates the whole scheme of human redemption; and which, according to the different aspects in which our feeble faculties consider it, we denominate the counsel of peace, the covenant of grace, or the decree of mercy. The full import of these words, "The Lord sware, and will not repent," we cannot tell; but assuredly Jehovah does not swear about a matter of trivial import. They mark, in the strongest manner, the solemnity, the importance, the immutability of the appointment.

The circumstances in our Lord's history, which answer to the inauguration of the Aaronical priesthood, are also much superior in solemnity. How poor is all the pomp of Aaron's vesture, to those robes of heavenly wisdom and purity in which Jesus stood by the banks of Jordan! and, how does all the solemnity of his ceremonial investiture dwindle into insignificance, when compared with the opening heaven, the descending Spirit, and the voice of Jehovah from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!"

By a baptism of blood and of the Spirit—"the oil of gladness," was the Redeemer consecrated to his office of an interceding priest. To this the apostle seems to refer, when he says, "It became him, by whom are all things, and through whom are all things, to make the Captain of our Salvation *perfect* through suffering." "By his own blood, he entered into the holy place." In the eyes of all enlightened, intelligent beings, there is infinitely more solemnity in the single death of the Son of God, than in the sacrifice of a hecatomb of victims, in all the pomp of Mosaic or Pagan ceremony.

The introduction of the high priest into the sanctuary, was a very splendid ceremony. But how does its glory fade away before the "excelling glory" of the entrance of the High Priest of our profession, baptized in his own blood, into the "holy place not made with hands,"—the true tabernacle, of which the Jewish sanctuary was merely the figure, to present the blood of his sacrifice before the throne of mercy, to make intercession for his people, and to sit down a "priest upon his throne!" "God went up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." "The chariots of God were twenty thousand thousand of angels. The Lord was among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." The whole celestial city was moved at his coming; the "everlasting gates" were thrown wide open to receive the

triumphant procession; and as he sat down with his Father upon his throne, the arches of the temple above rung with, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive glory and honour, power and riches, strength and blessing."

4th, Jesus Christ is superior to the Aaronical priesthood, in the value of his sacrifice.

The great design of the priestly office, was the offering to God both "gifts and sacrifices for sins." In proportion to the efficacy of these sacrifices, must be the dignity and importance of the priesthood; and under the moral government of a holy and a just God, the efficacy of a sacrifice must be in proportion to its value. The comparative value of the sacrifices of Jesus Christ and the Aaronical priests, is a just criterion of the comparative importance of their priesthood.

The value of a sacrifice arises from two sources—Divine constitution, and intrinsic worth. The first of these is absolutely necessary in every case. Sacrifice is not a duty of natural religion, but a positive institution. Without Divine revelation, we could neither have known that sacrifice is a duty, nor what sacrificial victim we ought to offer. It is owing to this circumstance, that the heathen expiations, though the victims were often rational beings, were not only without value as sacrifices, but were abominable in God's sight. Instead of being acceptable duties, they were enormous crimes. And could the human nature, even of the Son of God, have been offered without Divine appointment (a supposition, however, which involves in it a contradiction), even IT would, as a sacrifice, have been destitute of value.

At first view, the sacrifices under the law, and the sacrifice of our Lord, may be considered as on a level with regard to the value derived from Divine appointment; for both were equally of Divine appointment. That God appointed the Aaronical sacrifices, is plain from the book of Leviticus. That He appointed the sacrifice of our Lord, is equally obvious from such passages as the following: "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.—It pleased the Lord to bruise him.—Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.—The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.—He delivered him up for us all.—He gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.—He made him to be sin for us."

But though God really appointed both the sacrifices in the temple, and the sacrifice on Calvary, the objects of the two Divine appointments were very different. The design of the divinely-appointed Levitical sacrifices, was to “sanctify to the purifying of the flesh.” The design of the divinely-appointed sacrifice of Christ, was to “purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” The object of the former was, to procure the remission of ceremonial guilt, purification from ceremonial defilement, and deliverance from temporal punishment. The object of the latter was, to procure the remission of moral guilt, purification from moral pollution, and deliverance from everlasting misery. The sacrifice appointed by an infinitely wise and just God, to serve the last of these purposes, must be more valuable than those appointed by Him to serve the first of them.

The value of the Aaronical sacrifices arose *entirely* from Divine appointment. Of themselves they were altogether insufficient, even for the purposes for which they were intended. Their value, *as sacrifices*, was entirely extrinsic, originating in their being a Divine ordinance. Their connection with their object was like that which existed between our Lord speaking a word and curing a disease; not that which exists between the application of medicine, and the removal of the disorder.

It is otherwise with the sacrifice of our Lord. That sacrifice was *in itself* valuable; and between it and its object there existed the connection both of means and end, cause and effect. It was *in itself* calculated to gain the purpose for which it was intended. It was not so properly valuable because it was appointed, as appointed because it was valuable.¹

The intrinsic value of the victims offered in sacrifice by the Aaronical priests, was comparatively trifling. They were all of them irrational animals. The blood shed was that of bulls and goats. But Christ's sacrifice was the “sacrifice of himself,”—

¹ Were I not afraid of degrading a subject so important, by my attempts to illustrate it, I would say, the Levitical sacrifices resemble a state-paper currency, which owes both its value and its use to the appointment of the government; whereas the sacrifice of our Saviour bears an analogy to the gold coin. It has value in itself; the stamp of the mint only gives it currency; and it is because it is valuable that it is made current. May I be forgiven for tracing the analogy a little further? It is from its reference to real property, that paper currency has even the value it possesses. It is from a reference to the great sacrifice, that the Levitical expiations derived their principal value.

himself both body and soul. The life of a man is more valuable than the lives of innumerable beasts. The soul of a man is more valuable than a universe of mere matter. The sacrificial victim was, in the case of our Saviour's offering, an intelligent being, possessed of the highest intellectual endowments and moral excellences; so that, even in this point of light, the sacrifice of Christ was incomparably more valuable than those of the Aaronical priesthood.

The most important fact, however, in reference to the value of our Lord's sacrifice, remains to be stated. The sacrificial victim was a human nature most intimately united to the Divine, in the person of the Son of God. The Divine nature necessarily impresses its own dignity and value on the constituted person of the Messiah, and upon his whole mediatory work. Accordingly we find the value and efficacy of the sacrifice of the Son of God, is, in Scripture, referred to his essential Deity. "In *him* we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; *for* by him were all things created." The Son of God, whom He has "appointed heir of all things, by whom He made the worlds, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power, *by himself* purged our sins." "*Through the eternal Spirit*, he offered himself to God a sacrifice without spot." Can anything be more evident than that, in these passages, the value, and consequent efficacy of the Redeemer's sacrifice, are represented as flowing from his being a possessor of the Divine nature?

It is indeed most true, that the Divine nature is not susceptible of pain or death; and the cause of scriptural truth has been materially injured by the use of a phraseology by some of its honest and able defenders, which seems to imply the absurdity and impiety of the Divine passibility. Yet still, though only the human nature was, or could be, offered in sacrifice, it was the human nature of the incarnate Deity; and "God manifest in flesh," stamped his own glory on the propitiation for our sins.

How the infinite dignity of the Lord's divine nature conveyed an infinite value to the sufferings of his humanity, it is difficult, or perhaps impossible, for us fully to explain. The fact is certain,

and is of the last importance, as the foundation of the sinner's hope of acceptance with God.¹

There is a somewhat different aspect in which this most in-

¹ To attempt fully to explain such a subject, as the manner in which the divinity of the Saviour affects the value of his sacrifice, is certainly to endeavour "to be wise above what is written;" but we may surely "show the reasonableness of such a doctrine, and rebut the charges which rashness or profaneness may throw out against it, without overstepping the boundary prescribed to our feeble and fallen faculties." This has been done in so masterly a manner by an English divine, in whom seem to meet, in rare combination, extensive learning, critical acumen, consistent orthodoxy, and fervent piety, that I conceive I am doing an important favour to the reader, by presenting him with the following statement.

"I. The assumption of human nature by the Eternal Word, who is God, was the act of an infinite mind, knowing, intending, and contemplating all the *results* of that act of assumption, through the period of the designed humiliation, and for ever. To the Divine mind, nearness and remoteness of time or space are equal; consequently, as the actual assumption of human nature was the first result of the Omnipotent will, so the same act or volition must equally have carried forwards, and communicated its original Divine value, to all the subsequent moral and mediatorial acts of the incarnate Saviour.

"II. The union of the divine and human natures in his person, was constant and invariable. The Scriptures afford us no reason to think, that the Messiah's human nature, though retaining always its essential properties, had ever a separate subsistence. To the mother of Jesus it was announced, 'The holy being which is born of thee, shall be called the Son of God'; and, according to the prophetic declaration, as soon as the world could say, 'Unto us a child is born,' so soon was it the fact that his name was called, 'the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God.' It was the Mediator in his whole person, who acted for the salvation of man, though it was impossible that the divine nature could be subject to suffering.

"From these two positions, I infer a third, which I venture to propose as an unexceptionable mode of stating this important, though profound and difficult subject.

"III. All the acts of our Lord Jesus Christ, that were physical or merely intellectual, were acts of his human nature alone, being necessary to the subsistence of a human nature; but all his moral acts, and all the moral qualities of complex acts, or, in other terms, all that he did, in and for the execution of his mediatorial office and work, were impressed with the essential dignity and moral value of his divine perfection.

"These reasons appear to me sufficient to authorise our attributing to this holy sacrifice, a value properly infinite, on account of the divine nature of Him who offered it. A most important conclusion! rich in hope to the contrite sinner; full of joy to the obedient believer.

"I cannot decline also to observe here, how close and important is the connection between the two leading doctrines of the Christian system, the Deity and the atonement of Christ. They yield mutual illustration and support, and neither can be consistently held without the other."

These paragraphs are extracted from Dr Pye Smith's Sermon "*On the sacrifice of Christ*," pp. 53-55; a well reasoned and elaborate discourse, which, besides giving a very satisfactory view of the subject in general, is calculated to be particularly useful as a *necessary* supplement to Dr Magee's work on Atonement. Dr Smith's discussions in reference to the "*value and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ*," fill up a *most material defect* in the able and learned treatise of his predecessor, which, *so far as it goes*, is an unanswered and unanswerable defence of the scriptural doctrine of sacrifice and atonement.

teresting subject may be viewed ; and from the contemplation of which, the superior value of the sacrifice of our Saviour, above the Levitical sacrifices, will become yet farther apparent. The value of a sacrifice consists in its tendency to propitiate the Divinity, or, in other words, in its tendency to give such a display of God's hatred against sin, and his determination to punish it, as renders it consistent with his moral character and government to pardon and save the sinner. Now, that in this point of view the sacrifice of Christ infinitely transcends in value the Levitical sacrifices, may easily be made evident.

There are two circumstances with respect to a sacrifice, which may be viewed as illustrative of the displeasure of God against sin—the degree of suffering endured by the victim, and the dignity and excellence of the victim who undergoes the suffering. It is self-evident, that the pain suffered by all the victims which bled in sacrifice under the law, was as nothing when compared with the pain endured by our blessed Redeemer. And if there be no proportion as to the first mode of illustrating the Divine hatred of sin, the obvious disproportion is still more striking as to the last. What an infinite difference is there between the display given of the Divine displeasure at sin, by devoting some thousands of irrational animals to a violent and somewhat untimely death, and that given by inflicting on his own well-beloved and only-begotten Son, agonies which extorted from his lips these words of fearful emphasis : “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ! My God, my God ! why hast Thou forsaken me ?” Surely, if the value of the sacrifice be a just criterion of the dignity of the priesthood, our Saviour has “obtained a more excellent ministry.”

5th, Jesus Christ is superior to the Aaronical priests in the excellence of the blessings procured by him in the exercise of his priestly office.

The Aaronical high priesthood was a source of benefit, both to those who were invested with it, and to those on whose behalf they performed the sacerdotal functions. The high priest, in consequence of his office, was elevated above all his brethren. His apparel was splendid,—his revenue princely,—and his attendants numerous. His office was the most honourable known among the people of God, and he was admitted to intercourse with the Divinity peculiarly intimate.

But, how much more elevated are the honours, how much more rich are the blessings, which the "High Priest of our profession" has obtained for himself! He is "a priest upon his throne." "Because he humbled himself," in the offering of his sacrifice, "and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." God has prevented him with the blessings of goodness. "He has set a crown of pure gold upon his head. His glory is great in God's salvation. Honour and majesty have been laid upon him. God has made him most blessed for ever;—He has made him exceeding glad with his countenance." Because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors, he sees his seed, he prolongs his days, and the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hand. Jehovah apports him the great as his reward; and he "receives the many as his spoil." Instead of being permitted once a-year to contemplate the symbol of Deity in the material holy of holies, our New Testament High-Priest enters into heaven, and enjoys for ever the most intimate and uninterrupted communion with God. "Christ being come, a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entered in unto the holy place: He is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us."

The benefits procured by our Lord's performance of the functions of the priesthood for those in whose behalf he acts, are also incomparably more excellent than those secured for the Israelites by Aaron and his sons, in the discharge of their sacred duties. The Aaronical priesthood, by the performance of their sacred duties, obtained for the Israelitish people the remission of ceremonial guilt,—the removal of ceremonial pollution, and an exemption from the temporal evils to which these exposed them. They secured for them a right to mingle in the services of the sanctuary, and the peaceful enjoyment of the promised land.

These were, no doubt, blessings of very considerable value;

but they shrink into nothing when compared with the benefits procured for sinful men, through the sacrifice and intercession of Christ Jesus. A man might enjoy all these privileges, and yet perish for ever. But, through the priesthood of Jesus Christ, we obtain benefits large as our wishes, and lasting as our souls;—benefits suited to our nature, as rational and immortal, and to our situation as guilty and depraved. “In him we have redemption through his blood—the forgiveness of sins.” He has “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” so “that there is now no more condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” Through the priesthood of Christ, we obtain also deliverance from moral pollution. By the mission, incarnation, and sacrifice of the Son of God, the power of sin over elect men is destroyed. “God, sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and a *sin-offering*, condemned sin in the flesh, which the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.”¹ The blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself to God a sacrifice without spot, purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Through the priesthood of Christ we obtain too, complete and eternal exemption from the dreadful consequences of moral guilt and depravity. “Jesus delivereth us from the wrath to come.”

Nor is even this all. He has obtained for us free access at all times, and in all circumstances, to the throne of mercy. Through “the new and living way, opened through the rent veil of his flesh, and consecrated” by his blood, may the sinner approach in the assured hope of pardon, and the saint in the joyful expectation of “finding grace to help in every time of need.” In fine, through the priesthood of our Lord, is obtained for us the enjoyment of the heavenly Canaan. It is in consequence of his being slain, that men are redeemed to God, and admitted to the honours and joys of the celestial state. “Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have *washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore* are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in his temple; and He that sitteth on the throne

¹ Romans viii. 3. *πρὸς ἁμαρτίας.*

shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." How much superior in excellence, then, are the benefits procured by the priesthood of our Lord, to those obtained by the Aaronical priesthood! Judging of the comparative dignity of the offices, by the comparative importance of their results, we must acknowledge that Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry.

6th, Jesus Christ is superior to the Aaronical priesthood in the duration of his office.

The individual priests of the order of Aaron, like the rest of their brethren, "were of few days." The office by no means conferred immortality on those who were invested with it. "They truly," says the apostle, "were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." And not merely were the individual priests mortal, but the institution itself was but temporary. It did not last above fifteen hundred years. Nearly eighteen centuries have elapsed since any descendant of Aaron performed any of the priestly functions. Their altars are overthrown; the temple in which they ministered is levelled with the dust; and its sacred fire is extinguished for ever.

It is far otherwise with our New Testament High Priest. His mediatorial person is immortal, and his priestly character perpetual. "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him." "This man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." This was typified, under the former dispensation, by the priesthood of Melchizedec, whose predecessors and successors, both as a man and a priest, are concealed, for the express purpose of his shadowing forth the immortal life of the Messiah, and the perpetual duration of his priesthood. "For this Melchizedec, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him: To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being, by interpretation, king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is king of peace: Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of

life: but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually. The law maketh men high priests who have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

It is true, indeed, that with respect to one of the leading functions of the priesthood, Jesus has long ceased to exercise it. I allude to the offering of sacrifice. "He was once," and but once, "offered to bear the sins of many." This, however, instead of detracting from, is one of the most powerful illustrations of, the dignity and excellence of his ministry. The repetition of the Aaronical sacrifices was a proof of their inefficacy. It was "because their sacrifices could not take away sin, that every priest under the law stood daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices." "Had these sacrifices made the comers thereunto perfect, would they not have ceased to be offered?" The perfection of our Saviour's sacrifice completely superseded, not merely all other sacrifices, but the repetition of itself. This one sacrifice "put away sin,—obtained eternal redemption for us,—and perfected for ever all them who are sanctified." "Having offered one sacrifice for sin, he for ever sat down on the right hand of the throne of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." The efficacy of his sacrifice is, however, immortal. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

The other functions of the priesthood our Saviour continues for ever to perform. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." He for ever retains the power and the disposition to bless his people. Whether the priestly office of our Saviour is to be considered as, strictly speaking, eternal,—or whether it is to be considered as everlasting, merely in reference to the present order of things, and to terminate when "the Son shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all and all," are questions, the full discussion of which would involve us in some abstruse inquiries, and the resolution of which is by no means necessary for any important purpose, either of duty or of comfort. Whatever view we take of this subject, the superiority of our Lord's priesthood to that of the family of Aaron, is abundantly evident. Their lives were short, and their office temporary. His life is immortal, and his office unchanging.

Thus does it appear, whether we compare the priesthood of Aaron, and the priesthood of our Lord,—or contrast them, the result to which we are led is the same, the transcendent excellence and glory of our Lord's sacerdotal character. He has received a more excellent ministry.

And now, "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." He has been presented to our minds in various aspects; and the believing contemplation of him in each of them is calculated to instruct and to comfort you. As he is a possessor of the nature and perfections of Deity, with reverence and holy fear yield him religious homage; "he is your Lord, and worship ye him;" rely on his sacrifice, for it must be infinitely valuable; and trust to his grace, which must be all-sufficient. As possessed of immaculate moral excellence, behold in him the pattern of your conduct; and, contemplating his matchless worth, be transformed into his image from glory to glory. As divinely appointed to, qualified for, and invested with, the high priesthood of our profession, "see that ye refuse not him" who bears so high a commission; but, with unsuspecting confidence, commit the management of your spiritual interests to "him whom the Father has sanctified, sent, and sealed." To the merits of his atonement, look for the pardon of all your sins. To the prevalence of his intercession, look for the acceptance of all your services. To the power of his benediction, look for comfort here and happiness for ever. As the possessor of an immutable and immortal priesthood, fear not to trust him with your everlasting interests; and look forward to eternity without fear, since he ever lives to pardon and bless you. As he is the only High Priest of your profession, beware of going about to establish your own righteousness, and "trust in the Lord Jehovah, in whom alone is everlasting righteousness and strength." And, as he has done *all* for your salvation, devote yourselves with unreserved hearts to the advancement of his honour, and the fulfilment of his will. Improve the atonement, the intercession, and the saving power of the Redeemer, for all the purposes of holiness and of comfort, and "let the life you live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved you, and who gave himself for you."

How miserable is the situation of those who neglect or despise

our great New Testament High Priest! How enormous is their crime! how profound must be their perdition! "How can they escape, who neglect so great salvation!" "For them there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, to destroy the adversaries." Without delay, let every sinner "flee for refuge to the hope set before him in the Gospel." In the world to come, into which we must soon enter—to unforgiven, unregenerate men, there is no atoning sacrifice, no quickening Spirit. "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation."

I conclude with the reflection by which the discourse was introduced: How full are the Scriptures of our Lord Jesus Christ! He is, indeed, the sun and substance of them. He gives them meaning and consistency, importance and beauty. No portion of the Scriptures is apt to be perused with less pleasure and advantage, or indeed, considered by itself, appears less worthy of God, than the very particular detail which we find in the books of Moses respecting the Levitical priesthood. Viewed, however, in connection with the priesthood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we perceive their meaning, we feel their importance. "As the sun paints the clouds, which are in themselves but dark lowering vapours exhaled from the earth, with the most glorious colours; so, when the Sun of righteousness rises, even the 'carnal ordinances' and commandments of the law, dark and earthly as they seem, are gilded by his beams, and assume a fair and smiling aspect. Under his benignant influence, who is the light of the word, as well as of the world, the most barren parts of Scripture 'blossom as the rose.'" ¹

¹ M'Ewen.

SERMON V.

THE ABOLITION OF DEATH.

2 TIM. i. 10.—“ Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, hath abolished death.”

WHAT an interesting description have we in these words of that illustrious personage, to commemorate whose infinite excellence and ineffable love, as manifested in his “ dying, the just One in the room of the unjust,” we are to-day assembled,—OUR SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST; and what a glorious work is he here represented as performing,—THE ABOLITION OF DEATH! Let us first take a transient glance of his personal and official glories, as here exhibited, and then, somewhat more closely, contemplate that mysterious portion of his saving work, to which our attention is specially called by the words of the text.

I. OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. How sweet, to the ear of a believer, are these sounds! how precious to his heart, the truths to which they give utterance! Saviour—Deliverer—there is music in the very name. It tells of wisdom in the mind, and benignity in the heart, and energy in the arm, of him who bears it, and of all these effectually put forth, in the extinction of evil and the production of good. It speaks of relief from oppression, from pain, from sorrow, from danger, from fear; and, of course, calls up agreeable feelings in every benevolent mind, though the Deliverer be unknown to us,—though the delivered have no peculiar or intimate connection with us.

But he whom the apostle holds up to our devout contemplation is not only *a* Deliverer, *a* Saviour. He is OUR Deliverer, he is OUR Saviour. The Saviour of MEN. OUR Saviour, the Saviour of every one of us. Oh, what a view does this give us of his grace, and power, and wisdom! What were men? sinners,

“sinners before the God of heaven exceedingly.” How inexcusably guilty, how righteously condemned, how fearfully depraved, how deeply degraded, how variedly wretched, how hopelessly lost! How infinite must be the kindness which could induce any one to become THEIR Saviour; how infinite the wisdom which could form a satisfactory plan for delivering them from such complicated evils; how infinite the power which could carry such a plan into accomplishment! OUR Saviour, not the Saviour of sinning angels. No. He “laid not hold on them” to save them, he left them to the natural effects of their own impious rebellion; but he “laid hold” on us, not less impious, not less inexcusable rebels. Oh, how sovereign is his kindness! how distinguishing his grace! OUR Saviour, the Saviour of the race, by Divine appointment; “the Saviour of the world;” so that if any perish, it is for any reason rather than the want of a Saviour. OUR Saviour, ready to put forth his saving power in the case of every one of us “coming to God by him.” OUR Saviour, I trust, in the case of not a few now before me, by the personal acknowledgment of his claims, by the actual enjoyment of his salvation.

Our Saviour JESUS, *i. e.*, JEHOVAH the Saviour, the DIVINE Deliverer, Immanuel God with us, in our nature, on our side; a deliverer to whom the incommunicable name of Deity, Jehovah—incommunicable, because expressive of perfections which no creature can possess,—properly belongs: the independent, eternal, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, infinitely wise, infinitely righteous, infinitely benignant, ONE. How does this raise our thoughts, both of the Saviour and of his salvation! Our Saviour is “the great God,” “God over all, blessed for ever;” and the salvation wrought out by him, is worthy even of HIS power, wisdom, and benignity.

Our Saviour CHRIST,—the anointed one, known to the fathers as “Messiah the prince:” in his official character, clad in humanity, the divinely appointed, divinely qualified, divinely accredited prophet, priest, and king, the teacher, the expiator, the sanctifier, the deliverer or Saviour in all the depth of meaning belonging to that term, reaching as wide as the extent of man’s miseries and dangers, and stretching out to the illimitable ages of man’s immortal existence,—a deliverer from ignorance and error, from guilt and condemnation, from depravity and moral

degradation, from pain and sorrow, from death and endless destruction; in one word, a deliverer from evil, physical and moral, in all their forms and in all their degrees; and a deliverer from all these for ever and ever. Such is a very imperfect development of the "grace and truth" folded up in these words—OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

What an appellation is this! how replete with abundant consolation and good hope! Happy they who know this name, for all who truly know it, trust in him who bears it; and all who trust in HIM shall find that his name, truly understood, can excite no hope too high not to be realised, and they shall not be "ashamed or confounded, world without end."

"Sure 'tis the sweetest, dearest name,
 The heart can know, the tongue proclaim;
 Saviour of men, and Christ of God,
 What rich perfume it spreads abroad!
 'Tis balsam to the bleeding heart,
 When pierced by sorrow's keenest dart;
 A cordial to the fainting soul,
 It makes the wounded spirit whole.
 It calms our passions, dries our tears,
 The mind disconsolate it cheers;
 'Tis strong support, and sure relief,
 In hours of greatest guilt and grief.
 This name our powerful foes shall quell,
 'Twill raise our hopes, our fears dispel;
 From worst of ills 'tis our defence,
 And all our blessings flow from thence."

"His name is as ointment poured forth."

II. Having thus cursorily glanced at the descriptive appellations here given to our Lord, let us now contemplate, a little more closely, the wonderful work in which he is here represented as engaged: THE ABOLITION OF DEATH.

DEATH, a word often used in Scripture, figuratively, to signify *miser*y generally, as life is used to express *happi*ness,—is here obviously employed in its proper signification of a dissolution of the connection between the two constituent parts of human nature, body and soul, in consequence of which, "the dust returns to the dust as it was, and the spirit returns to Him who gave it." This change, though universal, is not, properly speaking, natural. It does not belong to the original economy under

which man was created. It is an awful anomaly ; it is a fearful departure from the truly natural course of things ; for as an apocryphal writer beautifully says, “ God did not create death. He made man immortal, and formed him an image of his own eternity ; nevertheless, through the envy of the devil came death into the world ;” or in words of infinitely higher authority, “ Death entered into the world by sin,” “ the wages of sin are DEATH.”

Death, though not by any means the most dreadful effect of sin, is a very frightful evil. It is something abhorrent to nature, and to a prodigious extent destructive of happiness and productive of misery. Viewed as the effect of the Divine displeasure, the execution of the Divine curse, and the entrance into an eternity of misery, it is, and it ought to be, consummately terrible ; and even when viewed, as much as possible abstracted from such considerations, there is much about death to scare the imagination, to alarm the mind, to revolt the feelings, to agitate the heart. It finally removes us from a world with which we are familiar, and from friends to whom we are fondly attached ; and ushers us into a state of existence of which we have no experience, and introduces us to beings, of whose modes of existence, and action, and enjoyment, we have no distinct conception. The events which usually precede it are all of a kind calculated to alarm and distress :—exanimating sickness, agonising pain, depressing debility, restless agitation, convulsive struggles ; and then come the fearful consequences in reference to the material part of our nature, the dreadful process by which our organised frame is resolved into its original elements, the dust returning to the dust as it was,—consequences which make us glad to hide the dishonour of our common nature, in the bosom of our common mother the earth. It is not wonderful, then, that death, in the language of all nations, should, when personified, be represented as an enemy ; and among the evils from which mankind need to be delivered,—the dissolution of the component parts of our nature, with the causes in which it originates, and the effects which it produces, occupies, by universal consent, an important place.

It is the ABOLITION of this evil that is here ascribed to “ our Saviour Jesus Christ.” DEATH is descriptive sometimes of the *event* of the dissolution of the connection between soul and body ;

sometimes of the *state* into which this event brings the material part of our frame. It sometimes means *dying*. It sometimes means *being dead*. It sometimes means both. To "abolish death," is in the first sense of the term, to put an end to men dying. To abolish it, in the second sense, is to restore those who are dead, to *embodied* life, and to secure that they shall never be deprived of this life. There can be little doubt that the great work referred to in the text includes both ; for, in the state which is to follow its complete accomplishment, there is to be "no more DEATH." The meaning is, our Saviour Jesus Christ has put an end to dying, and has raised all the dead to a life of which they can never be deprived. That is the plain meaning of the words.

But how can we reconcile this statement with palpable indubitable fact ? Death reigns with as unlimited dominion, with as uncontrolled sway, with as irresistible force, since the promised Conqueror of him "who has the power of death," appeared among men, as it did "from Adam to Moses," or from Moses to Christ. Still "it is appointed to men to die." The awful doom is obviously unrepealed, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." And, while there are many burials, there are no resurrections. The gates of the tomb as yet open only inwards. The deep sleep of death has not been broken ; or if, in one or two instances, the spirit has returned to the inanimate frame, it has been only to be a temporary occupant, soon again to be expelled by the relentless enemy. Yet, the Scripture cannot be broken. "God must be true, though every man should be a liar ;" and this is one of his true and faithful sayings.

The difficulty of reconciling the undoubtedly true saying, with the equally incontrovertible fact, has been felt, and various plans have been devised for removing it, and for showing the real consistency of what appear to be irreconcilable. Some have supposed that the words merely signify, that our Lord has, in a clear and well-accredited revelation of the Divine will, declared that death shall be abolished, and that the reign of that king of terrors shall not be perpetual ; as when he proclaimed, "The hour comes, when all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of condemnation." And there is no doubt, that the declaration of a future event by

a Divine messenger, is sometimes, to mark the certainty of its being performed, spoken of as the actual accomplishment of the event. Speaking of his appointing Jeremiah to predict the varied fates of nations, Jehovah says, "Behold I have put my words in thy mouth. I have set thee to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant;" and the apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, speaking of the same prophet, says, in reference to one of his predictions respecting the Christian economy, "In that he saith, a *new* covenant, he maketh the first old," or antiquated; *i. e.*, he declares that the old economy should be superseded by the new; and the same inspired writer says, that, in the ancient oracle, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedec," "there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, and the bringing in of a better hope," obviously meaning that that oracle necessarily implies, that, at some future period, there should be the dissolution of the economy of which the Aaronical priesthood was an essential part, and the introduction of an economy furnishing a surer basis for the hopes of men. The text may be explained on this principle, but this mode of expression being unusual, this method of interpretation is not to be resorted to without absolute necessity.

Others get rid of the difficulty, by giving a limited sense and reference to the word translated *abolished*, as if it meant, not annihilation, but merely depriving of energy, disabling; in the case before us, robbing death of its character to Christians, of an execution of a Divine curse, a manifestation of God's displeasure at them personally; and converting it into an instrument of good, the means of delivering them from all imperfection and sorrow, and introducing them into a state of unmingled holy felicity. This, too, appears to me a mode of interpretation far from natural. Christ, no doubt, has done this; but he has done more, or is to do more, than this, in reference to DEATH; and the words, in their plain meaning, describe the complete and ultimate, the perfect and eternal triumph of "the Prince of Life" over death, and "him that has the power of death." It seems just equivalent with the destruction of death, in the parallel passage, "The last enemy death, shall be destroyed."

I believe, the true principle of interpretation is this:—The declaration of the text is expressed in what grammarians term

the indefinite time. It represents the abolition of death as a work in which the Saviour is engaged. He has begun it; he is carrying it forward; he will in due time complete it. In our language, when we express a statement indefinitely, we usually employ the present tense. We would say, "Our Saviour Jesus Christ *abolishes* death, and *brings* life and immortality to light."

It is what he is habitually doing. He is the **ABOLISHER** of death. He is the **ILLUMINATOR** of life and immortality. He has entered on the mighty enterprize, and in due time he will completely accomplish it.

Let us now contemplate our Lord in this character. Let us see what he has done, what he will do, in the abolition of death. Taking for granted, that our Saviour Jesus Christ is "the Lord God Almighty," it would appear, viewing the matter abstractly, that the abolition of death must be a very simple, easy, matter to HIM,—of whose will the most stable laws of nature, as we call them, the most uninterrupted, and, as we think, necessary processes, are merely the expression or manifestation. It is because he wills the universe to exist, and to exist in a particular way, that it does so. He has but to will it otherwise, and it would cease to exist, or it would exist in a totally different form, under what we should term new laws. He bade man live, and he would have continued to *live*, had he not bidden him *die*; and he has nothing to do but to will it, and dead men shall live, and mortal men become immortal.

But the subject wears another aspect when we consider **DEATH** as a part of the moral government of God,—a penalty inflicted for the violation of a holy, just, and good law. Our whole notions on this subject will be confused and erroneous, if we do not keep this steadily in view. "Death is the wages of sin." "By one man death entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed on *all* men." Death is one of the appointed expressions of Divine displeasure against sin. Death, then, cannot be abolished by a simple act of the Divine will, by a single stroke of the Divine arm. "God cannot deny himself." The putting down death by mere power would be as if a king were to employ his army to rescue a criminal whom his judges had, according to law, doomed to punishment. It would be to produce anarchy in the moral government of God. Death cannot be abolished till something be done which shall better do

what death is intended to do,—express that malignity which there is in sin, and vindicate the excellence of the law, and the authority, and righteousness, and benignity of the Lawgiver.

It was by accomplishing this, that our Saviour Jesus Christ laid the foundation for the abolition of death, in a consistency with the perfections of the Divine character, and the principles of the Divine government. And how did he accomplish this? God appointed HIM the victim of human transgression. He destined him as “His Lamb” who was to “take away the sins of the world.” He “made to meet” on his head “the iniquities of us all;” and “he bare our sins on his own body on the tree” as a sin offering. He submitted to DEATH, “the just One in the room of the unjust.” “He made his soul an offering for our sin.” “He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.” And was not the law “magnified and made honourable,” by such a satisfaction both to its preceptive and penal demands,—magnified much more highly than it would have been, in the unsinning obedience and consequent immortal life of the whole race, had they continued innocent and immortal; or in the universal infliction, and ever enduring dominion, of death over the whole race, now that they had sinned? Sovereign kindness may now, to what extent, guided by infinite wisdom, it pleases, abolish death, without any hazard to the pillars of truth and justice on which the government of God rests. The just Author may now be the just as well as the merciful repealer of the law of mortality. Thus mysteriously did the great antagonist of death vanquish him by becoming his victim. “By dying he destroyed” death, as well as “him that had the power of it.” He expiated sin, which is death’s sting. He satisfied the law, which is sin’s strength; and, in sinking under his stroke, he, as it were, exclaimed, “O death, I will be thy plague;” in entering the gloomy portals of the tomb, “O grave, I will be thy destruction.”

But this is not the only way in which that wondrous decease, we are met to-day to commemorate, contributes to the abolition of death. That obedience which was consummated in that death, was the fulfilment of the benignant holy will of God. The interposition of the Son in the cause of truth, righteousness, and benignity—of God’s honour and man’s salvation, originating in disinterested benevolence, most pure generosity, most enlightened

zeal for holiness, carried on in a manner entirely faultless, absolutely perfect, and brought to a thoroughly satisfactory issue, was necessarily the object of the infinite complacency of the all-wise, holy, and benignant Jehovah: and this complacential approbation was manifested in bestowing on him, who displayed these principles, as the perfected Redeemer of men, "all power in heaven and earth" to be exerted by him in following out his benevolent interposition to its glorious results: and this reward was bestowed on him as at once merited by his labours and sufferings, and peculiarly suited to the benevolence of his character. "Because he" had so clearly proved that he "loved righteousness and hated iniquity, God, even his God, anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows." "Because he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, He highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, that at his name every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." He constituted him the administrator of those blessings of his grace for which, by his atonement, he had opened up a channel for communicating to sinful men. He "set him at his own right hand, far above all principalities and powers, and thrones and dominions, and every name that can be named, either in this world or in that which is to come." He placed him on his own throne, and said to him, "Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool;" and there he sits and reigns, and shall sit and reign, putting down "all rule, and authority, and power," opposed to God. "For he must reign till *all* his enemies are made his footstool." Ay, till even "the last enemy, death, is destroyed."

The power and authority thus obtained, he has already exercised in the ABOLITION OF DEATH in reference to himself. He, in the exercise of the power given him by the Father, "took his own life again" which he had most voluntarily in obedience to the same command, "laid down." According to his own prophecy, he rebuilt the mystic temple on the third day after impious hands had laid it in ruins. He rose from the dead—to die no more—"Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death has no more dominion over him; for in that he died he died by sin once—but in that he liveth he liveth by God."

“Put to death in the flesh, he was quickened by the Spirit”—that “Spirit of holiness” according to which he is “declared with power to be the Son of God;” that “eternal Spirit” by which “he offered himself to God a sacrifice without spot or blemish.” The resurrection of Christ is often, indeed, represented as the work of the Father; but there is no inconsistency between these representations and that which we have now given. The power of the Father and the Son is the same power,—the power of God; and “what things soever the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise.” It is probable, too, that “he abolished death” in all the extent of meaning belonging to the word abolish, in the case of those saints whose “bodies came out of their graves after his resurrection.” It seems congruous to suppose that they attended him to heaven, and that along with him there they “reign in life.”

But the grand triumph over the last enemy is yet future. The Redeemer, “made perfect through suffering,” has, after “tasting death for every one” of his people, become “the first-fruits of them that sleep.” His empty grave is the indication that by-and-by all the graves of his people shall be empty too. “In him,” through him, “*all* shall be made alive, but every man in his own order; first, Christ, then they who are Christ’s “at his coming.” With regard to the final and complete abolition of death, we have the most explicit declarations in the sure word of prophecy. The minuter details are hid from us; the great outlines are strongly marked: “This is the will of the Father who hath sent me,” says the faithful and true Witness, “that of all whom he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.” Yes, “this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” “I am the resurrection and the life.” “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound), while the living shall be changed, the dead shall be raised incorruptible; for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality; so when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass that saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” “Them who sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him. They who are

alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent"—*come before, have advantage over*—"those who are asleep. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall first arise; then they who are alive and remain shall"—having been changed—"be caught up, together with" those awakened from the sleep of death, "in clouds"—myriads on myriads, ten thousand times ten thousand—"to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they for ever be with the Lord." "And God himself shall be with them, and shall be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." "He who sitteth on the throne" will then have finished the work of restoration, and shall proclaim, as erst from the cross, "It is finished," "Behold I have made all things new." Well, then, with the full assurance of faith, may "we look for the Saviour from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself."

Nor shall death be abolished merely in the case of the "nations of the saved." It will cease to exist in the universe of God. When the hour is come of which our Saviour speaks, "ALL in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and come out, some to the resurrection of life, some to the resurrection of condemnation." No token of the displeasure of God at the *race*, shall be allowed to remain. That displeasure will only appear towards the finally, wilfully, irreclaimable, impenitent, and disobedient part of the human race. "Death and hell," *i.e.*, the separate state, "shall be cast into the lake of fire,"—*i.e.*, the state of death and of separate souls shall cease to exist. Then will all the intelligent universe of God have demonstration given them, that "our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death." And oh, how loud, and lofty, and sweet, and long drawn out, will be the shout of triumph over the fell tyrant—the hymn of thanksgiving to the Conqueror, the "Prince of Life," "the King Immortal," who has destroyed him, which shall rise from the countless multitude of ransomed captives,—“Oh death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! Thanks, everlasting thanks, be to

Him who giveth us the victory ;” “ Salvation to our God, who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever, hallelujah,” and again, and again, and again “ they shall cry, HALLELUJAH.”¹

Yet still, though in the case of all who are “ in Christ Jesus, the spirit lives through the righteousness” of the Second Man, and though “ He who raised him from the dead, will quicken our mortal bodies on account of his spirit dwelling in us,” yet must “ the body die,” “ because of” the first “ sin” of the first man ; and death must, in the first instance, “ reign over all,” even of those who are ultimately to “ reign in life, by Christ Jesus.” And the question naturally arises in the mind,—But why is not death now abolished?—why do men,—why do redeemed men die,—why do their bodies continue, it may be for many ages, in the grave—why is the prey allowed to fall into the hands of the mighty,—why are the ransomed captives not delivered ?

It may be doubtful how far it is wise, either to propose or to attempt to answer such questions. It might be enough to say, “ It is not for us to know,” or to determine “ the times and seasons.” “ His time is” obviously “ not yet come, our time is always ready.” With Him “ one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” It might be enough to say, that it takes its place along with a number of other questions, which men, more curious than wise, have proposed : Why did God not form man with an absolute security of continuing holy ? Why were the destinies of the *race* so deeply involved in the conduct of their original parents ? Why were sinning angels consigned to hopeless destruction, while a Saviour was provided for man ? Why, when the merits of that Saviour and the power of his Spirit were equally infinite, were not all men saved ? Why was the Saviour of the world not brought into it, till four thousand years after men needed his interference ? Why, before his coming, was revelation confined to one nation, and since his coming,

¹ “ How insipid and tame are the history of all other conquests, of the rise and fall of all other kingdoms and empires, when compared with the grand and wonderful achievements of the ‘ King Immortal,’ and the fall of death beneath his power ; then will he ‘ swallow up death in victory,’ and then clothe his redeemed in garments of immortality. Death shall be known and feared no more. Millions of millions shall join in everlasting praises to Him whom all the redeemed will acknowledge as their great deliverer.”—ROBERT HALL.

why has it not been extended to all nations? I scarcely think angels meddle with such questions; but “fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”

It can do no harm, however, to remark, that the delay, till the close of the present system of things, of the abolition of death, is owing to no want of *merit*, or of *power*, or of *grace*, on the part of the great Deliverer; neither are we, I apprehend, going “beyond our measure,” when we advert to some of the advantages which seem to be connected with the plan infinite wisdom has preferred, though in this, as indeed in every thing, “His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are our ways his ways.”

While it is utterly impossible for us to see to what an extent the immediate abolition of death would affect the established order of things, we cannot avoid seeing, that its effects would be most numerous and important, changing entirely the character of the present state, and unfitting it for many of the purposes it at present serves.

The denunciation of death, as the punishment of the first sin of the first man, is exceedingly precise; and its execution, in the case of every individual, is a striking confutation of the first lie,—a striking vindication of the truth of God.

