

# SERMONS,

BY THE LATE  
REV. JOHN LOGAN, F. R. S. EDINBURGH,  
ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF LEITH.

INCLUDING A  
COMPLETE DETAIL OF THE SERVICE  
OF A  
COMMUNION SUNDAY,

ACCORDING TO  
THE USAGE OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,  
A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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VOL. II.

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## TO THE PUBLIC.

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**T**HE very favourable reception which the First Volume of MR LOGAN's Sermons has met with, has induced to the Publication of a Second ; and the same allowances will be made, as in the former case, for a Posthumous Work.

Some of the Sermons are incomplete ; owing partly to their having been left in that state by the Author, and partly to the Manuscript being lost. Their places could have been supplied by others in a more perfect form ; but, as this is proposed to be the concluding Volume, it was judged better to make it up from a selection of the whole remaining Pieces of the deceased Writer.



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## LECTURE I.

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[A *Lecture* is a stated part in the MORNING SERVICE of the Church of Scotland, and follows immediately after the first prayer. The Minister reads some passage of Scripture, consisting, for the most part, of a considerable number of verses : these he successively explains, and, where necessary, illustrates them, not only from the context, but both from sacred and profane history. Besides making observations upon each verse, he generally, upon concluding, draws moral inferences from the whole.]

It is obvious, that the practice of *Lecturing* must, on those accounts, not only give scope to the learning of the preacher, and to his talent for bringing many particulars into one or a few points of view ; but must tend, at the same time to make the people more acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures, and to derive, from the experience of past times, very useful instructions with regard to life.]

### PSALM I.

1. *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

2. *But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*

3. *And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.*

4. *The ungodly are not so : but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*

5. *Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*

6. *For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous : but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

CHRISTIANS and Brethren ! The most critical period of human life is when we set out into the world. Frequently the first step is decisive. The

young adventurer, set free from the authority of parents and of guardians, becomes his own master, and follows his own inclination. It is then that he begins to form his character; and the character that is then formed generally lasts through life. Mankind for the most part continue in the same path in which they set out. The passions of youth may resign to the passions of age, and one set of vices or of virtues give place to those of a similar kind; but seldom does the formed character undergo an essential change. Our first steps ought therefore to be ordered with the greatest care and deliberation, as upon them, in a great measure, depends not only our present, but also our eternal happiness.

It was with a design to direct us in this important period, that the Psalm before us was written: in which the practice of righteousness is recommended, not only from the advantages attending it in this life, and in that which is to come, but likewise from the pernicious tendency of sin to embitter our earthly enjoyments, and to render us unqualified for inheriting the joys of heaven. The gradual deviation of a sinner from the onward path of virtue, till he is inextricably bewildered in the insidious mazes and winding ways of iniquity, are here most beautifully described.

The first step in reality, though it be the second in the description, is, *He standeth in the way of sinners*. Frequenting the company of the wicked is a certain introduction to a life of wickedness. Mankind are oftener led astray by the company of the profligate than their own depraved inclinations. This unhappy bias to associate with the profane arises from two causes, which operate powerfully on the minds of inexperienced youth. The first is that rigorousness and austerity which some gloomy-minded Christians attach to their religion. There are many persons of such an unhappy constitution, as to indulge themselves in perpetual moroseness and melancholy. Those sons of sorrow turn every house into a house



of mourning, and behave in life as if it were one of their principles, that mirth was made for reprobates, and cheerfulness of heart denied to all those who have the best title to be cheerful. My brethren, there is no connection; God and nature have established no connection between sanctity of character and severity of manners. To rejoice evermore, is not only the privilege, but is also the duty of a Christian. A cheerful temper is a perpetual hymn to the Divinity. A gloomy cast of mind is not only a certain source of misery and discontent; but is really in itself sinful, by deterring others from a holy life, by representing religion in an unfavourable and forbidding light, as if it conjured up a spirit to darken the face of the heavens and the earth, to trouble the peace and the harmony of nature, and to banish gladness from the circle of human society. Very opposite is the conduct of the votaries of vice. To betray unwary innocence into their snares, they put on the mask of mirth; they counterfeit gladness amidst the horrors of guilt, and borrow the accents of pleasure, and the air of joy. "Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds," say they; "let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered, let no flower of the spring pass away, let us devote the present moments to joy, and give thought and care to the winds." By their flattery and fair speeches, too often are the innocent ensnared. They mark the fair attire, and the smiles upon the cheek of the deceiver, Sensual pleasure; but they discern not, till too late, the pains, the diseases, and the destruction that follow in her train. They discern not that her steps lead down to the grave, and that her bower is an antichamber to hell.

There is a second cause which has often been known to make men associate with the profane, and that is, an opinion that wickedness, particularly some kinds of it, are manly and becoming; that dissoluteness, infidelity, and blasphemy, are indications of a sprightly and a strong mind. By the most unhappy of all associations, they join together the ideas of

religion and dullness ; and if they have a good opinion of a man's faith and his morals, they are led to have a very bad one of his understanding. This opinion, although it has gained ground where it might not have been expected, is without foundation in nature or in fact. Some instances there may have been of great men who have been irregular ; but the experience of ages is on the other side. Those who have shone in all ages as the lights of the world ; the most celebrated names that are recorded in the annals of fame ; legislators, the founders of states, and the fathers of their country, on whom succeeding ages have looked back with filial reverence ; patriots, the guardians of the laws, who have stemmed the torrent of corruption in every age ; heroes, the saviours of their country, who have returned victorious from the field of battle, or more than victorious, who have died for their country ; philosophers, who have opened the book of nature, and explained the wonders of almighty power ; bards, who have sung the praises of virtue and of virtuous men, whose strains carry them down to immortality ; with a few exceptions, have been uniformly on the side of goodness, and have been as distinguished in the temple of virtue as they were illustrious in the temple of fame. It was one of the maxims which governed their lives, that there is nothing in nature which can compensate wickedness ; that although the rewards and punishments, which influence illiberal and ungenerous minds, were set aside ; that although the thunders of the Almighty were hushed, and the gates of paradise were open no more, they would follow religion and virtue for their own sake, and co-operate with eternal Providence in perpetual endeavours to favour the good, to depress the bad, and to promote the happiness of the whole creation.

The second stage in the perversion of a sinner is *walking after the counsel of the ungodly*. It is a maxim established by the sad experience of ages, that evil communication corrupts good manners. The

power of nature and of conscience, and the influence of a religious education, may, for a while, withstand the shock, but these gradually will be overpowered, and yield to the impetuosity of the torrent. Hence follow the painful struggles between reason and the senses, between conscience and inclination, which constitute a state of the utmost misery and torment. Such persons, when they are carousing in the gay circle of their acquaintance, when the blood is warm, and the spirits high, will then go all lengths with their fellow-debauchees, and give a loose to every wanton and every wicked desire. But when the fumes of intoxication have forsaken the aching head; when the calm forenoon hour of reflection comes, then conscience, faithful to its trust, summons them to her awful bar, fills them with confusion and remorse, and condemns them to the severest of all tortures, to be extended on the rack of reflection, to lie upon the torture of the mind. This is a state in which great part of mankind live and die. They have as much corruption as to lead them to the commission of new sins, and as much religion as to awaken in them remorse for these sins. They repent of their old vicious pleasures, and at the same time are laying plans for new ones, and make their lives one continued course of sinning and repenting, of transgression and remorse.

The third and last stage of impiety is *sitting in the chair of the scorner*, or laughing at all religion and virtue. This is a pitch of diabolical attainment, to which few arrive. It requires a double portion of the infernal spirit, and a long experience in the mystery of iniquity, to become callous to every sense of religion, of virtue, and of honour; to throw off the authority of nature, of conscience, and of God; to overleap the barrier of laws divine and human; and to endeavour to wrest the bolt from the red right-hand of the Omnipotent. Difficult as the achievement is, we see it sometimes effected. We have seen persons who have gloried in their shame, and boasted

of being vicious for the sake of vice. Such characters are monsters in the moral world. Figure to yourselves, my brethren, the anguish, the horror, the misery, the damnation; such a person must endure, who must consider himself in a state of enmity with heaven and with earth; who has no pleasant reflections from the past, no peace in the present, no hopes from the future; who must consider himself as a solitary being in the world; who has no friends without to pour balm in the cup of bitterness he is doomed to drink; who has no friend above to comfort him; when there is none to help; and who has nought within him to compensate for that irreparable and irredeemable loss. Such a person is as miserable as he is wicked. He is insensible to every emotion of friendship; he is lost to all sense of honour; he is seared to every feeling of virtue.

In the class of those who sit in the chair of the scorner, we may include the whole race of infidels, who misemploy the engines of reason or of ridicule to overthrow the Christian religion. Were the dispute concerning a system of speculative opinions, which of themselves were of no importance to the happiness of mankind; it would be uncharitable to include them all under this censure. But on the Christian religion; not only the happiness but the virtue of mankind depends. It is an undoubted fact, that religion is the strongest principle of virtue with all men, and with nine tenths of mankind is the only principle of virtue. Any attempt therefore to destroy it, must be considered as an attempt against the happiness and against the virtue of the human kind. If the heathen philosophers did not attempt to subvert the false religion of their country, but, on the contrary, gave it the sanction of their example, because, bad as it was, it had considerable influence on the manners of the people, and was better than no religion at all, what shame, what contempt, what infamy ought they to incur, who endeavour to overthrow a religion which contains the noblest ideas of the Deity, and the pur-

est system of morals, that ever were taught upon earth? He is a traitor to his country; he is a traitor to the human kind; he is a traitor to Heaven, who abuses the talents that God has given him, in impious attempts to wage war against Heaven, and to undermine that system of religion, which, of all things, is the best adapted to promote the happiness and the perfection of the human kind. Blessed then is the man who hath not brought himself into this sinful and miserable state, who hath held fast his innocence and integrity in the midst of a degenerate world; or if, in some unguarded hour, he hath been betrayed into an imprudent step, or overtaken in a fault, hath made ample amends for his folly by a life of penitence and of piety.

VERSE 2. *His delight is in the law of the Lord.* He makes religion and virtue the grand business of his life, and his business becomes his delight. He does not take it up occasionally, and by fits and starts; it is his employment *day and night*. In the morning he riseth with the sun, and joins with the choir of angels and archangels in celebrating the great Creator. He looks around him with a pious pleasure on the living landscape which the hand of the Almighty hath drawn for his delight, and he adores that benevolent power who makes all nature beauty to his eye, and music to his ear; but he has a fairer prospect within, than nature can furnish without, and the still small voice of conscience whispers peace to his heart in sweeter strains than all the music of the morning, which hails him on every side. With a cheerful and a grateful heart, he contemplates the wonders of creating bounty, he recollects the instances of preserving goodness, and he traces the annals of redeeming love. He looks through the veil of created things, and raises his thoughts from this world to that state of happiness and immortality which is reserved for the spirits of just men made perfect. His religion does not consist in contemplation alone. He goeth about doing good. He instructs the ignorant in the light that

leads to heaven : he pours the balm of consolation into the wounded mind ; and he wipes the tears from the cheeks of the distressed. He distinguishes every day with some good, some memorable deed ; and he retires to rest with that inward, serene, and heart-felt joy, that sober certainty of bliss, which is only to be found in a life of holiness and of piety.

VERSE 3. *And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper.* A tree planted by the rivers of water, is a beautiful object in all nations ; but to the Jews, who lived in a hot country, and were scorched with the heat of the sun, it was an object both of signal beauty and of signal utility, by affording them a shadow from the heat. Hence, when they describe mankind in their happiest state, they represent them as sitting under their vines and their fig-trees. This allusion expresseth well the flourishing state of the righteous man. Planted in the garden of his God, and watered with the dew of heaven, his leaf is ever green, and he brings forth the fruits of righteousness in due season. His goodness is liberal and unconfined, and his beneficence is shared promiscuously by friends and foes. He is clothed with righteousness, and his judgment is a robe and a diadem. The ear that hears him blesseth, and the eye that sees him gives witness to him, because he delivereth the poor, the fatherless, and them that have none to help. He is eyes to the blind. He is feet to the lame. The loins of the naked bless him. The blessing of him that is ready to perish comes upon him, and he causes the widow's heart to sing for joy.

*All he doth shall prosper well.* Among the Jews, to whom this Psalm was addressed, this held invariably true. There was a particular dispensation of providence exercised towards that people, distributing temporal rewards to righteousness, and temporal punishments to sin. In the ordinary course of providence now, this does not always hold. Success and disappointment are administered variously to the sons of

men. But still, in all his endeavours, the good man bids the fairest for success. While he acts in character, he will attempt nothing but what is just and honourable in itself, or beneficial to the interests of society; he will always have the good wishes of mankind on his side. And, although he should sometimes be disappointed, the consciousness of his good intentions will keep his mind at ease, and his faith in the good providence of his heavenly Father, will fill him with a contentment and peace of mind, that is a stranger to the breast of the wicked man, even when he obtains his wishes.

VERSE 4. *The ungodly are not so: But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.* The Psalmist hits upon the distinguishing feature in the character of a wicked man. He never acts upon a plan. He lives and acts at random. He has no rule for his life but the veerings of passion. Present gratification being his only object, different and contrary passions solicit him at the same time. One appetite saith unto him, Go, and he goeth; another says, Come, and he cometh. The slave of sense, and the sport of passion, he is driven to and fro like the chaff before the whirlwind, and his life is one continued scene of levity, inconsistency, and folly.

VERSES 5, and 6. *Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the ungodly shall perish.* The miseries which the wicked endure here, are but the beginning of their sorrows. That God, whose grace they abused, whose mercy they undervalued, and whose power they despised, is now their awful and inexorable Judge. The wicked have no cause to complain of the sentence that is passed upon them. They have brought it upon their own heads. They have been the instruments of their own ruin. They have brought themselves into a situation in which it is impossible for them to be happy. Let us suppose them to be admitted into the company of the blessed,

their situation would be still deplorable. They would pine in the mansions of bliss, and search for heaven in the midst of paradise. We may venture to say, that it is even impossible for Omnipotence to make a wicked man happy ; it implies an express contradiction. They have put themselves out of the reach of Divine mercy, and become what the Scripture most emphatically calls, “ Vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.” “ Therefore they shall not stand in the judgment.” The poor and the distressed whom they refused to relieve, the widow and the fatherless whom they oppressed, the innocent whom they injured, the unhappy wretches whom, by their artifices, they betrayed into the paths of destruction, shall rise up and witness against them. Their own hearts will condemn them. The final sentence is pronounced, they are driven from the presence of the Lord, they are cast into outer darkness, where the worm dieth not, where the fire is never quenched ; and it had been happy for them that they had never been born.

I shall conclude with one reflection. You see, my brethren, from what has been said, that a life of wickedness is gradual and progressive. One criminal indulgence lays the foundation for another, till, by degrees, the whole superstructure of iniquity is complete. When the sinner has once put forth his hand to the forbidden fruit, and thinks that he can taste and live, he returns with greater and greater avidity to repeat his crimes, till the poison spreads through all his veins, and all the balm of Gilead be ineffectual for his cure. Fly, therefore ; I call upon you in the name of Heaven, fly from the approaching foe. Guard your innocence as you would guard your life. If you advance one step over the verge of virtue, unless the grace of Heaven interpose, down you sink to the bottomless abyss. Come not then near the territories of danger. Stand back. One sin indulged, gathers strength and abounds : it increases, it multiplies, it familiarizes itself with our frame, and introduces its whole brood of infernal inmates, worse than pestilence, famine, or sword.



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## LECTURE II.

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### PSALM XXIV.

1. *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof ; the world, and they that dwell therein.*

2. *For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.*

3. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ? and who shall stand in his holy place ?*

4. *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart : who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.*

5. *He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

6. *This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.*

7. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.*

**T**HIS Psalm was composed when David removed the ark of the covenant from the house of Obadedom to Jerusalem. But though it was composed for that occasion, it is evident, from the latter part of it, that it was ultimately intended for that more illustrious event, when Solomon transferred the ark from the tabernacle into the temple which he had built. As David was not only the Poet, but also the Prophet of God, he foresaw the future events of the Church, by the inspiration of the Divine Spirit ; and by the same inspiration, he composed songs and pieces of music adapted to these events. These he committed to Asaph, Hemon, and Jeduthum, the prefects of sacred poetry, to be sung as opportunities required.

The occasion of this psalm is one of the grandest

and most illustrious that any where occurs in history. Solomon, by the Divine direction, had now finished the temple, that superb monument of oriental magnificence and glory, which drew the princes of neighbouring nations to come and contemplate. The feast of tabernacles, the most solemn and most frequented of the Jewish festivals, was now at hand. All the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, were now assembled at Jerusalem to the feast. It was then that Solomon proceeded to dedicate the temple, and to fix the ark in its appointed place. The procession to the temple was grand and triumphant. Solomon arrayed in all his glory, attended with the elders of Israel, and the heads of the tribes went before ; after him marched the priests, in their sacerdotal robes, bearing the ark ; to them succeeded the four thousand sacred musicians, clothed in white robes, and divided into classes, some of them singing with the voice, others playing upon harps and trumpets, and psalteries, and cymbals, and other instruments of music ! behind them followed the whole congregation, with palms in their hands, rejoicing and wondering. Solomon had, on this occasion, made an oblation of twenty-two thousand oxen, and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep, of which the Almighty testified his approbation and acceptance, by causing the sacred fire come down anew from heaven, and consume the sacrifice. The Priests and Levites, as they went along sprinkled the ground with the blood of the victims, and perfumed the air with frankincense and sweet odours. This, with the fumes of incense which rose in clouds from the altars, had diffused such a potent perfume through the air, that people at a distance reflected on the breath they drew as a celestial influence, and regarded the strains of harmony which they heard as something more than mortal ; actually imagining that the God of the Hebrews had descended from his heaven to take possession of the temple which they had dedicated to his service. Nor were they mistaken. For after the priests had carried the ark into the

holy of holies, had placed it between the cherubim, and had reverently withdrawn, the cloud of Divine glory descended and rested upon the house. The Shechinah, or Divine presence, took up its abode in the Most holy place. Animated by this sublime occasion, the Psalmist begins his ode with celebrating the dominion of the Deity over this vast universe, and all its inhabitants, and setting forth their entire subjection to his power and providence.