It is also a most impressive standing lesson of the evil of sin:—Race after race descend into the grave, to mark God’s displeasure at a single offence against his law; and that, in the estimation of many, no very flagrant one. The Great Judge of all the earth appears full of awful majesty, when we see DEATH, his messenger, riding forth conquering and to conquer. How important to secure his favour—to escape his righteous displeasure!

Death, too, in various ways, whether their own death or the death of others, proves the means of exercising and strengthening the holy principles of renewed men, their faith, their hope, their humility, their resignation, their patience; the Saviour thus wresting out of the devil’s hands the weapons of his own forging, and turning them into instruments of holiness and happiness, instead of sin and misery.

Besides, it is obvious that the abolition of death, at once and for ever, will place in a peculiarly glorious light the power and grace of the Conqueror, and the magnitude and completeness of the victory. Had all the dead saints at the resurrection of

Christ,—a goodly company, but still comparatively a little flock,—been set free from the bonds of death, and taken with him to heaven; and had, since that time, every individual saint been freed from the necessity of dying, and been quietly “clothed upon” instead of being “unclothed,” the scene had been incomparably less striking than what will be exhibited on the last eventful day of the world’s history, when the merit and the power of the Redeemer founded on his merit, will bring the whole human race out of their graves, and before his tribunal; and enable him to confer on all of them an endless existence, on his own redeemed ones, an endless existence of perfect, holy happiness. Oh what a day of triumph to the Redeemer and the redeemed! How glorious will “the King of Israel,” the “Captain of our salvation,” be that day, at the head of his ransomed re-animated legions! Yes, radiant as they will be in holy light and loveliness, their glory will be as nothing, by reason of his glory which excelleth; a glory, compared with which the splendour of ten thousand suns is as darkness. Yet will he not only be glorious in himself, but “glorified in his” risen “saints,” with bodies fashioned like unto his glorious body, “and admired” by all the angelic millions “in them who have believed.”

The use we ought to make of these truths, is not far to seek. Why should a Christian be, through fear of death, subject to bondage? Death to him is great gain. With “the mortal body,” he puts off not only all its infirmities and disorders, but also the “body of sin and death.” By absence from the body he obtains presence with the Lord: and yet a little while, and “mortality shall be swallowed up of life,” and “the adoption, the redemption of the body” so eagerly desired, so deeply groaned for, shall be attained to.

And why should Christians mourn their departed friends, with an inconsolable sorrow? They are not LOST; they are gone before. They are in safe keeping, both body and soul. Ere long we hope that our spirits shall mingle with theirs, in the mansions of rest prepared for the disembodied souls of the faithful; and by-and-by, we, by the grace of our Lord, expect, in re-animated and transformed bodies, incapable of fatigue, or pain, or disease, or death, to spend an eternity with them, in the most interesting and exalted employments, in pure, transporting, unceasing de-

lights. When we meet them next, "all tears will be wiped both from their eyes and ours;" and that consideration, if it do not prevent, as it will not, our shedding tears, will take away from these tears much of their bitterness.¹

How eagerly should all seek a personal interest in this glorious Saviour. Oh how dreadful to be restored to life by him only to become capable of more varied and severer punishment for ever! Yet this must be the case with those who do not become acquainted with him as a Saviour, before they meet him as their Judge.

In fine, how reasonable and right is it, for Christians to hold in everlasting remembrance this most illustrious Deliverer, and especially to remember that DEATH by which the abolition of death was secured, and a channel opened by which "eternal life, the gift of God," might find its way both to our "mortal bodies" and to our guilty, dead, depraved souls. Let us gladly embrace the opportunity now offered of commemorating Christ's death, and may we find in the commemoration of HIS death, consolation for the death of our friends, and preparation for our own.

¹ Grove.

SECTION II.
INTRODUCTORY ADDRESSES,
OR
“FENCING OF THE TABLE.”

ADDRESS I.

THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS OF A CHRISTIAN.

IT is a delightful truth, of which we ought never to be weary of speaking, nor you of hearing, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners even the chief; and that whosoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out.” No guilt, however aggravated,—no depravity, however deep-rooted, excludes the sinner from applying to the Saviour for pardon and acceptance, holiness and everlasting life. We are called to proclaim the good news to every creature, and to invite “whosoever will, to take of the water of life freely.” There are no reserves in our commission, and we wish to make none.—The invitation to the table of Jesus is, however, by no means so extensive. In receiving the Lord’s Supper, men are considered not merely as sinners, but as believing and penitent sinners; not merely as persons who may and ought to come to Christ, but as persons who have actually come to him. The Divine Master of the feast, who, in the former case, proclaims—“Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come, buy and eat, without money and without price;” in the latter case, confines his invitation to persons of a particular character—“Eat, O *friends*, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved!”

A thoughtful person, who perceives this distinction, which is marked with sufficient plainness in the Holy Scriptures, will be

anxious, before taking his place at the Lord's table, to know, whether he be among the guests who have been invited, and who may reasonably expect to be made welcome by the Master of the feast. To relieve this natural anxiety, is the design of the preparatory duty of self-examination. It is not impossible, however, that even after serious attempts at self-inquiry, considerable obscurity may still hang on the important question, and a difficulty of discovering the path of duty may prevail to a distressing degree. To resolve, as far as possible, these doubts and scruples, on the one hand; and, on the other, to warn those who, though strangers to the power of religion, have so much of the form of it as to render it impossible to exclude them from church communion, of the danger to which they expose themselves, by intruding into a situation to which they have no right, seem to be the ends proposed by that part of the service of our church, to which we now proceed,—the stating plainly from the Scriptures, the character of those who have, and of those who have not, a right to the Lord's table. This service not being of direct Divine appointment, is, of course, not absolutely necessary to the right dispensation of the Lord's Supper; yet its use is sufficiently apparent. It is not intended to be a substitute either for church discipline or self-examination—though it is feared it sometimes has been thus abused. It is intended to do what church discipline cannot do, and what self-examination may not have done. If judiciously performed, it can scarcely do harm—it may do much good—and it is certainly quite in the spirit of the apostolic injunction, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.”

‘He who deeply and habitually feels his need of the Saviour, who cordially acquiesces in the Christian plan of salvation, who is under the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, and who pays a religious regard to all the commandments of God,—he, and he only, has a right in the sight of God to a place at the table of Christ.’ Listen with attention and self-application to a plain illustration of the different parts of this proposition.

1st, He only has a right to the Lord's table, who deeply and habitually feels his need of the Saviour: “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” The righteous law of God denounces condemnation against “every soul of man that doeth

evil." Every sinner is thus "condemned already;" and the sentence must be executed, unless satisfaction be made to the injured honour of the Divine government. This satisfaction no finite creature can give, and, of course, unless some superior being interpose in his behalf, man must perish for ever. These are principles with which all of you have been familiar from your infancy, and it is likely that all of you are ready to admit their truth: But it is one thing thus to take for granted that all mankind are sinners, and quite another thing, deeply and habitually to feel your own individual need of salvation.

Make this last point the subject of serious self-examination. Have you ever been convinced, that the law of God condemns you, as an individual, to everlasting destruction? Have you ever seen your total inability to procure for yourself the reversal of this tremendous sentence? Have you trembled at the prospect of endless perdition, and cried out in good earnest, "What shall I do to be saved?" If you are a total stranger to such feelings, you cannot be an acceptable communicant. He who never felt his need of a Saviour, never embraced him.

But beware of concluding, that you have a right to the table of the Lord, merely because you have had convictions of your danger as a sinner, and your need of a Saviour. Many have been convinced who have never been converted. Have your convictions been transient or abiding? did they wear off without producing any important permanent effect? or did they lead to faith, repentance, and obedience? Do you habitually feel that you are a sinner, and have constant need of the Saviour? If you do, you have reason to hope that you will be a welcome guest at the table of Jesus.

2d, He only has a right to the Lord's table, who cordially acquiesces in the Scriptural mode of salvation. In the Holy Scriptures, there is made known to us a scheme of reconciliation, formed by infinite wisdom, and executed by infinite power, by which guilty man may be pardoned, and depraved man regenerated and sanctified. Of this Divinely constructed plan the following is an outline: The Son of God, moved by pure benignity, in obedience to the appointment of his Father, voluntarily engaged to become the Saviour of a lost world. In pursuance of this engagement, he substituted himself in their stead, assumed their nature, obeyed the law to which they were subject, and endured

the penal evils which they deserved. The design of this was, to save them at once from the wrath of God and from all iniquity. The merits of his obedience, sufferings, and death, were infinite, and, in the estimation of Divine justice, perfectly adequate for both these purposes. On the ground of this satisfaction, He offers pardon, and purity, and eternal life. No merits, no doings of our own are required, to give us an interest in the blessings of this salvation. We are called on but to believe, to the saving of our souls. By this faith we are united to his person, justified by his righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit.

Now, what are your sentiments with respect to this way of reconciliation? Do you see little in it that is great or good, excellent or admirable? Would you rather be saved without being so completely indebted to the grace of God, and the merits of his Son? Does the freedom of salvation, and the exclusion of boasting, so offend your pride, as to induce you to refuse eternal life as a free gift, and to go about to establish your own righteousness? Then are ye yet strangers to the power of Jesus' grace.—But are you accounting the gospel record “worthy of all acceptance”? Is the plan of reconciliation “all your salvation and all your desire”? Do you “count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus”? and is it your supreme desire “to be found in him, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”? Then are you indeed the friends of Jesus, and ought to testify your friendship by sitting down at his table.

3d, He only has a right to the Lord's table who has experienced the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Divine Spirit. All who are interested in the righteousness of Christ are made partakers of his Spirit. “He who has not the Spirit of Christ is none of his.” This Divine Agent effects a complete transformation of the sentiments, tempers, dispositions, and habits. “If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and behold all things become new.” He is “created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works;” saved by “the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

Now, let every intending communicant examine himself, whether he has experienced this transforming influence? This question is to be determined by observing whether or not we

exhibit the fruits of the Spirit in our temper and behaviour. Are our affections habitually fixed on earthly objects—do we with reluctance engage in religious services—do we habitually indulge vain or vile thoughts—has no important *change* ever taken place in our mode of thinking and feeling? Then have we much reason to fear, that we are yet “dead in trespasses and sins.”

But, on the other hand, have our sentiments and our dispositions undergone such a change as to merit the appellation of a “new birth”? Do things spiritual and divine occupy many of our thoughts? Do improper thoughts and feelings excite deep uneasiness, even though they should not break out into open wickedness? Do we habitually live under the influence of the power of the world to come? Are hatred of sin, and love of holiness, habitual principles of action with us? Then we cannot, without at once neglecting a duty and undervaluing a privilege, refuse to approach to the table of the Lord.

4th, He only has a right to the Lord’s table, who pays a religious regard to all the commandments of God. There are many who would trust in Christ as a Saviour from hell, if they, at the same time, could obtain exemption from the authority of his holy law. All such, whatever may be their profession, are enemies to the Saviour. To no purpose do men call him “Lord, Lord, if they do not the things which he commands them.” “If ye love me,” says he, “keep my commandments.”

Let, then, the intending communicant examine himself, as to his sentiments and conduct in reference to the Divine law. Canst thou habitually indulge in the commission of what thou knowest this law forbids, or in the omission of what thou knowest this law requires? Dost thou secretly wish that the precept of the Divine law had not been so strict, and that its penalty had not been so severe? Dost thou choose which of God’s commandments thou wilt obey, and which of them thou wilt not obey? Does thy partial obedience proceed more from a fear of the Divine vengeance, than from a love of the Divine law? Dost thou fear the penalty of the law, more than thou lovest the precept? Then thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, and thou canst not eat the Lord’s Supper, without profaning that ordinance, and injuring thyself.

But, on the other hand, canst thou say, notwithstanding thy many lamentable and lamented failings, thou lovest the law—

thou delightest in it after the inward man—that when thou sinnest, thou condemnest thyself, and justifiest thy God—that thy desire is not that the law were brought down to thy weakness, but that thou wert brought up to its perfection—that to be holy is the strongest desire of thy heart—that thou accountest all God’s commandments to be right, and hatest every wicked way—and that the love of God and of Christ, constrain you to attempt an universal obedience to the Divine law? If thou canst say all this with a good conscience, thou art a friend of Jesus, and heartily welcome to “come in and sup with him.”

As “the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart,” I conclude with directing you to a few passages of Scripture, in which the character of saints and sinners are very plainly delineated.—Psal. xv. ; Matth. v. 3–9 ; Gal. v. 19–24.

Examine yourselves by these scriptural marks,—and may the Divine Spirit guide you into such a determination, as shall be glorifying to the Redeemer, and useful to your own souls.

ADDRESS II.

THE FAMILY OF CHRIST.

NOTHING is more plainly revealed in Scripture than this,—that true Christians are a peculiar people, invested with peculiar privileges, formed to a peculiar character, and distinguished by a peculiar mode of conduct. Though “in the world,” they are not “of it.” Their principles and their spirit, their pursuits and their pleasures, are altogether of a different kind from those of the men among whom they live. As every thing peculiar about Christians arises from their connection with Christ, there is perhaps no figurative view of this peculiarity of character and situation which we have just adverted to, more pleasing and instructive than that which represents them as one great family, of which Jesus is the head. In this interesting aspect, we find our Lord exhibiting himself and his people. The evangelical historian informs us, that, on one occasion, when Jesus was deeply engaged in his favourite employment of familiarly instructing the people, intimation was given him that his mother and brethren, who could not get near him for the crowd, were without, anxious to speak with him. Unwilling to be interrupted in the midst of his work, and seizing the opportunity which was afforded him of illustrating the closeness of the relation, and the tenderness of the affection, which subsisted between him and his disciples, “he stretched forth his hands towards them, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”¹

Among the peculiar privileges of the family of our Lord, the

¹ This incident in the gospel history, is so touchingly versified by our lamented

right to participate in the holy ordinance of the Supper must be numbered. This is a family feast,—a feast of love. It is the children's bread we break, and it must not be given to the dogs. All the children are welcome, but all else are considered as intruders, and may expect to meet with the alarming question, "Friend, how camest *thou* in hither?" Can we, then, be more appropriately employed, for a little, than in inquiring whether or not we belong to Christ's family? On the resolution of this inquiry depends the propriety of our taking our seats at his table.—How shall we know whether we are members of the holy family? All the members of that holy, happy society, are distinguished by intimate relation, warm affection, general resemblance, dutiful obedience to the Head of the family, familiar intercourse, and mutual good offices. Let us apply these general characters, for the purpose of discovering whether we belong to the family of our Lord.

1st, Are we distinguished by our intimate relation to our Lord Jesus Christ? All men are related to Jesus Christ, as their creator, and preserver, and governor, and benefactor, and judge; nay, all men are connected with him as partakers of the same nature; and all who hear the Gospel are connected with him as a Saviour, freely offered to them in the Divine testimony. But the relation I refer to, is far more intimate, and altogether peculiar to Christians. It is that relation, by the formation of which men become one with the Saviour; so one with him, as that all that he did, and suffered, and obtained as Mediator, is considered as done, and suffered, and obtained by them; so one with him, as that they receive out of his fulness, live by his life, and act by his strength. In this relation all true Christians are placed. They are *in* Christ Jesus.

countryman, Grahame, in his "Biblical Pictures," that I cannot refrain from gratifying the reader by quoting the passage:—

"Who is my mother and my brethren?

He spake, and looked on them who sat around,
With a meek smile of pity blent with love,
More melting than e'er gleamed from human face,
As when a sun-beam through a summer shower
Shines mildly on a little hill-side flock;—

And with that look of love, he said, "Behold

My mother and my brethren: for I say,

That whosoe'er shall do the will of God,

He is my brother, sister, mother, all."—GRAHAME'S *Poems*, vol. ii. p. 74.

But how are we to know whether we are distinguished by this relation? The question is not very difficult to answer. We are none of us by nature thus related to our Lord Jesus. This relation is formed by faith. All who believe are united with the Saviour; all who have not believed are still unconnected with him. Are you then believers? Are you persuaded of the truth of the Divine testimony concerning Christ? Do you cordially acquiesce in the way of salvation through his mediation? And do you personally rely on him, and on him alone, for pardon, acceptance, and eternal life? Another way of discovering whether we are thus united to the Saviour, is by inquiring whether we are possessed of the consequences of this union. The living head has living members. The fruitful vine has no barren branches. They who are in Christ, and abide in him, bring forth much fruit. Examine yourselves, then, whether ye be in Christ, and whether Christ be in you; for if this is not the case, ye are reprobates.

2d, Are we distinguished by the affections peculiar to the holy family? Families ought to be, and in many cases are, bound together by the cords of love. The Saviour loves his family: and “they love him who first loved them.” Can you, intending communicant! satisfactorily answer the question proposed by our Lord to the Apostle Peter, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” Canst thou say with him, “Lord, thou who knowest all things, knowest that I love thee.” Canst thou say, I love him above every created object—I love him more than worldly possessions—more than worldly relations—more than life itself, and yet I wonder and lament that I love him no more? Do you wish a criterion of trying the sincerity of your love to the Saviour? Hear his own words: “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:—if ye love me, keep my commandments.”—The family of Christ love the God and Father of their Lord. Once their “carnal mind was enmity against God,” but now they have learned “to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and strength, and soul, and mind.” Is this your character?—Farther, the family of Christ are taught of God to love one another. Do you love genuine Christians with a peculiar affection,—an affection founded on their Christian relations and qualities? “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.”

3*d*, Are we distinguished by a general resemblance to our Lord Jesus, and the members of his holy family? We generally find the same outline of features prevail among the members of the same family. It is so in a remarkable manner in the family of our Lord: "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also who are heavenly: And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." This resemblance, though not perfect in the present state, is yet real—universal—perceptible—and progressive.

Ask, then, intending communicant, is "the mind in me which was in Christ Jesus"? Do my sentiments and inclinations coincide with his? Am I in the world, as he was in the world, meek and lowly, tender and compassionate, patient and forgiving, zealous and active? Is the resemblance becoming more and more visible? "Beholding in a glass the glory of the Lord," am I "changed into the same image, from glory to glory"? And am I waiting and longing for that blessed period, "when he shall appear, and I shall be like him, seeing him as he is"? when the likeness shall be extended to the whole man? when "he shall change this vile body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body, according to the working of his mighty power, whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself"?

4*th*, Are we distinguished by dutiful obedience to our Lord, as the Head of the holy family? In every well-regulated family, the will of the head of the family is a law to the members of it. It is completely so in the family of our Lord. His will is the law of his house. Christians walk by rule; and that rule is not their own reason, or will, nor the opinions and will of other men, but the mind and will of Christ. Now, is this our character? Is our first inquiry with respect to any piece of conduct, what is the will of my Lord? Do we believe what Christ reveals, because he reveals it—do what he commands, because he commands it—and submit to what he appoints, because he appoints it? Is our regard to his will universal? Do we attempt to bring every thought and feeling into subjection to

him? Do we account his statutes concerning *all* things to be right? Have we no reserves, no exceptions? Is our obedience affectionate and cheerful—the obedience of children, and not of slaves? Do we delight to do his will—and “present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service”?

5th, Are we distinguished by that familiar intercourse which marks the members of the family of Christ? Members of this family have frequent and intimate intercourse, both with the Head of the family and with each other. Now, do we know what it is to have our “fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Christ Jesus”? Do we know what it is to tell our Saviour all our wants, and sorrows, and fears, and to receive the supply of our need “according to his glorious riches”? Do we highly prize the ordinances of grace, as the means of this communion? Do we greatly esteem the Holy Spirit, the great agent by whom this intercourse is conducted? Do we carefully avoid everything which has a tendency to interrupt this communion, by grieving “that Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance”? Do we maintain a friendly intercourse with our fellow-Christians, though they differ from us in opinion and usage on matters of inferior moment? “They who fear the Lord speak often one to another.”

6th, Are we distinguished by mutual offices of kindness, as members of the holy family? In a happily constituted family, the current of love is in constant circulation; and there is an endless succession of mutual kindnesses and attentions. It is so in the family of Christ. Are we distinguished by marks of the attention of our great Elder Brother and Head? Are we constantly receiving out of his fulness, receiving, according to our necessity, instruction and warning, reproof and consolation, chastisements and endearments? And are we attempting to do him good offices in return? Our goodness, indeed, cannot extend to him. He stands personally in need of none of our services: But he has a church on the earth which he identifies with himself. Are we endeavouring to promote its interests? Are we speaking to his honour, and living to his honour? Are we doing all we can to thin the ranks of his enemies, and increase the number of his friends? Are we daily making prayer for him, and daily also praising him?

By these plain scriptural marks, we call on you to examine yourselves. If you have no satisfactory evidence of relation, affection, resemblance, or obedience to Christ, nor of intercourse with him, nor of a mutual interchange of good offices, presume not to take a place among his children. But if, amid many deficiencies, you cannot but discern the outline of this character in yourselves, you are members of the holy family. Come, and welcome. Your Elder Brother sits at the head of his table, and his voice to you is, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved"!

SECTION III.

COMMUNION EXHORTATIONS.¹

EXHORTATION I.

THE REDEEMING LOVE OF GOD.

CHRISTIANS! the love of God to sinful men, is an overwhelming subject. It has a height and a depth, a length and a breadth, which bid defiance to the computing powers of created intelligences. It exceeds description; it "passeth knowledge."

Of all the numberless blessed effects of this love, the most wonderful is that which we are met this day gratefully to acknowledge, and religiously to commemorate: "God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. He spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all." All the other gifts of God, glorious as they are, lose all their lustre when contrasted with this gift, of value unspeakable, inconceivable.

Who the Son of God is, no created being can fully comprehend. On his vesture and thigh is a name written, the full import of which is known only to his Father and to himself; for, "as no man knoweth the Father but the Son, so no man knoweth the Son but the Father." To estimate his excellence exceeds our powers,—exceeds the powers of the highest created

¹ Those readers who may be disappointed in not finding a greater number of Communion Addresses, may be referred to Dr Belfrage's "Sacramental Addresses;" Dr Smith's "Sacramental Manual;" Eales' "Sacramental Exercises;" and the Author's "Hints on the Lord's Supper, and Thoughts for the Lord's Table."

being. Infinite intelligence can alone comprehend infinite perfection. Fix your attention, Christians, on the scriptural account of his glories, not that you may form an adequate estimate of his worth, but that you may be penetrated with the conviction that it is altogether inestimable.

His goings forth have been of old from everlasting. He was "in the beginning." Before the expanse of the heaven was stretched forth, or the sun had learned to know his place,—ere there was a day to rule, or a world to enlighten,—the Son of God existed, enfolded in the bosom of his Father, the partner of his honours, the equal sharer of his felicities. He is the "brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." By the exertion of his mighty power were the materials of all worlds called into existence; by his matchless skill they were arranged into that harmonious and beautiful system which we now behold; and by the continued exercise of the same infinite perfections are they upheld in being, and made to answer the purposes for which they were formed: "By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things subsist." It was he who inspired with wisdom the angelic hosts, and communicated understanding to the human soul. All the angels of God worship him, and heaven and earth are full of his glory.

The Son of God is not more glorious in himself, than he is dear to his Father: "The Father loveth the Son." Christ Jesus receives that appellation in a sense peculiar to himself. He is God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son. All that is implied in these appellations cannot be comprehended by mortals, but most assuredly they convey the ideas of intimate relation, and boundless complacency. God regards his saints and angels with compassion and kindness; but he loves his Son as he loves himself. He knows all the innumerable excellences of his nature, in all their infinite extent; and up to the full measure of his knowledge, if the expression may be admitted, does He love him.

Who could have expected, that a person so glorious in himself, and so dear to God, should ever have been exposed to incon-

venience or to sorrow? Surely it would have been natural to have expected, that the whole universe of creatures should have been allowed to sink in endless perdition, rather than the tranquillity of the Son of God should have been for a moment ruffled, or his happiness in the slightest degree impaired? Yet this glorious personage was not spared, when the salvation of a lost world required the sacrifice. When his interposition became necessary it was not withheld, and when he did interpose he was not spared. He was neither excused from suffering, nor spared when he suffered. He was delivered up; but to whom—to what? To enemies most formidable and numerous—to agonies most intense and deadly. The more we think of the sufferings of the Son of God, the more we are confounded and astonished. It is an object too big for comprehension—too awful for steady contemplation. He was delivered up to debasement and poverty, to pain and death,—to the power of devils—to the wrath of God.

And for whom was all this degradation submitted to, and all this suffering endured? Was it for creatures, unhappy indeed, yet worthy and innocent? No; it was for rebels against the Divine authority—violators of the Divine law—haters of the Divine purity;—Christians, it was for you. “Christ died for us;” he was “delivered up for us all.”

What can you render to the Lord for this, the greatest of his benefits? Take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.

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“In that night in which our Lord was betrayed he took bread, and when he had blessed, he brake it, and gave it to the disciples, saying, Take, eat: This is my body which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me. In like manner also after supper he took the cup, and when he had blessed, he gave it to the disciples, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood, shed for remission of sins unto many: Drink ye all of it. And as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death until he come.”

Communicants! “The lines have fallen to you in pleasant

places ; yea, ye have a goodly heritage." God has so loved you, as to give you his Son ; and, in giving him to you, He has in effect given you all you need for time and for eternity. There is no resisting the apostle's conclusion : " He who spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all, how will He not with him also freely give you all things ?" Yes, Christians, " all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, all is yours, ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Whatever is really good for you, of a temporal kind, shall not be withheld. If it is necessary to your happiness, nay, if it is really conducive to it, you shall be rich, and honourable, and great. Infinite wisdom knows, however, that, in ordinary cases, riches and honour, and grandeur, instead of being a blessing to the people of God, would be a curse—would entangle them in snares, and seduce them into sin, and therefore has generally assigned them but a moderate portion, sometimes but a scanty one, of worldly goods. Yet the poorest of you enjoy the benefits conferred on you by a securer tenure than the richest and mightiest of the sons of the world : Ye "*inherit* the earth." What you have is yours by the charter of the new covenant, is the pledge of your Father's love, and the earnest of a better inheritance. Fear not want ; for the all-sufficient God assures you that you shall not want any good thing : " What is good God will give : He will give grace and glory."

The best part of your inheritance, however, is that which is spiritual in its nature, and eternal in its duration. Whatever is necessary to remove the guilt, to purify the pollution, and to subdue the power of sin—to fill the mind with all necessary knowledge, and adorn the heart with all holy dispositions—to stimulate indolence, to assist weakness, to protect in danger, to comfort in sorrow, will certainly be conferred on you. Comfort in life, safety in death, happiness for ever, are all included in your inheritance.

Do unbelieving fears rise in your minds, lest those delightful anticipations should never be realised ? Look through these elements at the crucified Son of God, and be ashamed of your suspicions. God has given you his Son, and what will He refuse you ? The gift of Jesus is incomparably more valuable than any other, than the aggregate of all his other gifts ; and He who has given you the greater will not refuse the less. The

bestowal of all that is requisite for your happiness, is necessarily connected with the gift of Christ. He was given *for* you, that these benefits may be given *to* you. Were these refused, the unspeakable gift of God would have been bestowed in vain. In truth, Christ and his benefits cannot be separated. He who has the one must have the other. He who has Christ, has of course "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Ye are happy indeed, Christians, would you but believe your happiness, for ye may enjoy Christ in all things, and all things in Christ. When God gave his Son for you, ye were enemies; now, through the reconciling efficacy of his atonement, ye are friends. Most conclusively does the apostle argue on this subject, "God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved through his life." The gift of Christ Jesus, is a proof (what can be a stronger one?) of the love of God to those for whom he was given; and "whom He loves, He loves to the end." He resteth in his love: "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

"How great is his goodness! and how great is his beauty!" Let it ever be present to your minds, as the ground of your hope, the source of your joy, and the motive of your obedience: "O love the Lord, all ye his saints!" And, in proof of your love, reverence his authority, and obey his laws. "Delivered out of the hands of your enemies, by the tender mercy of your God, see that ye serve Him without fear, in righteousness and holiness all the days of your life."—Go in peace.

EXHORTATION II.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

“WE have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God! in the midst of thy temple.” Christians, imitate the holy psalmist’s example, and think ye of the loving-kindness of the great God your Saviour, now that, in the multitude of his mercies, he has brought you to his table. It is a delightful theme. Allow me for a few moments to guide your thoughts on it.

Think of the early commencement of his loving-kindness. It is an overwhelming thought,—there never was a period when your Saviour began to love you. There was indeed a period, and ye may recollect the time, when ye hated him, when ye violated his law, contemned his authority, and trampled on his atoning sacrifice; and his love was first manifested, when he turned you from darkness to light, and, by the invincible power of his grace, sweetly constrained you to love him. But did he then begin to love you? No; your conversion was the consequence, not the cause of his love: “He loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness did he draw you.” That the eternal Son of God should from unbeginning ages regard with love the worthless, guilty, depraved children of men, is indeed an idea which may well confound us by its grandeur, and amaze us by its strangeness; but, blessed be God, it is not more grand and astonishing than true and consolatory.

Think, Christians, of the inconceivable ardour and intensity of your Saviour’s love. Human language cannot express its fervour and tenderness. Maternal affection is, perhaps, the strongest instinctive principle of the human constitution. None but a mother can tell the tender anxiety and watchful love which agitates the bosom of a mother, when, in speechless

tenderness, she hangs over the cradle of her sick infant; but a thousand times more ardent, a thousand times more tender, is the compassion which glows in the bosom of the Saviour towards all his people: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, she may forget, yet will not He forget thee." But the journey from heaven to earth, the toils and the sorrow, the wounds and the death, of the Son of God, are the most satisfactory proofs of the ardour of his loving kindness.

Think, Christians, of the immutability of your Saviour's loving-kindness. He is "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He resteth in his love, and his name is "Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He may not—he will not—always bless you with equally clear manifestations of his love; and for this reason,—“your sins often separate between you and your Saviour, and your iniquities hide his face from you.” But, oh! you argue ill, Christians, if you conclude, because he afflicts you, therefore he loves you not. The opposite inference is the truth. He afflicts you because he loves you. His afflictive dispensations are the fruits of his affection. They are the fulfilment of some of the most precious promises of the everlasting covenant—the charter by which you hold all your blessings. The cause of his love is not in you, but in himself; and while he continues the same, his love will remain unaltered, unalterable. Sooner will the everlasting mountains be plucked from their deep-seated foundations—sooner will the universe dissolve like a vision—as soon will the throne of the Eternal crumble into ashes, as thy Saviour vary in his love.

Think, Christians, of the endless duration of your Saviour's love: "Whom he loves, he loves unto the end." Ye are interested in the favour of the Eternal, and "who can separate you from his love? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things," if called to encounter them, ye shall be made "more than conquerors, through him who loved you." Be persuaded, Christians, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate you from the love of Jesus Christ, your Lord."

Think, Christians, of the active and beneficent nature of the Saviour's loving-kindness. It led him to labour, and suffer, and die for you. It has procured for you the favour of God, the delights of holiness, and the glories of paradise. All you have, all you hope for, flows from this love.

And O forget not, Christians, the free, unmerited, unsolicited character of the Saviour's love. The love of Christ to sinners is of a description altogether peculiar. It is a love, not to dignity, but to meanness; not to beauty, but to deformity; not to innocence, but to guilt; in one word, and nothing more extraordinary can be said about it, it is the love of an infinitely holy and just God to guilty and depraved sinners.

While you muse, Christians, does not the fire of love burn within you, and are you not constrained to say, "We will remember thy love more than wine: We will think of thy loving kindness in the midst of thy temple"? In the amazing act now emblematically set before you, the death of Christ, you have the most abundant evidence of the inconceivable love of your Saviour; receive the sacred pledge of his kindness with reverence and with love.

AFTER COMMUNICATING.

Communicants! "Ye have thought of the loving-kindness of God your Saviour in the midst of his temple." I hope your meditation of him has been sweet, and that you are now disposed to say, "We love him, who first loved us."

"O love the Lord, all ye his saints!" It had been your duty to have loved him though he had never loved you. He is the most amiable and worthy of beings, and therefore the proper object of the supreme esteem and love of all intelligent creatures. But your obligations to love him are certainly greatly increased, by what he has done, and suffered, and procured for you. For you he left the honours and felicities of his pre-existent state; for you he took on him the nature of a man, the form of a servant, and the likeness of a sinner; for you he toiled and suffered; for you he bled and died: for you he obtained the favour of his Father, and the graces of his Spirit—the hope of immortality,

and the joys of paradise. Let a deep sense of his transcendent excellence, and his inconceivable kindness, ever dwell upon your heart, and excite a warm and active reciprocal affection.

Cautiously guard against every thing that has a tendency to abate the fervour of your love. If you are true lovers of the Saviour, you can never cease to love him. The Holy Spirit, who is the author of the love of Christ, as of every other holy principle in the heart of man, dwells in you, and will continue with you for ever. But, by involving yourselves too deeply in the cares or pleasures of the world, you are in danger of grieving the Spirit of love, and of provoking him to withdraw his enlivening influence. Live above the world, if you would wish to enjoy the manifestations of Jesus' love to you, and experience the pleasures which flow from your love to Jesus. Oh! it ill becomes you, Christians, to give yourselves up to a languid indifference with respect to the Saviour. Yet thus it too often is. The heart is cold under the melting beams of the Sun of Righteousness; and the affections are dull and stupid, when they should be waked to rapture at the remembrance of his love. Surely, my brethren, these things ought not so to be. Is this your kindness to your friend? It was not thus that Jesus loved you. His affection was unabated and unvarying. The floods of Divine wrath could not quench it; the thunders of angry Omnipotence could not terrify it; and all the glories of the celestial state cannot induce him, for a moment, to neglect the prosecution of the work of love. Sure I am, Christian, whatever may be the cause of your declining affection, it is not to be found in the object of your love. He has not become less amiable or excellent. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. His heart is still as tender—his hand is still as liberal, as when you first experienced his love. He is never weary of doing you good. O never be weary of the reasonable and delightful service of rendering love for love. Instead of your love waxing cold, let the fervour of your affection increase in proportion to your increasing knowledge of his excellence, and experience of his kindness.

Manifest your love to the Saviour, by abounding in exercises of kindness to him. Often think of him. Contemplate the dignity of his person, and the beauties and glories of his mediatorial character. Let thoughts of Jesus sanctify and sweeten

all your meditations. Often speak to him. Though he is unseen, he is ever near. Tell him all your wants, and fears, and sorrows. In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to him. Often speak of him. Speak of him to your fellow-saints, that you may inflame their affections. Speak of him to sinners, who know him not, that you may lead them into a saving acquaintance with his love. Imitate his example—love his ordinances—esteem and do good to his people—support his interest—and, in one word, obey his law. Retiring from his table, carry this solemn injunction on your consciences and hearts: “If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” Go in peace.

EXHORTATION III.

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST, AND THE MALIGNITY OF SIN.

CHRISTIANS ! the sufferings to which your believing and affectionate contemplation should now be directed, as the expiation of your guilt, the price of your redemption, and the foundation of your hope, were beyond conception intense and agonizing. The depth of the debasement to which your Lord submitted, the severity of the anguish which he endured, cannot be conceived by the imagination, nor told in the language of mortals. A consideration of the cause, however, for which he suffered, may enable us to form some idea of their prodigious extent ; or, at any rate, may serve to impress us with this truth, that our most dreadful conceptions of them come far short of the dreadful reality.

Christ Jesus, “ the Just One, suffered in the room of the unjust.” “ He who knew no sin, was made a sin-offering in our stead.” He suffered for sin, and in the room of sinners. He died, to expiate our guilt, avert our perdition, and secure our salvation. Sin is an evil of inconceivable magnitude : It is the violation of obligations endlessly varied, and infinitely powerful. Our obligations to love and serve God, as they arise from, so they must correspond to, the excellencies of his nature, the relations we bear to him, and the favours which we receive from him. The perfections of his nature are, in the widest sense of the word, infinite. Our relations to him, as our creator, our preserver, our governor, our judge, are numerous and intimate ; and the blessings we receive from him are in number infinite, and in value incalculable. Sin, then, must involve, in its very essence, the violation of obligations inconceivably strong : It is rebellion against the highest authority, and ingratitude for the

greatest goodness : It is disobedience to the best of parents, and treason against the greatest of rulers : It is to pour contempt on infinite condescension and kindness, and to set at defiance infinite power and indignation. What then is the just desert of sin ? What is the merited doom of the sinner ? The answer of reason and of God is,—Death, and destruction—the second death—everlasting destruction. Every *sin* deserves this, for God has said so ; and if every sin, surely much more every *sinner* : for what man has not been guilty of thousands, of tens of thousands of criminal actions ?

Jesus suffered, not for one offence, but for innumerable offences—not for one sinner but for a multitude of sinners, whom no man can number : “The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. Exaction was made, and he became answerable. The chastisement of our peace was upon him.”¹ He bare all that was necessary, in the estimation of a righteous God, to render it consistent with the principles of his moral government, to pardon and save sinners of mankind. He sustained the weight of Omnipotent displeasure at sin ; that eternal opposition to moral evil, which has produced such tremendous consequences on sinning men and angels. How dreadful, then, must have been his mental sufferings when he groaned in Gethsemane and bled on Calvary ! This, this accounts for his deep groans, and his speechless agony : This explains these otherwise most mysterious words, “My God, my God, why hast THOU forsaken ME !” His understanding was clear and unclouded. He knew the full extent of the demerit of sin, with which he was charged : He surveyed it in all its fearful dimensions, in all its terrifying aspects. He saw the dark cloud big with the thunderbolts of Divine indignation, he perceived it ready to discharge its thousand deaths on his devoted person : He knew the fearful power of the wrath of Jehovah : yet he meekly bowed his anointed head to the eternal decree—the bolt descended, and the Man, Jehovah’s fellow, sunk down into the dust of death. But he thus exhausted the contents of the wrathful cloud ; it has vanished from the sky ; and on those who by the faith of the Gospel are interested in the saving effects of that death, the light of Divine favour shines for ever with mild, unclouded radiance. “It

¹ Isa. liii. 6, 7. Lowth.

is finished," Christians! all is finished that was necessary to complete your deliverance: Your sins are expiated, your salvation is secured; and this bread and this cup are the testimonies, that "in Christ ye have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of Divine grace."

AFTER COMMUNICATING.

COMMUNICANTS! the malignity of sin, and the severity of the Saviour's sufferings, mutually illustrate each other. In the malignity of sin ye have seen the severity of the Saviour's sufferings; now, in the intensity of the Saviour's sufferings, contemplate the malignity of human transgressions. Though "fools make a mock at sin," to the reflecting mind innumerable and palpable proofs present themselves, "that it is an evil and a bitter thing." The malignity of moral evil is written in legible characters on the ills of life,—sickness, disease, and pain—pestilence, famine, and war—disappointment, sorrow, and remorse—in the agonies of dissolution, and the torments of hell. But he who would wish to see sin in all the hatefulness of its nature, the ruinousness of its tendencies, and the horror of its deserts, must take up the position which you now occupy, and turn the eye of the mind to an incarnate, suffering, dying Saviour—to Bethlehem, to Gethsemane, and to Calvary.

Behold him who is the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; who is in the form of God, and God over all blessed for ever, clothed in human nature, and leading the life of a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs! Behold the Lord of angels insulted by men, and tempted by the devil! Behold the Son of God, deserted of his Father, hanging on a cross, shut out from all sensible communications of Divine assistance, and suffering the most dreadful effects of Divine indignation at sin, while nature shudders at the sight, and the sun hides his face from beholding a scene so horrible! And then say, Christians, if it is a light thing to violate the obligations of the Divine law, and to contemn the authority of the God of heaven?

Is sin, then, so malignant in its nature, and so tremendous in its consequences? Did it expose our generous Lord, our dear Redeemer, to so much degradation and distress—so much bodily

anguish and mental agony? And shall not you, Christians, regard it with a mixed emotion of terror and detestation? shall it not be your first desire, and your most assiduous labour, to discard it from your conduct, and to exterminate it from your hearts? Are you not afraid of its power, sick of its tyranny, and anxious, above all things, to be delivered from its influence? In the sufferings of Christ ye have not only the completest evidence of the detestable and fatal nature of sin, but of the certainty of your being ultimately delivered from its power. These severe sufferings of the incarnate Son of God “finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness.” They did more: “they condemned sin in the flesh, which the law could never have done; so that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” If you have a right to the station which you now occupy, you are already delivered from the thralldom of sin: “Your old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that ye may no longer serve sin. Reckon then yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin, then, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield your members to sin, as the instruments of unrighteousness, but yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead; and your members to God, as the instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”

It is likely, that some of you feel it difficult to believe in this legal security from the power of sin, while you feel so much of its active influence within you. But trace the evil to its source, and you will find that it flows from a want of due confidence in the Divine promise. Improve this ordinance, for strengthening your faith in the sanctifying as well as the expiatory efficacy of the Saviour’s atonement, and you will find it a most powerful instrument for subduing the corrupt principle in all its various forms. You have seen, as it were with your eyes, the new covenant ratified in the blood of the Redeemer; and are there not in this covenant, promises of deliverance from the depraving influence, as well as the condemning power of iniquity? “Trust in the Lord for ever.” Live by the faith of the Son of God, and your lives will be at once lives of holiness and of peace,

—honourable to your Saviour and edifying to his people: “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” In his strength “give all diligence to add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity; for if these things be in you and abound, they shall make you that ye shall be neither idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Be strong, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.”

EXHORTATION IV.

THE CHRISTIAN SALVATION.

“How much owest thou unto my Lord?” is a question which in your case, Christians, is not very easily answered. You owe Him much, but how much, language cannot express, nor imagination conceive. All the blessings of the Christian salvation are the fruits of his bounty; and these blessings are infinitely numerous, and every one of them inconceivably valuable: “They could not have been gotten for gold, neither could silver have been weighed for their price: they cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx and the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal them: their exchange shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls, for their price is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal them, neither shall they be valued with pure gold.” The power of the highest angel, though employed through all eternity on the subject, could not collect all the items, nor sum up the mighty aggregate of your debt to my Lord:—Yet is the labour by no means undelightful or unprofitable, to exercise our feeble powers in this species of spiritual arithmetic; for, though we never can fully estimate the extent of his kindness and our obligation, we may thus obtain a deeper impression of a truth well fitted to excite grateful delight, and to stimulate to diligent obedience—that both are incalculable.