VERSES 1. and 2. *The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.* David ascertains the sovereignty of God over the world, and its subjection to him, from his having created it at first; from his having established it upon the seas, and founded it upon the floods. By this he opposes the sceptics and infidels of those times, who withdrew nature from the Divinity, and denied the interposition of Providence in human affairs: by this he distinguishes the God whom he adored, from the idols of the Gentiles around him, who were confined to one part or province of nature: by this he endeavours to inspire the Jews with gratitude and love to their God and King, who chose them from among all the nations whom he governs by his providence, to be his favourite people. the object of his particular providence, and peculiar loving-kindness. The Psalmist next determines where that God, whose perfections he had been describing was to be worshipped, and which of his worshippers were to be the objects of his favour and approbation.

VERSE 3. *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?* It was usual among the Jews to add the name of God to any thing that was great, that was wonderful, and of which they would give us a high idea. Lofty cedars in Scripture, are called the trees of the Lord: high hills are called the mountains of God: wine, on ac-

count of its generous, joyous, and exhilarating qualities, is said to cheer the heart of God and man. In this place, the phrase is not to be taken in its usual sense. By *the hill of God*, is here meant the hill of Zion, which the Almighty had chosen to be the place of his worship, and where he had commanded his temple to be built. Near the same tract of ground there were three hills. Zion, where the city and castle of David stood ; Moriah, where the temple was built, and Calvary, where our Saviour was crucified ; but these, for the most part, went under the general name of Zion. By the phrases of *ascending into the hill of God*, and *standing in his holy place*, the Psalmist would point out the persons who are to be admitted to worship God in his temple here, and, in consequence of that, to be received into the temple of his glory above, and to dwell for ever with the Lord. We have the character and qualities of these persons expressed in the following verse.

VERSE 4. *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart ; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.* It is very observable, that in ascertaining the qualifications of the citizens of the spiritual Jerusalem, the Psalmist does not so much as mention the external observances, the costly and laborious rites of the ceremonial law, in which the Israelites generally prided themselves, but dwells alone on the great and essential duties of morality, which are of universal and eternal obligation. The fond affection and attachment of the Jews to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, so as to neglect the other duties, is the more remarkable, as God, by the mouth of his Prophets, frequently declared that he had no pleasure in them ; calling them precepts which were not good, and statutes by which a man could not live. In the fiftieth Psalm, we have an express declaration to this purpose : “ Hear, O my people, “ and I will speak ; O Israel, and I will testify against “ thee : I am God, even thy God. I will not re- “ prove thee for thy sacrifices, or for thy burnt offer-

"ings to have been continually before me. I will  
 "take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out  
 "of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine,  
 "and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all  
 "the fowls of the mountains : and the wild beasts of  
 "the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not  
 "tell thee ; for the world is mine, and the fulness  
 "thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the  
 "blood of goats ? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and  
 "pay thy vows unto the Most High, and call upon  
 "me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee,  
 "and thou shalt glorify me." The qualifications  
 here required are those of the heart and the life,  
 "Clean hands and a pure heart." It is not enough  
 that we wash our hands in innocence before men ;  
 we must be pure in heart before the eyes of infinite  
 perfection. True religion is the religion of the heart ;  
 it is a principle dwelling in the mind, that extends its  
 influence through the whole man, and regulates the  
 life. Unless our religion enter into the heart, we have  
 no religion at all. The form of godliness is insuffi-  
 cient and unavailing without the power thereof. We  
 can never attain to the true beauties of holiness, un-  
 less, like the king's daughter, we be all glorious with-  
 in. On the other hand, when clean hands and a pure  
 heart are united in the same person ; when a conver-  
 sation without blame, and a conscience void of offence  
 coincide, they are in the sight of God of great price.  
 A life sacred to devotion and virtue, sacred to the  
 practice of truth and undefiled religion, joined to a  
 heart, pure, pious, and benevolent, constitute an of-  
 fering more acceptable at the altars of the Most High  
 God, than whole hecatombs of burnt-offerings, and  
 a thousand hills of frankincense in a flame.

By *lifting up the soul unto vanity*, the Psalmist means,  
 making riches and honour, those vanities of the world  
 the object of our affection and pursuit ; saying to the  
 gold, thou art our trust ; or to the most fine gold, thou  
 art our confidence. Or it may mean the worship-  
 ping of idols, which, in Scripture, go under the deno-

mination of vanity, as in Jeremiah, "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?" *Swearing deceitfully*, includes all manner of perjury. This vice is always represented in Scripture in the most dreadful colours. He that sweareth falsely, and he that feareth an oath, is an equivalent term for the wicked and the righteous. As an oath is the greatest pledge of veracity, and the end of all strife, general and customary violations of it must have the most pernicious effect upon society. Such a practice would entirely banish religious principles from the world; it would dissolve the bands of society, it would shake the fundamental pillars of mutual trust and confidence among men, and destroy the security arising from the laws themselves. For human laws and human sanctions cannot extend to numberless cases in which the safety of mankind is essentially concerned. They would prove but feeble and ineffectual means of preserving the order and peace of society, if there were no checks upon men, from the sense of divine legislation; if no belief of divine rewards and punishments came in aid of what human rewards and punishments so imperfectly provide for. We have, in the next verse, the rewards promised to the persons possessed of these qualifications.

VERSE 5. *He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness from the God of his salvation.* This alludes to the appointed custom of the Jewish priests, who, on solemn and stated occasions, were wont to bless the people. Their form of blessing we have prescribed in Numbers vi. 22. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise shall ye bless the people of Israel, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee; the LORD make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." But as the priest was a fallible creature, his blessing might be indiscriminately bestowed, and fail of its effect. But the person who hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not

lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully, shall receive the blessing from God himself, whose favour is better than life, and whose blessing maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow. These blessings are summed up in the eighty-fourth Psalm ; “ The Lord God is a “ sun and shield ; the Lord will give grace and glory ; “ no good thing will he withhold from them that “ walk uprightly.” *Righteousness from the God of our salvation*, may either mean the reward of righteousness, as the work in Scripture is frequently put for the reward ; or it may mean kindness, mercy, and the benefits from righteousness, as in 1 Sam. xii. 7. “ Now “ therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you “ before the Lord, of all the righteousnesses of the, “ Lord, which he did to you and your fathers.” Where it is evident from what follows, that by *righteousnesses of the Lord*, he means the deliverances that God had wrought for them.

VERSE 6. *This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob, or O God of Jacob*, as it might better be rendered. This is the generation, who, in obedience to the commandments of God, and in the methods of his appointment, seek his face, that is, his favour and friendship, and to whom he never said, “ Seek ye my face in vain.”

Animated by his subject, the Psalmist proceeds to higher strains, and, in the sublime spirit of eastern poetry, calls upon the gates of the temple to open and admit the triumphal procession.

VERSE 7. *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.* To illustrate this part of the Psalm, we must take a short view of the Hebrew psalmody. The Psalms of David are of various kinds. Some of them are dramatic, having speakers introduced, making a kind of musical dialogue. Of this the ninety-first Psalm is a remarkable instance. In the first verse, the high-priest, rising up, declares the happiness of him who putteth his trust in the Almighty. In the second verse, David himself, or one of the singers, representing the faithful among the Jews, de-

clares his faith and confidence in God. From the third to the fourteenth, the ode was performed by the sacred singers, both with the voice and instruments of music. The three last verses were spoken by the high-priest alone in the character of God Almighty.

Many of the Psalms are intended to be sung by two divisions of the sacred singers, the chorus and the semichorus. Such is the Psalm before us. Every verse is divided into two members, exactly of the same length, and generally representing the same thought, expressed in a different manner. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof;—the world, and they that dwell therein." When we come to the seventh, the verse is evidently altered. The verses are not divided into two members as before, and for a very good reason. The semichorus asked the question and the chorus made the reply. Apostrophes, or addresses to inanimate nature, are among the boldest figures in poetry, and when properly introduced, as in this place, are in the highest manner productive of beauty. The simple thought, when stripped of its poetical ornaments, is no more than this: When the priests had carried the ark to the temple, Solomon ordered the gates to be thrown open to admit the ark. How much this thought is improved, when embellished by the fine imagination of the sweet singer of Israel, and clothed in all the graces of poetry, let persons of the smallest critical discernment judge. In short, the passage is too well known, and too beautiful, to need or admit of any illustration. Like the meridian sun, it shines in its own light, and to endeavour to adorn it, were wasteful and ridiculous excess.

As we are assured, by an authority that cannot err, that the ceremonies of the Jewish law were a figure of good things to come, and as the ark has been considered as a type of our Saviour, it is highly probable, that its introduction into the temple prefigured to the faithful among the Jews, that solemn and triumphant period when our Saviour ascended into the heaven of heavens, to take possession of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.



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## LECTURE III.

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LUKE xvi. 19—31.

19. *There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.*

20. *And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores,*

21. *And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table : moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.*

22. *And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried.*

23. *And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

24. *And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame.*

25. *But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivdest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things ; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.*

26. *And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*

27. *Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house :*

28. *For I have five Brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*

29. *Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them.*

30. *And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*

31. *And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

THE method of instruction by parables, was much in use among the eastern nations. Both physical and moral causes contributed to introduce and to support this custom. The people of the east have always been more under the government of the imagination and fancy, than the nations of the north. They use the liveliest and the boldest figures of speech in their ordinary conversation; and their writings are all in the manner, as well as in the spirit of poetry. What the influence of the climate made natural, the form of their government rendered necessary. As the form of their government has always been despotic and tyrannical, they were afraid to speak out their sentiments with openness and with freedom. Truth durst not approach the throne, nor appear in public.