Few employments are more appropriate to your present circumstances, than such a survey of the benefits of the Christian salvation as has been now adverted to; for all these blessings, while to you the free gift of God, are the dear-earned purchase of the sacrifice of that holy suffering humanity of the Son of God, of which the instituted emblems stand now before you. The

price and the purchase will reflect mutual illustration on each other; and the higher value we learn to set on both, the more pleasant and profitable will be our communion feast.

In order to make your conceptions on this subject at once more vivid, accurate, and impressive, allow your mind to rest for a few moments on your situation, previously to your becoming partakers of the grace of the gospel. Children of wrath and of disobedience—condemned already—enemies of God, and objects of his displeasure—hopelessly, because wilfully enslaved to Satan and to sin—mortal, yet without anything to sweeten the bitterness of death—immortal, yet destitute of all prospect of an eternity of blessedness; such was your situation and character, for such is the situation and character of all the children of our fallen progenitor. Above you was an angry Deity, around you the instruments of his vengeance, and beneath was the gulph of perdition, yawning wide to receive you.

Turning from this scene of horror with a mixed emotion of terror and gratitude—terror at the danger escaped, gratitude for the blessings obtained—fix your minds on the glories and felicities of the Christian salvation: “In Christ ye have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” Ye are “accepted in the Beloved.” “Justified by faith, ye have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also ye have access by faith into that grace wherein ye stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Ye are “created anew in Christ Jesus to good works.” Ye are become new creatures: “old things are passed away, and all things are become new.” God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, loves you, and blesses you with heavenly and spiritual blessings. He invests you with the dignity, and forms you to the disposition of his children: Ye are made “partakers of a Divine nature,” and “the Spirit of grace and of glory rests on you.” All things work together for your good. None can separate you from the love of God. None can pluck you out of the Saviour’s hand. Angels are your guardians, Christ is your brother, and God is your Father: “Beloved, now are ye the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when HE shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory.”—This is only an outline of the benefits of the Christian salvation; but it has the advantage of being drawn by the pencil of inspiration.

It is indeed a salvation which includes in it “the enjoyment of God and all his perfections, of Christ and all his benefits, of the Holy Spirit and all his graces, of the new covenant and all its immunities, of the gospel and all its promises, and, what crowns all, it includes in it the enjoyment of all these for ever and ever.”¹ Oh, how valuable must have been the sacrifice which purchased this salvation—how boundless the generosity which bestows it! While in this holy institution you contemplate this salvation so dearly purchased, so freely bestowed—when you see the Saviour’s body and blood at once given *for* you, and *to* you,—bless the Lord with all your souls, and forget not all his benefits.

AFTER COMMUNICATING.

COMMUNICANTS! the holy ordinance in which you have just been engaged, was originally appointed by the Saviour, in the immediate prospect of his death; and ought to be observed by his followers, in the anticipation of their being made conformable to him in his death, and going down to the place where the Lord lay. For, wide as is the extent of the Christian salvation, it includes not in it exemption from the ordinary lot of mortals: “It is appointed to *men* once to die;” and the saint, as well as the sinner, must bow to the Divine ordination. Yes: children of immortality as ye are, ye must submit to the stroke of death: “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”

The recollections which naturally present themselves to your minds, in your present circumstances, are peculiarly calculated to excite a deep sense of your mortality. Where are the Christians with whom, in your earlier years, you were wont, in this place, to compass the altar of God? Where are the servants of Christ, who used, on these solemn occasions, to minister to your spiritual improvement? “Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?” The venerable form² which used to occupy the place where now I stand, is already dissolved into its original elements, while the ardent spirit which animated

¹ Grosvenor.

² The Rev. John Low, who died Nov. 1804.

it is, we trust, a flaming minister of God, among ten thousand flaming ministers. Your fathers, who used here to worship, are gathered to the congregation of the dead; and not a few of them also to "the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." Yet a little longer, and the lips which now address you must be sealed in the silence of death; and those hearts which are now, I trust, animated and agitated by devotional feeling, shall be cold and motionless as the turf which covers them.

These anticipations, Christians, ought certainly to inspire seriousness; but in you they need not, they ought not, to produce melancholy. In the believing recollection of the Saviour's death, you have all that is necessary to render the prospect of your own not merely tolerable, but delightful: "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." But Jesus, by dying, has satisfied the law, which gave sin its power—and destroyed sin, which gave death its terrors. In consequence of his death, you shall not *wholly* die, and you shall not die *for ever*. Your body must die, but your soul shall not perish: "The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness." When "absent from the body," ye shall be "present with the Lord." Freed from all those physical evils of which the body is the seat, and from all those moral evils, too, of which it is the occasion, your purified spirits shall be admitted into the most intimate acquaintance with the Divine character, and be blessed with the most ravishing communications of the Divine love. It is true, you must bid adieu to all your earthly relatives and friends; but you go to the house of your heavenly Father, to mingle with your spiritual kindred. It is true that you must relinquish for ever the ordinances of grace, in which you have experienced so much enjoyment; but you go to the God of ordinances, and, instead of drinking at the streams, you ascend to the fountain of blessedness. It is true, you must close your eyes, to open them no more, on the glorious sun, and this beautiful system of things; but you go to a world where "there is no need of the light of the sun, for the glory of Jehovah and the Lamb enlightens it."

And even that part of you which must die shall not die for ever: "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also

quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Yes, though your flesh must "see corruption," it "shall rest in hope." The dead bodies of the saints remain connected with the person of the Son of God, and are under the immediate care of Omnipotent kindness. He who reared the wondrous fabrics, watches over their consecrated ruins; and he will in due time collect their scattered atoms, arrange them in their former comely proportions, and form them into "buildings of God, houses not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And oh how changed, how improved, will be the corporeal part of the frames of the saints when reunited to its immaterial companion! "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." We show forth the death of our Lord, in the expectation of his second coming; and we know our expectation shall not be disappointed: "For to them that look for him, he will come the second time without sin unto salvation." And when he does come from heaven, "he will change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself."

Why, then, Christians, should you be afraid to die? Your spirits shall ascend immediately to the bosom of Jesus, and your bodies sleep in peace in the bosom of the earth, till the morning of the resurrection. Nor let the anticipation of the exanimating sickness and the intense pain which frequently precede dissolution, nor of the unknown agonies of the last conflict, alarm your minds. All is in the hands of Him who is infinitely wise, and powerful, and kind. Jesus can make—he often has "made a dying bed feel soft as downy pillows are." "As your day is, so shall your strength be." When you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, ye shall fear no evil, for God your Saviour will be with you: His rod and staff shall guide and sustain your steps. "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen: Even so come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

SECTION IV.

CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS.

EXHORTATION I.

HABITUAL REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST RECOMMENDED.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN! the peculiar solemnities of this day's worship are now closed. With much external decency and apparent devotion, and, I trust, also in the exercise of faith, and love, and reverence, and penitence, and joy, you have eaten bread and drunk wine, in commemoration of the Saviour's dying love. Before we separate, allow me to press on your attention these two most important practical truths—that remembrance of Christ should not be merely an occasional exercise, but a habitual employment; and that faith, and love, and reverence, and penitence, and joy, should not be mere transient sentiments and feelings, but abiding and operative principles.

I. "Whatsoever ye do, whether in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him."—"Bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifest in your body."

Remember Christ when you are called to the discharge of duty. Without this every duty will be difficult; with it every duty will be comparatively easy. When you feel your own weakness, and are in danger of abandoning your duty in despair, remember HIM in whom "it pleased the Father that all fulness

should dwell," that "out of that fulness his people might receive, and grace for grace." Trusting in his promise, that "his grace shall be sufficient for you," you shall be "able to do all things through him strengthening you."

When a sense of the many imperfections and improprieties which attend your best services, excites in you a fear, that, instead of meeting with reward, they will draw down on you punishment, remember HIM, on the ground of whose all-perfect righteousness you are made accepted of God, on the ground of whose all-prevalent intercessions your prayers and services rise with acceptance before him.

Remember Christ, and you will never want an example to imitate: you will be furnished with a complete practical directory in the plainest and most interesting form. Would you wish to know how you should think, feel, and act? Remember how Jesus thought, and felt, and acted, and as "he has set you an example, follow his steps."

Remember Christ, and you will never want motives to urge you to the discharge of duty: habitually remember that he loved you, and gave himself for you; and surely you must be sweetly constrained "to live not to yourselves, but to HIM who died for you, and who rose again." It is because we are so forgetful of Christ, that we are so remiss in the practice of Christian virtue. How could we be weary in well-doing, if we always bore in mind the unwearying assiduity of our Lord and Saviour? How could we be neglectful of, or languid in, devotional duties, if we habitually recollected HIM, "who, in the days of his flesh, offered up supplications, with strong crying and tears, and was heard in that he feared?" How could we be "angry at our brother without cause," when we thought of HIM who died for his enemies? How could we refuse relief to a distressed Christian, when we remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive. Inasmuch as ye do it to the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto me;" or thought of "the grace of the Lord Jesus, who though he was rich became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich?"

It is equally necessary and advantageous for you, Christians, to remember Christ in the day of trial as in the day of exertion. The remembrance of HIM is equally calculated to enable us to suffer, as to do, the will of God. Remember Christ, and you

will cease both to wonder at and lament your afflictions. He was a sufferer; and “is it not enough that the disciple is as his Master, and the servant as his Lord?” “He suffered for you, leaving you an example that ye should follow his steps.” Is it strange, that a crucified Saviour should require his disciples to take up their cross and to follow him?

Remember Christ, and in all your afflictions you will have a living directory how to conduct yourselves under the mighty hand of God. O strive to copy out in your temper, the fair exemplar he has set, of firm faith, humble resignation, invincible fortitude, and unwearied patience.

Remember Christ, and you will find abundant consolation and good hope amid all the afflictions with which you may be visited. His sufferings extracted the wormwood and gall of the Divine curse out of yours, and the tender sympathy acquired by these sufferings, opens up an exhaustless source of consolation and of joy: “In all things he was tempted like as you are, yet without sin.” Are you exposed to the “fiery darts of the wicked one?” Remember that he sustained the attack of the whole host of darkness, and came off more than a conqueror. Are you despised and maltreated by an ungodly world? Remember “that the world hated him before it hated you; and be of good cheer, for Jesus has overcome the world.” Are you oppressed with poverty? Remember HIM who was so poor as not to have where to lay his head, and cheerfully bear an evil which the Son of God has sanctified and sweetened by enduring. Are you reproached? Remember HIM whose heart was broken by reproach, and, like him, quietly “commit your cause to Him who judgeth righteously.” Are you weeping over the closing grave, or, still bitterer affliction! over the faithless unkindness of a much-beloved friend? Remember HIM, “from whom lover and acquaintance were far removed, and his friend into darkness;” and cling “close and closer” to that friend who sticketh closer than a brother.

There is an hour awaiting thee, Christian, dark with “the shadow of death,” covered with clouds, and full of terror—the hour in which thy spirit, separated from its mortal companion, must shoot the untried gulf of eternity,—in which recollection of the Saviour is peculiarly important to thy safety and thy peace: in that hour, Christian, forget not thy Lord, as thou

wouldest not wish then to be forgotten by him. Fix thy thoughts on him, as the Conqueror of death, the Destroyer of the grave, the Lord of eternity; and, as it has been thy principal study to be like him in his life, let it be thy closing ambition “to be made conformable to him in his death.” The remembrance of Jesus is a sovereign charm for chasing away those alarming visions which are apt to gather around a dying bed; and the persuasion of his love has often, in a great measure, superseded the agonies of dissolving nature.

Need I add, Christian! remember Christ throughout eternity. The advice were a needless one. His glories shine so bright in that blessed world, that they necessarily fix the attention, and excite the admiration of its happy inhabitants. Fairest, where all are fair—most glorious, where all are glorious, he is the centre to which the thoughts and affections of the angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, constantly tend. The diadems purchased by his blood are cast at his feet, and his labours, and sorrows, and triumphs, are the exhaustless subjects to which the redeemed tune their golden harps, and with which they accent their triumphant songs.

II. As the remembrance of Christ ought not merely to be an occasional exercise, but a habitual employment with you; so faith and love, and penitence and joy, ought not merely to be transient sentiments and emotions, but permanent and operative principles; not exerting themselves only when called forth by the solemnities of a religious ordinance, but influencing the general tenor of your thoughts and feelings, your language and conduct.

It is not enough that you have observed the Lord’s Supper in faith; it is necessary that “the life which you live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you.” No duty can be acceptably performed, no affliction acceptably sustained, without faith: “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” Weak in yourselves, you derive your strength entirely from another; and faith is the means by which these supplies are obtained: “By faith you stand; by unbelief you fall. Endeavour, then, amid all the vicissitudes of life, to retain an implicit belief of the Divine testimony—an unshaken confidence in the Divine promise—a steadfast reliance on

the Divine Saviour. Let it be your frequent and fervent prayer, "Lord, increase our faith;" and prove the sincerity of your prayer, by a careful use of the means by which faith is produced and strengthened in the soul. If you abound in the exercise of this grace, no duty will be difficult—no affliction severe—no enemy formidable: "I can do all things," said a very humble man, but a very strong believer, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me;" and if by faith you "look" steadily, "not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are unseen and eternal, your light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out for you a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory."

Let love to the Saviour also be one of the animating principles of your general conduct: "A friend loveth at all times." The man who never thinks affectionately of the Lord Jesus, except when the Lord's Supper, as it were, forces the recollection of his dying love on him, deceives himself, if he considers himself as a lover of the Saviour. Wherever the love of Christ really exists, it will manifest itself not merely in an occasional observation of the Lord's Supper, but in a conscientious regard to all his commandments. Let the love of Christ, then, exert a constraining influence over the whole of our thoughts and feelings, and sweetly oblige us "to live not to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and who rose again." Let his "love, shed abroad in our hearts by faith, through the Holy Spirit given to us," stimulate us to exertions to promote the advancement of his honour, the extension of his kingdom, the downfall of his enemies, and the happiness of his people.

Live habitually under the influence of reverence for the Saviour. At all times, and in all places, stand in awe of the omnipresent God our Saviour. Content not yourselves with an awful sense of his greatness, still less with mere external devotion, when engaged in the peculiar services of religion; but, remembering that he exists throughout all space and duration, reverence him at all times and in all places, and manifest the sincerity of your fear, by a careful obedience to all his commandments: "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

Penitence is another temper of mind which not merely should be exercised when you receive the Lord's Supper, but should influence the whole of your behaviour. Melancholy and godly

sorrow are two very different things. Religion forbids the one and enjoins the other. Let no day pass without a penitent confession of the sin of your nature and of your life before your God—without reviewing your daily imperfections and transgressions,—and without humbly supplicating pardon through the atonement and intercession of Jesus: “He who thus goes forth bearing precious seed weeping, will doubtless return rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him.” The confidence which may become one who never offended, does not sit well on a pardoned rebel. Though restored to the favour of his prince, and raised to the highest honours he has in his gift, he must never forget that he was a rebel, and that he owes his life to the royal clemency; and this recollection must mark his behaviour.

In fine, let Christian joy be the habitual temper of your mind: “Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and again I say, Rejoice. Rejoice evermore. Be joyful in tribulation,” and triumph in death. You have abundant ground of rational satisfaction and holy joy. To be habitually gloomy, is ingratitude to your Benefactor: It is an implied declaration, that, after all He has done for you, He has not done enough to make you happy. The apparent unhappiness of some good men has done incalculable mischief to the cause of religion; and, on the other hand, nothing tends more directly to recommend Christianity to all, but especially the young, than the proving by our conduct that we feel Christ’s yoke to be “easy, and his burden to be light;” “that wisdom’s ways are pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace.”

Is it your desire, then, Christian brethren, thus habitually to remember Christ in faith, and love, and reverence, and penitence, and joy? Then, in the first place, study deeply the character and history of Jesus, as detailed by the evangelical historians; and, in the second place, as these holy tempers are by no means the natural growth of the human heart, be frequent and fervent in your applications to the throne of grace, for that Holy Spirit whom God has promised to all who ask Him, and who is the sole source of all moral good in created natures.—According to our usual practice, we direct your attention, before concluding, to an inspired account of your duties as Christians. Read with me Col. iii. iv. 1–6.

And, “Now may the God of peace, that brought again from

the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

EXHORTATION II.

A SCRIPTURE FAREWELL.¹

BRETHREN, the principal design of our assembling ourselves together to-day has been answered. We have been allowed—all thanks to the long-suffering and mercy of our God!—we have been allowed to celebrate, in peace and comfort, our Christian passover. We are now about speedily to separate, with the probability, or rather with the certainty, of never all meeting again, till we meet before the tribunal of the Almighty Judge. What a solemn consideration! Since we last met on a similar occasion, more than one who sat down with us at the table of the Lord have passed into the invisible state. It is beyond the reach of human foresight to tell whose doom shall next be sealed. It must be one of us,—it may be any of us.

It is natural for the imagination, on such an occasion, to anticipate the circumstances of our next general meeting. How prodigiously numerous, how awfully solemn, the assembly! How important the business to be transacted! How serious the final separation! From that assembly not one of the countless millions of the human race shall retire thoughtless or unimpressed. The most frivolous and unconcerned *now*, shall be *then* deeply and eternally serious.

Under the impression that I am certainly parting with some of you, and as *I* am equally mortal with *you*, that I may be parting with all of you for a long, long series of ages, till we meet at the right hand or the left of Jesus the judge, I would call the attention, not only of those who have been communicating, but of all who now hear me, to a “message from God to

¹ The author conceives it right to remark here, that this Address is principally the filling up of an outline which he met with among the unpublished MSS. of his grandfather, the late Rev. John Brown of Haddington.

them." I shall bring to your remembrance some most important truths—propose some most serious questions—utter some most alarming warnings—proclaim some most gracious calls and invitations—offer some useful advices—and conclude with expressing some earnest good wishes. And, as I shall endeavour not only to present scriptural ideas, but to use almost wholly scriptural language, I not only request, but I command you, as you value your soul's salvation, to be attentive. The voice is on earth, but the speaker is in heaven: "The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silent before Him."—"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."

1st, Let me call to your remembrance some most important truths. "Brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel, which I have preached to you, which also you have received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. He gave himself for us a sacrifice and an offering, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;—even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Christ unto all and upon all them who believe, for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood, declaring his righteousness; that he may be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. To you is the word of this salvation sent. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Of them to whom much is given, much shall be required. If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost; whose unbelieving minds the god of this world hath blinded, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them. Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth to life, and few there be that find it. Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom

of God. It is appointed to men once to die, and after death the judgment. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, that we may receive according to what we have done, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Then shall the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous unto life eternal."

2d, Let me propose to you a few most serious questions. *What change in your religious state and character have you undergone?* Were you "alive without the law once, but, when the commandment came, did sin revive and you die"? Were "ye once darkness, but are ye now light in the Lord"? Have ye been "born again"? Are ye still "dead in trespasses and in sins," or have ye been "quicken'd, by the God who is rich in mercy, together with Christ Jesus"? Did you once "yield yourselves as the servants of sin, and your members to sin as the instruments of unrighteousness; but do you now yield yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your members to holiness as instruments of righteousness"? *What choice have you made?* Have you chosen "that good part which shall never be taken from you"? Have you "counted all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord"? Have you counted "the reproach of Christ" greater riches than all the treasures of the world? Have you made choice of God's testimonies above all riches? Instead of saying with the multitude, "Who will show us any good?" is the language of your heart, "Lord lift on us the light of thy countenance"? *What purpose have you formed?* Is it the "full purpose of your heart to cleave unto the Lord"? Is it your determination that you and your families shall serve the Lord? Is it your resolution, "This God shall be our God for ever and ever?—He shall be our guide even unto death"? *At what end do you chiefly aim?* Is it "that God may in all things be glorified through our Lord Jesus Christ"? that "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, ye may do all to the glory of God"? *What kind of a life do you lead?* "Is the life which you live in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you"? Are you "pilgrims and sojourners on the earth," declaring plainly, that you are seeking a "country, a better country, that is, an heavenly"? Finally, *What provision have you made for death,*

and for a future state? Do you “know whom ye have believed, and are you persuaded that he is able to keep that which you have committed to him”? Have ye “laid up a good foundation for the time to come, to lay hold on eternal life”? Have ye that “Holy Spirit of promise who is the earnest of your inheritance”? and, Are ye “sealed by him till the redemption of the purchased possession”?

3d, Let me now direct your attention to some most alarming warnings. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth now no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of vengeance and fiery indignation to destroy the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment shall he be accounted worthy, who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and accounted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of grace? The earth which, being often rained upon, bringeth forth nothing but briars and thorns, is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! The Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son. God hath lifted up his hands to heaven and said, I live for ever! If I whet my glittering sword, and my hand lay hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my adversaries. I will reward them that hate me; I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword will devour much flesh, with the blood of the slain and of the captive from the beginning of revenges against the enemy. If there be among you a root of bitterness, which bringeth forth wormwood and gall, who saith within himself, I shall have peace though I walk in the ways of my own heart; the Lord shall not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke sore against that man,—and He shall lay upon him all the evils that are written in this book. Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with Me; he that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.”

4th, Let me now proclaim to you some most gracious calls and invitations. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye: yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which profiteth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David. Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and that all who believe in him may be justified from all things from which they could not have been justified by the law of Moses. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Harken unto me, ye stout-hearted and far from righteousness! behold I bring near my righteousness unto you, and my salvation shall not tarry. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; eye-salve, that thou mayest see; white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear. Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him who is athirst, Come; and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely."

5th, Let me lay before you a few important and useful advices. "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. Trust in the Lord, and be doing good. Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, kindness, tenderness of heart, forbearing one another in love, and forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honour the king. Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.

In one word, let your conversation be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ."

6th, Let me take my leave of you with the expression of a few most earnest good wishes. "O that ye were wise! that ye understood this, that ye would consider your latter end! The good Lord pardon every one that hath prepared his heart to seek the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purifying of the sanctuary. Oh, that God would rend the heavens, and come down; that the mountains may flow down at his presence! May the God of hope fill you with all joy and hope in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. I pray to God that ye do no evil, not that we should be approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."

NOW TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON, AND TO THE HOLY GHOST, THE ONE JEHOVAH, AND OUR GOD, BE ASCRIBED BY THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN, AND THE CHURCH ON EARTH, ALL POWER AND GLORY, DOMINION AND MAJESTY, FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.

PART III.

DISCOURSES

AFTER THE

ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

DISCOURSES

AFTER THE

ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

DISCOURSE I.

THE MIND WHICH WAS IN CHRIST.

PHILIPPIANS II. 5.—“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

THE Divine origin of Christianity may be evinced, by a countless variety of unanswered and unanswerable arguments. Among these arguments, while there are many better fitted to confound and silence “the disputer of this world,” there is perhaps not one more calculated to produce and strengthen conviction in the honest inquirer, than that which is deducible from the perfect suitableness of the Christian revelation to the constitution and circumstances, the weaknesses and wants, the tendencies and capabilities of fallen humanity.

To perceive clearly, and feel strongly, the force of this species of evidence, a much deeper acquaintance with human nature, in its original principles and present state, and with the Christian revelation in its doctrines and precepts, is necessary, than the bulk of mankind either possess, or are inclined to acquire. But while a profound knowledge, both of the constitution of man, and of the revealed system in all its parts, is necessary to enable a man fully to estimate the strength of this argument, even a superficial acquaintance with these subjects, if it is but accurate so far as it goes, is sufficient to produce a conviction that it is a very strong one. It is surely impossible for an un-

prejudiced mind, not to perceive in the revealed system, a wonderfully extensive and minute correspondence with the leading features of the character and situation of man, as a rational, dependent, free, active, accountable, religious, improveable, immortal, guilty, and depraved being; and it is equally impossible to perceive this correspondence without drawing the conclusion, that human nature and Christianity have a common Author,—that a system so suited to man could originate only with Him who “knoweth our frame, for He hath made us.”

It is a persuasion of this truth which induces me to think, that there is no department of human science, from which more extensive and valuable contributions are yet to be levied, for promoting the interests of Christian truth, than the philosophy of the human mind. When, by a strict adherence to those laws of induction, which have introduced so much light and order into the regions of physical science, the facts in reference to man’s intellectual, and moral, and social constitution, shall be accurately ascertained and classified, the truth, beauty, and excellence of the Christian system, as suited to that constitution, will be placed in a new and most striking point of light; the natural consequence of which will be, the exposure of the futility of the arguments and objections of infidels, and the production of an increased feeling of satisfaction and security in the bosoms of reflecting believers. It would lead us into a wide but most interesting field of discussion, to follow up the general remarks now made, by a variety of particular illustrations.¹

Waving these illustrations, however important and interesting, as at present unseasonable, let me fix your attention for a little on the peculiar manner in which Christianity teaches moral truth, and on its singular adaptation to the nature and situation of man. The view of human duty exhibited by heathen moralists was not only radically defective and materially erroneous, but the manner of its exhibition was but little calculated to impress the mind, affect the heart, or influence the conduct. Abstruse reasonings about the fitness of things,—general declamations about the beauty of virtue,—cold inanimate precepts of conduct, if not contradicted, at any rate very imperfectly exemplified in

¹ These remarks are expanded in the Introductory Essay to Collins’s edition of “Venn’s Complete Duty of Man.”

their own behaviour,—might, in some degree, exercise their pupils' faculties of reasoning and memory, and render them subtle disputants and pompous declaimers, but had little tendency to enlighten their minds in the knowledge of moral truth, or to imbue their hearts with the love of moral excellence. It is far otherwise with the religion of the Scriptures. While the system of moral truth which they evolve is incomparably more extensive and pure than that of the heathen moralist, it is not, like his, couched in cold generalities, in abstract uninteresting language. It "comes home to men's business and bosoms." It is deeply impressive, and it is perfectly intelligible. It derives this character principally, we apprehend, from the circumstance of its being embodied and exemplified in the character and conduct of Jesus Christ. We are not merely told what is right and what is wrong; we have placed before us a person in our own nature, and in circumstances similar to ours, displaying every holy disposition, and performing every dutiful action, and we are called to contemplate, to admire, and to imitate; and as we are naturally most disposed to imitate those whom we love, this perfect pattern of excellence is one to whom we are infinitely indebted, and whom every principle of duty and gratitude calls on us to regard with a supreme affection. So well suited is Christianity, as a teacher of virtue, to a being like man, who is more easily taught by example than by precept,—who is more deeply affected by interesting facts, than by abstract reasonings,—and in whom the disposition to imitate corresponds in strength with the affection to the object of imitation.

Into this train of reflection,—which will not be useless if it lead us to a more attentive consideration of the internal evidences of Christianity, an inexhaustible store of consolation and establishment to the Christian,—I have been led, by observing the apostle, in the passage chosen as a subject of discourse, summing up the whole of the Christian's duty in one short comprehensive maxim, "Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus."

At the table of the Lord, over the instituted symbols of his holy suffering humanity, we have just been avowing our confidence in the Redeemer's atonement, our submission to his authority, and our desire to be conformed to his image. It cannot surely be unseasonable, then, shortly to consider the mode of thinking and feeling to which we have obliged ourselves

by this solemn profession, and which cannot be more comprehensively and energetically expressed than by the terms in the text, our “having the mind in us that was in Christ Jesus.” I count, therefore, on your devout attention, while I, *first*, EXPLAIN, and, *secondly*, ENFORCE, the apostolic injunction, “Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus.”

I. The word translated “mind,”¹ is a term of very comprehensive meaning. It is descriptive both of the intellectual and the moral character,—of the state both of the sentiments and dispositions. The command, then, to “let that mind be in us which also was in Christ Jesus,” is equivalent to an injunction, to conform ourselves in the whole frame of our mind and temper to him; to form our opinions and dispositions on the model of his; that so, thinking as he thought, and feeling as he felt, we may act as he acted. The duty enjoined, thus naturally divides into two parts,—the adoption of the sentiments,—and, the cultivation of the dispositions, which were characteristic of Christ Jesus.

1st, To have that mind in us “which was in Christ Jesus,” is to adopt his sentiments as our own. When two persons are agreed in their opinion on any subject, we say they are of the same mind. When we are called on, then, to be of the same mind as Christ Jesus, it plainly intimates, that our mode of thinking should be conformed to his.

Our Lord’s sentiments on many important subjects may be learned from his discourses as recorded by the evangelical historian. But these are not to be considered as the sole source from which our knowledge of our Lord’s mode of thinking is to be derived. Whatever is found in the apostolical writings is to be considered as an infallible expression of the Saviour’s judgment. “We,” says the apostle Paul, “we have the mind of Christ.” The whole of the scriptural revelation is to be viewed in the same light. It is the “word of Christ;” and it was “the Spirit of Christ” who was in the ancient prophets, and dictated to them their oracles.

Had no revelation been made respecting the great principles of religion and morals, it would no doubt have been the duty of man to have endeavoured, by the diligent exercise of his own

¹ φρονεῖσθαι, vide Schleusner or Robinson.

faculties, to discover as much as possible of the character and will of God, and he must have rested in those conclusions, which, upon the whole, appeared to him most probable. But, on the supposition that God has made a revelation of his will by Christ Jesus, and has put that revelation into our hands, along with the most satisfactory evidence that it is what it professes to be, it is plain, that man's duty, as to the formation of religious opinion, is reduced simply to the discovery of the meaning of this revelation, and the unreserved submission of the understanding to its dictates when discovered. This is to have "the mind in us which also was in Christ Jesus."

In some instances, the most unprejudiced inquirer into truth may find a difficulty in discovering what is the sense of Divine revelation with respect to a particular subject. In this case, hesitation is not only allowable, but praiseworthy; for it is indeed the same principle which sets the mind completely at rest when the meaning of revelation is clearly discovered, and which prevents the formation of a fixed opinion while that meaning remains unknown, or but imperfectly discovered. These cases are, however, comparatively of rare occurrence; and it may be laid down as a general principle, that it is our duty to adopt, without reserve, the views of truth exhibited in the word of Christ, in opposition equally to a proud dependence on the unassisted exertions of our own minds, and a base subjection to the authority of others.

There are some men, who, while they profess to believe in the authority of the Scriptures as a well-authenticated revelation of the mind of Christ, receive or reject its doctrines according to a self-formed standard of what is true or false, reasonable or absurd. They do not, perhaps, directly contradict the declarations of Scripture; but they do the same thing in effect, by explaining away their obvious meaning. This is not to have "the mind of Christ" in us, but to have a mind of our own. Such a mode of conduct is obviously not only criminal, but absurd; as we are far less liable to be deceived in judging of the evidence of a Divine revelation, than of the abstract principles of religious and moral truth, and as it plainly implies in it, that what is acknowledged to be a Divine revelation, is at once unnecessary and unfit to answer the purpose for which it was intended.

There are others who, professing to believe the Holy Scrip-

tures to be the revelation of the mind of Christ, seem yet afraid to receive the doctrines they teach, simply as they teach them, but must have them modified according to the views of individuals or bodies of men, whom they have learned to consider as the standards of orthodoxy. The question with them is not so much, What says the Scripture, on a particular subject; but, How does such an individual or body of men interpret the Scriptures? This is not to have the mind of Christ, but the mind of other men, in us. Such persons may be *materially* right, but they are *formally* wrong. The principles they hold may be true, but they are not to them “the mind of Christ.” They have “received for doctrines the commandments of men.”

In opposition to both these classes, he who “lets the mind be in him which also was in Christ Jesus,” endeavours to discover the true meaning of the holy Scriptures, that he may thus know the mind of Christ; and, having discovered it, he cheerfully acquiesces in it, however inconsistent with his preconceived opinions, the probabilities of reason, or the authority of the wise and learned. He sits down at the feet of Jesus, and learns the law at his mouth. He is disposed to say, with a truly great man, “Propose me anything out of this book, and require whether I believe or no, and seem it never so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it with hand and heart, as knowing no demonstration to be stronger than this, God hath said so, therefore it is true.”¹

In order to our minds being thus moulded into the form of Christian doctrine, it is necessary that we seek that faculty of spiritual apprehension, without which the mind of Christ cannot be discerned;—that we cultivate a serious and humble temper of mind;—that we peruse the Scriptures attentively, believingly, and devoutly;—that we improve all the means in our power, for discovering the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures;—that we earnestly seek, and confidently expect, the continued influence of the Holy Spirit;—and that we conscientiously apply the knowledge obtained to the regulation of our tempers and conduct.²

The importance of this conformity of sentiments to Christ

¹ Chillingworth.

² John v. 39; Isa. xxxiv. 16; 1 John iv. 1; Eph i. 17, 18; 1 Cor. iii. 13; James i. 5; John vii. 17.

Jesus, has been very much underrated by many professed Christians. The doctrine of the innocence of error has been strenuously maintained; and we have been told, that if in our temper and conduct we resemble Jesus, it matters not much what our opinions be. Such sentiments originate in confined and confused notions, both of human nature and Christian truth. In a being constituted like man, there is no securing right tempers and good conduct, but by implanting just sentiments. It is in the nature of things impossible, that we should be conformed to the dispositions and behaviour of Christ, but through the transforming influence of his doctrines. Hence the frequent representations in Scripture, of the importance of a right state of the understanding, as a necessary means of producing a right state of the affections and conduct. Hence the frequent declarations of the necessity and importance of knowledge and faith, and of the criminality and fatal consequences of ignorance and unbelief.¹

2*d*, To have that mind in us which also was in Christ Jesus, is to cultivate those tempers and dispositions by which he was distinguished. It has been remarked, by a very able writer, that, "in the whole business of man's redemption, wonderful in all its parts, its beginning, its progress, and its completion, the most wonderful part of all is the character of Christ: a character not exempt from those feelings of soul and infirmities of body which render men obnoxious to temptation, but in which the two principles of piety to God and good-will to mankind maintained such an ascendancy over the rest, that they might seem by themselves to make the whole. This character, in which piety and benevolence, upon all occasions, and in all circumstances, overpowered all the inferior passions, is more incomprehensible to the natural reason of the carnal man than the deepest mysteries—more improbable than the greatest miracles; of all the parts of the gospel history, most trying to the evil heart of unbelief—the very last thing which a ripened faith receives, but of all things the most necessary to be well understood, and firmly believed, for the softening of the sinner's heart, for quelling the pride of human wisdom, and for bring-

¹ The reader will do well to consult the concluding paragraphs of "Chalmers on the Evidence and Authority of Revelation."

ing every thought and imagination of the soul into subjection unto the righteousness of God.”¹

The tempers and dispositions of our Saviour must be known in order to their being imitated; and though the knowledge of them is easy in comparison with the imitation of them, yet even a correct, distinct conception of the moral character of Christ, as an exemplar to copy, is not to be obtained without close thought and serious meditation. The following hurried sketch may be in some degree useful for serving this purpose: Christ Jesus was, in the strictest and highest sense of the term, pious. He regarded his Father with supreme esteem and veneration, confidence and love. Regard to HIS will was the animating and regulating principle of all his conduct. He shrunk from no duty which HE required, however difficult; from no suffering, however severe, which HE imposed. “I must work the work of Him who sent me. Not my will but thine be done.” With respect to the world, in the scriptural sense of that phrase, he maintained a noble superiority: Its frowns could not terrify, nor its flatteries seduce, him from the path of duty; its pleasures and its power, its riches and its honours, had for him no power to allure. “He loved not the world, nor the things which are in the world.” With respect to mankind in general, the temper of the Saviour was tender pity and enlightened benevolence. He loved his neighbour as himself. He looked not merely “at his own things, but also at the things of others.” While he condemned crime, he pitied the criminal, and cherished towards the worst of his enemies feelings of forgiveness and tenderness. His disposition towards his peculiar people may be summed up in one word—love: a love peculiar in its nature and superlative in its degree; a love “that passeth knowledge.” “Pure and disinterested in its motives, the love of Christ had solely for its end the happiness of those who were the objects of it. An equal sharer with the Almighty Father in the happiness and glory of the Godhead, the Redeemer had no proper interest in the fate of fallen men. Infinite in its comprehension, his love embraced those who were his enemies: intense in its energy, it incited him to assume a frail and mortal nature, to undergo contempt and death. Constant in its operations, in an agony the sharpest the human mind

¹ Horsley.

was ever known to sustain, it maintained its vigour unimpaired. Having loved his own, he loved them to the end.”¹ Such was the mind which was in Christ Jesus.

Now, to have this mind in us, is just to cultivate and exercise these holy tempers and dispositions. It is to cherish an habitual and supreme veneration and love for the Supreme Being; to be thankful for benefits; submissive under privations and afflictions; active in doing and patient in suffering the will of God. It is to maintain the spirit of a pilgrim and a sojourner upon earth; it is to be neither unduly elated by worldly prosperity, nor unduly depressed by worldly adversity; it is to love all mankind as brethren, and to cultivate a disposition to alleviate their sorrows, and add to their comforts, though at the expense of our individual interest and gratification; it is, in fine, so to “love the brotherhood,” as to be ready to lay down our lives for those in whose room and for whose salvation the Saviour died.

If we would thus have the mind in us which also was in Christ, it is plainly necessary that we should both have just and comprehensive views of the Saviour’s character, and be at once disposed and enabled to make that character the object of our imitation. In order to obtain the first of these, a careful study of the gospel histories is necessary. To enable us to form right judgments of the Saviour’s character, is obviously one great object for which these wonderful narratives were written. The means which their authors, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, make use of in order to gain this purpose, though admirably fitted for answering their end, are somewhat singular. They enter into no laboured detail of his intellectual endowments or moral excellences: they utter no lofty panegyrics; they pronounce no eloquent encomiums: they are the historians, not the eulogists, of Jesus. Had much of the biography of Jesus been occupied in this way, the ingenuity of infidelity would not have been slow in suggesting, that the partiality of friendship had cast his defects into the shade, while his excellences were brought into the foreground of the picture; and it might have been suspected that, like some modern historians, the evangelists had been less anxious to give an accurate portrait, than to display to advan-

¹ Horsley.

tage their own ingenuity and eloquence. The method adopted by the evangelist evinces the absurdity of such a supposition. They give us a minute, simple, unadorned narrative of his actions, his doctrines, and his sufferings; they tell us what he did, and what he said, and how he suffered. They do not so much give us a picture of the Saviour's character, as present us with the materials for forming such a picture for ourselves. In consequence of this peculiarity, of all histories, the gospels require to be read with the closest attention, if we would derive from them all the information respecting the character of Christ which they are intended and calculated to communicate. And he who does read the evangelical historians with the requisite attention, will find his labour richly rewarded. He will often find a simple incident, an apparently accidental expression, opening up a most unexpected and delightful view of the Saviour's character.—Our study of the Saviour's character must be marked by a desire to copy it. We must not be like the mere spectator, who admires a beautiful specimen of penmanship; we must be like the scholar, who studies it as an example which he is to endeavour to copy as closely as possible. This character of Christ is not only an object to admire, but a model to imitate.

More however is necessary, much more than a just and comprehensive view of our Saviour's moral excellence, in order to our having the mind in us which also was in him. We must be as once disposed and enabled to cultivate the holy tempers and dispositions which were characteristic of our Lord Jesus. For this disposition and ability we must be indebted to the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is only by the effectual operation of the personal Spirit of Christ, that we can be formed to the temper and disposition of Christ: it is by his influence that we are "created anew in Christ Jesus to good works." If, then, we would wish to have the mind of Christ in us, let us be solicitous to have the Spirit of Christ in us. And how is this blessing to be obtained? By fervent, humble, believing prayer: "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

II. The *second* object which we proposed to prosecute in this discourse, was the enforcement of the apostolic injunction, "Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus." Here I might bring forward separately the motives which urge us to adopt the Saviour's sentiments, and cultivate the Saviour's dispositions. I might show, that we ought to maintain the same sentiments as Christ Jesus, for they are true, important, and necessary; and that we ought to cherish the same tempers, for they are enjoined by God, and are essential to our true happiness. As such an illustration would, however, by its length, necessarily trespass on your patience, I shall content myself with a more general recommendation of conformity to the mind of Christ, by showing that it is at once dutiful, honourable, pleasant, and advantageous.

1st, We ought to let the mind be in us which also was in Christ Jesus, for this mode of conduct is *dutiful*. To prove this, it is only necessary to repeat the text, and to remember, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." But, as we are very apt to forget what we do not deny, and to neglect what we do not refuse, it becomes necessary to dwell on the evidence of undenied truth, and multiply motives to acknowledged duty.

All that Christ—a well-accredited Divine messenger—reveals must be true, and therefore we ought to believe it: all the dispositions of the incarnate Son of God must be right, and therefore we ought to cherish them. Every argument, then, which enforces the belief of what is true in sentiment, and the cultivation of what is estimable and amiable in character, urges to conformity to our blessed Lord.—This was the great design of God in his choice of men to salvation: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." This was one great design of our Saviour's incarnation and sufferings: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example to follow his steps."—Nor is this all; the duty is expressly enjoined, not only in the text, but in other passages of Scripture: "Follow me," was the ordinary language in which Christ himself invited men to become his disciples. "If any man," says he, "would become my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." "Forasmuch, then," says the apostle Peter, "as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind, that ye no longer should live the

rest of your time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

2*d*, We ought to let the mind be in us which also was in Christ Jesus, for this mode of conduct is truly honourable. It is accounted honourable among men, to maintain the same sentiments as the wise and learned, and to be distinguished by the same manners as the great and noble. To have the same mind in us as was in Christ, must then be honourable. He is the greatest, the wisest, and the best of beings: He is, as Mediator, the Governor of the universe; and, as to his pre-existent nature, he is "God over all, blessed for ever." As to his Divinity, he is the only wise God; and, as Mediator, "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He is the "Wonderful Counsellor." He is all that is great, glorious, and lovely. To resemble the great ones of the earth, is often a real disgrace; but to be like Christ, is truly great and honourable: for this renders us "great in the sight of the Lord," and secures a large measure of "the honour that cometh down from above."

3*d*, We ought to let the mind be in us which also was in Christ Jesus, for this mode of conduct is productive of the truest pleasure. Man is so constituted, as that a very pure and exquisite pleasure is the result of the knowledge and belief of what is true, and the love and practice of what is right. Indeed, he is so constituted, that he can have no real rational enjoyment without these. "Truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." Still more sweet is the perception of truth to the regenerated mind; still more pleasant is the love of excellence to the regenerated heart: "In the keeping of God's commandments there is great reward. Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

There is a superadded pleasure arising from the circumstance, that in this knowledge and belief of the truth, and in this holy frame of temper, we are conformed to Christ. In walking along a road, in itself agreeable, and leading to scenes still more delightful, our pleasure is increased by the recollection, that our best Friend trod this path before us—that he opened it up for our advantage—that he intended us to walk in it—and that, by pursuing it, we shall in due time reach our Father's house, where that best Friend is waiting for us, to welcome us to the enjoyment of the happiness he has prepared for us.

In yielding up our understandings to the obedience of faith, we obtain rest from the perplexities of doubt ; and, in surrendering all our active powers to the transforming influence of the Divine Spirit, we obtain rest from the turbulence of malignant and impure passion : “ The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps the mind and heart through Christ Jesus.” “ Peace,” says Jesus to all who have the same mind in them, “ Peace, I leave you ; my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” “ To the wicked,” who are strangers to this mind, “ there is no peace.” And, in the experience of the saint, it will be found, that the larger measure he possesses of the mind of Christ, he is kept in the more perfect peace and tranquil happiness.

4th, We ought to let the mind be in us which also was in Christ Jesus, for it is very advantageous. Conformity to Christ is at once absolutely necessary and completely sufficient, to secure for a man all the advantages which flow from an assurance of his being interested in the Divine favour : “ If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” If any man has the Spirit of Christ, he is one of his. Who does not perceive, how numerous and important are the advantages which result from a well-grounded conviction that we are the objects of the unchanging love of God ? Now, all these belong to the man in whom the mind of Christ is, and belong to him just in proportion as he resembles his Lord.

Conformity to Christ is advantageous, for it fits us for heaven. Without this mind being in us, heaven would be no heaven to us. Without this mind we cannot be admitted into the celestial mansions. With it, we cannot be excluded from them : “ Without holiness no man can see the Lord ;” and with holiness, no man can be deprived of the beatific vision.

How advantageous, even in reference to the concerns of the present state, is conformity to the Saviour !—How happy would individuals, families, churches, nations be, if the mind which was in Christ were but universally prevalent ! If the same just sentiments about God and man, time and eternity, were universally entertained—and the same patient, self-denying, forbearing, generous, public-spirited temper, universally cherished, earth would be transformed into a resemblance of heaven—paradise would be restored—wars and dissensions would cease for ever—

security and peace would establish their tranquil and permanent dominion—man, the brother, would live the friend of man—God would be glorified, and mankind would be happy.

Thus, Christians, have you heard your duty explained, and the motives which urge you to its performance briefly illustrated. What remains, then, but that, in humble dependence on that blessed Spirit, who irradiated with perfect light the understanding of Jesus, and adorned his soul with all the beauties of holiness, and whose enlightening and purifying influences are freely promised to all who ask them, you go forward in a constant endeavour to “let the mind be in you that also was in him.”

If the discourse and the ordinance which preceded it have produced their proper effect, you will gladly receive this exhortation, and readily acknowledge the obligation of the duty, which it enjoins. In the most extensive sense the words will bear, it is your duty to have “the mind in you which was in Christ”—to think along with Christ—to feel along with Christ—to choose along with Christ—to dislike what he dislikes—to love what he loves;—and for this purpose it is your duty to study the revelation of his mind and will contained in his word, seeking the influence of his good Spirit that you may understand and believe that revelation, for in this way alone will his mind soon become your mind—his will your will.

But the apostle’s exhortation seems to have a peculiar reference to the ruling principle—the prevailing disposition of the mind of our Lord—the leading element of his character as embodied in his incarnation and sacrifice: Holy love, as opposed to criminal selfishness—holy love, manifested in zeal for the Divine honour, devotedness to the Divine glory, unreserved obedience to the injunctions, and submission to the appointments, of God, and a readiness to suffer every thing, and do every thing but sin, to make men happy—to shrink from no labours, or perils, or sufferings, which are necessary for this purpose—holy love, I say, in opposition to a criminal selfishness, the natural element of the human character in its fallen state, which is sure to develop itself in impiety and malignity—leading him who is under its influence, to make himself his own god—or to make creatures from whom he vainly expects happiness, his gods—so that he does not “glorify God as God, neither is thankful,” but

“worships and serves the creature more than the Creator;”—and leading him too, in seeking his own interest, ill understood, both to neglect and to invade the interests of others, becoming “hateful and hating” his fellow-men.

Cultivate this holy, generous love, in both its forms. Like Jesus, love God “with all your heart and soul, and strength and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.” Like Jesus, look primarily to the manifestation of the Divine glory as your chief end. Let this be your great object, that God, the infinitely great, excellent, amiable, benignant being, should have his character justly appreciated by yourselves and others—and that these just views should exert a paramount influence over the character and conduct of all men—formed for Him, that they may show forth his praise. Let this principle, embodied in the first and great commandment of the law, and in the three first petitions of the Lord’s prayer, and exhibited alive and in activity in the character and conduct of the man Christ Jesus, reign in your hearts. Let your whole conduct plainly say, We supremely venerate him who is infinitely venerable, and we wish all *thus* to venerate him; we supremely love him who is supremely lovely, and we wish all *thus* to love him; we supremely trust him who is supremely trust-worthy, and we wish all *thus* to trust him. “Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be *thy* name, *thy* kingdom come, *thy* will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Like Jesus too, love your fellow-men. How disinterested, how self-sacrificing was his love! Let his disposition be in you—feel for men’s bodily wants and distresses; feel especially for the wants, and the dangers, and the miseries of the rational immortal spirit; and to relieve both, give not only good words and fair speeches, but readily submit to privation—make sacrifices—willingly labour and suffer in order to diminish the mass of human guilt and wretchedness—to increase the sum of human worth and happiness. The command is that we love one another “as he loved us”—and that is not a Christian mind which does not acknowledge the justice of the reasoning of that apostle, who had much of the mind of his Master in him, when he says, “If Christ laid down his life for us, we also should lay down our lives for the brethren.”

This “mind which was in Christ Jesus” manifested itself in “obedience,” and if the mind be in you, you also will be “obedient

children"—children of obedience: Obedient in your *minds*—recognising no authority in religion but *one*, and ever bowing to that authority, counting every thing true God says, because He says it—every thing right He appoints, because He appoints it—and counting nothing in religion true or right, but what He says and appoints: Obedient in our *hearts*, answering with corresponding feeling every manifestation of the Divine character. When you look at his majestic grandeur and infinite holiness—"Sanctify Him in your hearts, making Him your fear and dread,"—when you look at the loveliness of his character, and the number, variety, and value of his gifts, "O love the Lord all ye his saints."—Meet manifestations of his faithfulness by increased confidence, and manifestations of his kindness with increased gratitude: Obedient in your *lives*—both passively and actively: passively, by patiently and cheerfully bearing whatever afflictions He sends, just because He sends them; and actively, "observing all things whatsoever He has commanded you," "walking in all his commandments and ordinances blameless," practically "counting his statutes concerning *all* things to be right, and abhorring every wicked way."

As the obedience of Christ, under the influence of "the mind that was in him," was obedience to death—so must yours be. Never forget, that it is the end which crowns the work. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." It is to the overcomer that the promise is made, "He shall sit with me on my throne, as I have sat down on my Father's throne."

And you must not only be "obedient *unto* death," but obedient *in* death. Oh my friends, that is a severe trial. "Dying work is serious work," but if the mind of Christ be in us, we shall be enabled to sustain the trial, to finish the work. Though shrinking from being unclothed, and willing rather to be clothed upon, yet when God makes it evident that the great law of mortality is about to have its course in reference to us, let us acknowledge the righteousness of the awful doom, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," let us meekly submit to the stroke of death,—thankful in our hearts that though "the body must die, because of sin, the spirit lives because of righteousness," and firmly believing that "He who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead," shall in due time "quicken our mortal bodies because of

his Spirit who dwells in us," "confident always and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord." Let us quietly submit to all his arrangements as to the time and manner of our departure; and instead of being "driven away,"—"chased out of the world,"—let us go cheerfully along with the grim messenger, knowing that he has no power over the redeemed spirit, which, escaping from its earthly tabernacle, like the bird from the snare of the fowler, finds its way direct to the bosom of God; and assured that though death may for a season give fearful proofs of his power on the now deserted material tenement, yet the period is hastening onward when "mortality shall be swallowed up in life," and the dishonours of the grave forgotten for ever in the glories of the resurrection and life eternal. "For we are looking for the Saviour from heaven, the Lord Jesus, who shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself."

The institution we have been observing confirms this glorious hope. It looks forward as well as backward—it speaks of the second as well as the first coming of the Lord. The services of to-day have probably painfully reminded some of us of happy communions here with those with whom we must no more drink the pignoral cup; but they point our hopes onward to the period when we shall hunger no more—thirst no more—but along with them be led by the Lamb to living fountains of waters, and "drink our fill of their pure immortal stream." In this emblematical institution, our Lord proclaims, 'I have come as a sin-offering—I will come a second time, not as a sin-offering, but for the salvation of those who are looking for me.' To the first announcement we reply, 'Blessed be thou who hast come in the name of the Lord'—to the second, 'Amen, even so come Lord Jesus.'

In obtaining a more and more accurate resemblance in their mode of thinking and feeling to that of their Saviour, and exhibiting a fair and still improving copy of the graces and virtues which rendered his life and his death so illustrious, Christians will honour their Lord—make sure their calling and election, and acquire a fitness for mingling in the closest fellowship, throughout eternity, with Christ Jesus, and his divine Father and Spirit, to whom be ascribed infinite and undivided honour. Amen.

DISCOURSE II.

THE CHRISTIAN EXHORTED AND ENCOURAGED TO EXERTION.

2 CHRON. XV. 7.—“Be strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.”

OF those good and great men who, in their respective periods, were “the lights of the world”—who, devoting the best gifts of heaven to the best purposes, contributed by their talents and virtues to the instruction, moral improvement, and happiness of their fellow-men, it is but a small proportion whose names, and a still smaller whose works, have survived their own age, and come down to excite the admiration and claim the gratitude of succeeding generations. This fact is easily accounted for. These men have, for the most part, been heedless of human applause. The object of their ambition was something infinitely higher than mortal fame—“the honour which cometh down from above,” the approbation of their God. Content with being good and useful, they left it to others to run the race and wear the laurels of earthly renown. On the other hand, an ignorant and unthinking world were indisposed to attend to, and incapable of estimating rightly, the worth of their character, and the importance of their labours; and, obstinately attached to their foolish and criminal pursuits, they willingly consigned to oblivion both their reprovers and their reproofs.

It is owing to these, and similar causes, that so many great and good men are entirely forgotten; and, but for the unperceived, yet frequently very powerful influence of their exertions on the minds of those with whom they were connected, are as if they had never been. Their memorial among men is perished.—Yet shall they be “held in everlasting remembrance.” Their names, though not inserted in the records of worldly honour, are “written in the Lamb’s book of life.” They “honoured

God, and He will honour them." "They turned many to righteousness, and they shall shine as stars in the firmament for ever and ever."

It cannot be doubted, that of those prophets whom God raised up for the instruction of the Jewish church, as well as of those ministers whom He has raised up for the instruction of the Christian church, there were many thousands, venerable for their piety, respectable for their talents, and highly useful in their stations, of whose very names we are totally ignorant : Of many more we know nothing but the names : Of a much less considerable number we have some slender memorial : and of a very few we have full delineations of their characters, and extensive specimens of their labours. In these dispensations we may notice, and ought to adore, the sovereignty of Divine Providence, who does what He wills with his own, and who distributes posthumous honour and usefulness on principles certainly wise, just, and good, but to us altogether inscrutable.

Of the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, we have considerable volumes : Of Micaiah and Gad we know little more than that they were prophets ; while Nathan, Obadiah, and some others, hold a kind of intermediate station—slender portions of their prophetic instructions having found a place in the inspired canon. To this third class belongs Azariah, the son of Oded, from whose short and solitary recorded prophecy I have chosen the subject of the present discourse.

The words of the text are the conclusion of a solemn and animated address, delivered by Azariah under the impulse of inspiration, to the pious Asa, on his return from the miraculous overthrow of Zerah the Cushite, and his prodigious army. The prophet assures the monarch and his people of the continued protection and blessing of Jehovah, if they remained faithful to their duty,—puts them in mind of the dilapidated state in which the true religion had for a long period been,—points out the necessity of an immediate and thorough reformation,—and concludes all with the exhortation in the text, "Be strong, and let not your hands be weak : for your work shall be rewarded." Without doubt, these words have a primary reference to Asa, and the people of Judah and Benjamin, in the particular conjuncture at which they were spoken. They are an exhortation to activity, vigour, and perseverance, in the great work of

national reformation, enforced by a declaration, that their labours should be crowned with an abundant reward. It is obvious, however, that they admit of a wider application, and that both the command and the encouragement may, without impropriety, be considered as addressed to men and saints in every country and age.

In this avowedly accommodated sense I shall consider it in the subsequent part of this discourse, in which your attention shall be successively directed to **THE DUTY ENJOINED**, “Be strong, and let not your hands be weak”; and to **THE MOTIVE PROPOSED**, “Your work shall be rewarded.”

I. I do not know, if, in the whole compass of inspired Scripture, there is to be found an injunction so frequently repeated as that to which your attention is now to be directed. “Be strong,” said Moses to Joshua, when he publicly declared him his successor; and the same laconic exhortation was repeated immediately from heaven, when he entered on the discharge of the duties of his office. “Be thou strong,” said David to Solomon, when he gave him his last advice respecting his conduct as a man and a king. “Be strong,” is a part of the evangelical message, according to the prediction of the evangelical prophet. “Be strong, O Zerubabel; be strong, O Jeshua; be strong, all ye people of the land,” was the command of God by the prophet Haggai to the restorers of the temple. “Be strong,” is the injunction of the apostle Paul on his son Timothy, and on the Corinthian and Ephesian believers. A mandate so frequently repeated by men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, must be important, and an inquiry into its meaning cannot surely be deficient either in interest or instruction. The Divine injunction is by no means obscure. It obviously enjoins alacrity in undertaking, activity in prosecuting, perseverance in continuing, a course of dutiful conduct. The general command, “Be strong,” implies in it an injunction to acquire those principles and dispositions in which moral strength and spiritual vigour consist; and to display those principles in their appropriate employment, of performing duty, resisting enemies, and enduring affliction. The duty enjoined, then, seems to be twofold—first, the acquisition; and secondly, the exertion of spiritual strength.

1st, The command, "Be strong," enjoins the acquirement of spiritual strength. Were a person worn out by disease, addressed in these words, "Be strong," the most rational course which he could adopt, in order to comply with the advice, would be carefully to use every means which promised to re-establish his health and restore his vigour. The application of the remark to the moral state of mankind is obvious and easy.

That men are naturally destitute of all moral vigour, all spiritual strength—that they are morally incapable, or, in other words, very strongly indisposed, to perform actions acceptable to God, is most decidedly the doctrine of Scripture. "Without strength, dead in trespasses and sins," are the expressive appellations given in Scripture to all men in their natural state: "They who are in the flesh cannot please God."

This moral inability seems owing to two causes—the Divine curse, and the depravity of human nature. "All men have sinned," and, of course, are under the curse which God has denounced against all the transgressors of his law. To this most holy and righteous ordinance of Heaven, I impute no active energy in paralysing the native powers of the human mind; but, without doubt, the object of the Divine curse cannot be the subject of that Divine influence, which is the sole source of moral goodness in created minds. The Divine curse cuts off, as it were, the supplies of the Divine life, and man, of course, continues "dead in trespasses and sins." It is thus that "the law is the strength of sin." It is, however, to the depravity of man's nature—to the wilful delusions of his understanding—and the determined wickedness of his heart, that man's moral inability is to be traced as its operative cause. It is because men will not do their duty that they cannot do it: "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life."

From this view of the subject it is plain, that in order to our acquiring spiritual vigour, two things are necessary—we must obtain deliverance from the Divine curse, and we must be "renewed in the spirit of our minds." I trust none of you are ignorant of the manner in which these blessings are to be obtained; yet, as it is scarcely possible to present the truth on this subject too frequently to the mind, I shall state the leading doctrines of the Christian scheme of restoration:—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, having himself become

a curse for us. When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God, sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and a sin-offering, has condemned sin in the flesh; which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." By faith in Christ Jesus, we are "made the righteousness of God in him," and become partakers of all the blessings which he has procured by his death. God, well pleased with him, and with us in him, "blesses us with heavenly and spiritual blessings;" and, among these blessings, one of the first and most important is spiritual ability, "the creation in Christ Jesus unto good works." This is conferred through the agency of the Holy Ghost enlightening the understanding in the knowledge of truth, and inclining the heart to the love of goodness. We are "born again of the Spirit—saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." "Sin no longer reigns in our mortal bodies. We yield no more our members to sin, as the instruments of unrighteousness; but we yield ourselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead, and our members to Him as the instruments of righteousness."

But if the communication of spiritual strength be entirely the work of God, how can we, who are dead in trespasses and sins, with consistency be exhorted to be strong by acquiring spiritual vigour? This is a difficulty which arises from confounding together the ideas of physical strength and moral ability, than which no two ideas can be more distinct; and from arguing from what is true in the one case, to what is true in the other. The difficulty is not to be got rid of, as has sometimes been attempted, by merely saying, that, though man cannot acquire spiritual vigour, he can use the means of acquiring it; but by asserting the plain truths, that an indisposition to do what is our duty, can never excuse us from its performance—that arguments and motives are the means suited to our rational nature for urging us to a particular mode of conduct—and that it is through their medium that that divine influence is usually exerted, "which works in us both to will and to do of God's good pleasure."¹

¹ I am glad to have it in my power to lay before my readers the sentiments of the most eloquent of living preachers, and, to say the least, one of the most profound of living theologians, on this highly important subject. "From the moral impotence which the oracles of truth ascribe to man in his fallen state, a certain class of

The continuance and the increase of spiritual vigour flow from the same copious sources of blessing as its commencement,—the atonement and the spirit of the Redeemer. “Without him” the most accomplished Christian “can do nothing.” If he is “strong,” it is only in the grace which is in the Lord Jesus. This increase of spiritual vigour is to be sought for in the exercise of faith and prayer, and in the conscientious use of that degree of spiritual energy already obtained. “Even the youths may faint and be weary, and the young men may utterly fall; but they who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings like eagles, they shall run and not weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

divines were induced to divide moral and religious duties into two classes—natural and spiritual; comprehending under the latter, those which require spiritual or supernatural assistance to their performance, and under the former, those which demand no such assistance. Agreeable to this distinction, they conceived it to be the duty of all men to abstain from the outward acts of sin—to read the Scriptures—to frequent the worship of God—and to attend with serious assiduity on the means of grace; but they supposed that repentance, faith in Christ, and the exercise of genuine internal devotion, were obligatory only on the regenerate.

“These conclusions were evidently founded on two assumptions: first, that the impotence which the Scriptures ascribe to the unregenerate, is free from blame, so as to excuse them from all the duties to which it extends; whereas, in truth, the inability under which the unconverted labour is altogether of a moral nature, consisting in the corruption of the will, or an aversion to things of a spiritual and divine nature, so that it is in itself criminal, and is so far from affording an excuse for what would otherwise be a duty, that it stamps with its own character all its issues and productions.

“Another principle assumed as a basis by the High Calvinists is, that the same things cannot be the duty of man and the gift of God; or, in other words, that what is matter of promise, can on no occasion be the matter of obligation. The consistency of the promises and commands in question, arises from the matter of each being of a moral nature. If we will allow ourselves to reflect, we shall perceive, that the will, and the will only, is the proper object of command; and that an agent is no otherwise accountable, or susceptible of moral government, than as he is the subject of voluntary powers. We shall also perceive, that the disordered state of the will, or the radical indisposition of an agent to comply with legitimate commands, which is the same thing, by no means exempts him from their obligation, nor tends in the least degree, to render the addressing such commands to him absurd or improper. That they will not be complied with, while that disordered state subsists, is true, but legitimate commands, enforced by proper sanctions, are amongst the strongest motives; that is, they tend in their own nature to incline the will, and therefore they cannot be withheld without virtually relinquishing the claim of authority and dominion.”—HALL'S (of Leicester) Preface to HALL'S (of Arnsby) *Help to Zion's Traveller*.—It is a profound remark of the same great man, that the radical principle both of Pelagianism and Hyper-Calvinism is, ‘that moral ability is the rule of obligation:’ “a position which, when the terms are accurately defined and cleared of their ambiguity, conduces us to this very extraordinary conclusion, *that men are obliged to just as much of their duty as they are inclined to.*”

2d, The command, "Be strong," enjoins the exertion of spiritual strength. All the faculties which God is pleased to confer on his creatures are intended to be employed. He does nothing either in the natural or in the moral world in vain. Has He formed mankind capable of acquiring knowledge? it is his will that they should acquire it. Has He given them the capacity of communicating knowledge? it is his will they should communicate it. In like manner, when He has by his Spirit produced a moral ability to do his will—when He has "worked in men both to will and to do of his good pleasure," it is his intention that these new moral faculties should be exerted, and that they who are possessed of them should be "fruitful in every good work." The three principal ways in which the Christian is called on to exert his spiritual vigour, are, the discharge of active duty—the resistance of spiritual adversaries—and the endurance of appointed trials.

The duties incumbent on the Christian are numerous and important. He owes many duties to his God—many to himself—and many to his brethren of mankind. These duties, though in themselves most reasonable, and to a perfectly holy being easy and delightful, are yet, in consequence of the remaining corruption of his nature, and the peculiar circumstances of his situation, frequently attended with very considerable difficulty. When he contemplates the number and importance of his duties, and contrasts with them his own deficiencies and weakness, his heart is apt to fail him, and his hands to hang down in hopeless inaction. He is in danger of neglecting them altogether—of discharging them in a slovenly manner—of attending only to a part of them—or of abandoning them while yet unfinished. In these circumstances, the Christian must "be strong"—call forth into action all the energies of his new nature—and look up to heaven for renewed supplies of spiritual vigour. Let him not waste his strength in uncommanded exertions. Let him not rashly engage even in a good work, to which he is not called. Such heedlessness is usually and justly punished by failure. But, when plainly called to follow a particular line of conduct, let no apparent difficulties prevent his entering upon it. Though commanded to demolish the walls of Jericho by the blast of rams' horns, let not the seeming inadequacy of the means prevent their employment. Though ordered to stretch forth a withered hand,

let not the hopelessness of the exertion prevent the attempt being made: Weak in himself, let him "be strong in the Lord," and say with the apostle, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me."

Nor must the Christian display his spiritual vigour merely in boldly entering on the performance of commanded duty. He must not only do what is required, but he must do it in the manner required. He must not confine his attention to those parts of Christian duty which are comparatively easy,—corresponding with his interests and habits; his spiritual vigour must be manifested in the performance of those duties most opposed to his worldly interests, and most abhorrent to his natural feelings. He must "mortify his members which are upon the earth, and crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts." He must not only part with what he perceives and feels to be an incumbrance; he must cut off a right hand, and pluck out a right eye, when duty requires the sacrifice.

Farther, the Christian must discover spiritual vigour in the perseverance of his dutiful exertions. "The Christian race," to use the figure of an accomplished female writer, "is not to be run at a few heats."¹ It is a constant progressive movement, commensurate with our lives. It is always "the race set before us." The same duties are constantly recurring. What was done yesterday must be done to-day, and to-morrow, and every succeeding day of our lives. The Christian is in danger of becoming "weary of well-doing." But he must "be strong," and press forward: "Forgetting the things which are behind, he must reach forth to those which are before, and press to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The enemies of the Christian's salvation are numerous and powerful. Within, he has "an evil heart of unbelief tempting him to depart from the living God:" He has carnal affections and unruly passions, a darkened mind and a perverse heart, to contend with. Without, the world assaults him both by its smiles and its frowns,—its allurements and its terrors. Death threatens to overwhelm him, and his "adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." In resisting these enemies, the exercise of spiritual vigour is

¹ Hannah More.

absolutely necessary. The Christian must "be strong." A better commentary on the prophet's words, in this view of them, cannot be conceived, than the exhortation of the apostle,—
"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places. Wherefore, take to you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." However much he may suffer in the conflict, he must enter into no terms with the enemies of his salvation. In his greatest distresses, let his language be—"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! when I fall I shall arise, when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to me." The battle may be obstinate, but, if thus conducted, ultimate victory is secure. The Christian shall be made "more than a conqueror, through HIM who loves him."

The endurance of affliction, is the third exercise which calls for the vigorous exertion of spiritual strength. Affliction is the general lot of mortals: "Man who is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble: he cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down; he flieth also as a shadow, and continueth not." The saint has his full share of the evils of life: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Spiritual vigour is not less necessary to enable us to suffer well than to act well. Affliction, especially if it is long continued, has a tendency to subdue the spirits and to weaken the mind. There is a species of strength of mind under affliction, which, so far from being a duty, is a great sin: a refusing to bend under the hand of the Almighty—a "despising of the chastening of God." Against this stubborn, untameable temper, the Christian must carefully guard. He must "hear the rod, and Him who appoints it." He must "humble himself under the

mighty hand of God." He must not "despise the chastening of the Lord." But neither ought he to "faint when he is rebuked of Him." However severe, however long-continued the affliction, he must patiently bear it. He must endeavour even to "rejoice in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." In this respect, as in every other, the apostle Paul is a fit model for the Christian to copy: "There was given to me," says he, "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me; and he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I also strong." Afflicted Christian, "go thou and do likewise."

II. Having thus illustrated the duty enjoined, the acquisition and exertion of spiritual vigour, I proceed to the consideration of the motive by which the injunction is enforced—"Be strong, and let not your hands be weak, FOR YOUR WORK SHALL BE REWARDED."

There is such a tendency in the depraved human mind, to consider benefits received in the light of a debt due to us by heaven for services performed by us, that there is need of peculiar caution and accuracy in stating some of the principles of the Christian institution, lest they should, by a perverted ingenuity, be construed as giving countenance to this common and most dangerous error. Among those principles which are thus liable to misconception, the doctrine of rewards for duty holds a conspicuous place.¹ By incorrect exhibitions of this confessedly important doctrine, the whole system of truth respecting man's salvation has been obscured and misrepresented; and in opposition to the apostle, who declares, that "by grace are we saved," men have been led to expect everlasting happiness, not as a boon from the self-moved benevolence, but a merited recompense for their exertions from the justice, of Heaven.

¹ See Note at the end of the Discourse.

The doctrine of merit is equally indefensible on the principles of reason and revelation: "Can man be profitable to God, as he who is wise is profitable to himself?" Can a rational creature, even in his best estate, do more than it is his duty to do? and if so, where is his merit? The highest angel, the purest seraph, has no merit. He owes his happiness, not to himself, but to the bounty of his Maker. And shall man—a worm, a rebel, a condemned, and at best a pardoned traitor—shall he, for a moment, cherish the proud thought of making God his debtor, or of obtaining happiness from any source, but the undeserved, self-originating goodness of the Divinity? If there is a truth revealed explicitly in Scripture, it is this, that all the good which man receives, either in the present or in a future state, from a breath of air, or a drop of water, to the high endowments and rapturous enjoyments of the blessed in heaven, all, all proceeds from the patience or the grace of the Sovereign Jehovah. From the justice of Heaven, man, viewed as a fallen creature, in any stage of his existence, deserves nothing but punishment;—if he is spared and pardoned, accepted and saved, not to him, but to his merciful God, his compassionate Redeemer, must be ascribed all the glory.

Still, however, it cannot be denied, and it ought not to be concealed, that in the Scriptures we frequently find the benefits bestowed on saints represented as rewards. Moses "looked for the recompense of reward." God is said to "recompense" to his afflicted people "rest with the apostles." And, in the passage before us, the command "be strong," is enforced by a promise, that dutiful exertion shall be abundantly rewarded. The idea intended to be conveyed by these and similar expressions, cannot be, that the blessings are merited by the exertion to which they are promised as a reward. The connection established between the exertion and the blessing, is a connection originating in sovereign appointment. Previous to the promise, no man, even though he had done the duty, could have laid claim to the reward; and the strength necessary to the discharge of the duty is obviously the gift of God. Yet the language is far from being either unmeaning or obscure. It teaches us, that, without the discharge of the duty enjoined, the promised blessing will not be bestowed; and that the benefit will be conferred in a degree proportioned to the dutiful exertion made for its acquisition.

In the Christian doctrine of rewards, thus understood, while there is nothing incongruous with the strictly gratuitous nature of all the blessings of salvation,—we have a striking proof, that, in the scheme of man's redemption, advantages apparently inconsistent are conjoined; for while every rising emotion of pride and self-glorying is repressed by the consideration that all is of grace, all the energies of our nature, which depend on the principle of interest, are called forth into exercise in promoting our sanctification, by the prospect of the gracious "recompense of reward." Having thus, in order to prevent mistakes, shortly explained the nature of those rewards which God bestows on his people, I proceed to show how the active and vigorous discharge of Christian duty is usually rewarded. The work of God's people is rewarded both in the present and in a future state.

1st, The work of God's people is rewarded in the present state. On a cursory view, the present state of things appears a kind of moral chaos, where one event happens to all, where good and evil are dispensed with a careless hand, and happiness and misery alternately and indiscriminately are the lot of the righteous and the wicked. A closer inspection will, however, convince us, that there are design and order amid apparent chance and confusion, that there is a system of moral government administered even here, that "verily there is a reward for the righteous, that verily there is a God who judgeth in the earth." The modes in which God rewards the work of his people are very diversified. Sometimes He recompenses their dutiful exertions by worldly prosperity; sometimes by the success with which He crowns their labours; uniformly by an increased degree of internal peace, and a more confirmed hope of eternal happiness.

God does not always reward his people's dutiful exertions by temporal prosperity, for temporal prosperity is not in every case a blessing. It is not every good man who can withstand its temptations, and where it seduces into sin, it is certainly not a blessing, but a curse. Yet still, in many cases, the work of the saints is rewarded by external blessings. Under that peculiar dispensation under which the ancient people of God were placed, they were in general prosperous or afflicted, according as they kept or violated the law of their God. Asa obeyed the commandment of the Lord by the prophet Azariah, and we find he was rewarded by twenty-five years of uninterrupted peace and

prosperity. Who can doubt, that the external blessings by which Job, and David, and Daniel were distinguished, were the gracious rewards of their doing and suffering the will of God? Nor was this mode of rewarding dutiful exertion peculiar to the theocratic dispensation: still we find the promise to godliness, of "the life that now is," frequently fulfilled. "The blessing of God still makes rich," and when a person who is conscientiously employing all his capabilities of doing good, finds his worldly interests prospering, he is warranted to consider this as a reward for his past exertions, and as an encouragement to persevere in well-doing.

Another way in which God perhaps still more frequently rewards the dutiful exertions of his people, is by crowning their labours with abundant success. When a saint enters with alacrity on the discharge of a difficult and important duty, the necessary supplies of Divine assistance are given him, and he accomplishes it with an ease which at once astonishes and delights him. When he boldly encounters the enemies of his salvation, he is made "more than a conqueror;" and when he sets himself to endure affliction, strength is given him from above, "patience has its perfect work," and the affliction, having served its purpose, is removed. In the success of his dutiful exertions, the saint enjoys a rich reward. How amply recompensed is the faithful and laborious minister, when his exertions are obviously rendered effectual to the conversion of sinners, and the improvement of the faithful; or the pious and diligent parent, when he sees his children growing up in the knowledge of the truth, and the love of holiness! How wonderfully has the work of that honoured individual¹ been rewarded, who, nearly thirty years ago,² raised almost his single voice in behalf of a benighted world, and whose exertions in their cause have ever since been most vigorous and unintermitting! In the establishment of many Missionary and Bible Societies; in the translation of the Scriptures into most of the written languages of the world; in the distribution of hundreds of thousands of Bibles; in the formation of many Christian churches; in the conversion of many souls; in the prospect of the Christianisation of the whole peopled earth;—he has already obtained an exceeding great reward. Never, perhaps, could any

¹ Dr Carey.

² In the year 1791. This was first published in 1816.

man adopt, with greater emphasis, the words of Simeon, than this distinguished friend of God and man: "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

It is not, however, in every case that God thus rewards the dutiful exertions of his people with success. They often seem to "labour in vain, and to spend their strength for nought and in vain." In such instances, however, we should draw a very rash conclusion, were we to affirm that their work is unrewarded. It is a most important truth, that "the kingdom of God is within man," and in secrecy and silence are many of its punishments and rewards dispensed. Peace of mind is the reward in every case of dutiful conduct. "In keeping God's commandments there is great reward. Great peace have they who love God's law, and nothing shall offend them." He who has felt the pangs of remorse, and he who has tasted the sweets of conscious sincerity, are equally convinced, that it is a delightful thing to have "a conscience void of offence towards God and man." Not that the saint depends on his most dutiful exertions as the grounds of his acceptance. No; he trusts in no arm but God's, he relies on no righteousness but Jesus's; but in his humble persevering endeavours to do his duty, he has satisfactory evidence that he is interested in the Divine favour. "His calling and election are thus made sure," and the peace of mind thus produced may surely be considered as the reward of his giving all diligence to add to his faith every Christian virtue.

In proportion to the saint's diligence in the discharge of his duty, is he rewarded with the unclouded hope of eternal life. The saint's security of eternal life is derived from his interest in the all-perfect atonement and all-prevalent intercession of our Lord Jesus. But the enjoyment of the satisfaction arising from the prospect of celestial blessedness, is dependent on, and is the reward of, his dutiful exertions. Indolence on the part of a true saint cannot render his final salvation insecure; but it may, it must, render him uncertain about it. Then does the Christian most delightfully feel that his hope is not that of the hypocrite, when it animates him to "purify himself as God is pure."

2d, The work of God's people shall be rewarded in a future state. Of the blessings which await the people of God in a future world, we are able to form but very indistinct and inade-

quate ideas. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be. Here we see through a glass darkly." Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God has there laid up for those who love Him. From the various images under which the celestial blessedness is represented to our minds, we may safely conclude, that it is infinitely superior to anything of which we have experience in the present state. It is "a crown of glory and of life," "an enduring substance," "a city which has foundations," "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, unfading,"—it is an "eternal weight of glory,"—it is "fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore." This blessedness, represented under so many figures, consists principally in the knowledge, the fellowship, and the enjoyment of God. This is the full recompense of reward. It is a reward, for it is necessarily connected with the discharge of the duties enjoined. "Without holiness no man can see the Lord," and with holiness, none can be excluded from the beatific vision. It is a reward, for the measure in which it is enjoyed corresponds to the degree of dutiful exertion made in order to obtain it. "Every man shall receive according to his own labour." "They who are wise shall shine as the firmament, while they who turned many to righteousness shine as the stars of the firmament for ever and ever." He who gains ten talents is made ruler over ten cities, and he that gains five shall obtain a proportionable reward. This view of the celestial blessedness, as the *reward* of the saint's labours, is frequently exhibited in the Holy Scriptures. "God will render to every man according to his deeds,—to those who, by a constant continuance in well-doing, look for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life." "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, *for* I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

The rewards with which the dutiful exertions of God's people shall be crowned, are not more valuable than they are secure. "Faithful is He who hath promised, who also will do it. He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent: Hath He said it, and will He not do it? hath He promised

it, and will He not make it good?" Be strong, then, my brethren, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded. Allow this motive to have its due influence on your minds. It is by no means the only one which urges you to vigorous and persevering exertion in the discharge of your duty; but it is a powerful one. Moses felt it, and accounted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt, "for he looked for the recompense of reward." Jesus felt it, and "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Let not the difficulty of your duties, the power of your enemies, and the severity of your afflictions, make a disheartening impression on your spirits. The joys of heaven will more than compensate for all, and "the more you toil and suffer here, the sweeter rest will be." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

Unconverted men! Ye are "the servants of sin, and free from righteousness." Ye are strong, and your hands are not weak in the prosecution of the deeds of darkness. Your work also shall be rewarded. If you persist in your sinful course, "God will render to you according to your works, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." He has sworn by himself, that He will render vengeance to his enemies, and recompense them who hate Him. "The wages of sin is death." "But" it is equally true "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Receive the gift so freely offered. "Work the work of God, in believing on his Son whom He has sent into the world." "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." "To-day if ye will hear his voice." "Now is the accepted time,—now is the day of salvation."

NOTE.

NATURE AND REWARDABLENESS OF CHRISTIAN VIRTUE.

It may be necessary to adduce proof that the Christian revelation does aver the doctrine and promise of rewards. Not a few who

bear the Christian name, survey the subject with jealousy and dislike. They suspect its interference and incompatibility with salvation by grace. Its vocabulary is repugnant to their taste; they never employ it but with qualification. They might almost account inspiration incautious in its style. They are always ready to correct it. They affect a concern for the Divine character which it does not confess. They are always impatient to set it right. This is a sentiment morbid and profane! It is "speaking wickedly for God!"

The sacred Volume plainly defines what is, and what is not, its principle upon this question. It supposes the case of an unfallen man, who has kept the whole law, who is entitled to the life of justification by works. "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt." That case is purely hypothetical,—it is utterly inapplicable and unavailing—it is for ever past. The ground of a sinner's justification is altogether different. He of himself can do nothing to recover favour and acceptance. The attempt to do so is a fearful aggravation of his guilt. "He worketh not." He can claim no "reward of debt." When "he believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith," that is, its objects, or that which it embraces, "is counted for justification." Now in such an instance, after such a pre-requisite, may we prepare ourselves to understand "the reward of grace." Let us, with this distinction in our mind, examine inspired language concerning the well-doing of justified and regenerate men. "God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." "The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath He recompensed me." "Verily there is a reward for the righteous." "Great is your reward in heaven." "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward." "Let no man beguile you of your reward." "Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance."¹ The principle is not dependent on a word, or some nice shade of expression. The conditional manner in which all promised good or benefit is ensured, confirms it. It is pledged to character; it is unintelligible and unsuited to them who possess not kindred sentiments and tastes. Character is here the condition, being the capacity. We therefore read, "With the merciful, Thou wilt show

¹ Reward may be used in the sense of positive recompense. So our translators occasionally employ it; Psalm xci. 8; Hebrews ii. 2; 2 Peter ii. 13. Sometimes it is employed indifferently for good or evil; *μισθαποδοσία* is taken to be stronger than *ἀνταπόδοσις*. This cannot be proved. We adopt it in its conventional acceptation, exclusively as the premium of virtue; punishment can only have an invariably evil meaning.

thyself merciful; with an upright man, Thou wilt show thyself upright; with the pure, Thou wilt show thyself pure." Nor is it less when this promised good rests with our dispositions to give it effect. "If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward." "Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward." The final state of happiness to which Christians are admitted, is thus described: Something to be enjoyed by a peculiar aptitude, and under a condign claim. They are "accounted worthy to obtain that world." "They are worthy of the kingdom for which they suffer." "They walk in white, for they are worthy." The theory of Christian reward depends upon a fixed constitution of holy law, which has its foundation in the atonement of Christ. From that real sacrifice proceeds a consideration, by virtue of which the strict justice which regarded the sinner is satisfied. That justice no longer forbids his salvation, but confirms it. An infinite merit, or righteousness, becomes the basis for the acceptance of his person and his works. Could his works challenge a perfect conformity to the Divine will, he would not need the aid of any atonement. They now look to the satisfaction of Christ for the sole reason why they can find favour with the Righteous One. The entire basis and scope for such treatment of them is the mediatorial system. All is done "through Jesus Christ," and "in his name." All is received "for his sake." " whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." "For his name's sake they went forth." We are explicit to guard against misconception. We would found the doctrine of rewards aright. But we would speak in no tone of exception and excuse. Whatever its relations and its reasons, it is a perfect doctrine, to be understood and defended in itself. God, the rock of faith and fulness, binds himself to it. It is not that pseudo-scheme which stipulates his dishonour by the allowance of a sincere, instead of a complete, obedience; itself adjusted and accommodated to a mitigated law (a predicament which, by its terms, must make insincere what it tolerates as incomplete,) but an order and arrangement which, insisted on, against the substitute of man, a perfect obedience, even unto death, ere the imperfect virtues of them upon whom the penalty has no farther claim and force could be approved, and still exhibiting that obedience as the exclusive ground of approval. This course being settled, God having engaged himself to it, there arises an order which He authorises, an expectation which He fulfils. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

It may be said that, while punishment is considered as a recompense, every benefit of salvation, and all that flows from it, is ascribed to grace. The one may be of desert, but the other is gratuitous bestowment. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." To any such statement we assent. It must, nevertheless, be remembered that the former applies properly to the first constitution, while the latter is peculiar to the second. And assuredly we speak not now of eternal life, otherwise than a gift, certainly not as the wages we have earned—however, beneath the dispensation which secures this gift of eternal life, there be terms and rewards which serve the better to illustrate its simple mercy, its holy character, its glorious immunity!—WINTER HAMILTON.

DISCOURSE III.

THE SAINT'S SEED-TIME AND HARVEST.

PSALM CXXVI. 5.—“They who sow in tears shall reap in joy.”

IN forming an estimate of the worth or the happiness of mankind, no criterion is more deceitful than external appearance. The most splendid actions sometimes originate in the most unworthy principles, and hypocrisy frequently receives the honours due to genuine sanctity. On the other hand, modest worth often passes through life in noiseless obscurity—its unobtrusive excellences altogether overlooked, or rated at a price far below their value. In the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and human characters exhibited in their true colours, strange discoveries will be made. It will then appear how different men are from what they seem to be; and how inconsistent their opinions, who judge according to external appearance, are with the judgments of Him who looketh on the heart.