Such was the origin of parables. This method of instruction possesses many advantages. It is obvious to all capacities, and has a charm for every hearer. It is well adapted to strike the fancy; it interests the passions, and thus makes a deeper and more lasting impression than mere moral instruction could convey. It likewise possesses one advantage peculiar to itself. It makes a man his own instructor. When the parable is told, we ourselves draw the moral, and make the application. Observations and reflections that we make ourselves, are of more avail to us in the conduct of life, than any instruction we can learn from others.

The parable now before us contains many useful and important lessons. We have here represented two characters not uncommon in the world; a rich man, who enjoyed the pleasures and the luxuries of life; and a poor beggar, who lived and who died in poverty, and in distress. This man was a signal object of pity. He was a beggar, and he was full of sores. Notwithstanding this double call to sympathy

and compassion, the heart of the rich man was hardened against him. All the advantage he reaped from lying at the great man's gate was, that his dogs, who had more feeling than their master, came and licked his sores. Nevertheless this rich man was not a miser. He was not a niggard of the gifts of Providence. He enjoyed life. He was arrayed in purple, which, in those days, was the vestment of kings. Hospitality presided in his hall, and luxury reigned at his table. He made sumptuous entertainments for his friends, and he made them every day. He seems to have been one of that class of men, and a very numerous class they are, and very frequently to be found in life, who are very hospitable to those who do not want, but very unfriendly to those that do ; who prepare rich and splendid entertainments for those tribes of flatterers and sycophants who always croud the mansions of the great, and at the same time have nothing to spare to a real object of distress. However, he acted very agreeably to the principles of his sect ; for as we learn from the sequel, he was a Sadducee, or, what in our days we call an infidel, that is, one who has no religion at all. He did not believe in the immortality of the soul. He did not believe that there was either a heaven or a hell. Accordingly, he endeavoured to make the most of this life, and acted up to the maxims of his sect, " Let us eat and drink, for " to-morrow we shall die."

Learn hence the folly and the danger of endeavouring to establish virtue upon any foundation but that of true religion. People may tell us that social affection is the law of our being ; they may talk of virtue being its own reward ; they may sing the praises of disinterested benevolence ; but if you take away the rewards and punishments of the world to come, you set the greatest part of mankind free from every moral obligation, and open a door to universal depravity and corruption of manners. If the beauty of virtue is laid in one scale, and interest in the other, it will not be difficult to determine to which side the

balance will incline. The accusations of conscience will be little regarded, unless they are considered as an earnest of the worm that never dies. Take away the doctrine of a world to come, and you make this world a scene of universal depravity and open wickedness.

At first view we would be apt to wonder at the ways of Heaven, and perhaps tempted in our minds to arraign the conduct of Providence, in crowning this worthless and wicked man with wealth and prosperity, whilst all that diversified the good man's lot was scene after scene of poverty and pain. But let us suspend our judgment. We see but one link in the great chain of Providence. We live but in the infancy of being. The great drama of life is but begun. When the catastrophe is brought about, when the curtain between both worlds is undrawn; the morn will arise that will light the Almighty's footsteps in the deep, and pour full day upon all the paths of his providence.

VERSE 22. *And it came to pass that the beggar died.* He died, and all his miseries died with him. He whom this rich man would have disdained to have considered as his fellow-creature, had a company of angels sent down to transport him to the regions of the blessed, to the bosom of Abraham, where all his sorrows had an end, and the tears were for ever wiped from his eyes. Let the needy and the oppressed take consolation from this salutary doctrine. With God there is no respect of persons. Let it be the great business of your lives to be rich in faith and in good works, and to lay up treasures in heaven, and then you may rejoice in hope, that though you have nothing here, yet yours is the kingdom of God.

VERSES 23 to 26 inclusive. Before our Saviour's incarnation, the Greek language had made its way into Judea. Along with the language of the Greeks, their opinions in philosophy, and the fictions of their poetry, had been introduced, and made part of the popular belief. This part of the parable which we have now read, is evidently founded upon the fictions

of the Grecian poets concerning the state of departed souls. They, as well as our Lord in this parable, represent the abodes of the blessed as lying contiguous to the regions of the damned, and separated only by a great impassable river, or deep gulf, in such a manner, that the ghosts could talk with one another from its opposite banks. In the parable, souls, whose bodies were buried, know each other, and converse together, as if they had been embodied. In like manner, the heathens introduce departed souls as talking together, and represent them as having pains and pleasures, analogous to what we feel in this life; and they thought that the shades of the dead had an exact resemblance to their bodies. The parable says, that the souls of wicked men are tormented in flames; the Grecian poets tell us, that they lie in a river of fire, where they suffer the same torments they would have suffered while alive, had their bodies been burnt. From this account, therefore, we are to draw no inferences concerning the real nature of heaven or of hell. A parable is no more than an instructive fable or tale, and the only thing to be regarded in it is the moral that it conveys. We cannot therefore conclude from this parable, that there is material fire in hell, or that the abodes of the blessed and the regions of the damned are contiguous to one another. The word of God gives us no materials wherein we can make a description either of hell or heaven. It was never the intention of scripture to satisfy our curiosity, but to influence our practice, and for that purpose to awake our hopes and our fears, by representing the one as being the region of the greatest torment, and the other as the scene of unmingled and everlasting joy.

*The rich man died, and was buried.* We read not of the burial of the poor man. He would be thrown into a common grave, and mingled with vulgar and obscure dust. But the rich man was buried with pomp and with splendour. Crowds of mercenary mourners would attend his funeral, and venal tears be

shed upon his tomb. Every amiable and every respectable quality would be ascribed to him by those ready flatterers, who have always a character at hand for the deceased of quality. But, insensible to this incense, *in hell he lift up his eyes.* How astonishing and how awful must it be, my brethren, for a person who believes not in a future state, to receive his first conviction from the flames of the lake which burneth for ever, and from the gnawings of the worm that never dies. The request of the rich man is very remarkable. He does not acknowledge the justness of his punishment, nor confess the greatness of his sins. He does not shew any remorse of mind for the offences he had committed against God, for the injuries he had done to society, or for the ruin he had brought upon his own soul. He had no sorrow for sin, he had only a feeling of pain. He did not want to be delivered from his guilt, but only from punishment. But such had been his character in this world. The fact is, my brethren, we retain the same dispositions hereafter, that we cultivate here. It is utterly impossible, that the mere separation of the soul from matter, can make any alteration upon the essential qualities of the soul. We carry to the other world the same qualities, the same temper of mind, and the same character, that we have on earth. What manner of persons doth it become us then to be? As we now sow, hereafter we reap. Our heaven, or our hell is already begun within us. The worm that never dies hath already begun to gnaw the heart of the wicked; and the good man hath already begun those hymns and hossannas of praise which shall employ him through eternity.

*Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things.* This answer of the Patriarch is remarkable for mildness. When a person, by his imprudence and folly, hath involved himself in a scene of distress, there is nothing more common than for those who visit him at such a time, to upbraid him with his by-past conduct in the severest manner, and to administer rebukes with acrimony and bitterness. In-

stead of giving their assistance to extricate him from his distresses, those miserable comforters push them deeper in the pit, and take a cruel pleasure in adding affliction to the afflicted, conscious that whilst they are insulting over their unfortunate brother, they are paying encomiums to their own superior prudence and discretion. This rich man had brought himself into the last of evils, into an evil that admitted of no remedy, by his own wickedness. Yet Abraham did not address him in this severe and insulting language. He calls him *son*, his descendant according to the flesh. The good patriarch wanted not to add to the horrors of hell. The spirit of rage and rancour never gains admittance into the bosoms of the blessed. This shews us how different the meek, the gentle, and the benevolent temper is from that cruel and merciless zeal which often passeth for it upon earth.

His own petition being refused, the rich man now applies for his relations. VERSE 27. *Then he said, I pray thee therefore, futher, that thou wouldst send him to my futher's house.* Let no wicked man boast himself of possessing some virtues amid the number of his crimes. You see there is even some goodness in hell. The rich man retained still some affection for his brethren, and had a desire for their conversion. Though they had been partakers with him in his sins, he did not want them to be partakers of his punishment. The repetition of the request shews he was in earnest.

VERSE 31. *Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* As this is a point of great consequence, it requires to be illustrated at some length. Let us suppose, that in order to convince a person of the immortality of his soul, Almighty God sent one of his deceased friends, either in his unembodied state, or with the same body he had in life. As no person would require such a proof, but one who was very much addicted to scepticism, it is very probable, that even then his doubts would not be removed. He might say, perhaps this may be an im-

postor, perhaps it may be some evil spirit who has assumed the shape of my deceased friend.