Nor is external appearance a surer test of the happiness than of the worth of mankind. That man is not necessarily happy, who has all the external marks of happiness; nor is he who wears all the usual badges of wretchedness, necessarily miserable. The world calls him happy, who is raised above the fear of want and the necessity of labour—whose mansion is splendid, and whose domains are extensive—who in health and vigour enjoys in abundance the riches, and pleasures, and honours of life. Yet such a man may be, and often is, very miserable. He may be an unpardoned sinner; and if he is, the curse of God poisons all his pleasures, and turns their sweetness into gall: “Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of these things is often death.” On the other hand, extreme apparent wretched-

ness is not inconsistent with real happiness : Behold that afflicted Christian ! poverty and disappointment, disease and pain, have long been his portion. His dearest friends have gone down to the grave. "String after string has been severed from his heart," till his attachments to the present state are well nigh dissolved. His countenance is wrinkled with care, and furrowed with tears ; and from his lips proceed these plaintive accents, "I am the man who have seen affliction by the rod of his wrath." Yet amid all this apparent wretchedness, he is not wretched : his confidence in the wisdom and goodness of God, and the hope of eternal life, render him not only resigned and patient, but contented and happy : "Blessed is the man whom the Lord chasteneth, and teacheth out of his law, that He may give him rest from the days of adversity." "His light afflictions are but for a moment, and they are working out for him a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory." He is sowing in tears, but his tears are not those of despair, for he knows that he shall reap in joy.

The words of the text form part of a sacred ode, composed on the unexpected deliverance of the Jewish captives from Babylonian bondage. After celebrating, in the highest strains of oriental poetry, the Divine power and goodness, as manifested in this remarkable interposition in behalf of his people, the psalmist, in the text, and in the verse which immediately follows it, states under a beautiful figure the consolatory truth, that while the saint, in the present state, must lay his account with labour and sorrow, these exertions and afflictions are connected with, and shall be amply compensated by, the pleasures and honours of futurity. In the succeeding part of the discourse, I will consider the text AS A FIGURATIVE ACCOUNT OF THE SAINT'S SITUATION—FIRST, IN THE PRESENT STATE ; AND, SECONDLY, IN A FUTURE STATE. Here "he sows in tears," there "he reaps in joy."

I. The saint, in the present state, is represented as "sowing in tears." The Holy Scriptures abound in figurative representations of spiritual objects. In gracious condescension to human weakness, the Divine Spirit uses a language with which we are familiar ; and, to render the important truths of religion and morals at once interesting and intelligible, clothes them in de-

scriptions borrowed from the works of nature and the ordinary functions of life. In explaining these figurative representations, much caution and delicacy are necessary. Some men, with the best intentions, have, by tracing analogies too far, and by using for evidence what was meant only for illustration, exposed both themselves and the doctrines they taught to the ridicule of the profane. We trust we do not lay ourselves open to either of these charges, when we represent the figurative view of the saint in the present state "sowing in tears," as teaching us, 'that the saint in the present state is actively engaged in useful exertions which have a reference to futurity; and that, while thus employed, he exhibits tokens of distress and sorrow.'

1st, The figurative description of the saint's present state in the text intimates, that it is a state of active exertion. Sowing, like the greater part of agricultural operations, is a laborious exercise. Burdened with the seed, the sower walks with measured step over the uneven glebe, and scatters the grain as extensively and regularly as possible over the field. This figure happily delineates the active and laborious nature of the Christian life. Religion does not consist, as too many seem to suppose, in barren speculation, enthusiastic feeling, or specious declamation. It no doubt does interest both the understanding and the heart, but it proves the hold it has of both, by influencing all the springs of action, and making the man discharge with alacrity and diligence all the duties of active life. It deserves notice, that the figurative representations of the Christian life almost uniformly imply the idea of vigorous exertion. It is a race—and a combat: exercises which require the active employment of all the energies of our nature. "The Christian is a merchant—a scholar—a husbandman—a traveller—a soldier: The anxiety of the merchant, the application of the scholar, the hardy toil of the husbandman, the unwearying progress of the traveller, the painful exercise of the soldier, are images which ill accord with indolence, ease, and inaction."¹ He "works the work of God;" "he works out his own salvation with fear and trembling." He "forgets the things which are behind, and reaches forth to those which are before, and presses towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It is of the very essence

¹ Jay.

of true religion to quicken the soul, and to bring all its faculties into active employment; and no delusion can be more gross, than for a man to flatter himself that he is religious, merely because he has a certain species of religious knowledge and religious feeling, while he lives in the neglect of those dutiful exertions which he is called on to make, for the promotion of the honour of God and the happiness of mankind.

2d, The figurative description of the saint's present state, in the text, intimates, that his active exertions are directed to important and useful purposes. The employment of the sower is not merely laborious, it is at the same time useful and necessary. It is deeply to be regretted, there is not only much indolence and inaction among mankind, but also much wasted exertion, much misapplied industry. How many spend the whole of life in busy idleness, constantly employed, but never employed to any good purpose! Their exertions produce no useful result, either to themselves or to others. They scatter pebbles instead of grain over the field: They have all the labour of the sower, but they have none of his reward. How many more do worse than merely waste their activity in trifling, by strenuously exerting themselves to do mischief to themselves and others! "They are of their father the devil, and the works of their father they do." Their time and talents are devoted to his service, with a zeal and perseverance which reprove the languor and unsteadiness of those who profess to be engaged in a better cause. These men sow the seeds of some deadly poison, instead of the wholesome grain. They are industrious, but their industry is not only useless but mischievous. It is a melancholy reflection, that many men put themselves to an expense of time and labour in ruining their souls, which, if properly employed, might have been sufficient to save them.

The industry of the saint is wisely and usefully directed. His labours have for their object the glory of God, the salvation of his own soul, and the happiness of his brethren of mankind: "Whatsoever he does, he does it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by him. Whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the glory of God." His great desire is, "that in all things God may be glorified." He makes his "light to shine before men, that they, seeing his good works, may glorify his Father who is in heaven." He

sows, that there may be a rich harvest of "the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus to the praise and glory of God."—Next to the glory of God, the salvation of his own soul is the great object of the saint's vigorous exertions. He is well aware, that "eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" but he is also aware, that it is by "a constant continuance in well-doing, that men are to look for glory, honour, and immortality." Persuaded that religion is the one thing needful, he labours to obtain "that good part which shall never be taken from him." He gives "all diligence to add to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. He makes his calling and election sure; and thus an entrance is ministered to him abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." He "labours whether present or absent, that he may be accepted of God."—A third important and useful object to which the active exertions of the saint is directed, is the promotion of the true happiness of his fellow-men. In his estimation, no man ought to live to himself. He "looks not merely on his own things, but also on the things of others." If blessed with affluence, he employs his influence and wealth in mitigating the sorrows of his less fortunate brethren. "He is eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the afflicted poor. The blessing of him who was ready to perish comes on him, and he makes the widow's heart to sing for joy." If Providence assigns him a more narrow sphere of exertion, still, within its limits, he "does good to all as he has opportunity;" and labours, by promoting by every means in his power the happiness of his brethren, not to live in vain.

3d, The figurative description of the saint's present state in the text, intimates, that his active and useful exertions have a reference to futurity. The conduct of the sower is accountable only when viewed as looking forward to the months of harvest. To a person unacquainted with the law of nature by which vegetable substances are reproduced, the husbandman, casting into the earth what is fitted for the food of man and of beast, would appear to act the part of a madman. It is so with the Christian: his labours have a direct reference to futurity; and, without taking into consideration the invisible realities of religion

and eternity, there is much of his conduct that is altogether unaccountable. The employments in which he takes most pleasure, have no tendency to secure for him the pleasures, the honours, or the riches of this world. They look beyond time into eternity for their recompense. He sometimes makes sacrifices, for which, in the present state, he can expect to receive no compensation ; and, if there is no heavenly happiness remaining for him, he is of all men the most foolish and miserable. Indeed, the whole of his mode of thinking, and feeling, and acting, is distinguished by this reference to futurity. He “walks by faith, and not by sight.” As the sower sows in hope, so the Christian acts and suffers, lives and dies, under the influence of the faith of the Gospel and the hope of eternal life.

4th, The figurative account of the saint's present state, in the text, intimates, that while thus actively engaged in useful employments which have a reference to futurity, he often exhibits symptoms of distress and sorrow : “He sows in tears.” It might have been expected, from the account already given of the saint's employments in the present state, that he should be blessed with uninterrupted serenity. What can be better fitted to preserve the mind in perfect peace, than constant employment in the best of all causes, with the prospect of perfection and immortality ? And indeed we find, that good men do derive much satisfaction from the duties and exercises of religion : “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus ;” and they not unfrequently “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.” Yet still the motto of the saint is—“Sorrowful, though always rejoicing.” The state of good men in a present world is of a mixed character, and while they never want ground of joy, they also are never without ground of sorrow. While the saint goes forth bearing precious seed, weeping, his tears are principally tears of penitence, tears of affliction, or tears of sympathy.

The people of God are not naturally better than the rest of mankind. They have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. When renewed in the spirit of their mind, they are instructed in the malignant nature of sin in general, and are deeply impressed with the hatefulness of their own sins, and these sins are “ever before them.” Though well assured that God

has forgiven them, they find it impossible to forgive themselves ; and whenever their sins are brought to their remembrance, the tears of godly sorrow burst forth afresh. But this is not all : the saint not only recollects with regret that he once was a sinner, but he feels with deep sorrow, that still “in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” There is “a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, so that when he would do good, evil is present with him.” This fills him with constant uneasiness, and induces him to breathe out the apostle’s complaint, “Oh, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death !”

The afflictions of life frequently also oblige the saint to exhibit symptoms of distress, while engaged in the discharge of his important duties : for religion neither exempts her votaries from the evils of life, nor renders them insensible under their pressure. “What son is there whom the Father chasteneth not ?” “All who would live godly must suffer persecution.” “Through much tribulation must they enter into the kingdom.” All these afflictions are kindly intended on the part of their heavenly Father ; and, by his superintending providence and gracious influence, will ultimately be productive of the most beneficial results. But while they continue they are painful, and the saint must sometimes breathe a sigh and drop a tear.

Farther, in the present state the saint often sheds tears of sympathy. There is much in this world to affect with sadness the heart of any man who is not an entire stranger to sensibility. It is a world full of sin and misery. Every renewed heart glows with a peculiarly tender sympathy for all the miseries of man ; and every renewed mind is enlightened with just views of the nature and extent of the evils, and especially the moral evils, under which mankind groan. In following the instinct of his new nature, as well as in obeying the commands of his Saviour, the saint must often shed tears, “weeping with those who weep.” —Thus have I shortly illustrated the truths respecting the saint’s present state, suggested by the figurative language of the text. ‘He is actively engaged in useful employments which have a reference to futurity, and, while thus employed, he frequently exhibits symptoms of distress and sorrow :’ “He sows in tears.”

II. The future state of the saint is held up in the concluding

part of the text, under the corresponding figure of a harvest of joy: "They who sow in tears shall reap in joy." The remaining part of the discourse shall be devoted to the illustration of the truths suggested by this beautiful figure. It seems to intimate, that the saint's future state shall be very different from his present state—that it shall be a state of activity—that it shall be a state of enjoyment—and that it shall be a state resulting from, and corresponding to, the employments of the present state.

1st, The figurative description of the saint's future state, in the text, intimates, that it is very different from his present state. Here the saint sows, and sows in tears; there he reaps, and reaps in joy. The employments of seed-time and harvest are very different, and sorrow and joy are opposite affections of mind. The great object of all the saint's actions is the same in every stage of his existence—the glory of God; and the enjoyment of God, is the principal source of his happiness both here and hereafter: "Grace is glory begun; glory is grace perfected." Yet still there is an obvious and important difference between the Christian's present and his future state. Here, he is engaged in a ceaseless round of fatiguing employments; there, "he rests from his labours, and his works do follow him." Here he is exposed to numberless inconveniences, from the hostile disposition of the men of the world; there, "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Here, he is constantly contending with his spiritual adversaries—"without are fightings, and within are fears;" there, all is internal peace and external security. Here, he puts on the helmet and assumes the shield; there, he wears the garland, and holds the palm of victory. Here, he wanders along the wild of life, a pilgrim and a sojourner; there, he dwells for ever in the house of his Father. Here, he has "no continuing city;" there, he has "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Here, his "adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" there, "Satan is bruised under his feet." Here, he "sees through a glass darkly;" there, he "sees face to face." Here, he "knows in part;" there, he "knows even as he is known." Here, he "walks by faith and not by sight;" there, he "sees God's face in righteousness, and is satisfied with his likeness." Here he hopes; there he enjoys. Here he fights;

there he triumphs. Here he prays; there he praises. Here he weeps; there God wipes away all tears from his eyes. Here he dies; there he lives for ever: "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

2*d*, The figurative representation of the saint's future state in the text, intimates, that it is a state of activity. He is represented as reaping in joy: a figure which not merely conveys the idea of happiness, but of active exertion on the part of the individual who enjoys it. The happiness of the saint in a future state, is very frequently in Scripture described by figures significant of tranquillity and repose: "The righteous enter into peace, they rest in their beds." "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." These expressions are intended to intimate the complete freedom from weariness and pain which the saints possess, and the immoveable nature of their happiness. But it would certainly be a misinterpretation of the Scripture to conclude from such texts, that the saints in heaven are mere passive recipients of pleasurable feeling, and that they pass the ages of eternity in a state of indolent repose. The rest which they enjoy is opposed, not to action, but to fatigue and uncertainty. The truth is, no one figure is sufficient fully to delineate the celestial blessedness; and of consequence different, and in some points of view inconsistent, metaphors must be employed, to represent its diversified aspects, and transcendent excellence.

That the future state of the saints shall be a state of activity, might be presumed from what we know of the human constitution. Action is absolutely necessary to rational, permanent enjoyment. He who is most actively employed, provided his activity be properly directed, possesses the largest portion of enjoyment. It is true, indeed, that the most wise and dutiful exertions will, in the present state, if pursued to excess, produce fatigue and uneasiness; but that arises from the defects of our nature, either moral or physical, neither of which have any place in heaven. Accordingly we find heaven represented as all energy: "There is no night there;" for there is no need of relaxation or refreshment. The saints are made like the angels of heaven, who excel in strength, and with unwearied activity execute the purposes of the Most High. They rest not day nor night, but unceasingly sing this anthem, "Holy, holy,

holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." And, while these "living creatures," who seem to be the symbolical representatives of the angelic hosts, "give glory, and honour, and thanks to God, the four-and-twenty elders," who are the symbolical representatives of the redeemed from among men, "fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, and worship Him who liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

With respect to the particular employments of the saints in heaven, the Holy Scriptures do not furnish us with any very definite information. They certainly, however, authorise us to conclude, that all the intellectual and active powers of our nature shall be exerted on their proper objects with a vigour, and perseverance, and success, of which at present we can form no adequate conception. In the acquisition of knowledge, the love of holiness, and the communication as well as the reception of happiness, the blissful ages of eternity will be delightfully and actively occupied.

3d, The figurative representation of the saint's future state, in the text, teaches us, that it is a state of enjoyment. He reaps, and he reaps in joy. Instead of entering on a general account of the happiness of the future state of good men, I shall confine myself to the illustration of the ideas suggested by the metaphor before us. We read in Scripture of "the joy of harvest," as a pleasure peculiarly delightful. There are chiefly two things which render the harvest so remarkably pleasing to the husbandman: It is the fulfilment of his desires and hopes, and it furnishes him with a supply for the wants of the coming year. This observation equally applies to the harvest of the Christian husbandman. It must be a season of enjoyment to him, for it is the accomplishment of his most ardent desires and fondest hopes; and it secures him abundant provision for the unending year of eternity.

In the treasures of harvest, the husbandman obtains the reward of his exertions, and finds that he has not laboured in vain, nor spent his strength for nought. In the celestial blessedness, the saint gains the possession of that happiness which he so highly valued, so eagerly desired, so patiently expected, and

for which he so diligently and perseveringly laboured. "The hope of which he had heard in the word of the truth of the Gospel," now comes to him, and amply compensates all his toils and sufferings. In the present state, he frequently felt that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" but he now feels, that the other part of the proverb is equally true, "when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life." He now finds, to his eternal joy, that his hope has not been what he often feared it would prove, the hope of the hypocrite, and that it shall never make him ashamed. He now clearly perceives, that all his exertions and sacrifices were well bestowed; and, looking back on the events of the seed-time and the summer, in grateful joy his heart blesses the Supreme Ruler, who has rendered all their diversified incidents subservient to the production of so rich a harvest of endless happiness.

Harvest affords pleasure to the husbandman, not only by the retrospect it induces him to take, but also by the anticipations which it naturally excites. He rejoices that he has secured a supply for the wants of the coming year. In this point, too, the figure holds with respect to the Christian husbandman. In his harvest he obtains an abundant supply for the wants of eternity. Without exposing himself to the charge of folly, he may say, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for eternal ages." All is well with him, and all is well for ever. After the most abundant harvest, the husbandman knows that his stores will be soon exhausted, that the labours of the spring must be again submitted to, and the supply of his wants again become dependent on the uncertainties of the weather. But the Christian's harvest is that of an endless year. His supplies can never be exhausted. His happiness admits neither of diminution nor termination. Well, then, may the Christian rejoice, when the seeds of faith and holiness reach their maturity in the fruits of heaven. "God has increased his joy. He joys before Him according to the joy of harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil."

4th, The figurative representation of the saint's future state in the text teaches us, that it results from, and corresponds to, the employment of the present state. Seed-time and harvest are mutually connected. The labours of seed-time look forward to harvest,—the events of harvest result from, and correspond to,

the employments of seed-time. That the present conduct and the future happiness of the saint are closely connected, is too plain to require a laboured proof; but it may be necessary to make a few observations to explain the nature of that connection. It is obvious that the good conduct of the saint in the present state is not the meritorious cause of his future happiness. "Eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." "By grace are we saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Yet the connection is as close and indissoluble as if it were that of cause and effect. The heavenly blessedness is "the recompense of reward." "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." He only who "sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

The figure employed in the text may be of some use in illustrating this important and much misunderstood subject. No person will be so absurd as to affirm, either that the labours of seed-time are, properly speaking, the cause of an abundant harvest, or that there is no connection at all between the one and the other. The true cause of an abundant harvest, is the unseen operation of that God who worketh all in all. By means of human labour, and the influence of the elements, He covers our fields with abundance for man and for beast. Just such is the connection between the Christian's labours and his reward. It were gross presumption to expect the latter without the former. Yet it is connected with it, not as the effect is with the cause, but as the end is with the means. It is equally absurd to consider the Christian's labour as the meritorious cause of his reward, and to suppose that the reward is attainable without the labour.

The figure also throws light on the nature of the celestial blessedness considered as a reward. It is a reward just in the same sense in which an abundant harvest is a reward to the industrious husbandman. In ordinary cases, the productiveness of the harvest is proportioned to the diligence with which the seed-time has been improved. This holds universally with the spiritual husbandman. His future happiness not only results from, but corresponds to, his present labours. One man shall receive "a prophet's reward," another "a righteous man's reward." One shall be made ruler over ten cities, and another over five. "Every man shall receive according to his own

labour." "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

Having thus shortly illustrated the figurative account which the text contains, of the saint's present and future state, it only remains that the discourse be concluded by a few practical reflections.

How enviable is the situation even of the most afflicted saint, when compared with that of the happiest worldling! Even amid his sorrows, he has a peace which passeth all understanding, and a joy which the world can neither give nor take away. And his "light afflictions are working out for him a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory." What abundant reason, then, has he for patience under the pressure of present affliction! "Cast not away your confidence, Christian, which has great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." How grateful ought the saint to be for that revelation which assures him of a harvest of joy!

"That field of promise! how it throws abroad
Its fragrance o'er the Christian's thorny road.
The saint, reposing on assur'd relief,
Feels himself happy amid all his grief;
Forgets his labours as he toils along,
Weeps tears of joy, and bursts into a song."¹

Let careless sinners reflect, that they too are sowing, and perhaps sowing in joy; but ere long, if mercy prevent not, they must reap in sorrow. "While ye forget the God of your salvation, and are unmindful of the Rock of your strength, you may plant pleasant plants, you may set strange slips; in the day ye may cause your plant to grow, and in the morning make your seed to flourish, but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief, and of desperate sorrow." "Be not deceived; God is not

¹ Cowper.

mocked : Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Ye are sowing to the flesh, and "of the flesh ye shall reap destruction." Happiness is not more certainly connected with holiness than misery is with sin. The servants of sin shall assuredly receive their wages ; which are death,—eternal death. "Repent and be converted. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? Believe in the Lord Jesus, and ye shall be saved." Rely on his atoning sacrifice, and ye shall become righteous ; trust in his sanctifying Spirit, and ye shall be made holy. Thus shall your "fruit be to righteousness, and the end everlasting life." Amen.

DISCOURSE IV.

THE CHRISTIAN A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN.

PHILIPPIANS III. 20.—“ Our conversation is in heaven.”

THE moral code of Christ is distinguished from all other systems of human duty, by the extent and purity of its precepts, and by the variety and power of the motives by which these precepts are enforced. Its requisitions are not confined to a few ritual observances, or external actions. Like its Author, it is spiritual, and the internal principles, as well as the outward behaviour, are the objects of its cognizance. It requires the sources of action to be pure, as well as the streams which flow from them, and aims at the regulation of the conduct, by enjoining the integrity of the heart. And, while thus spiritual in its nature, its injunctions are varied and extensive as the thoughts, the feelings, the actions, and the relations of men.

In the Christian system of duty, a beautiful harmony pervades the whole; and the power of the motives proposed, is proportioned to the importance and difficulty of the duties enjoined. The imperfect morality of heathen philosophy was but feebly enforced by its ablest teachers. The tendency of virtue to promote the dignity of human nature; the moral fitness of things; the pleasure arising from the consciousness of having done well, and the possibility of a future state of rewards,—these were almost the only, these were certainly the strongest, arguments which their imperfect views of truth enabled them to use for guarding men against the commission of sin, and urging them to the performance of duty. On beings so much absorbed as men are, with present and sensible things, such reasonings, even in the most favourable circumstances, could be expected to make but little impression. Opposed, as they were, by strong inclination

and apparent interest, they were altogether unavailing. There was no proportion here between the means and the end. The attempt to calm the raging ocean, by merely bidding it be still, would not be more foolish than the endeavour, by such arguments as these, to induce mankind to resist their strongest inclinations, and forego their most favourite pleasures.

In the revealed system, we find a force of motive better proportioned to the resistance to be apprehended from fallen man. An almost infinite variety of the most powerful arguments is brought forward. Man is assailed, as it were, on every side. Appeals are made to the principles of reason, of conscience, and of interest. Duty is made to appear, with the clearest evidence, to be reasonable, and advantageous, and necessary. The authority of God, the most powerful of all motives, is explicitly and strongly urged. The secrets of eternity are in part disclosed; and the joys and sorrows of eternity, are held up as warnings against crime, and incitements to holiness.

It deserves also to be noticed, that the motives urged in the Christian system of duty, are not only powerful but appropriate, wisely varied according to the nature of the duty enjoined, and the character and circumstances of the person to whom the injunction is addressed. For example, when the sinner is commanded to forsake his evil ways, the command is enforced by a view of the misery which will certainly overtake him if he persevere in the paths of iniquity, and by the assurance that, if he solicit the Divine mercy in sincerity and faith, he shall not solicit in vain. When he is enjoined to believe on the Saviour, the dignity of the Redeemer's person, and the extent and suitability of his mediatorial excellences, are pressed on his consideration, and he is informed that this is the only and the certain way of escaping eternal misery, and securing everlasting happiness. On the other hand, when the saint is urged to the performance of his duties, a similar adaptation of the motive, both to the duty, and to his peculiar state and character, may be observed. The authority, the sacrifice, the grace, and the example of his Saviour—the dignity of his new character, and the grandeur of his hopes, are among the arguments most frequently brought forward. He is urged to the duty of forgiveness, "because God for Christ's sake has forgiven him:" to almsgiving, because "the Lord Jesus, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that

we through his poverty might become rich ;” to patience, “ because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps ;” to humility, because “ Christ humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross ;” to universal holiness, because such is the will of God—such the design of the Redeemer’s sacrifice—such the object of the Spirit’s operations ; and because without this “ no man can see the Lord.”

Of the force and appropriateness of Christian motives, we have a fine exemplification in the passage of Scripture connected with the subject of discourse. In the preceding context, the apostle exhorts the Philippians to unanimity in their sentiments, and harmony in the prosecution of the great objects of their Christian calling, verses 15–17 ; and he enforces this exhortation by the motive in the text (the intervening verses being obviously parenthetical), “ for our conversation is in heaven.” The power and fitness of this motive may not at first view be very apparent. Owing to the fluctuation of living language, words and phrases gradually change their meaning. We have an illustration of this remark, in the alteration which has taken place in the sense of the term *conversation*, since the period in which our present version of the Scriptures was made. This word, when used in our translation, usually signifies conduct in general ; for example, “ only let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ,” —“ let your conversation be without covetousness.” The word now is restricted in its signification to colloquial intercourse, and the sense in which it occurs in Scripture is entirely obsolete. In the text, the word translated conversation¹ properly signifies *citizenship* ; and the meaning of the apostle seems obviously to be, “ We are citizens of heaven.” That such changes in the meaning of words should take place, is no way wonderful ;—the true cause of wonder is, that in a book translated more than two hundred years ago, there should be found so very few passages which, from this cause, either misrepresent the meaning of the original text, or by their obscurity occasion difficulty to the reader who is acquainted with no language but modern English. Understanding the original term in its plain sense *citizenship*, the appropriateness of the motive adduced by the apostle becomes

¹ πολιτειαν.

at once apparent. The Philippian Christians are urged to unanimity and harmony, from a consideration of their common character and hopes as citizens of heaven.

My object in the following part of the discourse, is to illustrate some of those truths, in reference to the situation and character of Christians, which are suggested by their being termed "citizens of heaven." This figurative representation seems to intimate, —that they are strangers and sojourners in the present state; —that heaven is the residence of their Father and friends; —that they are possessed of peculiar immunities; —that they are distinguished by a peculiar mode of conduct; —that their best affections are placed on heavenly objects; —that they maintain a constant intercourse with heaven; —and that heaven shall be the place of their everlasting abode. To a short illustration of these interesting and pleasing truths, shall be subjoined a few appropriate practical reflections.

1st, The figurative language of the text intimates, that the Christian is a pilgrim and sojourner upon earth. The citizen of heaven must, when on earth, be a stranger. This aspect of the Christian's situation and character is often presented to our view in the Holy Scriptures, and well deserves our considerate attention. Like a stranger resident in a foreign country, his continuance in the present state is limited and uncertain: "Here he has no continuing city." "He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."—Like a stranger resident in a foreign country, too, not only is his residence in this world limited and uncertain, but his situation, while he continues in it, is far from being comfortable. He is from home, and he cannot reasonably expect all the conveniences and comforts of home." "Many are the troubles of the righteous." Exposed, in common with the rest of mankind, to the ordinary evils of life, he is liable to a variety of afflictions which are peculiar to himself.—He receives the treatment of a stranger from the great body of his fellow-men. "The world is not his friend, nor the world's law." To pass through life in peaceful obscurity, is the happiest event which can befall him; for, if he attract in any great degree the world's notice, contempt and ill treatment are likely to be his portion. Many of these citizens of heaven, while in this land of strangers and enemies, have

“had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, of bonds and imprisonment : they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.” And though the sword of persecution has long been sheathed, and its baleful fires extinguished, the malignant spirit of the world still manifests itself against the citizens of heaven. The arrows of calumny are still directed against their reputation. Their character and conduct are the standing jest of the profane.—Like a stranger resident in a foreign land, the Christian, in the present state, feels that he is from home, and acts under the influence of this feeling. He is very thankful for every comfort he enjoys, but he still feels that this is not his rest. Though in the world, he is not of it. His sentiments, tempers, and habits, are radically different from those of the persons among whom he lives ; and though he by no means affects an unnecessary singularity, he finds, that, without making an undue sacrifice both of principle and feeling, he cannot be “conformed to the world.” He honestly avows his real character, and the language of his profession and conduct is harmonious : He confesses that he is a stranger and pilgrim on the earth ; and, while he says these things, he declares plainly that he “seeks a country, a better country, that is, an heavenly.”

2d, The figurative language of the text intimates, that heaven is the residence of the Christian’s Father and friends. The situation of the saint may, at first view, appear void of comfort, and full of misery. To be without a country and a home, is a prominent feature in the picture of the consummation of human wretchedness : But this is by no means the situation of the saint of God ; he has a country, though it is a distant one ; he has a home, though he is not yet arrived at it. Though an alien on earth, he is a citizen of heaven.

If we trace those pleasurable feelings which are connected with the ideas of country and home to their source, we will find that they principally originate in their being associated with all that is interesting and delightful in the relations and affections of consanguinity and friendship. There is, perhaps, no word in any language which calls up such a variety of pleasing thoughts and feelings, as the English term *home* ; and why ? but because

home is conceived of as the abode of relative love and mutual kindness ; because there we have met, and expect to meet, with the care of a father, the tenderness of a mother, the affection of a wife, and the veneration of children. It is on much the same principle that the feeling of patriotism is founded. It is not the mildness of our climate, not the fertility of our soil, nor even our civil and religious liberties, which chiefly bind our attachments so closely to our sea-girt isle : It is, because it includes within its limits almost all who love us, and all whom we love.

The consideration of heaven, then, as the country of the Christian, naturally suggests the idea of its being the residence of his Father and friends. There, indeed, has the Father of mercies established his throne, and reared his house of many mansions, for the eternal residence of all his children. There dwells "Jesus, the Mediator of the better covenant," and that Holy Spirit, who is the author of knowledge, and purity, and happiness. There reside the "general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven—an innumerable company of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect." With all these illustrious personages, the Christian on earth is closely connected. The eternal Father is "not ashamed to be called his God,"—Jesus is his elder Brother, Saviour, and Friend,—the Holy Spirit is his Advocate and Comforter,—the perfected spirits of the just have but finished the course in which he is engaged,—and as to the angels, "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation?" The saints on the earth and the saints in heaven form one great family—bound together by the closest relations—children of the same Father—citizens of the same state.

3d, The figurative language of the text intimates, that the Christian is possessed of peculiar immunities. It is not unlikely, that when Paul wrote these words, the important privileges of Roman citizenship were present to his mind. In the more flourishing ages of the Roman republic, the name of a citizen of Rome was a safeguard, through a large portion of the world, from injury and insult ; and the apostle himself had, in the course of his travels, on more occasions than one, found the possession of this character of high importance to his safety. But the honours and privileges of the citizen, even of imperial Rome, dwindle into insignificance—shrink into nothing, when compared with the

immunities of the citizen of heaven. The citizen of the new Jerusalem is, indeed, "a citizen of no mean city."

The immunities of celestial citizenship are enjoyed in the greatest number, variety and perfection, in the better country. But, as a powerful state not only provides for the happiness of its subjects at home, but stretches forth its protecting arm around such of them as sojourn in foreign countries; so, even during his state of exile and pilgrimage, the Christian derives guidance, and safety, and comfort, from his connection with the kingdom of heaven. God sends forth his light and his truth,—they lead him and guide him. The good Spirit conducts him through all the dangers of life, to the land of uprightness. An unseen guard of angels surrounds him: "The angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear God, and delivers them." His celestial citizenship does not, indeed, secure him from the ordinary evils of life, but it secures him from being in any degree injured by them; it does more, it converts them into important blessings—for "all things work together for good to them who love God, and who are the called according to his purpose."

Instead of farther illustrating the privileges of the Christian as a citizen of heaven, I shall direct your attention to a scriptural delineation of them. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: My God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terrors by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation: There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the

young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot. Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him : I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call on Me, and I will answer him : I will be with him in trouble ; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation." "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Such are the immunities of the citizens of heaven.

4th, The figurative language of the text intimates, that the Christian is distinguished by a peculiar mode of conduct. Out of the relation of citizenship arises a variety of important duties, by the discharge of which, every good citizen is distinguished. Among these, a due respect for the sovereign, a strict regard to the laws, a warm attachment to his fellow-citizens, and a zealous and active support of the interests of the state, occupy a prominent place.

Heavenly citizenship is by no means a mere name, and every person who is possessed of it, is distinguished by the discharge of the duties which flow from it. He maintains a supreme reverence for his Divine Sovereign. He "sanctifies the Lord God in his heart, and makes Him his fear and his dread;" and takes every opportunity of testifying his respect for his authority, and his love to his law.—The Christian does not live at random. As a citizen of heaven, he regulates his conduct according to the laws of the kingdom of God : he is "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." He lives his time in the flesh, "not to the lusts of the flesh, but to the will of God." He takes God's law "as a light to his feet, and a lamp to his path, accounting it concerning all things to be right, and sincerely hating every wicked way."—A warm attachment to his fellow-citizens, is another distinguishing character of the true citizen of heaven : "Having purified his soul in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, he loves them with a pure heart fervently." "Hereby," said our Lord, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."—Farther, the citizen of heaven is distinguished by a zealous and active support of the interests of the kingdom of God. He is not a good citizen who is destitute of

public spirit. He is no Christian who cares not for the things of Christ. The citizen of heaven earnestly desires, and fervently prays for, the advancement of the interests of the Saviour's kingdom among men; and, not content with this, he proves the sincerity of his desires and his prayers, by cheerfully devoting his time, his talents, and his property, to this purpose. His motto is—"To me to live is Christ." To promote HIS honour, in the salvation of mankind, is the only object he thinks worth living for; and, in his estimation, to gain this object, ease, and health, and life itself, are by no means too costly sacrifices.

5th, The figurative language of the text intimates, that the saint's best affections are placed on heavenly objects. A man of ordinary sensibility, when exiled from his native land, finds that his country, and the objects connected with it, occupy the principal place in his affections and thoughts. In his imagination, a nameless charm is connected with everything which belongs to home. Its skies are more beautifully azure—its fields more delightfully verdant—and its streams more refreshingly pure, than the skies, the fields, or the streams of any foreign land.—From what has already been said, it is plain, that heaven must be the object of fervent affection and habitual thought to the Christian: "Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also." The Christian "sets his affections on things above." Firmly persuaded, both of the real existence of the heavenly state, and of his deep interest in it, he eagerly desires, and firmly hopes, in due time to participate in its joys. The language of his heart is, "Oh, how great is the goodness which God has laid up for those who fear Him! When shall I come and appear before God? I would not live always. I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." The sincerity of these desires and hopes is proved by a corresponding mode of conduct: "By a patient continuance in well-doing, he seeks for glory, honour, and immortality."—Nothing more strikingly distinguishes the true Christian, than what may be termed the spontaneity of his religious affections. It does not require an external impulse to awaken, in the mind of the exile, tender recollections of the land of his fathers. The current of his thoughts so naturally takes that direction, that, even in sleep,

when reason is inactive, under the guidance of imagination, he passes, quick as thought, boundless oceans and pathless deserts, transports himself to the delightful fields in which he passed the joyous years of childhood, and mingles with the long lost companions of his youth. In like manner, under the influence of his new nature, the thoughts of the saint spontaneously rise upward, and, leaving behind them earth and its vanities, rest with settled delight on the honours and felicities which await him in the land of his better birth.

6th, The figurative language of the text intimates, that the Christian maintains a frequent intercourse with heaven. It is usual with those who are laid under the necessity of leaving their native country, and residing in a foreign land, to keep up as close a correspondence as possible with their relatives at home; and, by this means, the ills of exile are wonderfully lightened. The figure holds, in this point of view, with respect to the citizen of Zion, in this strange and hostile land. He maintains a constant intercourse with the heavenly country. On the part of God, this intercourse is carried on by the communication of blessings, and the influence of the Holy Spirit. "Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. God meeteth him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness." On the part of the Christian, this intercourse is maintained by holy affection, religious worship, and a discharge of the ordinary duties of life as in the Divine presence, and with a view to the Divine approbation. In the ordinances of grace he "draws near to God," and, in the general tenor of his conduct, he "walks with Him."

The doctrine of the saint's communion with God, is by no means the dream of enthusiasm; it is plainly taught in the Holy Scriptures, and is attested by the experience of the saints in every age: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The infidel may wrangle, and the mocker blaspheme, but the humble Christian knows, by a species of evidence, which in their present state they are incapable of appreciating, and of which all their sophistry cannot deprive him, that there is a possibility of maintaining, even in this land of distance and darkness, a close intercourse with the Author of knowledge, truth, purity and happiness.

With respect to the intercourse which takes place between saints on earth and angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, Scripture is almost totally silent. Imagination may conjecture much on this subject, and produce pictures peculiarly soothing to the heart, scarcely recovered from the severest of all wounds. But this is not the place for indulging even the innocent wanderings of fancy. Suffice it to remark, in the beautiful, though somewhat obscure, language of the apostle: "We are come to Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

7th, The figurative language in the text intimates, that heaven shall be the place of the Christian's everlasting residence. A person may continue for a while in a foreign land, but his fixed residence is to be sought for in the country of which he is a citizen. The residence of the saint in the present state is but of very short continuance: "Man who is born of a woman is of few days." The shortness of life, which to most men is a very ungrateful subject of reflection, is replete with pleasing anticipation to the saint of God. Death is to him but a restoration to the land of his better birth—a translation from pathless wilds and desert solitudes, to fields of perpetual verdure, and streams of ever-living water. The return of the Saviour to heaven, secures that, in due time, all his people shall follow him. His promise cannot fail: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it had not been so I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go away I will come again, and take you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." The Saviour's prayer must be answered: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which Thou hast given me; for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

From these blissful mansions the Christian shall never be excluded. "He shall go no more out." The staff of the pilgrim and the sword of the soldier shall for ever be laid aside, and the harp of praise and the palm of victory take their place: "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to

Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Christians! are ye indeed citizens of heaven? Maintain then a dignity of conduct corresponding to so exalted a character. The son of a king, and the heir of a crown, would surely act an unworthy part, were he to content himself with the conceptions, take an interest in the cares, and follow the pursuits, of vulgar life. Such a mode of conduct would but ill fit him for wielding a sceptre with grace, and for managing with advantage the concerns of empire. His days and his nights ought to be otherwise employed. His ideas and employments ought to correspond with his present high rank, and the still more exalted station which he is destined to occupy. And shall you, sons of God, citizens of heaven, heirs of eternal life—shall you degrade yourselves so far, as to make the world and its concerns the principal objects of your thoughts and your affections? "Walk worthy of the high calling wherewith you are called." "If ye are risen with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; and when he who is your life shall appear, ye shall appear with him in glory. Set your affections on things above, and not on the things which are on the earth."

Are ye *fellow*-citizens of heaven? Cherish the affections, engage in the offices, of mutual love. The tendency which a foreign soil has to bind closer the bands of affection, has often been noticed. The heart opens in a land of strangers. There, every countryman is an acquaintance—every acquaintance is a friend—every friend is a kinsman—every kinsman is a brother. Show, by your conduct, that you feel this influence. Pilgrim-citizens of Zion! "see that ye fall not out by the way." Oh! it ill becomes those who hope to spend an eternity of peace and love together in heaven, to quarrel with one another on earth: "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye put on bowels of mercy, tenderness of heart, forbearing one another in love, and forgiving one another, if any have a quarrel against any, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

In fine, are your prospects, as citizens of heaven, so glorious? let not the afflictions of life make a disheartening impression on your spirits. Ye may well "rejoice in tribulation," because ye

“rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Let the words of promise be your “song in the house of your pilgrimage.” It is thus that the way-worn traveller soothes his fatigues by the songs of his native land. His path is rugged, and his heart is lonely; but the well known and much loved sounds recall to his mind the scenes of early life, the images of distant friends, and the recollection of departed joys,—while hope fondly whispers, that he shall yet re-visit these scenes, converse with these friends, and renew these joys. In the sadly pleasing retrospect, and the joyful anticipation, he loses the sense of his sorrows, and journeys onward with increased vigour. Behold your model, Christians! Go ye and do likewise.

DISCOURSE V.

THE TERMS OF DISCIPLESHIP, AND THE REASONS FOR COMPLYING WITH THEM.

MATT. XVI. 24-27.—“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”

MARK VIII. 34-36.—“And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel’s, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

LUKE IX. 23-26.—“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.”

SUCH are the terms of Christian discipleship, and such are the considerations which should induce all to whom these terms are proposed, cordially and immediately to accept of them. These, then, are to be the two topics of discourse—and topics more important, or on such an occasion more seasonable, surely could not easily be found. Let us all, my brethren, whether we belong to the class who to-day have so solemnly avowed our submission of mind, and heart, and active energy to Jesus Christ, or to that of the halters between two opinions, whose minds are not yet made up on the all-important question—*for* Christ or *against* him—seriously consider this statement of claims and reasons. It is plain Jesus Christ means that there shall be no room for

innocent mistake on these subjects. Let us meet him with a corresponding honesty of mind—let us endeavour to be as candid in weighing, as he is downright in stating, the whole truth on the subject. Regard for ourselves, as well as respect for him, requires this—the weal of our eternity is at stake.

I. And first, then, of the terms of Christian discipleship. They are thus stated, with scarcely even a literal discrepancy, by the three evangelists—“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” To come after Christ is just equivalent to—to become one of his disciples—to yield obedience to the command “follow me.”

The full force of the expressions, “if any man *will* come after me,”—“Whosoever *will* come after me,” is in danger of being in a great measure overlooked, in consequence of the verb *will* being often, in our language, employed as merely the sign of future time. The meaning of the statement is, ‘If any man *wills*, or *would*, if he chooses, or is determined to become my disciple, it is right for him to know and consider beforehand what is required of him—what, in that case, he must be ready to do and to suffer. He who, in his wish to become my disciple, is influenced by the hope of worldly ease, or wealth, or honour, would do well to reconsider the matter, for he will assuredly be disappointed. He who is disposed to be my disciple, must “deny himself.”’

The phrase “deny himself,” sounds strangely, and it would sound still more strangely if its frequent use had not somewhat accustomed us to it. What does it mean? To “deny” is to contradict. To deny a statement is to say it is not true—to deny a request is to refuse to comply with it—in both cases to contradict the speaker. But what is it to deny a person’s self? It is said that “God cannot deny himself,”—that is, He cannot contradict himself either in word or in deed. He cannot act inconsistently. And a man may be said to deny himself when he acts a part incompatible with his character, as when a wise man says or does something foolish. It is obvious, however, that this cannot be the meaning of the expression here, for a

Christian is required to be consistent. In the degree he is not so, he fails in exhibiting his appropriate character, and performing his appropriate duty, as a disciple. It would seem as if the word were understood as used elliptically, as equivalent to—to deny himself that which he desires—that is, to refuse to gratify his own wishes; and if this expression be understood with proper limitations, as of equal import with—to oppose his own inclinations, when these are inconsistent with the will of his Lord—then it describes a fundamental Christian duty.

I cannot help, however, regretting that the phrase has been employed, for its employment is not only susceptible of abuse, but has been often abused. It has given an unnecessarily repulsive aspect to the religion of the New Testament—it has led to the notion that self-denial—understanding by that, contradicting natural inclination—forms, as it were, the sum and substance of Christian duty; and has laid the foundation of monkery as a state peculiarly holy, and penance as a substitute for the repentance of the New Testament, among the Roman Catholics; and of a species of asceticism, scarcely more akin to genuine enlightened spiritual Christianity, in purer communions. To do violence to any of the original principles of our nature, except where duty absolutely requires, is folly, not wisdom—not duty, but sin. It is a strange idea that it can be agreeable to Him who is essential benignity, that creatures should make a merit in refusing to gratify innocent wishes, or think that they can please Him by torturing themselves. It is not, to a man of sound mind, a recommendation to anything, but the reverse, that it opposes an innocent inclination, that it prevents or destroys blameless enjoyment. To deny ourselves every forbidden gratification, is an essential part of Christian duty; and so is to deny ourselves the gratification of desires in themselves innocent, when this is inconsistent with the gaining of the high objects of our Christian calling. But to doom a person's self to live on bread and water, to wear sackcloth, to fast merely to mortify the desire of food, and to live in a cell in a wilderness merely to mortify the natural love of society, to do this, or anything like this, whatever it may be, is not obedience to any law of Christ. This is certainly not the grand constituent of Christian character—this is not the criterion of discipleship. A man may systematically do all this, and yet be entirely destitute of Christ's spirit, and therefore none of his;

and, at the very utmost, all we can say is, that in some of its forms and degrees, this ascetic spirit is not inconsistent with a man being a Christian disciple, though in every such case it is a proof that the doctrine of Christ is very imperfectly understood, and its influence very imperfectly experienced.

I think our Lord's meaning would have been better brought out, and this opportunity of abusing his saying been foreclosed, had the word been rendered, as it properly enough might, *renounce* instead of *deny*. 'If any man would be a disciple of Christ, he must renounce himself. He must cease to consider himself as his own property. He must devote himself entirely to Christ as his master. On subjects on which his Master has spoken, he must have no mind but *his* mind, no will but *his* will, no views, no interests, separate from, inconsistent with *his*. He must surrender himself up into Christ's hands, to be taught, and guided, and governed, and saved in *HIS* way. He must believe, and choose, and suffer, according to the will of his Lord. His talents, his time, his acquisitions, his body, his soul,—himself, in one word, must be Christ's—employed in his service, devoted to his objects.'

This is the fundamental term of true discipleship, entire self-renunciation. He who has not made up his mind to this, had better not assume the garb of discipleship. The Master will not acknowledge him. They who are determined to remain their *own*, cannot be *his*.

A second term of discipleship is taking up the cross—taking up the cross daily. It is common to speak of afflictions, of whatever kind, as crosses, though in that figurative expression, as ordinarily employed, there does not seem to be any reference to crucifixion. Every man is said to have his cross,—no man is free from affliction. And in reference to this use of the English phrase, it has been supposed that our Lord's meaning is, 'Every man who embraces Christianity, may lay his account with suffering—suffering in some form and degree, on account of his religion. Some may have a heavier, others a lighter, cross—but every man will have his burden to bear, and every man who wishes to be a disciple of Christ's must lay his account with this. He must not refuse to submit to these sufferings—he must not, by any improper means, evade them. He must meekly take up the cross when it is laid down before him, and

patiently bear it. And he must expect that this is not to be a thing of very rare occurrence. From the moment he becomes a disciple, he will have his cross to bear—and he must bear it daily, till, like his Lord, he exchange the cross for the crown.'

This is truth, important truth, but it does not at any rate exhaust the meaning of our Lord's language. When a criminal, who had been condemned to the cross, was about to be executed, he was usually required to bear or carry his cross to the place of execution; we know it was so in the case of our Lord. The taking up the cross was the certain and immediate preparation for being nailed to it. When our Lord then says, 'He who wishes to be my disciple, must take up his cross;' the meaning is, and it must have been so understood by those to whom it was addressed, 'He must at all times hold himself ready to undergo suffering and death in the most shameful and painful forms. He must be ready to suffer the loss of all things—to endure pain and obloquy and contumely—to die the death of a felonious slave; he must be in heart habitually prepared for all this.'

It deserves notice, our Lord does not say generally 'he must be ever ready to die in my cause.' Peter would very readily have said, "I will go to death for thee," meaning by that he would fight in his defence, till the last drop of his blood was shed; and no doubt multitudes of those who were disposed to take him by force, and make him a king, had made up their minds to hazard their property and their life in his cause. He says he must be ready to be crucified—to be charged with the vilest of crimes, and to be treated as if guilty of them.

This is the spirit which Christ still requires of his disciples. He is not a genuine Christian who has not in him the spirit of the apostle, who "counted not his life dear to him;" or of the martyrs who "loved not their lives to the death;" who is not habitually ready rather to sacrifice property, liberty, reputation, and life, than to deny the doctrine, or disobey the law of the Lord. Such persons alone are "worthy" of, that is, 'fit' for, being Christ's disciples. To all who cannot make up their minds to this, it is better not to make a profession of attachment to Christ—better for themselves—better for Christ's cause both in the church and in the world. Profession on their part is hypocrisy

and a lie in them, and can be no credit or satisfaction to him, for it must end in perfidy and disgrace.

The precise force of the words that succeed, "and let him follow me," is not very easily fixed. They may be considered as just a re-duplication of the commencing statement; thus, 'If any man wishes to be my disciple, he must renounce himself, cease to consider himself as his own property, and regard himself as mine, and he must hold himself ready at any moment to submit to the very extremity of suffering for my sake. Let such a man come after me, let such a man become my disciple—he is the sort of disciple I wish.' Such a discipleship, in the long run, is sure to be satisfactory both to Master and disciple—none other can. Or it may be a following out of the thought in the expression, "let him take up his cross and follow me, bearing my cross." Jesus bore the cross till, being nailed to it, he expired proclaiming, "It is finished." Let the disciple be like the Master. Let him too be faithful unto death. Or, like the expression in other parts of the New Testament, it may mean, 'Let him who, being qualified to be a disciple by a spirit of self-renunciation and entire devotement, act the part of a disciple. This is the sum of the Christian disciple's duty—to follow his Lord. It is enough here that the disciple be as the Master. Let him follow me as a teacher, seeking to know all my doctrines, believing whatever I reveal, believing nothing as religious truth which I do not reveal. Let him follow me as a ruler—seeking to know all my will—to do all my will. Let him follow me as an exemplar—walking as I also walked—being in the world as I was in the world—my living image—my epistle seen and read of all men.'

I am inclined to consider the last as probably the true sense; and thus we have in the words before us a very condensed view of all that is essential in that Christianity which has connected with it the joys of eternity. It is a habitual following of Christ as a teacher, ruler, and exemplar, growing out of an entire renunciation of self, and connected with a readiness to submit to any degree of privation and suffering he may appoint, for the promotion of his cause.

Are we, my friends, in possession of this Christianity? We say we will to come after him—we say that we renounce ourselves—we say we are ready to take up each man his cross—we

say that we are following him. But is it indeed so? I hope it is so with some—with not a few. I fear it is not so with all. Ay, I fear there are many with whom it is not so. Surely you may know whether it is so or not. Are there not many here sensible that they are not willing to be Christ's disciples? They have many a wish—many a determination; but this is none of them. Are there not many who know they have never renounced themselves—their own wisdom—their own righteousness—their own strength; who are no way disposed to renounce themselves, who think and feel as if they were their own. Are there not many who know that they would not part with what they value much less than life, for Christ? Are there not many who know that Christ's doctrine, Christ's law, Christ's example, are not the light, and the rule, and the pattern they follow? Oh, why do such persons call him Lord? What good can that do either to him or them? And yet call him Lord they ought, for he is Lord of all—call him their Lord they must, for if they continue refusing to acknowledge him as their Lord, they must perish.

To fit them for being his disciples indeed, they must receive his word and abide in it, and thus know his real character. Whenever the truth as it is in him, is distinctly perceived—when his glory is seen as the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, when it is clearly understood *who* he is, and *what* he has done, self-renunciation becomes an easy, a necessary thing; the man cannot help it, though he does it with all his heart; to suffer shame, and pain, and death in his cause, is felt to be a privilege and honour, and the great desire is to have his mind our mind—his will our will—to trace his steps on the earth, and to wait for his coming in the clouds.

II. It is time now that we should turn our attention to the considerations adduced by our Lord, for complying with the terms of discipleship,—the reasons for becoming his disciples, even though it should be necessary for this purpose that we renounce ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him. The considerations would need to be weighty. And so they are. We have but to look at them to see this. “For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it. For what is a man

profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, lose himself, or be cast away? and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every one according to his works.

The great general consideration, showing how much it is the interest of men gladly and gratefully, to become Christ's disciples on his own terms is this, "That no worldly advantages can countervail the disadvantages necessarily incurred by not becoming the disciples of Christ; and that no worldly disadvantages can countervail the advantages secured by becoming his disciples." The right interpretation of the whole passage depends on properly fixing the meaning of the word rendered life and soul, for it is the same word that receives these two different versions in the paragraph before us.

"Life" is often, in the Bible, used as equivalent to happiness. For example, 'Thy favour is life'—makes happy. "This is life eternal," this is true enduring happiness, "to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent." "He shall never see life," he shall never know what it is to be happy. Were we to understand the word in this way here, a very good sense would come out of the statement. 'He who, to secure present enjoyment, denies Christ by refusing to become his disciple or renouncing discipleship once professed, shall expose himself to the loss of enjoyment far greater than that which he may have thus obtained; while he who sacrifices present enjoyment in the cause, and for the sake, of Christ, shall in due time obtain enjoyment far superior to that which he has thus sacrificed.'

But the word used by our Lord here is not that employed as equivalent to enjoyment. It is a word that signifies 'life' properly so called—the principle of life—the soul—sometimes the principle merely of animal life, at other times the principle of rational immortal life.

Some interpreters have supposed that the word *life* is used throughout the passage in the first of these senses, and that the meaning of the declaration we are illustrating is, 'He who, to save his life, either refuses to become my disciple, or having pro-

fessed discipleship becomes an apostate, shall lose his life by the very means he employs to save it ; while, on the other hand, he who by becoming my disciple and acting out that character, exposes his life to very great hazard, shall notwithstanding, by that very step which seemed to make certain its loss, secure its continuance.' There can be no doubt that even in this view of the matter, our Lord's words were remarkably verified. Many of the Jews who, to save their lives, refused to become Christ's disciples—those who, lest the Romans should come and destroy their city and nation, chose rather to put him to death than acknowledge him as the Messiah ; and those who, having professed Christianity waxed cool in their love amid the persecutions of the first age, stumbled—relapsed—apostatized when that burning withering sun arose—vast multitudes of these two classes lost their lives in the most deplorable manner during the siege and at the capture of their metropolis ; while those who continued steadfast amid the greatest hazards, escaped in a very wonderful manner the general destruction by obeying the command of their Lord to leave the city, at the only time, from the beginning to the close of the siege, when there was an opportunity, a very unexpected one, for doing so.

This interpretation is ingenious but not satisfactory. Our Lord's words here as well as the verses that follow, wear the form of a general maxim intended for all time, and the reference to our Lord's coming in the glory of his Father, and in *his* presence denying those who denied him, compels me to accede to the interpretation, which proceeds on the principle that the word 'life' is used with a different meaning in the two parts of the antithesis, signifying in the one the life of the body, and in the other the life of the soul. This shifting of meaning, though it would be a great fault in ordinary composition, is a beauty where it occurs, being quite in accordance with the proverbial, enigmatical style which for various obvious reasons our Lord so often employed.

The meaning—and we have as deep an interest in it as those who first heard the words, is—'He who, to secure himself from danger and death, refuses to become my disciple, or who having become in profession one of my disciples, on such an account apostatizes, that man will find that in the ultimate result of things, he is anything but a gainer.—He loses what is infinitely

more valuable than what he has retained. He may secure a life which must soon terminate, but he exposes himself to a death which will never end. He may save his life, but he shall lose his soul: While he who, as my disciple, shall not only take up his cross, but actually be nailed to it and breathe out his spirit—his soul—there: he who exposes his life to hazard: he who lays down his life rather than renounce his allegiance to me, he shall be no loser—he shall be an infinite gainer. He shall obtain a better life than that he parts with—he may lose his life, but he shall save his soul. And he who saves his life at the expense of his soul is an infinite loser, while he who saves his soul though at the loss of his life, is an infinite gainer.

The first of these sentiments is expressed, the other plainly implied, in the weighty words which follow,—“For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul;”—lose himself, be a cast-away—“and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” Here, as well as in the words already considered, there seems a reference to the double sense of the term translated *life* there and *soul* here. The general idea is, ‘How foolish to seek the attainment of any enjoyment by that which will completely and for ever incapacitate for all enjoyment! You may easily estimate the gain of the man who succeeds in such an attempt, but who can estimate his loss?’

Our Lord supposes a man to gain the whole world. These words *may* mean, to become proprietor of the whole terraqueous globe; but they more probably *do* mean, to obtain everything in the shape of enjoyment that this world can afford to a human being. Then he supposes this seemingly most fortunate of men, in the gaining the world to lose his life, and asks, what would such a man, having died, be the better of the world he had gained. What is the use of wealth, or honour, or pleasure to the dead? He is totally and for ever incapable of enjoying them. The idea of a man seeking to obtain these, by a course that necessarily implied that their price to him must be his life—seeking for enjoyment in a way that must deprive him, not only of the enjoyment he has succeeded in obtaining, but of the very faculty of enjoyment for ever—is in the highest degree preposterous and absurd. Such a man, if he succeeds, has gained the world,—but who is to enjoy it? Not he—he has lost himself. In making his fortune, he has himself become a cast-away.

This thought is very powerfully brought out by the interrogation—"What will a man give in exchange for his life?" The words may be considered as referring either to life in danger, or to life lost. In the first case they are equivalent to, 'What—how many—how great—how valuable things, will a man give for his life?' It suits the idiom of our language better to use the negative interrogatory in such a case: What will a man not give as a ransom for his life? The sentiment in this case is, 'It is folly to seek to gain or retain blessings at the expense of that which is more valuable than them all.' If the words are considered as referring to life viewed as lost—then their meaning is, 'What can a man give in exchange for his life, as a ransom to buy it back again? What *can* he give? He is himself lost,—he has no power—no possessions. Lost life so far as man's power is concerned, is hopelessly lost. He has lost life, and in losing life he has lost everything else—and he has lost them without any capacity of regaining them.'

There can be no doubt that our Lord's leading object here was to hold up under this striking but imperfect figure, the madness of the man, who, in the hope or even with the certainty of obtaining every enjoyment this life can afford, should, by refusing to become his disciple, or apostatising after having assumed discipleship, take a course which must end in "the loss of the soul" in the higher sense of which these words are susceptible. To seek to gain any worldly good by what is to cost life, is, so far as the individual is concerned, foolish; but to do this by what must end in the loss of the soul, is just as much more foolish as eternity is longer than time, and death less dreadful than damnation. To lose the soul is not to be annihilated. That, in comparison, though nature shrinks from it, were a "consummation devoutly to be wished." To lose the soul is the converse of to save the soul. To save the soul, includes deliverance from all danger and misery, and the possession of all happiness in absolute security for ever. To lose the soul, includes the conscious loss of all that man can lose of happiness, and the endurance of all that man can suffer of misery, and both these for ever. That is an evil incurred already by every human being as the penalty of the law he has broken. The only, the certain, way of escaping it, is by becoming Christ's disciple. Would he not, then, be a loser, an infinite loser, who by refusing to become Christ's disciple,

at once secured that all the enjoyments the world can give should be his, and that he should lose his soul—perish for ever?

And if this be true, what shall we then say of those—alas, what multitudes of such surround us—who expose themselves to this tremendous doom, with no certainty and little probability of getting any remarkable share of worldly good—ay, what shall we say of those who prefer to becoming Christ's disciples, and its glorious results, the making themselves as miserable as they can be out of hell—while following a course which must end in that pit of perdition being their everlasting abode?

The words before us plainly imply the converse of what they express—'Who can count his gain, who, though at the loss of the world, by subjecting himself to suffering in every form, has obtained the salvation of his soul?' How wise, how happy the disciple of Christ—whatever sacrifice he may be called to make, whatever suffering he may be called to endure—the loss of life is infinitely more than made up in the salvation of the soul!

But as the man who loses his soul does not usually gain the world, so the man who obtains the salvation of the soul, does not in the highest and best sense of the word, at all lose the world. He must indeed give up with the world as his portion—he must be "crucified to the world," and "the world must be crucified to him:" Yet "the world" is a part of his inheritance, for his Lord is the Lord of the world; and so far as *it* can be made to conduce to his highest interests, there is nothing within its wide compass that shall not be his.

The same general thought—the wisdom of becoming Christ's disciples at all hazards—is brought before the mind in still another aspect by our Lord. "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in his own glory and in his Father's, and of his holy angels," or "with his holy angels." This declaration, like that which precedes it, is obviously intended to suggest the other side of the antithesis, "and whosoever shall not be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man not be ashamed when he cometh in his own glory, and his Father's, and of the holy angels."

Our Lord describes his contemporaries as “an adulterous and a sinful generation.” The relation in which Jehovah stood to the Jews is often spoken of under the figure of the conjugal relation. He was their husband—they were his spouse. They were an unfaithful spouse. The great body of the Jews in our Lord’s time, were Sadducean infidels or Pharisean formalists; not enlightened, pious men. Though not, like their fathers, idolaters—they were not spiritual worshippers of a spiritual Divinity. And as they were, religiously considered, either sceptical or superstitious—so, morally considered, they were profligates, and their rejection of our Lord was the natural result of their character. It would have been strange if such a people had received such a Messiah.

To be ashamed of our Lord in the midst of such a race, was—for persons who could not help perceiving that he was a Divine messenger, possibly the Messiah—to allow *their* influence to overmaster *his*, so as to decline becoming his disciples; or to cease from becoming his disciples—to neglect what he requires and to do what he forbids, from a fear of losing their respect and favour, or of incurring their contempt and displeasure.

With regard to such persons, our Lord declares that he will be ashamed of those who thus showed themselves ashamed of him. Some interpreters have considered these words as referring to our Lord’s coming to destroy the Jewish state; but great violence must be done them to make them bear this interpretation. Did our Lord at the destruction of Jerusalem “reward every man according to his works”? The words look forward to a far more solemn occasion, in which all who have been ashamed, and all who have not been ashamed, of the Son of man before an ungodly world, shall have their reward.

When our Lord had finished his work of expiation, he entered on his reward. He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. And these heavens which have received him must retain him till the period fixed for closing in awful majesty the mystery of God, when he shall again return to our world. “Behold he cometh in clouds, and every eye shall see him.” When he thus comes, he will come “in glory”—not as a feeble babe—a man of sorrows—an expiring victim, but attended by every possible circumstance of impressive grandeur. He will

come "in his own glory," with the splendour befitting the Only-begotten of God incarnate—"in the glory of his Father," with a splendour becoming him to whom the Father hath committed all authority and power—the appointed Divine Manifester and Vindicator of the power, and wisdom, and righteousness, and benignity of Godhead; and "in the glory of" or "with his holy angels"—attended by an innumerable host of those pure and holy intelligences who excel in wisdom and strength, ready to be the ministers of his will, the executioners of his righteous sentences.

Before him, when he thus comes, shall be gathered all nations. The dead have been raised, the living changed, and all wait to hear their final sentence from him appointed to judge the world in righteousness. There is but one feeling in reference to the value of *his* approbation amid these innumerable millions. A smile, a token of kind recognition from *him* is felt to be worth ten thousand worlds. But no such look will be vouchsafed to any who, amid an adulterous and sinful generation, were ashamed of him and his words. He will then be ashamed of them. He will act as a man does in reference to persons who claim some connection with him of whom he is ashamed. He will turn his eyes away from them, with a withering look of settled contempt and dislike. Should one class say, "We thought better of you than the bulk of our countrymen did"—the reply would be, "And yet, notwithstanding these convictions, you were ashamed of me—you preferred the praise of men to the praise of God: you had your choice, and you must abide by it." Should another class say, "We were called by thy name, we did espouse thy cause"—the answer would be, "If it had not been so, if you had not done so, you could not have so foully dishonoured my name—you could not so deeply have injured my cause." To both he will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity." While the objects of universal everlasting contempt, the feeling of shame for their prodigious folly, will scarcely be less intolerable than that of remorse for their enormous wickedness in having treated with contumely the greatest and best, the most estimable and amiable, Being in the universe.

On the other hand, the man who, following the conviction of his reason and conscience, has openly avowed and consistently maintained his faith and obedience to our Lord, notwithstanding

all the contempt and reproach to which it has exposed him, shall on this solemn occasion be acknowledged by our Lord in the presence of an assembled universe, and be presented to his Father as his faithful servant—his beloved friend—his near kinsman. “Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” “I appoint to you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed to me a kingdom.” You have overcome, and “I appoint unto you to sit with me on my throne; even as I have overcome and am set down with my Father on his throne.” You have been faithful to death: receive the crown of life. You were willing partakers of my reproach and sufferings, and you shall “reign with me for ever and ever.” Oh, is not this an exceeding abundant, as it is an eternal, recompense for all the shame which, even when bearing it, they felt sweet for his sake! Who is now the gainer? He who obtained the world’s applause, and lost the Son of man’s approbation, or he who willingly incurred the world’s scorn, and has secured the honourable sentence and the approving smile of the Judge of the world?

Looking at the terms of discipleship in the light of “that day,” who will say they are hard terms? Does He require too much? Could he require less? In the light of that day we must contemplate them. “For the Son of man *shall* come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then will he reward every man according to his works.” Yes, he shall come. It is not more certain that he has come the first time for sin, than that he will come the second time for the salvation of his people and the destruction of his enemies. He will come not in the form of a servant, as erewhile, but in the form of God. Infidel men may tauntingly ask, “Where is his promised coming?” But He is not slack concerning his promise. He is on his way. “He that should come will come.” And when he does come he will render to every man according to his works; to the fearful and unbelieving, and to the consistent and faithful. The sins of the former shall be at once the ground and the measure of their punishment. The Christian virtues of the latter, while not the ground—that is to be found in justice satisfied, and law magnified by their surety—shall be the measure of their reward. And then shall not only they, but all men of every age and country, have their everlasting destiny fixed according to the principles of eternal justice.

When our Lord uttered these words, the period referred to lay far off in the distance of futurity. Eighteen centuries have run their course since they were spoken, and still "all things continue as they were;" and for aught we know, the time which has elapsed may be but as a watch in the night in comparison to the period which may have yet to elapse before they be fulfilled. But what there is of force and argument in reference to the duty of becoming and continuing true disciples of Christ folded up in these words, does in no degree depend on the time when these events are to take place, whether to-morrow or at the distance of ages of ages. It rests on the certainty that they shall some time take place. And it must never be forgotten, that though the final advent of the Son of God may, for aught we know, be at the distance of a thousand centuries, the termination of our mortal course individually—which certainly cannot be more remote than a few years, which may be so near that our next breath may be our last—will place us unalterably in that relation to the approbation or disapprobation of the supreme Judge, which his sentence on that day will announce in the ears of the assembled universe. "Consider what has been said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things."

I cannot conclude without adverting to the very powerful though indirect evidence which the text affords of the Divinity of our Lord. How ill would such language become a mere man? The highest of the prophets, Moses, or Elijah, or Isaiah, knew his place too well ever to adopt words like these. No; no, my brethren, there is no alternative—the Gospel is a fable, or Jesus is Divine. His claims are presumptuous, if they are not those of the incarnate Deity. Blessed be God for the abundant evidence for the Divinity of the Saviour. How secure a foundation does this lay for our hope—Jesus Christ our Saviour is the great God! How powerfully does this corroborate his claims on our faith and obedience! We cannot disbelieve him without calling God a liar! We cannot disobey him without contemning Divine authority—incurring Divine displeasure—defying Divine vengeance. We cannot look at Christ's claims aright if we forget what gives them their peculiarity. Obedience to him must be of a corresponding character. Let us see that our obedience has that character. He is our God—let us wor-

ship Him. What an honour to serve and to suffer for such a Master!

“Jesus, and shall it ever be
That I should be asham’d of thee?
No! when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere thy name.
Asham’d of Jesus! yes I may,
When I’ve no sins to wash away—
No tears to wipe—no good to crave,
And no immortal soul to save.
Till then—nor is the boasting vain—
Till then I boast a Saviour slain;
And this shall still my glory be,—
‘Jesus is not asham’d of me.’”

THE DUTY
OF
KEEPING OURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD,
AND
THE BEST MEANS OF PERFORMING IT.

FOUR SERMONS.

SERMON I.

ON KEEPING OURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD.

JUDE 20, 21.—“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

“THE perfecting of the saints,” “the edification of the body of Christ,” is the great design of that precious gift of the risen and ascended Saviour, ‘the Christian Ministry,’ in all its forms, extraordinary or ordinary, temporary or perpetual. Those in whom that gift was first embodied, the apostles, steadily prosecuted this design. Next to the glory of their Lord, and as the grand means of promoting that glory, the object of their intense desire and constant endeavour was the perfection in holiness and comfort of his chosen people. They did and endured all that they did and endured, “for the elect’s sake, that *they* might obtain the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory.” Every thing in their writings bears on this great object,—that the “chosen, called, separated, peculiar people,” might enjoy Christian privilege, and possess Christian character, and discharge Christian duty, in the highest degree possible in the present state, as a preparation for that state of perfect happiness and perfect holiness on which they are soon to enter. Their statements, arguments, precepts, persuasions, warnings, encouragements, and consolations, were all obviously intended, and are all obviously fitted, to gain this end,—that “the church purchased by the blood of Christ,” in every one of its members, might be “complete in Christ, perfect and entire, wanting nothing; filled with all knowledge and spiritual understanding, even with the riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledg-

ment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ : that they might not be like children, tossed too and fro with every wind of doctrine, but rooted and grounded in love, stablished, strengthened, settled : that they might not be babes who require milk, but strong men who can digest strong meat ; not unskilful in the word of righteousness, but having their senses exercised to make a distinction between truth and falsehood, good and evil : that they might be filled with all joy and peace in believing, having abundant consolation and good hope : that they might be sanctified wholly in the whole man, soul, body, and spirit, becoming partakers of the Divine nature, and escaping the corruptions that are in the world : that they might be perfect men in Christ Jesus, having attained to the measure of the stature of his fulness : that they might be filled with the fruits of righteousness : that they might be strong, and overcome the wicked one : and that, walking worthy of him who had called them to his kingdom and glory, they might be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and be found of him then in peace.”

This object is never lost sight of by the apostles, no, not for a moment, even when led into statements which seem to have no direct bearing on it. The character and the doom of the ungodly are sometimes necessarily introduced in their writings ; but it is interesting to observe how quickly they dispatch such subjects, and how readily they find their way back to their favourite themes, Christian character, and Christian privilege, and Christian duty : and how ingeniously, we should have said—did we not recollect that they wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost—they render even such statements subservient to their great object. The transitions by which they pass from the one subject to the other are often very striking. For example, in the second Epistle of the Apostle Paul to Timothy (iii. 13, 14), he is led to remark, that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived ;” but he immediately adds, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.” And in his first Epistle to the same Evangelist, vi. 10, 11, he notices some Christian teachers, who, led aside by “the love of money, the root of all evil,” had “erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows ;” and

then emphatically says, "But thou, O man of God! flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." In the Epistle to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 13), after stating that "God will send on those who believe not the truth, but take pleasure in unrighteousness, strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they may be damned," he adds immediately, "But we are bound to give God thanks always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory;" approbation, the complete complacent approval, "of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast." And here, in the interesting passage chosen as a suitable subject of exhortation to you, after you have made a solemn profession of the faith of Christ, by observing the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, in which its leading doctrines were strikingly exhibited to you, and your obligations to Him solemnly acknowledged, the apostle Jude, after speaking of "the mockers in the last day, who should walk after their ungodly lusts, sensual, not having the Spirit," adds, with a similar transition, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." May the good Spirit who dictated this exhortation guide us in our illustrations of it, and render them the means of making you "perfect in every good work, working in you that which is well pleasing in the sight" of our heavenly Father; that so ye may "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour," "adorn his doctrine in all things," and ultimately have "an entrance ministered to you abundantly into his everlasting kingdom!"

For the illustration of this exhortation it will be necessary that we attend,—first, to the duty which the apostle calls on Christians to perform, or the object which he calls on them to prosecute,—the "keeping themselves in the love of God;" and, secondly, to the means which he recommends for the performance of this duty, or the attainment of this object,—"building themselves on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life."

Let us first, then, consider the duty which the apostle here

enjoins, or the object which he calls on Christians to prosecute, "Keeping themselves in the love of God." There are two questions which must be here resolved, What are we to understand by "the love of God?" and, What by Christians "keeping themselves in the love of God"?

The love of God is often in the New Testament used to signify God's love to us, as when it is said, that "God commendeth his love to us in that, when we were sinners, Christ" his Son, "died for us;" that "nothing can separate" those who are in Christ Jesus "from the love of God;" when "the love of God," along with "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," and "the fellowship of the Holy Ghost," is prayed for; when it is said, that "the kindness and love of God towards man has appeared," been made manifest; and that "the love of God towards us was manifested, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we should live through him." It is also used in the New Testament to signify our love to God, as when "the love of God" is mentioned by our Lord along with "judgment," or righteousness, as one of the things passed over by the Pharisees when "they tithed mint and rue, and all manner of herbs;" and when he said to his unbelieving countrymen, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you;" when the apostle prays that the hearts of Christians may be "directed into the love of God;" when it is said, that "the love of the Father is not in him" who loves the world, and that "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." There are passages in which it has seemed doubtful which of these meanings attaches to the phrase, as when "the love of God" is said to be "shed abroad in the heart" of Christians "by the Holy Ghost given" to them, and when "the love of God is said to be perfected in him who keepeth the word of Christ," though I think there is no reason to doubt, that in the first passage the phrase denotes God's love to the believer, not the believer's love to God; and even with regard to the second, when we compare it with the statement, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us," it seems probable that that is its reference there also. The ordinary meaning of the expression "the love of God," in the New Testament, is, then, God's love to us.

In the passage before us the word may be interpreted in either

of the senses now noticed, without violating the usage of the New Testament, or the analogy of faith. It is most common to consider the phrase as referring to the Christian's love to God; and the exhortation, "Keep yourselves in the love of God," is thus considered as going on the supposition that they already loved God, and as calling on them to continue to love Him. 'Let not your love to God wax cold; let it rather grow exceedingly in ardour and influence, as you obtain wider, clearer views of his loveliness and his loving-kindness.' The objections to this mode of interpretation are, that "the love of God," and "the mercy of our Lord Jesus," are expressions which must be explained on the same principle of interpretation; that the reference of the latter expression, which is incapable of any interpretation but one, must determine the meaning of the former, which, taken by itself, might, as we have seen, be interpreted in either of two different ways; and that "to be in the love of God" seems a strange, unnatural mode of describing our love to God, though not an unnatural mode of expressing our being the objects of his love. To have the love of God in us, not to be in the love of God, is the ordinary New Testament way of expressing our love to God; and it is difficult to find a reason why the apostle should choose to express so plain an idea as 'Continue to love God,' by so uncommon an expression as "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Besides, this mode of interpretation gives a disjointed appearance to what is obviously one closely connected exhortation, recommending one duty, "the keeping ourselves in the love of God, and the best means of performing it;" "building ourselves up on our most holy faith;" "praying in the Holy Ghost;" and "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life."

The interpretation which gives "the love of God" here its ordinary meaning, and considers the whole clause as an exhortation to Christians to beware of losing that place in the complacent approbation of their God and Father, which, as "his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus," they enjoyed, is the most natural one; and though at first sight there may seem to be difficulties connected with it, on close examination they will turn out to be merely apparent, not real ones; and it will be found to bring out a meaning peculiarly rich in Christian practical instruction, and exactly corresponding with the

obvious meaning and purpose of all the other parts of the passage.

There is a passage in one of our Lord's valedictory discourses very much calculated to throw light on the text, and which it is difficult to doubt that Jude, who heard our Lord deliver that discourse, had in his mind when he wrote the words now under consideration. John xv. 9, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love;" that is, 'Keep yourselves in my love.' But what does "continue in my love" mean? It may mean, 'Continue to love me,' though, as he is speaking of his love to them, not theirs to him, that is not very probable; but read on: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide," that is, continue (it is the same word in the original), "in my love;" that seems to mean, 'I will continue to love you;' but read on, and you will find what settles the question, "Even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and continue in his love," that is, without doubt, 'He continues to love me.' 'My Father loved me; I kept his commandments; I continue in his love; that is, He continues to love me, and continues to love me because I have kept his commandments. I have loved you as my Father has loved me; keep my commandments as I have kept his commandments, and ye shall continue in my love as I continue in his. I will continue to love you as He continues to love me.' These words of our Lord not only explain the words of our text, but they also illustrate the sentiment it conveys.

To be "in God's love" is to be a possessor of God's favour, to be in favour with Him. Now, to be an object of Divine favour, may describe one or other of three very distinct yet intimately connected things, which we must take care neither to disjoin nor to confound, as confounding them may lead to serious mistakes; for what may be affirmed of one of those things, may not, as a matter of course, be affirmed of all the rest.

Of the human being, whom from a special regard, of which no cause can be found out of the Divine nature, God determined, in preference to another human being, to save from a misery which both should equally deserve, it may be said that man is "in the love of God;" he is an object of special favour. Such a man obviously did not bring himself into God's love, and as obviously does not keep himself in it. The determination to save, in no degree and in no sense depends on the will or the

doing of him who is chosen to salvation. Every individual "predestinated in love" to eternal life, ever was, and ever will be, "in the love of God." It were absurdity in this reference to bid Christians keep themselves in the love of God.

Of the elect sinner, who by nature was, like others, "a child of wrath," an heir of the curse, an object of the judicial displeasure of God, but who by the faith of the truth has been "justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and "made accepted in the beloved," "made the righteousness of God in him" who was "made sin in his room," it may also be said in truth that he is "in the love of God," an object of Divine special favour. He is in a state in which the perfections of the Divine character, and the principles of the Divine government, not only permit but secure his salvation. Into this state the sinner does not bring himself, and in this state he does not keep himself. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, tells us that he is brought into it "by the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe;" a power which he illustrates by comparing it with "the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when He raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand." And the Apostle Peter in his first Epistle, tells us that he is "kept" in this state "by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." It might not, as in the former case, be an absolute absurdity to call on the believing sinner to keep himself in the love of God in the sense of a justified state; but, if not absolute absurdity, it would be pernicious error. "There is," there shall be, there can be, "no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Continued faith and holiness are necessary to the continued enjoyment of the blessings of a justified state; but it is not the faith and the holiness which secure the justification, but the justification which secures the faith and the holiness. It is not then to the Christian, viewed simply as an elect person, or as a justified person, that the injunction in the text is addressed.

Of the elect believing justified sinner, as the subject of the transforming influence of the Divine Spirit, it may be said, in a sense of which it could not be said of him as an elect person, nor of him simply viewed as justified, that God loves him, that he is an object of Divine favourable regard. God loves him for the spiritual and moral loveliness which belongs to him as a

part of the new creation in Christ Jesus. The favourable regard which God has towards his elect ones as elect, has no cause in them. They in the Divine prescient mind, were contemplated as standing on the common level of the fallen race, nothing in them but guilt, depravity, and misery. He had mercy on them because He willed to have mercy on them. He had compassion on them because He willed to have compassion on them. The favourable regard which God has towards the justified as justified, has no cause in them either, but originates entirely in his being "well pleased for the righteousness sake" of him who, when he was made sin in the room of sinners, "magnified the law and made it honourable," by the propitiation made in his blood, reconciling the exercise of mercy with the demands of justice; to whom the sinner has become united according to the Divine method of salvation, by—under Divine influence,—believing the Gospel. Of the Divine love or favour in these two views of it, we can find no cause in its objects; the cause of the one being found in the sovereignty of the Divine nature, the cause of the other in the finished work of the Divine Redeemer.

The holiness of the believer is just that measure of conformity of nature, mind, and will, to the nature, mind, and will of God, which the Holy Spirit produces by the faith of the truth. Spiritual, moral excellence must be an object of the Divine approbation wherever it exists. It is so in himself. It is so in the holy angels. It was so in our innocent and holy first parents. It is so in all his children by faith in Christ Jesus, in the degree in which they possess it; He loves them because they are lovely, though of that loveliness He is the sole author.

The love or favour of God in the two former views of it, admits of no degrees. Every elect man, every justified man, stands on the same level before God. The security of one elect sinner is not greater than that of another. The consistency of the salvation of one justified person with the character and government of God, is not greater than that of another. But the love of God, in this last sense which we are now considering, not only does, but must, admit of an endless variety of degrees, both as to different individuals and to the same individual at different times. It admits of being to a considerable degree lost. It admits of being in an illimitable degree increased. The special love of benevolence is always the same, originating

in an immutable cause, the sovereign will of God. The special love of amnesty, forgiveness, and acceptance, is always the same too, originating as it does, also, in an immutable cause, the finished work of the atonement by the one sacrifice of the incarnate Son. But the special love of complacency is regulated by the degree in which the object of it is possessed of the qualities which naturally draw it forth. The smallest measure of true holiness is an object of complacent delight to the holy and benignant Jehovah; but the larger the measure of true holiness possessed by the individual Christian, the higher the place he must occupy in the estimation of Him who is perfect in knowledge, and wisdom, and holiness, as well as benevolence, and whose judgment is always according to truth. It is, then, to the love or favour of God in this last sense, that the apostle refers when he says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

There are, I apprehend, two very important closely connected injunctions bound up in this one exhortation. First, seek to preserve and increase that holiness of heart and life which are the objects of the Divine complacency, and which in the degree in which you possess them will make you the objects of the Divine complacency; and secondly, seek the continuance and the increase of the apprehended manifestation of the Divine complacency. Seek to continue to please Him, and seek, too, to obtain assurance that you are well pleasing in his sight. Let us say a word or two on these two closely connected aspects of the exhortation.

Christians are to seek to preserve and increase that holiness of heart and life which is the object of the Divine complacency; and which, in the degree in which it is possessed by them, makes them the objects of Divine complacency. They are in this respect, as in many others, to be in the world even as he, their Lord, was in the world. The grace of God was on him, and it is on them; and he grew in favour with God, and so should they. It is most certain that Christians as sanctified persons are "God's workmanship," "formed" by as well as "for himself;" and, as He has originated holiness in them, so He must increase it and perfect it. It is his "good work," He has begun it, and He "will perform it till the day of our Lord Jesus Christ;" but it is just as certain that they are active in their progressive sanctification. "God works in them," and by them, according to their intelligent and active nature. He keeps them in his love,

not without their care and diligence, but by means of their own care and diligence. His promises do not supersede their exertions; the latter are the means of the fulfilment of the former. The prayer of our Lord, "Father, keep them," is ill interpreted when it leads to the conclusion they have no need to keep themselves. As Hooker has it, "To our own safety is required our own sedulity." It is an Antinomian notion that God always regards his people with equal complacency, that in them sin is not an object of his displeasure, or at any rate that they are not objects of his displeasure on account of it. Sin is hateful to God every where; nowhere so hateful as in his own people. He is displeased at their sin, and at them on account of their sin. "He is not a God that can have pleasure in iniquity." The man according to his own heart "displeased" Him when he sinned, and drew down on himself fearful manifestation of this displeasure. "The just shall live by faith; but if he draw back," as drawing back, "God's soul has no pleasure in him." It is as going forward that He has pleasure in him. "His eye is on the righteous; with a pleasant countenance He beholdeth the upright." On the other hand, there is a "walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." There are "things which are pleasing in his sight," "sacrifices with which He is well pleased."

Now, the Christian must carefully avoid what is displeasing to God, if he would "keep himself in the love of God." He must beware of sins in the heart, and sins in the life. He must "come out and be separate, and not touch the unclean thing," if he would have the Lord God Almighty smile on him as his Father. He must "take heed, and not lose the things that have been wrought in him," and on which the eye of God rests with complacency. He must "hold fast what he has attained." He must "keep himself," so that the wicked one may not pollute him with his touch. He must take heed lest his faith, without which neither he nor his works can be pleasing to God, fail or become weak, lest his love wax cold, lest his zeal abate. And he must never forget that mere standing still will not keep him in the love of God, for progression is the very law of his new nature. "To please God," he must "abound more and more" in faith, and love, and hope, and zeal, and holy activity. God is displeased with the lazy and "unprofitable," as well as with the wicked and "unfaithful servant." The

Christian must be constantly seeking the entire approbation, the unmingled complacent regard, of God : and, in order to this, he must seek to “cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.”