But let us suppose, that these doubts are removed, that he is convinced of the reality of the apparition, and the truth of a future state. Let us then see what effect it would have upon his life. He goes into company. He tells the story of the apparition to his companions. They hear it with derision and ridicule, and consider him as a visionary enthusiast, disturbed in his imagination. As the experience of all mankind is against him, and the laws appear to be fixed for ever, of no intercourse between this world and the next, in whatever companies he tells it, it meets with the same treatment ; and all the effect of the apparition is, that it makes every one to conclude him to be beside himself. You all know how difficult it is to remain single in opinion against the whole world. It is still harder to become the object of laughter and ridicule ; so that with these difficulties in his way, it is ten to one but he falls in with the opinion of the world, and believes the apparition to have been the phantom of his own fancy. That this is not a mere conjecture, but what would really happen, appears from undoubted matter of fact, that did really happen. You remember the history of Saul. When the Lord would not answer him by his prophets, he went in quest of a woman who had a familiar spirit. She raised up to him an apparition, which he believed to be the ghost of Samuel the prophet. The apparition assured him that his kingdom was departing from him, and that he had only one day longer to live. What effect had this upon the king ? did he repent of his sins ? At first he was sore afraid, and was melancholy, but through the persuasion of his attendants, he soon resumed his joy ; and on the morrow after the battle was lost, in order to fulfil the prophecy of the devil, he proceeded to commit the most deliberate crimes that can be perpetrated by man : he raised impious hands against his life, and plunged his sword in his own breast.

The fact is, my brethren, mankind are not always



in a mood to be convinced. In spite of speculative opinion, men act from their passions, and bad passions will always produce bad actions, to the end of the world. The reluctance of mankind to assent to evidence, when it makes against their preconceived opinion, is remarkably apparent in the reception the Jews gave to our Saviour. All the prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in him. He appeared in the world in the precise time predicted for the coming of the Messiah ; he was descended of the lineage of David ; he was born in the city of Bethlehem. A prophet went before him in the spirit and power of Elias. He performed miracles and mighty works, which no man could perform. But after all these proofs, after all these miracles, the Jews, who expected their Messiah to be a temporal Prince, still demanded more evidence. "Shew us," said they, "a sign from heaven." A sign from heaven they obtained. Now, in the presence of multitudes, a voice came from heaven, the voice of the Eternal, piercing the clouds, and proclaiming aloud, "This is my beloved Son !" Were they then convinced ? No : They persecuted him with reproaches in his life, and at last brought him to an ignominious death. And when they had nailed him to the accursed tree, they still affirmed they would believe on him on proper evidence. "Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe on him." If he had come down from the cross, the redemption of mankind would have been defeated, as it was to be accomplished by his death ; but he did more than come down from the cross. He rose from the dead. Did they then believe on him ? No : They charged the soldiers who brought them the news of his resurrection, to give out that his disciples stole him away while they slept. Well then may we adopt the maxim of the Patriarch Abraham, and affirm, that if ye believe not Moses and the Prophets ; if ye believe not Christ and his Apostles ; ye will not be persuaded *though one rose from the dead.*

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## LECTURE IV.

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MATTHEW XXV. 1—10.

1. *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*

2. *And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

3. *They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them :*

4. *But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

5. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*

6. *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him.*

7. *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.*

8. *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.*

9. *But the wise answered, saying, Not so ; lest there be not enough for us and you ; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.*

10. *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage ; and the door was shut.*

**I**N a former lecture, I explained to you the nature, the origin, and the use of parables. They were the common vehicles of instruction among the oriental nations. The wisdom of the east loved to go adorned with flowers and with figures, and, by means of the imagination, to make its way to the heart. This mode of instruction was frequently honoured by our Lord's adopting it. Accommodating himself to the practice of the east, and to the manners of the

Jews, he wrapt up his wisdom in this veil, and delivered his doctrines to the people in parables. As men are much under the guidance of the external senses, and strongly impressed by the material objects around them, he who knew what was in man, and who laid hold of every avenue to the human heart, frequently addressed himself to this part of our frame. He spiritualizes the whole system of nature, he turns the most common and familiar occurrences of life into vehicles of Divine truth: and in the gentlest and most insinuating manner, leads us from earth to heaven.

In the parable which I have now read, the kingdom of Heaven, or dispensation of the Gospel, is likened to a marriage solemnity. On such occasions it was a custom among the Jews, that the bridegroom, in company with his friends, came late in the night to the house of the bride, where, upon a signal given, she and her bride-maids went out in procession to light him into the house, with great ceremony and splendour. It is said that *five of these virgins were wise, and that five of them were foolish*. I explained to you, on a former occasion, that, in a parable, we are not to apply particular expressions, but to consider the intention and design upon the whole. If we understood and applied this expression literally, we would be led to conclude, that, under the New Testament, the number of the good and of the bad was equal. But to settle this point, to ascertain the number of those who are to be saved, and of those who are to be damned, was not the intention of our Lord in the parable. For, by the same way of arguing, we might infer from the parable of the talents, which immediately follows this, that the number of the good was double the number of the wicked, as there were two faithful servants who improved the talents committed to them, for one slothful servant who wrapt up his in a napkin; and in the parable of the marriage supper, in the foregoing chapter, amongst all the number of the guests who were called

to the feast, there was only one who wanted the wedding garment: Only from this general scheme of thought which runs through all our Lord's parables, from their being always framed with a view to the charitable side, we may safely draw two conclusions. In the *first* place, Let us always form a favourable judgment concerning the character and state of those who are externally decent, whether they agree or differ from us in opinion; and, if we do err, let us err on the side of charity. There are a set of men to be found in the world, who are remarkably fond of passing sentence and judgment upon the external state of their neighbours, and in passing this judgment, they attend, not so much to the general tenor of life, and integrity of conduct, as to the system of doctrines which a man believes, and the sect or party in which he arranges himself. Unless you believe in every point precisely as they do, down go you in their estimation.

Rash and profane mortal! who gave thee a commission to fix the mark of election and reprobation upon men? Did Almighty God depute thee to draw the line betwixt the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light; to fill the heavens, and to people hell? We are astonished, and stand aghast at the boldness and impiety of the Roman Pontiff, who pretends to open and to shut the gate of mercy, and who arrogates to himself the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And yet thou who accusest him, art thyself equally guilty. Thou rushest unto the throne of the Eternal, and darest to direct the thunders of the Divine vengeance. Thou prescribest bounds to the mercy of the Omnipotent, and sayest to his saving grace, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." Vile worm! dost thou not tremble at thine impiety? Fall prostrate in the dust. Shrink into thine own insignificance. Let thy time be employed in working out thine own salvation, rather than in dealing of damnation to thy neighbours.

At the same time, though I condemn this rage which some men discover to condemn their neighbours, as, in my opinion, entirely inconsistent with the genius of the Gospel, and the spirit of Christianity, nevertheless I would not go into their extreme, and pass the same sentence on them which they pass upon others. To pass a judgment upon characters is a difficult task, and requires a very delicate hand. We ought to distinguish what flows from a narrowness of mind, from what flows from a badness of heart. We ought to make great allowances for the prejudices of education. If a man be educated in the belief, that none are to be saved but those who believe every article of that system which he embraces; if his judgment concerning the characters of men rest not upon the goodness of their lives, but upon the soundness of their belief, such a man's charity must be narrow and constrained. And this may sometimes be owing, not to the badness of his nature, but to the badness of his religious principles. And I have sometimes seen such persons, though I must acknowledge very rarely, striving and struggling to get the better of their system; the heart and the affections true to Christianity, whilst the mind was enslaved by the prejudices of education.

VERSE 3. *They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them.* The foolish virgins seemed at first to resemble the wise, and shone out for a while with the same lustre. They made the same profession and appearance at first. Themselves were awake, and their lamps were burning. But they had no supply for the future. Their goodness was like the morning cloud, and soon vanished away. They had no real religion in the heart. They wanted that inward principle of grace, which can alone enable us to stand fast in the Lord. They were not rooted and grounded in the faith. They had no steady principles of conduct, nor settled habits of action. Like the seed which was sown in the stony ground, they

forthwith sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth, and when the sun arose, they withered away.

*But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.* They sought and obtained the influences of the Divine Spirit to abide with them through life. They made a serious business of religion. They laid up a store of useful knowledge. They acted upon fixed and steady principles, and acquired habits of religion and virtue. They kept the heart well, knowing that out of it are the issues of life. They looked forwards to the time to come; they provided against the evil day, and extended their view to take in all the temptations and afflictions of human life.

VERSE 5. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.* Whether we interpret this coming of the bridegroom, to be the second coming of our Lord to judge the world, or whether we apply it to our appearance before his tribunal at death, is a subject of no consequence; the material point to be considered is, that while the bridegroom tarried, all of them, the wise as well as the foolish virgins, slumbered and slept. The wise grew remiss and careless, and the spiritual life declined within them. The foolish virgins returned again to foolishness, and because the Lord delayed, because sentence against an evil work was not speedily executed, were fully bent to do evil. Seeing then that the wise virgins slumbered as well as the foolish; seeing that good men, as well as bad men, may fall into sin; a question, a very serious one, naturally arises: How shall we distinguish between those temporary relaxations in the Christian race, into which a good man may fall, from the final apostasy of the wicked; how shall we distinguish between the sins of infirmity, into which the best men may fall, from those sins which are unto death? And to this I beg your attention, as one of the most important subjects which can ever occupy your thoughts. In order to decide this question, Let me ask you, in the *first* place, What was the nature of your relapse into sin? There are times in which all men feel religious impressions and devout dispositions of mind. The

seed is sown in stony places, as well as on the good ground. The influences of heaven descend on the barren desert, as well as on the field which is to be fruitful. On such occasions, the seed which was sown on the stony places will spring up for a time, and the barren desert will seem to bloom. To speak without a figure, the Spirit of God in one manner or another, in his common or in his special influences, descends upon all men. After such times of refreshing, the saint of a day; as well as the persevering Christian, will receive the word with gladness, and set about a thorough reformation. And as both of them receive the word with gladness, so both of them are subject to sin. Yet they are not alike in their errors. The sinner having no real principle at bottom, having no fixed plan of life, and but doing every thing by fits and starts, may, at the first approach of temptation, advance with swift steps to ruin. But the true Christian, laying his account to meet with hardships and temptations; prepares against them, and will not wholly fall off. The coward may at once desert his post; and fly from the banners of the Captain of salvation; to the standard of the prince of darkness: but the good soldier of Jesus will make head against the enemy; he will encounter his spiritual foe; he may be foiled for a moment, but he will never be subdued.