In the best there is much wanting, much wrong, much with which God is not—cannot be—pleased. Therefore they ought, “not accounting themselves to have attained, or to be already perfect, to forget the things that are behind, reach forward to those that are before, and press to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” determined never to be satisfied till they are “presented to him without spot and blameless,” “holy as he is holy, perfect as he is perfect,” till they obtain entire conformity in mind and will to Him, and become for ever incapable of a thought, feeling or action, which is not perfectly pleasing in his sight.

The second thought suggested by the words is, that Christians should seek the continuance and increase of the apprehended manifestation of the Divine complacency in, and love to, them. The Christian is not only to seek to do the things which are pleasing to God, but to seek to have the conscious assurance that he is the object of the Divine complacency and love. Much of his comfort and much of his improvement depends on this.

It is obviously a very desirable thing that Christians should, on satisfactory grounds, be assured that they are the objects of the Divine approbation and special favour ; and it is one of those desirable things, the attainment of which is to be sought, not merely in praying for it, but in the active use of the means fitted to attain it, without the use of which we have no reason to expect we shall attain it, and in the use of which we have no reason to doubt our attaining it.

The direct and the only safe way of arriving at this conclusion, that we enjoy the approbation of God, is just habitually, carefully to avoid the temper and habits which we know He disapproves, and habitually to cultivate the temper and habits which we know He approves. Confidence that God regards us complacently apart from this, is—must be—dangerous delusion ; and permanent, satisfactory evidence that we are in a state of pardon and acceptance with God, and that of course we are the objects of the electing love of God, can only be obtained in a course of holy disposition and conduct.

A solid, safe conviction on this subject, can rest only on one or other of two grounds: it generally rests on both. It may rest, in the first instance it does rest solely, on a clear, distinct apprehension of saving truth. I believe no man can have *that* without a corresponding degree of the hope of salvation. Or it may rest not apart from this, but, in connection with this, on a perception in ourselves, notwithstanding all our deficiencies and faults, of that state of mind and heart which Scripture represents as characteristic of those who are in a justified state, by which "calling and election" are made sure. If I am neglecting the cultivation and exercise of holy tempers, if I am indulging in unholy tempers and undutiful conduct, I cannot legitimately possess the confidence which rests directly on the saving truth believed; for the very prevalence of the wrong state of mind, is the strongest of all proofs that that truth is not before the mind. It is the same truth which sanctifies the soul, and which gives it confidence and a sense of security in God. If the sanctifying effect is not there, the truth is not there; and if there be confidence of the goodness of our state in such a case, it must be presumptuous confidence. It is confidence resting not on truth believed at the time, and its felt effects, but, it may be, on a recollection or imagination that we have believed it, and that it did produce certain effects; a most dangerous basis to rest such an edifice on. And then, with regard to the second ground, of coming to the conclusion that we are in a state of favour with God, it is quite obvious that it is entirely coincident with that, which satisfactorily proves that we are doing the things which are pleasing in his sight.

In either view of the subject it is plain, that assurance of salvation, "the full assurance of hope," cannot consist with the indulgence of known sin. Iniquities do—they must—separate between Christians and their God. Sins do—they must—hide his face from him. A cloud, a dark, cold cloud is raised, which prevents them from the enjoying the warm benignant radiance of the smiling countenance of the Father of lights.

The attempt to combine indulgence in sin with maintenance of confidence in the safety of our state, is a monstrous one. The very disposition to make it, is a strong reason why he who feels it should stand in doubt of himself. It is not the Christian, but the self-deceiver, who usually attempts it. No Christian

can succeed in it; and the man who does so has no cause to congratulate himself. "Delusions, strong as hell, bind him fast," and he is saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." "If we say we have fellowship with HIM who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all, while we are walking in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another;" that is, He and we have fellowship; He with us as our reconciled Father; we with Him, as his reclaimed prodigal children.

It is only in the belief of the truth respecting a free and full salvation to the chief of sinners, through the atonement made by him, who, as "the Mediator between God and man, gave himself a ransom for all," that solid confidence before God can be obtained. And that ground must never be shifted. But it is equally true, that it is in "keeping his commandments,"—which are, "to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and to love one another," and thus "doing the things which are pleasing in his sight,"—we are to escape the condemnation of our own heart, "assure our hearts before Him," and "hold fast our confidence before God;" for in no other way can we obtain permanent evidence, that in the faith of the truth we are justified, and have indeed obtained peace with God and free entrance into his gracious presence.

This, then, is the great object which the apostle presses Christians to seek after: the cultivation of a course of disposition and conduct which shall meet the complacent approbation of their God and Father; and which, in his infinitely wise and holy arrangements, is connected with the enjoyment of the high satisfaction rising out of a well-grounded assurance of their interest in his special favour and immutable love.

Surely the truths to which our attention has been directed, afford a very powerful superadded motive to the cultivation of holy dispositions, and the performance of commanded duties. The path of holiness is the only path in which the Christian can enjoy the delights arising from a well-grounded assurance, that the eye, not of a righteously offended Sovereign, but of an infinitely benignant Father, rests on him; that all his sins have been freely pardoned for His sake whose blood cleanseth us from

all sin ; and that he is indeed among those who were “ chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blame ;” and having been “ begotten again, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in heaven,” are secured of being “ kept for it by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.”

Oh, what folly is it in a Christian to do any thing that must interfere with these holy delights ! What can the world give to compensate for one frown of the serene countenance of our heavenly Father ; for one hour of doubt whether we are the objects of his approbation, the children of his love ?

It is plain that the duty we have been illustrating is a duty which only Christians can perform. Men must be “ in God’s love ” before they can keep themselves in his love. All men, by nature, are not “ in his love,” in the sense of the text. They are guilty and depraved ; they are condemned by his law : and, if He were to approve of them, He must deny himself.

How dreadful the state of those who are not in God’s love, and in whom God’s love is not ; who are condemned already, and on whom his wrath abides ! If mercy prevents not, the condemnation in the book of the law must be ratified from the judgment-seat ; and the character of depravity becoming indelible, the sentiment of disapprobation must become unalterable. Fearful doom ! For one who was made capable of friendship with, conformity to God, to sink under the curse of his law, and the power of his disapprobation, for ever and ever !

Yet there is hope concerning such. Oh, sinners ! however guilty, however depraved, you may yet be in the love of God, and the love of God may yet be in you. Believe the revelation of mercy. Accept of the offered salvation. Give God credit for the love which is in his heart to sinners, and which He has proved to be there by the mission and sacrifice of his Son. Be reconciled to Him in receiving his grace. He is “ pacified towards you for all the iniquities which you have done.” He proclaims, “ I, even I, am He who blotteth out your iniquities for my own sake ; and I will not remember your sin.” “ Return, return, thou backsliding child ; I have redeemed thee.” “ Acquaint thyself thus with God ; so shall good come to thee.” “ Take hold of his strength ;” that Gospel which is “ the power

of God unto salvation." "Make peace with Him, and He will make peace with you." Then will "the love of God be shed abroad in your heart, by the Holy Ghost given to you;" then will you "love Him" who has so loved you; then will the Father "love you, and give you everlasting consolation and good hope;" and then will you be enabled to "keep yourselves in the love of God, by building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life."

SERMON II.

ON BUILDING OURSELVES UP ON OUR MOST HOLY FAITH.

JUDE 20, 21.—“ But ye, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

THESE words contain an injunction on Christians of an important duty, and instructions respecting the means by which, and the manner in which, this duty is to be performed. The duty enjoined is, “ the keeping themselves in the love of God :” and this duty is to be performed by “ building themselves up on their most holy faith,” “ praying in the Holy Ghost,” and “ looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus unto eternal life.”

The last discourse I delivered to you, was occupied with the illustration of the duty enjoined. I endeavoured to show you, that “ the love of God” here signifies the complacency with which God regards his graciously chosen, called, justified people, as regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, through the faith of the truth ; and that, for Christians to keep themselves in this love of God, is to persevere and increase in those holy tempers and habits which are the foundation of *this* complacency, and in the continuance and growth of which they only can enjoy the habitual, permanent, constantly-enlarging manifestation of this complacency.

I proceed now to the consideration of the means, by the use of which the performance of this important duty, and the enjoyment of the important privilege connected with it, may be secured. These are three, “ building ourselves up on our most holy faith,” “ praying in the Holy Ghost,” and “ looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.” This is the way, the only way, the certain way, of “ keeping ourselves in the love of God.”

I remark, then, in the first place, that they who would keep

themselves in the love of God, must "build themselves up on their most holy faith." Here the following questions require our attention; first, What is the Christian's "faith"? secondly, Why is it termed "holy," "most holy"? thirdly, What is it for a Christian to "build himself up on this most holy faith"? and finally, How is this fitted to secure his "keeping himself in the love of God"?

Faith properly signifies that act or state of the human mind, in which a statement made on apparently satisfactory evidence is believed or reckoned true; but according to that general law of language, by which the name of a mental affection is transferred to its object, faith not unfrequently signifies the statement believed: as when I say, 'That is my faith, though it may not be yours;' meaning, 'That is what I believe, though it may not be what you believe.' A Christian's faith, then, may signify the *act* or the *object* of his belief; either his believing, or that which he believes. In the New Testament, it sometimes signifies the one and sometimes the other. What is its precise signification in any particular passage, is to be ascertained from the context.

In the case before us, there can be no reasonable doubt but that the word "faith" means, the truth believed by the Christian, not his belief of the truth, though that he believes the truth is necessarily implied in its being termed *his* faith. Truth is not less truth that a man does not believe it; but if he does not believe it, it is not *his* faith. Whatever be meant by faith here, it is the foundation of the spiritual edifice of holy character and privilege. Now that, according to the Christian method of salvation, is, "the truth as it is in Jesus," "the doctrine of Christ," "the gospel of the grace of God," "the gospel of our salvation," understood and believed. The faith of this truth, in the sense of my believing it, is not the foundation, but it is the act of building on the foundation. It is not by belief as an act of my mind that I am made holy and happy, it is the truth that I believe that is the source of my holiness and happiness; though from the constitution of my nature, if I did not believe it, that truth could not make *me* holy and happy. It is the Gospel, then, viewed not only as exhibited in the word, but as believed in the mind or heart, that is here termed the Christian's faith.

Now, what is this Gospel? The following are inspired summaries of it:—"I declare unto you the Gospel, that Christ died

for our sins, according to the Scriptures ; and that he rose again from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures." "God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The righteousness of God," the Divine method of justifying sinners, "by the faith of Christ, attested by the Old Testament Scriptures, is manifested to all, and is upon *all* them that believe ; for there is no difference," in reference to this Divine method of justification, among them that believe ; "for all" of them "have sinned," and lost, entirely lost, the Divine approbation ; and all of them too are "justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ; whom God hath set forth as a propitiation by faith in his blood, declaring his righteousness in the remission of sins that are past, declaring his righteousness that he is just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus ;" "given for our offences, raised again for our justification." "The righteousness of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend to heaven, that is, to bring Christ down, or who shall descend into the deep, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead ? but what saith it ? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach ; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved : for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation ; for the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek : for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call on him : For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them ; 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." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; even the chief." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy hath He saved us ; by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made

heirs according to the hope of eternal life." "Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel." "Jesus delivers from the wrath to come." "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin;" and "he is able to save to the uttermost those that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us."

This is "the faith once delivered to the saints." This is the very truth most sure, whether men believe it or not: but while they believe it not, it is not their faith. It is the only foundation of Christian character and privilege, of true holiness and happiness. It is a sure foundation; but unless a man believe, it is not his foundation. While he continues an unbeliever, he cannot build on it; but when it is understood and believed, the man becomes a Christian, and the truth he believes becomes *his* faith, his foundation.

Let us now inquire why this faith, this truth believed, is termed "holy, most holy," "your most holy faith." Holiness, as expressive of a moral quality, is plainly applicable only to moral beings and their dispositions and actions. When used in reference to a set of principles, as in the case before us, the meaning is, that these principles are the embodiment of the holy mind and will of the Holy, Holy, Holy One, who reveals them; and that if believed, if they become the faith of an individual, they will make him holy. They have a sanctifying—a powerfully sanctifying—influence. A man cannot believe them at all without being made holy by them. The new mind created by them is a holy mind—a mind in conformity with the mind of the Holy One. The man is "transformed by this renewing of his mind." The more enlightened, the more steadfast, is a man's faith of the truth, the more thoroughly the faith delivered to the saints is his faith; the more holy is he.

The Spirit of God is the author of all holiness in the human mind; and he is so, not only as the revealer of the truth contained in the Scripture, but as the producer in the mind of that state, which alone can secure such an apprehension of the meaning and evidence of saving truth as will lead to its being believed; a state which is not natural to any human being, and which, if human nature were left to itself, would never occur in a single instance. He is the sanctifying Spirit, but he produces sanctify-

ing effects only by sanctifying truth. He is the only efficient agent, but he employs appropriate means—means suited to the constitution of the being on whom he operates, and the nature of the effects he means to produce. “Sanctify them through thy truth,” says the Saviour; “thy word is the truth.” God “gives” all his people “the Holy Ghost, and puts no difference” between one class of them and another in this respect, but “purifies all their hearts by faith.” The word of God preached by the apostles, when received, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of the living God; the word of God thus becoming their faith, “worketh effectually in them who believe it.” “The grace of God” revealed in the Gospel, and, when believed, becoming the Christian’s most holy faith, “teaches” what nothing else can teach, “to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly.” And the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel are to be affirmed constantly, in order “that they who have believed in God may be careful to maintain good works.” Thus “these things are good and profitable to men.”

If men professing to be Christians remain unholy, there is mistake—serious mistake—if not timely rectified, fatal mistake—somewhere; and the mistake commonly lies in one or other of these points. The man has a *faith*, but his faith is not the truth believed, but a lie believed; and it were strange indeed if the faith of falsehood could produce the same effect as the faith of truth. To wonder at this is about as wise as to wonder that poison does not produce the same effect as wholesome food or salutary medicine. If a man who has a faith, a creed, a set of principles which he really believes, and yet continues unholy, he may rest assured that, whatever he may have believed, he has not believed the Gospel of Christ. This is one of the points where there is often mistake. The other is this: a man may have the truth, to a very considerable extent at least, before his mind, and yet continue unholy, for the truth is not his *faith*; he contemplates it, speculates about it, talks about it, contends about it, but never really believes it. There is no more wonder that sanctifying truth does not sanctify that man, than there is that nourishing provision does not nourish the man who merely looks at it; it may be analyzes it, it may be prepares it, and presents it to others, but never partakes of it; never does what, according

to the nature of his bodily constitution, is necessary to his deriving advantage from it. According to the nature of man's mental constitution, the faith of sanctifying truth is as necessary to personal sanctification as the eating of nourishing provision is to personal nourishment. "Holy faith" is just an equivalent to sanctifying faith; "most holy faith," to powerfully sanctifying faith. A full Gospel fully believed is fitted to "sanctify a man wholly, and to preserve the whole spirit and soul and body blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus."

Having thus ascertained what is the Christian's faith—the Gospel believed—and what is the force of the epithet here given to his faith "most holy faith," as describing the sanctifying, the powerfully sanctifying, influence of the Gospel believed, let us now proceed to inquire what is meant by a Christian "building himself up on his most holy faith."

The general idea of building up is progressive improvement; of building a person's self up, progressive improvement by means of the active exertions of the individual himself. The figure is applied both to the Christian church as a body, and to Christian men as individuals. To the Christian church, "Ye are," says the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, speaking plainly to them as a body, "Ye are God's building." "Ye," says the apostle Peter in his First Epistle, "as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." The various orders of the Christian ministry are said to be "for the edifying" or building up "of the body of Christ"—that is the church. Our Lord says, that "he will build his church on a rock;" and his apostle says, that that church, composed of Jews and Gentiles, is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone." So Christians, when spoken of as individuals, are represented as "rooted and built up in Christ, and stablished in the faith as they have been taught;" and they are enjoined to comfort themselves together, and to "edify or build up one another." On looking carefully at the passage before us, I think there can be little doubt the reference is not to the church as a body, but to Christians as individuals; all the duties enjoined being obviously personal duties, "praying in the Holy Ghost," "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

It has been a question among expositors, whether the duty enjoined here and in the following verse, be the duty the Chris-

tian owes to his brother or to himself. There is no doubt that the words will admit of the translation which has been given them, "build one another up on your most holy faith;" "keep one another in the love of God;" and that similar phrases are in some places in the New Testament rightly rendered in this way, as in Eph. iv. 32, and Col. iii. 16. But the more literal and common rendering is that which our translators have adopted, and it best suits with the rest of the passage.

Taking for granted, then, that the exhortation refers to the duty which a Christian man owes to himself, let us inquire into the meaning of the injunction, and into the manner in which the duty enjoined is to be performed. The meaning of the injunction varies according as you render the words, "building yourselves up *in* your most holy faith," or with our translators, "building yourselves up *on* your most holy faith." In the first case, the injunction is a command, corresponding to the prayer of the disciples, "Lord, increase our faith;" a command to seek wider, and clearer, and more impressive views of Divine truth and its evidence; and in this view of the passage, "faith" would stand rather for believing than for the thing believed. This brings out a very good meaning, and a meaning suitable enough to the connection; for there can be no doubt it is by strengthening faith that we are to be enabled to keep ourselves in the love of God. Yet the rendering of our translators, which is equally warranted, gives a much wider signification, and one which still more powerfully bears on the apostle's object, as suggesting the proper mode of complying with his principal exhortation. We consider the words, then, as they stand in our version, as conveying the apostle's idea, and proceed to their illustration, "Building yourselves up *on* your most holy faith."

The Gospel of the grace of God, in its various statements, is represented as a foundation on which the Christian man is enjoined to build himself up, to raise the whole frame of sentiments, and dispositions, and habits, which form the new man in the full stature of maturity; or, more in accordance with the figure in the passage before us (though the passage I refer to describes the church as a body), "fitly to frame together" on this foundation the various parts of the gradually rising "holy temple in the Lord, a habitation of God through the Spirit." The apostle does not call on them to lay the foundation,—that

had been done in the word, "Behold I lay in Zion a foundation;" he does not bid them rest themselves on the foundation, that had been done when they believed, when the Christian truth became their faith; but he calls on them to build on that foundation, to build themselves on that foundation.

His leading thoughts are: The truth believed is intended to be an operative principle, and to call your powers of activity into vigorous exertion in developing its energies. To intimate the tendency of Christian truth, understood and believed, to produce all holiness of heart and life, it is compared to the sowing of seed in the earth, which, when favoured with the influences of heaven, leads to the development of the whole plant or tree; while to place in a clearer point of view the place which human activity has assigned it in the restorative process, it is represented as the foundation intended for a superincumbent edifice, a foundation well able to sustain it, and exactly suited to the kind of materials of which this edifice must be composed, but which materials must be placed on it. The cultivation of holy temper, the discharge of commanded duties, the welcome entertainment of warranted comforts and encouragements, are all various ways of building ourselves up, and they are all based on our most holy faith. No disposition is to be cherished but what that faith naturally excites; no duty to be engaged in but what that faith lays a foundation for; no expectations or consolations admitted but what that faith suggests; and, on the other hand, every disposition, duty, and consolation, which legitimately rises out of this faith, which fits in to a building raised on this foundation, has a claim to be attended to. It is materially the same idea as when the apostle Paul represents (Rom. vi. 17) the Christian doctrine, our most holy faith, as a mould into which the human character, fused as it were by the fire of Divine influence, is poured in order to be fashioned anew, every doctrine being intended and fitted to form the new man to solid strength, or easy activity, or moral loveliness.

Perhaps the best commentary that is any where to be found on the words before us, is that in the commencement of the Second Epistle of the apostle Peter, in which he exhorts "them who have obtained like precious faith with the apostles, who have been called through the knowledge of our God, and of Jesus our Lord, and by a glorious power, to whom have

been given exceeding great and precious promises, that by these they might become partakers of a divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust;" to "give all diligence, to add to their faith, virtue," or rather fortitude; "and to fortitude, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance or moderation; and to moderation, patience or rather perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in them, and abound, they would make them that they should be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Peter," like Jude, "does not exhort Christians to seek after faith. He supposes them to possess it already. He addresses them as believers, and calls on them to pursue a course worthy of their faith, corresponding with their faith, and to which their faith binds them."¹ This is the way to build up one's self into an edifice, sacred to the honour, employed in the service, blessed with the presence, beautified by the glory, of the Lord.

The manner in which the Christian is thus to build himself up on his most holy faith is, just by endeavouring habitually to keep before his mind the Gospel, the whole Gospel, in its meaning and evidence; and to allow it to have its fair influence on his whole character and conduct, guarding against the seductive influences of the present evil world, which, like Sanballat and the Horonites, are continually attempting to interrupt the building of the Lord. It is by steadily contemplating the glory of the Lord, to change the figure, as it appears in the face of Christ Jesus delineated in the Gospel, that we, like mirrors, are to be made to exhibit a dim resemblance to its heavenly radiance, being changed by that which is so glorious into something glorious also, as the opaque moon reflects the effulgence of the orb of light round which it revolves when it is turned towards it. To revert to the figure in the text, every stone in the foundation must have its corresponding superstructure. On the doctrine of Christ's devotement for us, must be built our devotement to him; on his love to us, our love to him, and to those whom he loves; on the value of the soul, earnest, persevering endeavour to secure the salvation of our own souls, and the souls of others; on the promise of God to make all things work for our good, entire

¹ Jay.

resignation to the dispensations of his providence. Every stone in the foundation must be built upon, that so a stately symmetrical structure may be raised.

It only remains, on this part of the subject, that I briefly show how this building of himself up on this most holy faith is fitted to tell favourably on the Christian keeping himself in the love of God. A very few remarks will suffice to make this plain. 'I cannot secure the continued complacent approbation of God, but by avoiding those things which offend Him, and doing the things which are well-pleasing in his sight; and thoroughly depraved as my nature is, "for I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing," I will not do the things which please Him, I will do the things which displease Him, unless I remain under the continued influence of that most holy faith, which, by the good Spirit enabling me to understand and believe it, has produced in me whatever the eye of that God, who hath no pleasure in wickedness, regards with a pleasant countenance. In building myself up on this most holy faith, I do what He commands me to do, and therefore He must be pleased with me doing it; and just in the measure in which I succeed, I realise that character which, being conformed to his mind and will, must be the object of his complacent regard.'

The connecting with the exercise of every holy temper, and the performance of every commanded duty, the contemplation of "our faith most holy," has a double effect on keeping us in the enjoyment of a comfortable sense of the Divine kind regard. The truth on which rests all our confidence before God, all our hope for eternity, is kept habitually before the mind; and we are preserved both from those misconceptions of the Divine character, and from those sins, which separate between us and our God, and hide his reconciled countenance from us, for our faith is faith most holy. It is plain, that just in the measure in which a Christian builds himself up on his holy faith, will he keep himself in the love of God. So says the apostle Peter: He who does not build himself up on his holy faith, who does not "add to his faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity;" "he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from

his old sins." Even if a forgiven sinner, he loses all the comfort of knowing that he is forgiven; while, on the other hand, he who builds himself up on his most holy faith, "makes his calling and election sure, and has an entrance ministered to him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." So says the apostle John, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin. Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him; for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him; and hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us."

The consideration of the other means for keeping ourselves in the love of God, the praying in the Holy Ghost, and the looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus to eternal life, must be reserved for discussion till some future opportunity.

This discourse, like the one which preceded it, has been addressed all but exclusively to true Christians. They, they only, can build themselves up on their most holy faith. It naturally, however, brings before the mind a great general truth, in which all men are equally interested, to which, in conclusion, I wish for a little to turn your minds. The truth I refer to is this: That Christian truth believed, is the only basis on which can be raised in the human mind solid hope or true holiness.

There is no hope for man, the sinner, but through the free grace of God, manifested in harmony with his justice, through the atonement of his Son; and that hope cannot become mine, if I do not believe the Gospel, which contains the only and the well-accredited account of that harmonious manifestation of Divine grace and righteousness on which alone rational hope, in a righteously condemned sinner, can rest. There is no holiness for man but in that love to God, and conformity to his character,

mind, and will, of which he is naturally destitute ; and it is only in the Gospel that we have such views of God as are fitted to excite love in a being like man ; only in the Gospel that we have such a revelation of the mind and will of God as makes conformity to them possible ; and the Gospel must be believed, in order to these views and this revelation producing their appropriate effects.

Nothing can come in the place of the Gospel believed to serve these purposes. Good works will not serve the purpose ; for where are really good works to come from, in the absence of just views of the Divine character, which only can proceed from faith in the Gospel ? And if we had them, in all the extent that some men seem to dream of their being attainable by man, how could they form a ground of hope to a sinner ? how can they, which are but imperfect payment of present debt, obliterate “ the handwriting ” that is against the sinner, the curse which has gone forth against every soul that hath done evil ? and as to holiness as an internal quality, surely good works can never confer it ; we must have it, in order to our doing good works.

Strong religious impressions can as little stand in the room of the Gospel believed, as a safe foundation of hope, or a permanent source of motive. Feelings, except as they are excited and regulated by true principles, are in every respect valueless, in many respects dangerous, things. Instead of being able to support hope, they need themselves to be sustained by faith. The religion which rests on mere excited feeling is at best a tottering fabric. It gives way in the hour of temptation ; it will be consumed in the day when every man’s work must be tried by the fire of Divine judgment. Nothing, nothing but the true Gospel, really believed, can give a well-grounded hope to the sinner, or produce in him a consistent, progressive, permanent holiness.

To men, then, seeking a ground of hope and confidence before God, the advice we must give is, Believe and hope : “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” No hope for thee but in him ; no access to him but by believing the truth respecting him.

To those who are putting the questions,—How must we work the works of God ? how are we to obtain that holiness without which no man can see the Lord ?—our answer must be, “ This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom He hath sent.”

It is the truth—the truth about him understood and believed—that alone can make you free: that will “make you free indeed;” and “enable you to walk at liberty, keeping God’s commandments;” to “serve Him without fear, in righteousness and holiness, all the days of your life.” To lead men who are concerned about the interests of eternity, to seek and expect either hope or holiness by works of righteousness, or by internal exercises of mind, instead of directing them immediately to the only Saviour, the only Author of hope and holiness, in the only way in which they can come to him—in the belief of the truth respecting him as contained in the Divine testimony—is to delude, and, if they are not brought under better guidance, to destroy them.

Unconverted men! we cannot bid you build yourselves up on your most holy faith; for the most holy faith is not your faith. You do not believe the Gospel; if you did, you could not be destitute of hope, destitute of holiness, as you are, and as I doubt not some of you are aware that you are. But while we cannot call on you to build up what has never been laid on the foundation, we can, and we do most earnestly, beseech you to look at the Gospel, the most holy faith of all Christians, and tell us if it be not fitted to be a foundation for you as well as for them; if you do not stand in need of such a foundation; if you know of any other foundation which can form a basis for hopes, and for a character, which will bear the scrutiny of the final judgment; and if you can give any satisfactory reason why, in the belief of the truth, this foundation should not become your foundation. This, this alone, is the immovable rock; all else is shifting sand or yielding air. We beseech you, as you value the interests of eternity, begin at the beginning; it is the only way of reaching the end.

We call on you then, in the faith of the truth, to receive Jesus Christ, the Saviour and the Lord; and, “having received him, walk in him; rooted and built up in him.” Oh! may the good Spirit accompany these statements and exhortations with his efficacious influence, opening the understandings of unconverted men, to understand the truth as it is in Jesus, opening their hearts to receive the love of the truth, so that they may be saved by it! And, under his continued influence, may those who have commenced building on the foundation of our “most holy faith,” prove themselves “wise and diligent builders;” show

that "they have a mind to work!" Then will the spiritual house in every heart, "fitly framed, grow into a holy temple in the Lord;" and ere long the copestone will be laid on, amid the shoutings of the angels, and of the spirits of the just made perfect. "How beautiful! Grace, grace unto it!" Meanwhile, remembering that "we have not attained, neither are already perfect, let us forget the things that are behind, reach forth to those things which are before, and press to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

SERMON III.

ON PRAYING IN THE HOLY GHOST.

JUDE 20, 21.—“ But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

WHEN I entered on the consideration of the interesting passage of Scripture, now a third time read to you, as the subject of discourse, I proposed to attend, first, to the duty which the apostle calls on Christians to perform, or the object which he calls on them to prosecute, the “keeping themselves in the love of God;” and secondly, to the means which he recommends for the performance of this duty, the attainment of this object, “building themselves up on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

The first discourse was entirely occupied with the first of these topics. In that discourse, I endeavoured to show that “the love of God” here, signifies the complacency with which God regards his graciously chosen, called, justified people, as regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, through the belief of the truth; and that for Christians to keep themselves in this love, is to persevere and increase in those holy tempers and habits which are the foundation of *this* complacency; and in the continuance and growth of which they can only enjoy the habitual, permanent, ever-enlarging manifestation of this complacency.

In the second discourse, I entered on the consideration of the means recommended by the apostle for the performance of the duty enjoined, the attainment of the object proposed; “the building ourselves up on our most holy faith, the praying in the Holy Ghost, and the looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” The illustration of the first of these

topics, "the building ourselves up on our most holy faith," required all the time we had to dispose of on that occasion. I endeavoured to show you, that "faith" here means the Christian's belief; that which he believes; "the doctrine of Christ;" "the Gospel of the grace of God;" and that this is "most holy," being the embodiment of the holy mind and will of Him who only is holy; and, when believed, powerfully sanctifying. I attempted to explain what is meant by a Christian "building himself up on this most holy faith," the improving its various principles for the formation of his character and the regulation of his conduct; and how this "building himself up on his most holy faith," is calculated to secure his "keeping himself in the love of God."

I proceed now to the consideration of the second means recommended by the apostle to enable Christians to keep themselves in the love of God—"praying in the Holy Ghost." The theme, then, of this discourse is, 'If we would "keep ourselves in the love of God," we must "pray in the Holy Ghost."' And here there are three questions to which we must endeavour to find satisfactory answers. What is it to pray? What is it to pray in the Spirit? And how is praying in the Spirit calculated to help the Christian to keep himself in the love of God?

I. Prayer is very well defined in that admirable compendium of Divine truth, the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, a little book which contains in it the substance of many large volumes; a book, the contents of which almost every child among us can repeat, but which comparatively few grown-up people fully understand; "prayer is," in that excellent summary of faith and duty, described as "the offering up of the desires of the heart to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." The word prayer, in strict propriety of language, is expressive only of request or petition. To pray to a person, is to seek with earnestness from that person something that we wish to obtain, and which we are persuaded he can bestow; but the term is often, both in Scripture and in theological discourse, employed as descriptive of the whole of that devotional intercourse which man in the present state holds with God. In this comprehensive sense it includes solemn invocation, or calling on

the name of God; speaking to Him as one connected with and near us; addressing Him by one or more of the appellations by which, in the holy Scriptures, He has made himself known to men; an intimation of our design to worship Him, and our desire to have communion with Him; an expression of our insufficiency for the rightly conducting such an exercise, and of our wish and hope for the promised assistance of his Spirit; an adoration of his excellences, as displayed in his works and revealed in his word; an acknowledgment of our insignificance as creatures, and our ill desert as sinners; a confession of the depravity of our nature, and the sins of our life, our desert of punishment, and our unworthiness of mercy; a deprecation of all evil, temporal and spiritual, present and future, from ourselves and others; an equally extensive petition for all good; an enforcement of our petitions by appropriate scriptural arguments from the greatness of our wants, and our utter incapacity to supply them; from the excellences of the Divine nature, infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, kindness; from the relations in which God stands to us, and the promises He has made to us; from the atoning sacrifice of his Son, whose blood cleanseth from all sin; and from his ever-enduring, all-prevalent intercession, by which he is able to save us to the uttermost, coming to God by him; a dedication of ourselves to God, to be his only, wholly, and for ever; a grateful acknowledgement of all his mercies, and an humble expression of confidence, that our devotional services will be graciously accepted, and our petitions complied with. And in doing all this, the word of God is to be our rule of conduct; the mediation of Jesus Christ the ground of our hope; and the Holy Spirit, in his enlightening and sanctifying influences, our guide and helper.¹ This is prayer, which is just the Christian's laying open his mind and heart to his Father in heaven, telling what he thinks of Him, and what he expects from Him; acknowledging his own emptiness, his conviction of the Divine fulness, and his desire and hope that all his need will be supplied out of that fulness, according to its glorious riches.

Thus to pray is the Christian's habitual privilege and duty: and every thing that interests him may, and ought to be, the subject of prayer. "In every thing by prayer, with thanksgiving,

¹ Watts.

should he make his requests known to God." Especially should every thing connected with his duty and his interests as a Christian, a new creature, a Son of God, an heir of immortality, be made the subject of prayer. It is plain, then, that Christians ought to pray in reference to their "keeping themselves in the love of God," and in reference to their "building themselves up on their most holy faith," in order to their keeping themselves in the love of God.

It is prayer, with this particular reference, that is enjoined in the passage before us. What, then, does the apostle call on Christians to pray for? We are to pray, that we may be enabled to keep ourselves in the love of God; that we may be preserved from cherishing any disposition, or doing any action, which would diminish God's complacency in us: that in order to this we may be blessed with spiritual perspicacity and spiritual sensibility, so as readily to perceive, and instantaneously to shrink back from, every thing that would be displeasing in his sight; that we may be enlightened in the knowledge of all duty, and in opposition to the biases of our depraved nature, and the influence of temptation, whether from spiritual agents or external objects, be inclined and determined to do all duty at all hazard; that we may be made sensible of the slightest intimations both of the approbation and disapprobation of God, and be preserved from trifling with conviction, tampering with temptation, and continuing secure in sin.

And, in order to our keeping ourselves in the love of God, we are especially to pray that we may be enabled to "build ourselves up on our most holy faith." For this purpose we are to ask, that by God's good Spirit we may be led into wide accurate views, and deep impressive convictions, respecting every part of "our most holy faith;" that we may be made distinctly to see and readily to yield to the fair practical influence of every portion of it; that every part of the foundation may be built upon, and every part of the building raised to the proper height, "fitly framed and compacted together;" that we may be enabled to derive from every part of the word of God, all of which is given by his inspiration, all the profit for "doctrine and reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness," which it is intended and calculated to afford; that we may be made to know what we ought to do to please God, how we are to do it, and why we are to do

it; that it may be "a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path," guiding the mind, influencing the heart, forming the character, regulating the conduct. These are the things which the apostle here calls on Christians to pray for in order that they may keep themselves in the love of God, and in order that for this purpose they may build themselves up on their most holy faith.

II. We are prepared now to enter on our second inquiry, What is meant by "praying in the Holy Ghost?" The Holy Ghost is that Divine person, who, along with the Father and the Son, exists in the unity of the Godhead. That the term Holy Ghost is not uniformly or ordinarily employed in Scripture to denote a personification of a Divine attribute or influence, but usually designates a real personal agent, can scarcely be doubted by any attentive, if but unprejudiced reader. Making all due allowance for the boldness of oriental figure, there are many passages from which no consistent meaning can be extracted but on this supposition. In the simplest narrative, and in the most unimpassioned statements, the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God, is represented as performing works which it would be absurd to refer to an attribute or influence; and that the person designated by this appellation is Divine, is clearly proved by the passages of Scripture in which names, and attributes, and works, characteristic of, peculiar to, Deity, are ascribed to him. Nothing more clearly establishes both the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost, than the two facts, that in the administration of baptism, and in the apostolical benediction, he is associated with the Father and the Son, whose distinct personality has scarcely been questioned, and whose supreme divinity is capable of such abundant proof. It would be an inconceivable incongruity, a monstrous absurdity, that a religious ordinance should be administered by the authority of two persons, and of one of their attributes or influences, and that a benediction should be prayed for from, or pronounced in, the name of so strange a combination. It is equally inconsistent with all just ideas of such subjects to suppose, that an ordinance should be administered in the name of the one God and two creatures, or that a blessing should be supplicated in the same breath from Him and from them.

In the economy of grace, the Father, the Son, and the Holy

Spirit, are each of them represented as occupying peculiar offices and relations, and performing the functions that are appropriate to such relations and offices. All things are *of* the Father, *through* the Son, *by* the Spirit. To the Spirit belongs what is ordinarily called the applicatory part of the work of salvation. It is by his operation and influence, that the individual sinner is brought into the state, and formed to the character, by which he is made capable of enjoying the blessings which flow to men from the grace of the Father, through the mediation of the Son. It is the Holy Ghost who produces in man that faith of the truth, which unites him to the Saviour in his atoning death and justifying resurrection. It is he who makes the sinner a new creature, and brings him into a new creation. It is he who gives and sustains spiritual life, and who inclines and enables the new creature to perform all its functions. He is the author of all right thinking, and feeling, and acting, in reference to God, and things unseen and eternal.

The Holy Ghost is particularly represented as having an agency in producing and sustaining that state of mind and heart, of thought and desire, of which prayer is the expression. An Old Testament prophet, speaking of New Testament times, terms him "the Spirit of grace and supplication;" and represents the pouring out of his influence as a character of these times. And the apostle Paul, in one passage of Scripture, informs us, that "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities:" When "we know not what to pray for as we ought, he maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered;" "He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." And in another passage he tells us, that God, who hath "sent forth into the world his Son to redeem" us, hath "sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying," that is, making us cry, "Abba, Father." The apostle Paul enjoins the Ephesians "to pray in the Spirit." And the apostle Jude here exhorts those to whom he wrote to "pray in the Holy Ghost."

To pray *in* the Holy Ghost is an idiomatic expression, of equivalent meaning with, to pray under the influence of the Holy Ghost; but this meaning is very forcibly expressed in this peculiarity of phrase. It indicates, that the persons to whom it is applied are, as it were, united to the Holy Spirit;

so that their individual minds and wills are, as it were, lost in his. That to be "in the Spirit," which is the same thing as to be "filled with the Spirit," means to be under his influence, is quite plain from such expressions as the following: "Jesus was led in the Spirit into the wilderness." Paul says, "I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem." John says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." "Immediately I was in the Spirit." "He carried me away in the Spirit." The person possessed of the gift of tongues, is said "in the Spirit to speak mysteries." "To walk in the Spirit," is to act under the Spirit's influence.

It is a question, obviously of vital importance here, what is to be understood by praying under the influence of the Holy Spirit? In replying to this question, men have run into opposite extremes. On the one hand, some would restrict it to prayer directly dictated to the individual by an influence similar to that by which the writers of Scripture were inspired; considering prayer in the Spirit as something peculiar to the miraculous age of Christianity, and representing it as absurd as to bid men now pray in the Spirit, as it would be to bid them speak a language they had never learned, and heal disease by a touch or a word: and others consider, that there is no prayer in the Spirit but when a sensible impulse of the Spirit excites to prayer; concluding, therefore, that set times for prayer are unwarrantable, and worse than useless. These are mistakes in one extreme. There are others who, running to the opposite extreme, hold, that to pray in the Spirit is merely, in the matter and manner of our prayer, to endeavour, in the exercise of those faculties which the Spirit of God has given us as men—that "inspiration of the Almighty," by which He has given us "more understanding than the beasts of the field, more wisdom than the fowls of heaven"—to regulate ourselves by the directions which He has given us in those Scriptures, which were written by holy men moved by Him.

We shall endeavour to state the truth, the doctrine of Scripture, on this interesting subject, as distinctly and briefly as possible, guarding against both extremes. To pray under the influence of the truth respecting God and ourselves, understood and believed by us, and to pray in the Spirit, are substantially the same thing; for not only is that truth contained in a book, written by men inspired by the Spirit, but it is only in the degree

that the mind of the individual is influenced by the Spirit, that this truth is, or can be, truly understood and believed by him. There is no prayer in the true sense of the word, but "prayer in the Spirit." Prayer is the expression of a sincere desire of what is necessary and sufficient to true happiness, addressed to the true God in the hope of obtaining it, because He has promised it. To this there is plainly required, a knowledge of God and of ourselves, of what we need and of what He has promised; a desire of heavenly and spiritual blessings; and a confidence in the power, grace, and truth of God; a knowledge, and desire, and confidence, which no unconverted man possesses, and which can originate in nothing but in the Holy Spirit influencing the mind to attend to, to understand, and to believe the truth, and influencing the mind by the truth thus understood and believed. No man can pray, in the only just meaning of the term, but, "in the Spirit." Even he who prays for the Spirit, if he does more than use mere words, if he understand what he asks, and really wishes to obtain it, prays "in the Spirit;" for it is the Spirit alone which can teach man that he needs the Spirit. No natural man, no mere animal man, no man just as born of the flesh, knows his need of the Spirit, or really desires the Spirit. And just in proportion as a man is influenced by the Spirit, in the two ways we have noticed, will he pray, as to matter, and manner, and effect, as he "ought to pray."

He will pray *intelligently*, both with regard to God and himself. He will not, like the Samaritans, worship he knows not what; he will know whom he worships; for, "in the Spirit," he has been made to "know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent." He knows his immaculate holiness, his inflexible justice, his omnipotent power, his infinite wisdom, his redeeming kindness, his inviolable faithfulness. And he knows all this, for he has been taught it by the Spirit. The Spirit has led him to understand and believe the truth revealed by him on these subjects. He knows, for the same reason, his own deep, inexcusable guilt, thorough depravity, entire helplessness; he knows that the possession of God's favour, and conformity to God's image, are necessary and sufficient for his happiness; he knows that God has promised these blessings; and, knowing this, he knows what things to ask of God.

He will pray *believingly*, not speaking as it were to the empty

air, or addressing an imaginary being, but speaking to the great Reality ; for he knows, he believes, “that God is,” a much less common attainment than many suppose ; and he expects to obtain what he is asking, being persuaded that what he asks is according to God’s will, is what He has promised, and what He both can and will confer. He knows and believes that He is “the rewarder of,” that He will do good to, “those who diligently seek him” in the way of his appointment : and in the spirit of a son he will go boldly to his Father in heaven, on the throne of grace, in the full assurance of finding mercy and obtaining grace.

He will pray *fervently* ; for having believed the truth through the Spirit, he perceives the intrinsic excellence of the blessings he asks ; and the desire of his heart is drawn out towards their attainment. Just in proportion as, “in the Spirit,” he is enabled to realise to his mind the heavenly and spiritual blessings pledged in the exceeding great and precious promises, will he “with his heart desire them, with his Spirit within him seek them early.”

He will pray *reverentially*. The truth about God’s infinite grandeur and excellence, and that about his own situation and character as a creature and a sinner, kept before the mind by the Spirit, will so abase every high thought, as that “God alone shall be exalted,” “sanctified in the heart, and made his fear and dread.”

He will pray *submissively*. For the Spirit, by the word, teaches him that his Father in heaven, infinitely wise and infinitely benignant, knows best how and when to answer his prayer ; what are the blessings needed in his circumstances ; what are the measure and manner in which they should be bestowed.

We see now what it is to “pray in the Spirit.” It is with minds enlightened, and hearts purified, and desires awakened and regulated by the Spirit, leading us to believe the truth, and influencing us by the truth believed, to pray with intelligence, and faith, and fervour, and humility, and submission, for the blessings which God has promised ; and the more intelligently, believingly, fervently, humbly, and submissively we pray, the more fully do we comply with the command, “Pray in the Spirit.”

To some, prayer “in the Spirit” may seem rather a privilege than a duty. In truth it is both. It is equally true that the

Christian, of himself, "knows not how to pray as he ought," and that he ought "always so to pray, and not to faint." That man is ignorant of the very elements of spiritual Christianity who does not know, that what is beyond all doubt man's duty, cannot, owing to his depravity, be performed but by Divine assistance; and that the Holy Spirit works that in us which God requires of us, "writing his law on our hearts," and "working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight."

That we may habitually pray "in the Spirit," two things are absolutely necessary: that we should study the mind of the Spirit in his Word, and that we should seek the influence of the Spirit by prayer. That knowledge of ourselves and of God, which is necessary to our praying in the Spirit, is not to be expected to be miraculously put into our minds, as it was into the minds of inspired men. We are to "search the Scriptures," and to examine ourselves, that we may know who God is, and who we are; what we need, and what He has promised. And we are to pray *for* the Spirit, that we may pray *in* the Spirit. The first, the converting, influence of the Spirit, comes unasked by the individual, though not unasked by the great Intercessor. It comes unasked, otherwise it would never come at all. But further communications of the Spirit are to be obtained by prayer; and it is presumption to expect them without it. It deserves notice, that it is with reference to this among other promises—"I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," that it is added, "Thus saith the Lord God: I will yet for this be inquired of the house of Israel to do it for them." And ye know the words of our Lord Jesus: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask Him?"

In connection with these observations it is important to remark, that the influence of the Spirit in prayer is not always, is not

usually sensible, nor is it always most powerful when we think we most powerfully feel it. It is not usually to be distinguished from the operations and feelings of the mind, influenced by truth according to the laws of our constitution. And it is a sad delusion to think we must live in the neglect of prayer, or give over praying, because we feel as if we were not under Divine influence. No. We are to pray for the Spirit; and "it is usually while we are praying that we obtain grace to pray."¹

Indeed, though I should tremble at the thought of awakening either hopes or anxieties unwarranted by God's word, I must say that I am persuaded, that if Christians would but wait on the Lord in the believing study of his word, and in prayer for the Spirit, they might safely count on being enabled to pray "in the Spirit," in a degree and with an effect which would contribute to their spiritual enjoyment and improvement in a way that would astonish themselves. Instead of the comparative deadness which so often characterises the prayers even of true Christians, seasons of devotion would be found to be "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, the Spirit." "Things seen and temporal" would all but vanish, "things unseen and eternal" fill up the whole field of vision, and, instead of a reluctance to pray, there would be a feeling as if we could do nothing else. We should know what to pray for, and how to pray as we ought, and our hearts would be filled with holy desire, our mouths with scriptural arguments. We should be brought near God, even to his seat, and allowed to pour our complaints and thanksgivings, our joys and sorrows, our fears and desires, into his very bosom. We should have ineffable longings after God, the living God. We should be enabled to "launch forth," as a great and devout man has it, "into the depths of the Divine perfections and promises, and possess ourselves as much as possible of the fulness of God."² It is probable that there are few Christians who have not experienced at times—alas! how seldom; at intervals, alas! how distant—something like this. Why, oh why, should it not be our daily, our hourly experience? Why should we sit still and cry, "My leanness, my leanness?" while He is saying "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

I have only further to remark here, that the only satisfactory

¹ Fuller.

² Hall.

proof that our prayers are "in the Spirit," is to be found in the effects resulting from them. If they do not lead us to keep ourselves in the love of God, we have reason to fear, that whatever spirit we prayed by, it was not the Holy Spirit. The very design of praying in the Holy Ghost is, that we may keep ourselves in the love of God.

III. With a few words as to how praying in the Spirit conduces to our keeping ourselves in the love of God, I shall conclude the discourse; and a very few words are all that is necessary for this purpose.

Praying in the Spirit is, in its own nature, fitted to be subservient to our keeping ourselves in the love of God; for it brings before the mind, in the circumstances most calculated to make a deep impression, those truths about God, which, when understood and believed, are the most powerful motives to care lest we offend Him, and to diligence in doing the things which are well-pleasing in his sight. If a Christian could but carry about with him always the frame of mind and heart towards God which he has when he is "praying in the Spirit," how comparatively powerless would be the seductions and terrors of the world; how desirous would he be to please God; how careless about displeasing every one else, if this can not be avoided but by displeasing Him! How afraid would he be to offend Him; and what a wretched bargain would the approbation and applause, the wealth and the pleasures, of the world appear, if purchased at the expense of incurring his frown!

Further, praying in the Spirit is fitted to be subservient to our keeping ourselves in the love of God; for He has commanded us thus to pray, and we cannot neglect any of his commands without so far forfeiting his complacent regard; and He has constituted this prayer the appointed means of obtaining those supplies of Divine influence which are necessary to our keeping ourselves in his love, by doing the things which are good in his sight. The declaration already referred to, "For all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them," is connected with the promise of progressive sanctification. "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within

you ; and will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh ; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes ; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them"—that is, 'ye shall keep yourselves in my love'—"and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

This means of keeping ourselves in the love of God, and that which we illustrated in our last discourse, are very closely connected ; they act and re-act. "Building ourselves up on our most holy faith" naturally leads to "prayer in the Spirit." It increases the instrumentality by which the Spirit works in leading us to pray, and to pray as we ought. It raises mounds on which he may plant his enginery ; furnishes arrows which, with unerring aim and resistless power, he sends into the heart. On the other hand, "praying in the Spirit" enables us to "build ourselves up on our most holy faith." "Except the Lord build that house," the holy temple founded on our most holy faith, "they labour in vain that build it." And how is the Lord's help to be secured but by enlightened, believing, fervent prayer, prayer in the Spirit ? "Call on me," says he ; "I will deliver." "He shall call on me ; I will answer him." Thus do these two exercises mutually sustain each other ; and thus are they together subservient to our "keeping ourselves in the love of God."

I thought of concluding the illustration of the subject in this discourse ; but I find I must defer the consideration of "Looking to the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life," till another opportunity.

Has not what I have said been obviously and powerfully calculated to impress on the minds of Christians the importance of prayer, of prayer in the Spirit ? That is a truth we are by no means sufficiently impressed with ; not so impressed with as we are likely, ere long, to be. I believe the dying sentiment of that good man, Suttcliff of Olney, the friend of Andrew Fuller and of Carey, is a very common one with genuine Christians, and strongest in those who, their most intimate friends think, have least ground for it. "I wish I had prayed more." "This," says his illustrious friend, "was one of those weighty sayings which are not unfrequently uttered in view of the solemn realities of eternity. This wish has often recurred to me since his depar-

ture, as equally applicable to myself, and with it the resolution of that holy man, President Edwards, so 'to live as he would wish to have done when he came to die.' In reviewing my own life, *I wish I had prayed more than I have for the success of the Gospel.* I have seen enough to furnish me with matter of thankfulness; but had I prayed more, I might have seen more. *I wish I had prayed more for the salvation of those about me, and who are given me in charge.* When the father of the lunatic doubted whether Jesus could do any thing for him, he was told in answer, that if he could believe, all things were possible. On hearing that he burst into tears, saying, 'Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.' He seems to have understood our Lord as suggesting, that if the child were not healed, it would not be owing to any want of power in Him, but to his own unbelief. This might well cause him to weep and exclaim as he did. The thought of his unbelief causing the death of his child was distressing. The same thought has occurred to me as applicable to the neglect of the prayer of faith. Have I not by this guilty negligence been accessory to the destruction of some that are dear to me? And were I equally concerned for the souls of my connections, as he was for the life of his child, should I not weep with him (and pray with him)? *I wish I had prayed more than I have for my own soul.* I might then have enjoyed much more communion with God. The Gospel affords the same ground for spiritual enjoyment as it did to the first Christians. *I wish I had prayed more than I have in all my undertakings.* I might then have had my steps more directed by God, and attended with fewer deviations from his will. There is no intercourse with God without prayer. It is thus that we walk with God, and have our conversation in heaven."¹ It is thus that we "build ourselves up on our most holy faith;" thus that we "keep ourselves in the love of God."

Let these weighty words have their appropriate influence on our minds, on our hearts, on our conduct. Let Christians beware of "restraining prayer before God." Let them "give themselves to prayer;" let them "watch unto prayer;" let them "continue instant in it;" let them "always pray"—that is, persevere in praying—and "not faint;" let them "pray without

¹ Fuller.

ceasing ;” let them “pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit ;” let them “be careful”—that is, anxious—“about nothing ; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let them make their requests known to God ; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep their hearts and minds by Christ Jesus.” And this is the way to holiness as well as to peace. It is by complying with this exhortation that you will be inclined to comply with that which follows it : “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do ; and the God of grace shall be with you.” This is to “walk so as to please God ;” this is to “be followers of God as dear children ;” this is to “keep ourselves in the love of God.”

Here I would close, could I but persuade myself that there are among my hearers none who do not belong to the class to whom the epistle is addressed, “The sanctified by God the Father, the preserved in Christ Jesus, and called.” But, with the utmost stretch of charity which reason will allow, I cannot indulge so pleasing a thought. There may be, I fear there are, some, it may be not a few, “who are sensual, not having the Spirit ;” “natural men who receive not the things of the Spirit, to whom they are foolishness ;” who are therefore prayerless, who may *say prayers* but who do not, never did, cannot *pray*, “pray in the Spirit.” What shall I say to them ?

I say, all who have the Spirit pity you. Your condition is indeed most pitiful. A body without a soul is a corpse, tending to decomposition, loathsome, dangerous ; and what is a soul without the Spirit ? Spiritually dead, spiritually corrupt, spiritually loathsome, spiritually noxious. They pity you, for they were once like you. They were once “dead in trespasses and sins.” They know the miseries and dangers of your condition. All who have the Spirit pray for you. They know that nothing but Divine power and grace could have quickened them ; that nothing but Divine power and grace can quicken you. Their prayer is, “Come, O come from the four winds ! O breath of the Lord, breathe on these dry bones that they may live !” All who are in the Spirit,

and who pray in the Spirit, would earnestly wish that you *in* the Spirit were praying for the Spirit. But they know that, in your present condition, for you to employ words of prayer, asking for the Spirit, would be mockery and insult. You have no belief in the truth respecting the existence and work of the Holy Spirit. You have no sense of your need of the Holy Spirit. Supposing the existence of such a thing as his regenerating and sanctifying influence to be forced on your conviction, while your hearts remain as they are, the very last thing in the world you would wish for yourselves is, to be their subjects. It is your duty to pray, it is the duty of all men to pray,—to pray in the Spirit, to pray for the Spirit; but while you remain in unbelief, the thing is a moral impossibility. And what you would call prayer is an abomination to the Lord, intended by you as a substitute for what is your duty, your immediate duty; suggested by the enemy of souls as a means of deepening delusion; and detaining you from Him who alone can deliver from guilt, and depravity, and endless ruin.

Your duty, your immediate duty, your interest, your highest interest, is to believe the Gospel. Till you do this you cannot know God as the hearer of prayer. You cannot see his throne as the throne of mercy. Its back is, as it were, turned to you, and there is a cloud on it. And do not say, I can no more believe than I can pray without the Spirit. That is most true; but it is nothing to the purpose as an excuse for your not immediately believing. Do not say, I must wait for the Spirit. The Spirit is waiting for you. How long has he waited for some of you? Beware lest you so grieve him as that he give over waiting, and retire from you for ever. He is now striving with you. O, take care lest the awful word be uttered, ‘My spirit shall strive no longer!’ Then bursts forth the overwhelming deluge, then down comes the thunderbolt. You say you cannot believe. What does that mean, but that you are so stupified with the love of sense and sin, that, in opposition to the plainest statement and evidence, you will not believe the testimony of the God of truth concerning his Son, nor receive the salvation from sin which that testimony believed is ready to convey to you?

There can be no reasonable doubt of your obligation. The statement is plain, the evidence is abundant, the authority is

supreme. It is your duty; your duty now. "If you do not believe, you must die in your sins." And you may die very soon, very suddenly. And as you ought to believe, since to do otherwise is to contradict the principles of your rational nature, as well as to pour contempt at once on the authority and grace of God; as you must believe, if you would not perish, perish for ever; so you *would* most certainly believe if you did not wilfully shut your eyes and stop the cars of your mind. Look at the declaration of God's law and Gospel, his law condemning you, and his Gospel proclaiming free forgiveness, full salvation. It is not in looking away from these things, while professing to be waiting for some operation on the mind, which shall as it were compel you to believe, that you are to be brought to the faith of the Gospel. "Faith comes by hearing," by listening to, by understanding the word. Fix your mind on the truth respecting yourselves and the Saviour. Can you do this without seeing your need of him, his suitableness to you? Can you see this without gladly, gratefully accepting him and his salvation?

Then will you have evidence—you never can have it in any other way—that the Spirit has been savingly working on you, and that he is now in you. Then will you pray, pray in the Spirit; and God will hear your prayers, and give you larger and larger measures of this Spirit; that, "building yourselves up on your most holy faith," you may become every day more holy and happy; that you may "keep yourselves in the love of God," of which, as his regenerated ones, you are the appropriate objects, "looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

SERMON IV.

ON LOOKING FOR THE MERCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST UNTO ETERNAL LIFE.

JUDE 20, 21.—“ But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

THE great duty to which Christians are exhorted in these words is, “ the keeping themselves in the love of God ;” and the means recommended for this purpose are, “ building themselves up on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

In the first of the three discourses which I have addressed to you from this exuberant passage of Scripture, I explained to you “ the Christian’s duty to keep himself in the love of God ;” and, in the second and third, I illustrated the first two of the means recommended for assisting in the performance of this duty, “ the building himself up on his most holy faith, and the praying in the Holy Ghost.” It only remains, to the completion of our exposition, that I turn your attention to the third exercise recommended by the apostle as conducive to the Christian’s keeping himself in the love of God,—“ The looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

This, then, is our theme. ‘ If Christians would keep themselves in the love of God, they must “ look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” ’ All true Christians have experienced the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, his kindness, his free grace, his tender pity, towards them ; from their sin utterly undeserving of, from their misery greatly needing, this mercy. It was in the exercise of this special mercy, that the Only-begotten of God from eternity undertook their cause ; in the fulness of time appeared in their nature, charged with its responsibilities, though unstained by its sinfulness ; and having, by his obedience unto death, fully satisfied the demands of the

Divine law on their behalf, assumed that unlimited sovereignty assigned him by his Father, the righteous Judge, as the reward of his having, at such a cost of generous labour and suffering, reconciled the exercise of mercy with the claims of justice; in the exercise of which, under the influence of his unchanging, unchangeable mercy, he will put them all in possession of complete unending happiness, giving eternal life to all whom the Father has given him. Every one of them who has been brought out of his natural state of condemnation, into a state of judicial forgiveness and paternal favour; every one of them who has been delivered from the reigning power of that depravity, which is, and must be, the object of the Divine abhorrence, and formed to that character of true holiness, which is, and must be, the object of the Divine complacency, owes this to "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is Christ who, in his mercy, sends forth his Spirit, to produce that faith in the sinner by which he is "interested in the justifying efficacy of his atoning sacrifice, and becomes the proper subject of the sanctifying and comforting influence of the truth as it is in him." All true Christians have thus obtained "the mercy of the Lord Jesus;" they have had a satisfactory manifestation of his mercy, his distinguishing mercy, to them; they have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." From that mercy they have received much; but from that mercy they are warranted, encouraged, commanded, to expect more. It is to the duty of the Christian, in cherishing these expectations of farther manifestations of the mercy of the Lord Jesus, and to the influence which the discharge of this duty is calculated to have on "our keeping ourselves in the love of God," that our attention must be turned in the remaining part of the discourse.

The general statement of the apostle is, that Christians should "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." This is equivalent to a statement that Christians, having experienced the mercy, the free grace, the tender compassion, of the Lord Jesus Christ, having "tasted that their Lord is gracious," should cherish an humble, confident expectation, that they shall receive from him continued manifestations of his mercy, in the communication of blessings suited to their circumstances; all of them introductory to, preparatory for, that final state of absolute perfection in holiness and happiness which is termed "eternal life," to which He is ultimately to bring them, and in which his

infinite mercy will be as fully expressed towards them as their limited natures admit. All this is obviously included in these pregnant words,—“Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

We must endeavour to break down this magnificent thought into its component parts, that we may the more distinctly perceive its meaning and feel its power :—I. (1.) Christians should look for eternal life ; (2.) They should look for it as the result of mercy ; (3.) Of the mercy of the Lord Jesus. II. And till they obtain this “eternal life,” “the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory,” they should look to that same mercy, which is thus to crown at last, for all that is necessary for them till the period of bestowing on them eternal life arrives, for all that is necessary to preserve them to, and prepare them for, its enjoyment. Such is the hope and expectation which the Christian, in the passage, is enjoined to cherish. After a few remarks, illustrative of the objects and grounds of this hope, I shall shut up my illustrations of the passage, by showing how the holding fast the confidence and rejoicing of this hope is fitted to be subservient in enabling Christians to comply with the leading injunction in the text,—“Keep yourselves in the love of God.”

Our first remark, then, is, Christians should look for “eternal life.” Life, eternal life, is not unfrequently used in Scripture to denote that state of spiritual being into which men enter, when they believe the Gospel, in contrast with the state in which they are by nature. As when our Lord says, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him who sent me, hath everlasting life,” “is passed from death to life.” “Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life ;” “I give unto my sheep eternal life.” “God,” says the apostle John, “hath given to us eternal life.” Eternal life is, in these passages, spoken of as something which the Christian already possesses, something that belongs to him as a Christian, something received in believing.

The term is, however, also often employed to denote that state into which the Christian is to enter after the general judgment. After the final sentence has been pronounced, the righteous are said to go into “life eternal.” They who have made sacrifices for Christ, are said to be recompensed in various ways “in this time ;” but, “in the world to come,” they are to receive “eternal life.” And, when God “renders to every man according to his

works," it is said that "then" He will render "eternal life" "to them who, by a constant continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality." There can be no doubt, that it is in the last of these references that the phrase is employed in the passage before us; and that it is descriptive of the last and most perfect state of the saved; of what the apostle Peter calls, "the salvation laid up in heaven," "the grace to be brought to Christians at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ."

We have thus fixed the reference of the expression. But what is its meaning? What is the truth about that state which is meant to be placed before the mind, when it is called "Life, eternal life"? It has been common to say, that death is figuratively used for misery, and that eternal death is just equivalent to eternal misery; that life is figuratively used for happiness, and that eternal life is just equivalent to eternal happiness. But this is not satisfactory. A state of eternal death is a state of eternal misery, and a state of eternal life is a state of eternal happiness; but the one is a state of misery because it is a state of death, the other is a state of happiness because it is a state of life. The question is, what is that death, what is that life, the perfection and perpetuity of which constitute absolute misery or absolute happiness?

The most general notion we can form of life, is the capacity of action and enjoyment. The more any being is capable of action and enjoyment suited to its nature, the more life has it. God is the Living One; that is the leading idea when He is said to be "a Spirit;" He is "the Eternal Life," eternally possessed of infinite capacities of action and enjoyment. Man was originally created "in the image of God," as a living being "a spirit," capable of action, capable of enjoyment. Man's peculiar nature is constituted by a union of the material and the immaterial. His body is a piece of organised matter, which is animated by an immaterial principle, possessed of various capacities or faculties of action and enjoyment,—some of them possessed in common with the lower animals; others of them, though still referring merely to "things seen and temporal," of a kind greatly superior to the endowments of mere animals; and some of them of a higher kind still, connecting him with the invisible and the infinite, with God and eternity.

In man's nature, as it came from the hand of God, the higher

principles of his life possessed the control of the lower; the animal and the merely rational being subordinated to the spiritual. To adopt the apostle's arrangement of the constituents of human nature, "the soul" animated and ruled "the body;" "the spirit," that which connected him with God, animated and ruled "the soul."

The functions of life, with regard to the highest faculties of man's nature, were activities and enjoyments having God for their immediate object; with regard to the intermediate faculties, activities and enjoyments of intellect and affection, having for their object the things which God has made; with regard to the lower faculties, activities and enjoyments of an animal kind, of which the material portion of man was the instrument. Every one of these classes of capacities or species of life, had its own appropriate activities and enjoyments; and in the full harmonious exercise of these faculties on their appropriate objects, man would have manifested his complex life, and found his appropriate happiness; and, while this continued, life and happiness would have continued; and it would seem, from the capacity of improvement which belongs to human nature in almost all its faculties, would have constantly increased.

Man sinned; and by sin death came into the world, and passed on all men. The death of man is twofold, referring to him both as a rational animal and as a spiritual being. The immediate principle of animal life is the soul, and the withdrawal of it from the body is natural death. Innocent man was immortal; man the sinner is mortal. His animal frame is liable to disease, and pain, and decay, in an endless variety of forms; and, after a few short years, a dissolution of the connection between soul and body takes place, and the material portion of man, by a process peculiarly revolting to the imagination, is resolved into its elements,—the dust returning to the dust, as it was. Man, as an animal, becomes thus utterly incapable of activity or enjoyment; and this state, but for the restorative dispensation, it would seem must have been perpetual.

The principle of spiritual life is the Spirit of God influencing the higher powers of our immortal nature, and producing activities and enjoyments of which God is the object. The innocent spirit of man, though an humble habitation for the Divine Spirit, was yet not an unsuitable one; and he was not disposed to be

“as a stranger, tarrying only for a night.” But man, under the influence of the evil spirit, wickedly, madly, basely, expelled the heavenly visitant ; and he withdrew, as it became his insulted majesty and kindness. Man was now spiritually dead. The rational spirit, having withdrawn itself from the source of spiritual life, became spiritually lifeless, dead while it lived. Separated from Him who is “the life,” its faculties, now influenced and regulated by the propensities and appetites of the animal frame ; by the world, that is, things seen and temporal, animate and inanimate ; and by the god of the world and his subordinate agents, —however active otherwise, were powerless as to spiritual good ; and its sensibilities, however acute otherwise, callous as to spiritual enjoyment.¹ A spiritual and moral decomposition, more revolting than that putrefaction which is the result of natural death, takes place ; and as the soul, from its nature, is immortal, it retires farther and farther from God, and sinks deeper and deeper in delusion and error, and depravity and wretchedness, for ever. In the absence of the Divine Spirit, there may be—there is—a species of bestial life, a species of diabolical life, a life like that of the lower animals, a life like that of the fallen angels ; but the Divine life, the life of God, is not—cannot be—there. This is the death of the soul, this is spiritual death ; and, but for the restorative dispensation, this too must, in the case of every human being, have been everlasting.

The state of double death into which sin has thus brought man, must to every created intelligence, on being put in possession of the facts, appear hopeless. The ruin of the body and of the soul would seem equally irretrievable. But the Living One can not only give but restore life. He can not only “call the things that be not as if they were,” He can also “raise the dead.”

In the case of man, however, this cannot be done by a mere act of omnipotence. Death in both its forms is a penal evil. It takes place in accordance with the principles of God’s righteous

¹ “If reason be swallowed down into the animal life, it ceases not to operate there ; but all her operations there are tinctured with that life in which she is immersed : so that she will be active either in crafty contrivances for the getting of wealth, or in merry wiles for the enjoyment of pleasure, or else be plotting designs to satisfy ambition, or at least be perpetually taken up for the getting of a necessary livelihood. Nor doth she contain herself within the bounds of mere dry action, but according to the genius of the party discovers herself in the power of speech and eloquence.”—DR HENRY MORE.

moral government, which are just the expression of the perfections of his holy moral nature; and man cannot be restored to life till justice is satisfied, and law magnified, by a display of the evil of sin, fully equivalent, in the way of answering all the purposes of God's holy moral government, to the permanent infliction of the penalty of death on those who have deserved it.

Created intelligence could never have discovered what could accomplish this object, nor could created power have carried it into effect. This has, however, been realised in the incarnation and atonement of the Only-begotten of God, who has "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," dying "the just in the room of the unjust," and "by thus dying has destroyed death." This was a sacrifice "so rich and fragrant, so full of value and grateful savour, as that by it abundant recompense was made for the wrong man had done to the Majesty of heaven; an injury to which the creation consuming would have been a disproportionate sacrifice; but the sacrifice of himself, the Immanuel God-man, was both suitable and adequate to the exigency of the case, being the sacrifice of him who was man, therefore suitable to the offence of man; being the sacrifice of him who was God, and therefore equal to the wrong done to God."¹ A deep and broad foundation was thus laid for the restoration of life to man. And all who in the appointed way, the faith of the truth, are interested in this great atonement, obtain deliverance from their double death, and are put in possession, in the appointed order, of the two species of life which they had forfeited.

In the case of all the saved, the Holy Spirit, sent in consequence of the atonement made by the Saviour, by an agency on the mind which we cannot understand, but which for potency the apostle Paul compares to the energy by which Christ was raised from the dead, quickens the dead soul, producing faith in it—that is, leading it to understand and believe the truth respecting the Divine character—unites it to the Saviour, "creates it anew in him" in "the image of God," makes it "a new creature," brings it into a new creation, communicates a new life which admits of indefinite increase, and which, though liable to partial decay, is not only incapable of extinction, but secured of an endless, ever-expanding development in spiritual activities and spirit-

¹ Howe.

ual enjoyments. When men, under Divine influence, believe, "they pass from death to life;" and in reference to this life it is said "they shall never die." The source of that life is in them a well of living water springing up unto everlasting life. Living in the Spirit, they walk in the Spirit; they through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body; they have joy in the Holy Ghost; they have an inner life, whose appropriate enjoyments are independent of things seen and temporal; and, while their outward man decays, their inward man is strengthened day by day.

The law of mortality is not repealed in reference to these favoured ones. The life of God, in them, is incapable of death; but the life which directly animates their material frames is a mortal life. All of them must die, and see corruption. But when "the end cometh," "the last enemy," physical death, "shall be destroyed." The bodies of the saved shall be raised powerful, glorious, incorruptible, and immortal; and these living bodies shall become the meet habitations of their living spirits. Thus, delivered from death in every form and degree, the nations of the saved shall "reign in life *by* Christ Jesus," *with* Christ Jesus for ever and ever.

This is the account which the apostle gives of those to whom "there is no condemnation, being in Christ Jesus" who is "set forth a propitiation in his blood;" those who, on the ground of that propitiation, are "made free, by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, from the law of sin and death." With regard to them, Christ is in them, and they are in Christ; "their body is dead," it is mortal, it must die, "because of sin," the first sin of the first man; "but the spirit is life," the soul is quickened, made capable of spiritual activity and spiritual enjoyment, it is made truly holy and happy in God; and "He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also" at the appointed time, in the due order, "quicken their mortal bodies by," or rather because of, "his Spirit dwelling in them." The bodies, which are the purchase of the Saviour's blood, and the place of the Spirit's abode in the souls which dwell in them, shall, according to their nature, be put in possession of the life, in which, in reference to the saved, "mortality is to be swallowed up."

With regard to those who are not interested in the Christian salvation, "dead in trespasses and sins," they never see life; their souls become as it were twice dead; and, though their bodies

are to be raised up, it is not to the resurrection of life, but to the resurrection of condemnation, to be "cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death."

"The eternal life," spoken of in the passage under consideration, plainly denotes the state which is to be the ultimate state of the saints; a state in which no change but that of indefinite regular progression shall take place for ever. It brings it before our minds as a state in which there is no death, no feebleness, no decay, no termination; a state of unmixed life, where all the powers and capacities which belong to human nature, all the powers that can be possessed by such embodied spirits, all the powers of intellect, and affection, and action, and enjoyment, shall be possessed and exerted in the best possible manner; a state of perfect, holy happiness, in entire conformity to the character and will of Him who liveth for ever and ever, the Holy, Holy, Holy One, the ever-blessed God; a thinking along with Him, choosing along with Him, willing along with Him, acting along with Him, being like Him; a partaking of his holiness, his happiness, his life; a being holy as He is holy, happy as He is happy, full of life as He is full of life. And it brings this state before the mind also as one that shall continue for ever; when God dies they may die, but not till then. This, then, is the ultimate object of the Christian's hope.

For this he is to "look." "Looking for eternal life," is an expression which naturally suggests three ideas. Counting it certain, habitually thinking of it, earnestly desiring it.

The Christian should look for eternal life as something that really exists. He should reckon the existence of such a state absolutely certain. The world thinks of such a state as an airy dream. But the Christian ought to regard, and, so far as he acts in character, he does regard that future state as certain as, and far more real than, the state of things which at present exists. His faith is "confidence in reference to things hoped for, conviction with regard to things not seen." It is indeed strange that such a state should remain for men who are spiritually dead, and who must all submit to natural death; but it is the most reasonable of all things to believe it, for the living God, "God who cannot lie," has promised it. Nothing in the scriptural revelation is more frequently and more clearly stated, than the existence of such a state. It is, and it ought to be, one of

“the things most surely believed” among Christians; and, as all doubts in reference to it are most unreasonable, so are they fitted to be injurious to the Christian’s best interests.

But the Christian is to look for eternal life, not only as certain in itself, but as certain to him. He is to look for it as something which he is himself to enjoy. The promise of eternal life to the believer is just as certain as the revelation that there will be eternal life. Can any words be plainer than the words of our Lord, “I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” The Christian man, who is giving all diligence to “make his calling and election sure, by,” under the influence of the faith of the Gospel, “adding to his faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity,” cannot too confidently reckon on “an abundant entrance being ministered to him into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” It is only, however, in the faith of the truth, and yielding to its sanctifying influence, that such confidence can be legitimately or safely maintained. Every sinful feeling and action is calculated to shake this confidence; for it is a proof that the ground on which it alone can safely rest, “our most holy faith,” the testimony of God, is out of the mind’s view. It is in “a constant continuance in well-doing,” produced by habitual faith, that the Christian is to look for that “eternal life” which is “the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The Christian is not only to count eternal life a thing absolutely certain, certain to him, but he is to make it the subject of habitual earnest consideration. He must “mind the things which are above, where Christ sits at God’s right hand.” If his faith is enlightened and firm as to eternal life, it must occupy many of his thoughts. It is impossible for a man to hope for a thing, but he will be thinking of it. There is no looking *for* the things unseen and eternal, without looking *at* them.

And still farther, this looking for eternal life implies earnest desires for it. The soul, living by the new life communicated by the Spirit, is “burdened,” both with a “mortal body” and “a body of sin and death,” with which it is closely connected; and, though naturally shrinking from dissolution, is more than

“willing to be unclothed.” Knowing that, till the mortal body is put off, the body of sin will not be got rid of, and that death is the way to eternal life in both of its constituent parts, perfect spiritual life and perfect natural life, the language of his heart is, “O, when shall I come and appear before God!” With Him is “the fountain of life.” When shall I escape from this “congregation of the dead,” at best of the “half quickened”? When shall “that which is perfect come, and that which is in part be done away?” When shall I be “like God, seeing Him as He is”? When shall “this mortal put on immortality”? When “shall death be swallowed up of life”?

While the Christian is thus to look for eternal life, he is to look for it as the result of *mercy*. “By grace are we saved,” “Eternal life is,” not the wages of merit, but “the gift” of mercy. “Death is the wages of sin, but eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Christian knows he deserves hell, and that he never can deserve anything else, but he trusts to mercy, sovereign mercy, for eternal life; and he does not trust the less confidently on this account, for he knows that God is rich in mercy, that he takes pleasure in those who trust in his mercy, and that He has said, “Mercy shall be built up for ever.” This is his first hope, this is his last hope. “You are going to receive your reward,” said one to a very good man, full of good works, on his death-bed; “I am going,” said he in reply, “to find mercy.”

And the Christian not only looks on his receiving eternal life as the result of mercy generally, but as the result of “the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He knows that with Christ he has directly to do, and with God only in him, through him. The Father has given his chosen to the Son, and has given *him* all power in heaven and in earth, that he may give eternal life to *them*. His love, his mercy, had, at an infinite expense of labour and suffering, opened the way, which sin had shut up, to this eternal life appointed for them before the foundation of the world; and therefore they may well trust him for doing what must be so congenial to his generous, compassionate heart, the bringing them into the full enjoyment of this eternal life;—the putting them in possession of “the salvation that is in him with eternal glory.”

But the Christian is not only to look for eternal life as the

grand ultimate result of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ ; he is to look to the same mercy for all the blessings that are needful previous to, and preparatory for, the full enjoyment of "eternal life." This idea, as well as the former, is obviously included in the words, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." The Christian is not to receive "eternal life," in the full extent of meaning belonging to these words, till the coming of our Lord Jesus. But he is not to wait till then for manifestations of "the mercy of the Lord Jesus." He has already tasted that he is gracious, and he is to expect from the same exuberant fountain every needful blessing till he receives the crown of eternal life. He has obtained "spiritual life;" but, without the constant exercise of the mercy of the Lord Jesus, that life would soon be extinguished. The murderer from the beginning would deprive him of life as he did his primogenitor ; the pestilential elements of this evil world, and the infection of the disease which is consuming its inhabitants, would destroy it ; nay, such is the madness that is in him, "that is, in his flesh," that, left to himself, he would commit spiritual suicide. But he must trust in the mercy of the Lord Jesus, and believe in his gracious declarations, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." "I have overcome the world;" "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." "Satan shall be bruised under your feet shortly." When difficulties appear insurmountable, when duties seem impracticable, when sufferings seem insupportable, he must trust in Him who says, "My grace is sufficient for thee : my strength shall be perfected in weakness." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "Fear not, I am with thee." "I will never leave thee ; I will never forsake thee." He must trust that He will "deliver him from every evil work, and preserve him blameless to his kingdom and glory."

And when "the mortal body must die because of sin," still he must "look to the mercy of the Lord Jesus." He must in his last moments commit his parting spirit into the hands of HIM who has redeemed it, and consign his body to the grave, in the full assurance that the mercy of the Lord Jesus will in due time bring it up again, knowing whom he has believed, and persuaded that he will keep that which he has committed to him against that day. He must die, trusting that the Saviour will give his

soul a hearty welcome to the resting-place of the just, and "looking for the Lord Jesus from heaven to change his vile body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body." He must, in a word, "look for the mercy of the Lord Jesus," manifesting itself in his coming "the second time without sin to his salvation," bringing his happy spirit with him, re-establishing its union with its raised, powerful, glorious, spiritual body, acknowledging him as his in the presence of an assembled universe; and solemnly in the exercise of mercy "reigning through righteousness," adjudging him to the full possession of life in all the holy activities and enjoyments of which perfected humanity is capable. The mercy of Christ has now consummated the happiness of its object; and it only remains to trust that the mercy which has made that happiness complete will make it permanent, that perfect life shall be eternal life. Such is the Christian's duty, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

In conclusion, let us now, in a few sentences, show how this hope in Christ, this looking for his mercy unto eternal life, is calculated to be subservient to "our keeping ourselves in the love of God." The honour that is done to our Lord Jesus, when we entirely confide in his power, and wisdom, and faithfulness, and kindness, when we "look for," expect, "his mercy unto eternal life," is and must be well-pleasing to his Father, who is well pleased in him, intrusts him with all that concerns his glory, and delights to honour him; and whose declared will it is, that all should honour the Son as they honour himself. Nothing displeases the Father more than dishonour done to the Son. Nothing is more fitted to keep us in his love than showing our confidence in "his servant whom he upholds, his elect in whom his soul delights."

The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ is, indeed, the mercy of God; for "God is in Christ Jesus." Distrust in his mercy is peculiarly dishonouring and displeasing to God. "The fearful and unbelieving" are among the objects of his special disapprobation; while, on the other hand, "the eye of the Lord is on," that is, rests complacently on, "them that fear Him, or those that hope in his mercy." The more generous any being is, the more does he delight in being trusted, and the more does he love those who trust in him.

Confidence in the mercy of Jesus Christ, as securing to us every necessary blessing, excites gratitude, which naturally expresses itself in that obedience which is necessary to our keeping ourselves in the love of God. It arms too against temptation to act in a way which would prevent us from keeping ourselves in the love of God. What can the world promise better than what the mercy of the Lord Jesus will bestow? What can the world threaten against which the mercy of the Lord Jesus cannot defend? "Hope" is "the helmet of salvation."

Finally, when we consider the nature of the ultimate blessing which the Christian is looking for from the mercy of our Lord Jesus, we will see that this exercise has a direct and powerful tendency to enable us to keep ourselves in the love of God, by cultivating universal holiness. For what is that eternal life which we look for, but just perfect happiness in perfect holiness? If that be the great object of our hope, contemplation, and desire, present holiness of heart and life must be the result. What says the apostle John? "Now are we the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him." The life we shall participate with him is eternal life; "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;" perfectly, experimentally know him; and "to know him is eternal life." Now, mark what follows: "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." Every one who "looks for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life," will, just in the degree in which he does so, "keep himself in the love of God;" for "looking for this blessed hope" deepens the lesson taught by "the grace of God," "the mercy of the Lord Jesus," to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world." Having the promise of eternal life, understanding and believing it, we cannot but "cleans[e] ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God;" thus "doing what is well pleasing in his sight," and "keeping ourselves in his love." "I hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ," is one of the means prescribed by the apostle Peter for enabling us, "not to fashion ourselves according to our former lusts in our ignorance, but to be holy as he who has called us is holy, holy in all manner of conversation." And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews

calls on Christians to "give all diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end, that they may not be slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises."

Thus have I completed the plan laid before you, when we entered on the consideration of this subject. The discourses have all of them been, from the nature of the subject, practical, and much exhortation has been mingled with the exposition. Formal application is therefore felt to be unnecessary. I conclude with the prayer, that all "the sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus, and called among us," may have their "pure minds stirred up by these remembrances," and be enabled to "keep themselves in the love of God."

But how can I close without saying something to those, some of whom, I doubt not, are in this audience, who, if they were aware of their true state, could not help seeing, that not only in the vista of their futurity is there the spectre death, sometimes seeming to approach, then to recede, but always keeping the middle of the path, so that there is no passing him; but that beyond him in the distance, closing the prospect, is an object more terrific still, — not eternal life, but everlasting destruction; and who have nothing to look to, for anything good, in the mean time, but the patience, the long-suffering of God, which they have madly presumed on, fearfully insulted, which will not continue for ever—which even now may be all but exhausted?

And what shall I say to you who are in these circumstances? Continuing in impenitence and sin, I can bid you hope for no good. I can promise you no blessing. I bid you fear, and tell you, you cannot fear the worst; the evil to be feared is worse than your most fearful apprehensions of it. But why should you continue impenitent and unbelieving? There is mercy, mercy for you, if you will but receive it in the only way God can bestow it or you enjoy it, through the mediation of his Son, in the faith of the truth.

The King of Israel is a merciful King; merciful even to the rebellious. He has received gifts for such, and he is ready to bestow them. He still "receiveth sinners." Come to him, believing the testimony of the Father respecting his grace. Cast yourself on his mercy. He is "rich in mercy." He "waiteth to be gracious." Jesus is now passing by. He is very near you,

in the word of the truth of the Gospel which we preach. Oh ! if you but knew the truth about yourself and him, you could not help crying like the poor blind man, in earnest desire and humble hope, "Jesus, Son of David, Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me;" and, though men should attempt to make you hold your peace, you would, like him, but cry so much the more "Jesus, Son of David, Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me." And do you think he would lend a deaf ear to such a cry? Oh, no; "Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Full of compassion, He would say, "Be it to thee according to thy faith. Thou hast found mercy. Go in peace;" and henceforth, amid all the trials, and struggles, and sorrows of life, "Look for my mercy unto eternal life."

Oh ! how happy, how secure, is he who has thus found mercy of the Lord ! Hear the Divine declaration. "The mountains may depart, the hills may be removed," the earth may be burned up, and the heavens depart as a scroll when it is rolled together; "but my loving-kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord God, who hath mercy on thee."

Remain despisers of his mercy, and what must be the consequence? The death of the body finding you in this state—and how soon, how suddenly, may it lay hold on you!—will convey you into a region where the death of the soul becomes fixed, immutable, eternal; a state in which there is no mercy to those who, in the time of their visitation, despised and abused mercy, but where justice has free course and is glorified; a state in which "He who made you can have no mercy on you, and He that formed you can show you no favour" for ever. Life and death are before you; make your choice, make it now. Is there room for halting between two opinions here?

Think not of obtaining salvation in any way but through "the mercy of our Lord Jesus." You never can have it from the Divine justice; mere justice can never award you any thing but condemnation and punishment, for you deserve these and never can deserve any thing else. Think not of obtaining it even from the Divine mercy, apart from our Lord Jesus Christ. That mercy is indeed infinite, but it cannot be displayed but in consistency with justice; and it can, in consistency with justice, find its way to you only through the channel of Christ's atone-

ment. It is “in Christ that God is reconciling the world to himself.” All that the mercy of God can do for sinful men, all that his omnipotent love can bestow on them, is done and offered “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Life, hope, happiness, are here, here only, to be found. He that believes the testimony of God hath the Son. “He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son shall never see life;” “HE abideth *in* death,” and “the wrath of God abideth *on* HIM” for ever.

THE END.

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