In the *second* place, Let me ask you, what is the state of your mind during these relapses? Are you in total subjection to the sins which have dominion over you? Is your conscience lulled in a profound sleep? Do you roll iniquity like a sweet morsel under your tongue? Do you find the ways of sin to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be peace? Is your bondage sweet, and are the chains of your captivity become pleasant to you? Then I pronounce that there are no symptoms of spiritual life within you; then your sleep is unto death. But, on the other hand, is the dominion which sin has over you, against the bent of your soul? Whilst you sleep,

does your heart wake? During your captivity, is your face towards Jerusalem? Do you lament the deceitfulness of your heart, the feebleness of your resolutions, and your own impotence to save yourself? Do you strive to burst asunder the bands which detain you? Then there is hope in Israel concerning you.

In the *third* place, let me ask you, what is the nature of the sins into which you fall? Are they contrived beforehand, deliberate? Do you commit them with coolness and with consideration? Or are you led astray on a sudden by the strength of temptation, and the power of prevailing passion? The best of men are subject to the impulse of passion; may yield to the strength of temptation, and be overtaken in a fault. But he is a wicked man who sins upon a plan; who makes a system of iniquity; who contrives scenes of mischief upon his bed, and who rises to execute with ardour what he has contrived with coolness. If the sun goes down upon thy wrath, or any other bad passion; if day unto day uttereth speech of your evil deeds; if night after night findeth you in the service of sin, then you are a sinner indeed, then you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.

Let me ask again, what are the sins that most easily beset you? The sins of men may be divided into two classes. The one kind flows from a good principle wrong directed, from the perversion and abuse of laudable inclinations; the other kind flows from evil principles and a bad heart. Of the latter kind, are malice, envy, treachery, cruelty, malignity, deceit, and hypocrisy. These indicate a mind which neither fears God nor regards man. The best Christians will at times fall into sins; but they will never harbour in their heart the dark offspring of hell. They may have the failings and the faults of men; but they will never have the crimes of devils, nor the spirit of the damned.

VERSE 6. *At midnight there was a cry heard. At midnight, the hour of silence and repose, when the*



operations of nature seemed to stand still, and all things were at rest, when there was no expectation of any event, then was the cry heard, then was the alarm given,—*Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him!* And, indeed, my brethren, it often happens, that our last hour comes unexpected. When we are busied in some favourite scheme, when we are laying a scene of happiness which we expect will last for years, the awful voice comes, “This night thy soul shall be required of thee.” I mention not this as if I thought it one of the evils of life. If we are prepared to die, a sudden death must be the most agreeable of all. The servant who is doing his duty, will be agreeably surprised at an unexpected visit from his master. The soldier, whose arms are crowned with conquest, would be happy if his prince should suddenly come to be the witness of his victory.

VERSE 7. *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.* Their lamps were not gone out, though they were not burning bright. They soon arose and trimmed them, to meet the bridegroom. A good man is always habitually prepared for death. He has an interest in the righteousness of his Redeemer, which purchased life and immortality to men; and he is possessed of those good and holy dispositions which fit us for the inheritance of the saints in light. Such a person is ever in a state of preparation to meet with his Lord.

VERSE 8. *And the foolish virgins said unto the wise, Give us of your oil.* Mark here, my brethren, the triumph of religion. Wicked men at the last envy the state and the happiness of the good, and desire to partake in it. There is a time coming when those who scoff at religion, and laugh at every thing that is serious, will gladly say to those humble and contrite ones whom they now despise, “Give us of your oil.” “Let us die the death of the righteous; let our last end be like his.” “Would to God our souls were in your soul’s place.” Feeble

and ineffectual wishes ! which discover their misery, but which cannot save them from it.

VERSE 9. *Lest there be not enough for us and you.* There are no works of supererogation. After we have done all, we are unprofitable servants ; and though we were perfect, we can assign no part of our righteousness to you : “ *Go to those that sell,*” Go to the ordinances of Divine appointment ; improve those means of grace which you formerly despised ; break off your sins by repentance ; who knows if it be yet too late ?—*Cætera desunt.*

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## LECTURE V.

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LUKE ix. 28—36.

28. *And it came to pass, about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter, and John, and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.*

29. *And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.*

30. *And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias ;*

31. *Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.*

32. *But Peter and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep : and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.*

33. *And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here ; and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias : not knowing what he said.*

34. *While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them : and they feared as they entered into the cloud.*

35. *And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son : hear him.*

36. *And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone : and they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.*

IN these verses, we have an account of a very remarkable event. Our Saviour having foretold his sufferings and death, in order to keep alive the faith and hopes of his disciples, who would be apt to de-

spair under that mournful event, also foretold them, that some of their own number, before their departure, should behold him coming in his kingdom. "But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God."

As an accomplishment of this prediction, he takes his three favourite disciples, Peter, James, and John, and having carried them to an high mountain, was transfigured before their eyes, that he might give them some idea of the glory of that kingdom to which he was afterwards to ascend. The mountain here mentioned, by tradition, is Tabor, a hill of great beauty, and, according to Josephus, very high.

Many magnificent events in the Divine dispensations, have been transacted on hills. It was on mount Sinai that God descended to give the law : It was on the hill of Moriah that he commanded Isaac to be sacrificed : It was on the hill of Zion that he ordered the temple to be built : From the mount of Olives, Christ was wont to send up his prayers to Heaven ; and on the mount Tabor he was transfigured, and appeared in glory to his disciples. This is founded upon nature. There is an air of grandeur in a lofty mountain, that loseth itself in the heavens, and casteth its shadow into distant lands, which accords with the natural greatness of the soul, and awakens a feeling that is highly favourable to devotion. The grandeur, the awfulness, the silence, and the solitude of the scene, assist sentiments of religious adoration. Remote from man, and exalted above the turbulence of the inferior world, we breathe celestial air, we feel divinity more present, and bow down and worship in the temple not made with hands. Hence men, actuated by their natural feelings, and under the impressions of religious awe, have so often been guided to erect their temples upon hills, and to consecrate to the Deity such places as those on which he had appeared, and where his footsteps were seen.

We are told, that our Saviour went up to this moun-

tain to pray. Christ began all his great works with prayer to Heaven. Before he entered on his public ministry, he retired into the wilderness, and devoted forty days to contemplation and prayer. When he was about to suffer his last agony, he went and prayed in the garden. And here, when he enters upon his transfiguration, he went up to a mountain to pray. Illustrious example of piety and devotion! worthy the study and imitation of the world. If the eternal Son of God, the Mediator between God and man, who had no errors to be corrected, who had no sins to be forgiven, and who had few wants to be relieved, if he entered upon no important work without prayer to Heaven, if he spent whole nights in the fervour of devotion, shall men, shall feeble, indigent, and sinful men, dare to attempt works of importance, or rush into scenes of danger, without lifting up their eyes and hearts to Heaven, and imploring the protection and assistance of Providence? And yet it is to be dreaded that there are many persons who go under the name of Christians, who live in the constant and habitual neglect of this duty; who go out and come in, who rise up and lie down, without once bending the knee to the God of Heaven, and who, unless on this returning day, when they join in the public devotions of the Church, never acknowledge their dependance upon God. Far be such conduct from you, my brethren.

*Peter, James, and John*, were also chosen as the witnesses of our Saviour's agony. If they rejoiced with him on mount Tabor, they also suffered with him in the garden of Gethsemane. And indeed it seems to be one of the general laws by which this world is governed, that those who have the highest enjoyments should also have the deepest afflictions. Providence hath wisely balanced human affairs, and set the day of prosperity against the day of adversity. The most enchanting hopes give rise to the most mortifying disappointments; the most transporting enjoyments end in the cruellest lassitude and disgust;

and the highest honour is succeeded by the lowest disgrace. The same lively passions and fine feelings that give the greatest relish to prosperity, give also the severest smart to the wounds of adversity.

The transfiguration itself is next related. The evangelists seem to vie with one another in describing the glories of this scene. During this period, we are told, *the fashion of his countenance was altered; his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the snow.* When Moses received the law upon mount Sinai, his countenance shone in such a manner that the Israelites could not behold him. But a greater than Moses was here; and he was invested with greater majesty. The splendour of his Divinity shone through the veil with which it was clouded; he reassumed some rays of that glory which he had with the Father before the world was; and he stood confessed the Son of the living God.

To heighten the grandeur and the solemnity of the scene, Moses, the giver of the law, and Elias, the greatest among the Prophets, descended from heaven, and conferred with him concerning his kingdom. It is usual for the chief ministers of a kingdom to resign the seals and badges of their authority to their successors in office. Thus, Moses and Elias, who had been the ministers of the kingdom of God under the Old Testament, the one representing the law, the other representing the prophets, resigned their authority to Jesus Christ, who was to reign for ever. Had we, my brethren, been present on the mount of transfiguration, been spectators of this wonderful scene; had we beheld the glorified spirits of Moses and Elias, arrayed in the robes of heaven, and adorned with the beauties of immortality; had we beheld the Son of the Most High clothed with uncreated light, and appearing in the glories of Divinity unveiled; had we heard the voice of the Almighty proclaiming from the overshadowing cloud, *This is my beloved Son, hear him*; would we not have been thrown into that delightful amazement of soul, that trance and ecstasy

of spiritual joy, which the disciples were in when they cried out, not knowing what they said, *Lord it is good for us to be here ; let us build three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias !*

The evangelist tells us, that the disciples were heavy with sleep, or rather heavy as with sleep ; and Mark says that they were sore afraid. From comparing them together, it appears to have been a rapture and an astonishment that suspended all the powers of the soul with a stillness similar to sleep. The sublime appearances which they saw struck a sudden terror into their minds, and occasioned that ecstasy of soul which holy men were generally in when they were favoured with the visions of God. Moses and Elias were properly chosen as messengers to our Saviour, and witnesses of his transfiguration, as both of them were eminent types of Christ, acceptable to God for their faith and holiness, and admired by the Jews their countrymen for the miracles which they had performed. Both of them were admitted to conference with God in Horeb ; both of them had fasted forty days ; both of them had divided the waters ; they had been both the messengers of God to kings ; and as they were marvellous in their lives, so there was something extraordinary and miraculous in both their departures. Moses died at the commandment of the Lord, and was buried in a place which no man knew. Elias, without seeing death, was translated to Heaven in a chariot of fire.

When this celestial triumvirate had assembled, what was the topic of their conversation ? Did their discourse run upon the fate of empires and the fall of kings ? Did they converse about the progress of the human genius, about the improvements of society, the inventions of art, and the discoveries of science ? Did they talk of the glories of that heaven from which they had descended, or attempt a description of those mansions above, whose beauty eye hath not seen, and whose joys ear hath not heard ? No, my brethren, an event greater than all these engaged their attention.

*They talked of that decease, or departure, which our Divine Redeemer was to accomplish at Jerusalem.* The prospect of suffering an ignominious and an accursed death, had always appeared to our Saviour a circumstance of distress, and filled him with dismal forebodings of mind. As the event drew nearer, these forebodings increased. The prospect of being forsaken, denied, and betrayed by his friends ; of being mocked, and tortured, and crucified by his enemies ; the terrors of the hour and power of darkness ; the agony in the garden ; the horrors of the cross ; the assault of devils and wicked spirits ; and, far above all, the hiding of his Father's countenance, and drinking the cup of the wrath of God ; these were circumstances of tremendous suffering, sufficient to have overwhelmed his human nature with horror and despair.

But as an angel was sent to comfort him in the garden, so here two illustrious saints descended from heaven to allay the terrors of that decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. They might represent his passion to him as entering into the councils of heaven before the world began ; as the hope and expectation of all the patriarchs, and prophets, and righteous men under the law ; as the accomplishment of all the prophecies delivered to the Old Testament Church ; as the fulfilment of all the types and prefigurations of the Mosaic institution ; as the consummation of the legal economy, and period of the Jewish Church ; and as the commencement of a new age and higher order of events. They might place it before his eye as confirming his doctrine from above ; as magnifying the law and making it honourable ; as rendering glory to God in the highest, and restoring peace on earth, and good-will towards men ; as conquering the principalities and powers of darkness, and setting open the gates of paradise for all the faithful to enter in. They might set it before his eyes as the means of overthrowing the kingdom of Satan ; as diffusing light, and life, and salvation through the world ; as uniting the nations in the bond of charity and love ;



as being the great theme to the Church universal under the New Testament ; as affording a subject for new hymns and anthems to the heavenly host ; as reaching beyond the circle of time, and drawing hosannas of praise from the heirs of immortality, through the round of everlasting ages. These considerations would comfort our Redeemer under the forebodings of his passion ; and the prospect of the joy that was set before him would animate and strengthen him to endure the cross, to despise the shame, and to finish the work which the Father gave him to do.

Seeing then that the death and passion of our Saviour is an event of such infinite importance, let us, my brethren, make it the theme of our praise, and the subject of our contemplation. Let us frequently call to mind that scene which mount Calvary beheld, the sufferings that our Saviour there endured, the groans that he uttered, and the blood that he shed on our behalf. Let us dwell on that marvellous love which moved him to undergo such unutterable agonies, till we feel its transforming power and efficacy, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory ; that so the cross of Christ, which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, may become to us the wisdom and the power of God.

VERSE 36. *And they kept it close, and told no man.* Though they were so highly favoured of their Lord, allowed to behold him in the glories of his future kingdom, and to hold converse with two illustrious messengers from the mansions above, nevertheless they made no merit of the preference that was shewn them, and even concealed from the world that they were distinguished from the rest of the apostles. Such, my brethren, is the uniform conduct of good Christians. The manifestations of heaven only inspire them with humility. He is but a novice in the school of Christianity, who is puffed up by any privileges which he has attained. Greater degrees of grace, and higher attainments in virtue, banish all self-conceit and spiritual pride. This holds in other matters, as well as in

religion. The pretender always outdoes the real character. The actor always exceeds nature, and goes beyond the life. In friendship, those who have the least of the reality, have generally most of the appearance and pretence. Men of the greatest talents and abilities appear in conversation but like other men; whilst fools and coxcombs assume those airs of superiority, and that tone of solemn pedantry, which amazes the ignorant. This holds even in infidelity itself. Those wretches, who set their mouths against the heavens, and profess open impiety, are generally hypocrites in wickedness, who believe and tremble when alone, and are in the horrors whenever they are left in the dark.

Beware, therefore, of a form of religion without the power thereof. The voice of true piety is not heard in the streets. She sounds no trumpet before her, affects no appearances, and lays claim to no distinctions. Those persons are always to be suspected who covet the public eye; who make a show of their sanctity, and who endeavour to dazzle the world with the pomp and the parade of godliness. Let men discover your piety and virtue; do not you discover them yourselves. There is all the difference in the world betwixt being exemplary and being ostentations. When the angels descended of old, they were in form and appearance like men; but when the devil appeared, he transformed himself into an angel of light.

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# S E R M O N I.

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LUKE ii. 10.

*—Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.—*

**T**HE coming of the Messiah is always foretold in Scripture as a period of joy and triumph. The Patriarchs rejoiced when they saw his day afar off. All the Prophets take fire at this great occasion, and rise into strains of rapture when they describe the glory of the latter days, and the happiness of the Messiah's reign. In the most beautiful colours they paint its arrival as a new era of happy time, and as a general jubilee to the world. They represent it as accompanied with universal peace and prosperity ; as effecting a renovation, the return of innocence to earth, and the descent of God to dwell with men. "In those days the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad ; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the rose. They shall blossom abundantly ; and rejoice with joy and with singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it ; the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the dry land springs of water. In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.—The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold." When the heavens and the earth at first arose in beauty from the hands of the Creator, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. In like manner, when these new heavens and this new earth appeared, all the angelic host broke forth into strains of grati-

lation, ascribing glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards fallen men.

Unhappily, the Jews, who were a gross and carnal people, misinterpreted the prophecies concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, took the magnificent style of prophecy for literal description, and fondly imagined that these glad tidings of great joy announced temporal and earthly blessings. They looked for no better a country than the land of Canaan, and expected no other redemption than to be redeemed from the Roman yoke. The veil is now taken off from the prophets, and we discern the Gospel, not as meant to procure us possession of the earth, and dominion over the nations, but as intended to make us partakers of eternal life, and to give us an inheritance in the heavens, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.

The Gospel, then, is a system of spiritual joy. And, in treating of it in this light, I shall, in the *first* place, consider it as a method of instruction, enlightening the darkness, and dispelling the ignorance of human nature : In the *second* place, As a plan of redemption from the guilt of sin : In the *third* place, As a scheme of comfort and relief during the afflictions of life ; and, in the *fourth* place, As a system of consolation against the fear of death. Here are comprehended all the evils of human life ; and if we find that the Gospel brings us relief from all of them, then it will appear to contain indeed, “ Good tidings of great joy.”

I am to shew you, then, in the *first* place, That, as a system of joy, Christianity enlightens the natural darkness of the mind, and gives us all requisite information concerning the truths necessary to our happiness.

Curiosity, or the desire of knowledge, is one of the earliest emotions of the human soul. No sooner does the mind arrive at the exercise of thought, than it proceeds to examine the objects around it, and to extend its researches wider and wider over the

whole circuit of nature. One of the most obvious dictates of reason is the belief of a God. There are so many indications of wisdom and contrivance in the works of nature ; such striking displays of order and beauty ; such splendid demonstrations of a plan established, that an intelligent mind is at once recognized, and a Deity, though invisible in himself, is everywhere seen in his works. Accordingly, all nations have agreed in acknowledging and worshipping a supreme Power, the Creator and Governor of all things. But although the light of nature reveals to us the existence of a God, it gives us no materials whereon to form an opinion concerning his attributes. A mixed dispensation of things seems to prevail in the world. There are many indications of goodness, but there are also many appearances of evil. Providence seems equally to favour the good and the bad. All things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked. Reason is at a loss what conclusion to draw from such contradictory appearances, and, amidst the clouds and the darkness that surround the paths of the Almighty, cannot discern that justice and judgment are for ever the habitation of his throne. But a state of uncertainty and suspense, especially about an object of such great importance, is the most deplorable of all situations. To live and to die in ignorance and uncertainty, whether the Governor of the world be a tyrant or a friend, whether we are under the misrule of hate, or the government of love, must sit heavy upon the candid and inquisitive mind, and give additional smart to all the sorrows which embitter human life. What beams of joy will break in upon such benighted minds, when the Sun of Righteousness appearing, scatters the clouds of ignorance and error, and lets in the pure light of heaven upon the darkness of the human condition ? To make the discoveries of the Gospel to such persons, is to reveal to them a father and a friend. To discover that God is love ; that he is a God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself ; that he

administers the affairs of the universe so as to issue in the general good ; that he is for ever employing the attributes of his nature, his infinite wisdom, his boundless goodness, and his Almighty power, to favour the cause of righteousness, and to promote the happiness of the good throughout the whole creation : Such views of Deity as these, fill the mind with joy and with consolation. The weary traveller has now got a shelter from the storm. He has found a sanctuary in the time of trouble, and he looks to the heavens *from whence cometh his aid*. The heart is fully at ease while it rests on him that made it, and reposes with perfect peace under the protection of everlasting arms.

Further, Man in a state of nature is equally ignorant concerning himself. He finds himself here a stranger in a wide world, where the powers and operations of nature are very imperfectly known ; where both the causes and the issues of things are wrapt up in much darkness, and where he can only form uncertain conjectures from whence he comes, for what purpose he was brought into being, and whither he is to go when he departs from hence. If he looks back to his origin, he is lost in uncertainty. Born to be at the head of the inferior creation, and to be the masterpiece of the Almighty in this lower world, he hath at the same time appetites and passions, the abuse of which degrades him below the level of the brutes that perish. His dignity and his meanness ; the excellence of his frame, and the degeneracy of his nature ; the elevation of his understanding, and the corruption of his heart,—form a contrast which the philosophy of ages could never reconcile. How could such a creature come into the world ? If he be the work of a wise and good being, whence come the seeds of evil that are latent in his heart ? If he be the production of malignant beings, whence the seeds of goodness, and the lineaments of heaven, which, however obscured, are to be found in his frame ? Whatever supposition we take, we are beset with insuperable difficulties. But, change the scene, and look for-

ward to his future lot, and he is still more distressed and forlorn. He sees his friends and companions, one after another, continually disappearing. But whither do they go when they depart? Have they withdrawn into everlasting darkness, or do they still act in another scene? Is the beam of heaven for ever extinguished? Is the celestial fire which glowed in their hearts for ever quenched, and naught but ashes left to mingle with the earth, and be blown around the world? Are their hopes limited to this life? Or, beyond the horizon which terminates their present prospects, does a more beautiful and a more perfect scene present itself, where the wicked shall cease from troubling, and where the weary shall be at rest? If we consult our affections, we will be inclined to believe in a future state. Nature is loath to quit its hold. The heart still wishes to be kind to the friends whom once it loved. Imagination takes the hint, and indulges us with the pleasant hopes of one day meeting again the companions which we dropped in life. The perfections of the Deity also favour these wishes of nature. If God be infinitely wise and infinitely good, he would not have brought us into being only to see the light, and to depart for ever. Would a wise builder have erected such a noble structure, to last but for a moment? On the other hand, if we consult the analogy of nature, the horrors of annihilation surround us. The leaf that falls from the tree revives no more. The animal that mingles with the earth never rises to life again.

These doubts and horrors are now removed, and this darkness destroyed, by the Gospel of Christ. No sooner did the day-spring arise from on high, but it became a light to lighten the Gentiles, and extended its radiance over the region and shadow of death. The nature of man is now unfolded; the origin of evil accounted for; and life and immortality brought to light. Our Saviour did not propose these doctrines as the controvertible opinions of a private man: He taught them with the authority of God. Of his pe-

culiar doctrines he gave us a proof in kind. Did he teach that the dead were to arise? As an infallible confirmation of it, he himself arose from the dead. The good man need not now be in anxiety about his future existence. Come and behold the place where the Lord lay. Come and behold the place from which the Lord arose. You do not mourn as those who have no hope. You commit the bodies of your deceased friends to the grave in the hopes of a blessed resurrection. For we know that our Redeemer liveth, and we know that we shall in like manner revive. The sound of the last trumpet shall pierce even the caverns of the tomb; the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; the celestial fire shall again re-animate these ashes, and a glorious body spring forth from the bosom of corruption. What a source of consolation does this open to us in all the afflictions of life? Can that man despond and sink under the evils of life, who has the prospect of a blessed resurrection, and of a happy immortality?

It has been thus endeavoured to shew you the advantages that we derive from Christianity, in point of instruction. It was never my intention to exalt revelation at the expence of reason, or to establish Christianity upon the ruins of natural religion. The light of nature affords us many discoveries, and the religion of nature suggests many obligations to virtue. The heathens reasoned well concerning the existence of a supreme Cause; from the things which are seen, they inferred his eternal Power and Godhead, and gave many excellent lessons for the conduct of human life. But their discoveries had not the authority of uncontroverted truth, and their precepts wanted the obligation of laws. They were the private opinions of mere men, who had no commission to enact articles of faith, and who had no authority to establish laws for the conduct of human life. Their discoveries did not even carry conviction to their own minds. They doubted concerning points the most important and the most essential to the happiness of a rational mind.



If, from the order and beauty of the natural world, they inferred the existence and the power of God ; from the irregularities and evils of the moral world, they were led to doubt concerning his wisdom and goodness. The immortality of the soul was rather the object of their wishes, than of their firm belief. The law of nature, amidst the multiplicity of vicious and criminal customs, was almost totally obliterated. The sense of moral good and evil, amidst the universal degeneracy and depravity of manners, was in danger of being altogether lost. So general, so gross, was the darkness which long involved the nations, so deep and thick did the cloud sit over the moral world, that the wisest of the ancient philosophers thought it was a necessary step in the Deity, in order to ascertain his perfections, and vindicate his ways to men, that a prophet should descend from heaven, clothed with a Divine commission, to make a revelation of the Divine will.

But they laboured under a difficulty still more dreadful than ignorance,—that was a sense of guilt. This leads us to the *second* head of discourse,—To consider the Gospel as a plan of redemption from the guilt of sin.

When the sins of a criminal life rose up before them, horror of conscience overwhelmed them. Unenlightened nature presented nothing to their eye but an offended Judge, arrayed in all his terrors. The violated law called aloud for reparation. Justice unsheathed her flaming sword. The mercy of the Judge was altogether unknown. All was darkness and dismay, without one beam of hope. It was in this dreadful dilemma, that, in order to appease the wrath of the incensed Deity, they had recourse to sacrifices, and to the shedding of so much blood. It was this that drove them to violate the strongest and most sacred laws of nature ; drove them to torture their own flesh before the shrine of the offended God, and, terrible to tell, drove them,—drove the tender parent to take his son, his first-born son, and, with his own trembling

hands, to shed his blood as a ransom for his soul ! The grand inquiry of the heathen world was that with which the Prophet Micah introduces the king of Moab, " Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, " and bow myself before the High God ? "

As a sense of moral good and evil is implanted in the mind, and as a principle of conscience, condemning sin and approving righteousness, is universally felt, we see and we feel, by sad experience, that all men have sinned, have come short of the glory of God, and that, without an atonement, there could be neither joy nor peace in the heart of man.

Further, it was necessary that, in this atonement, provision should be made for delivering men from the state of degeneracy and imperfection, that they might not again fall into deadly sin, and stand in need of a new atonement. In consequence of that original corruption derived to us from our first parents, our nature is degenerated, and our moral abilities impaired so, that no man can yield perfect obedience to the law of God. It would therefore be of little consequence to blot out our transgressions for the time past, unless we were also to be delivered from the dominion of sin in the time to come. To be always falling into sin, to be always standing in need of new acts of indemnity and forgiveness, is neither consistent with the dignity of the Divine government, nor with the perfection of a rational and immortal nature. Accordingly the great atonement proposed in the gospel not only provides for our redemption from the wrath to come, but also for our restoration to the image of God. From the cross of Christ, virtue flows to the world, and healing to the nations. In consequence of his sufferings and death, our Saviour is now ascended to the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, to administer the affairs of his kingdom, and dispense the treasures of the new covenant. He retains our nature, and represents our persons in the presence of God, and makes intercession with the Father in our behalf. He sends down his sanctifying

Spirit to repair the ruins of our nature ; to create in us the clean heart ; to renew within us the right spirit ; to lead us on from grace to grace, and from strength to strength, till we perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Having thus recovered the original honour of our frame, and being restored to the image of God, he translates us to the mansions of immortality above, where these good tidings of great joy are a subject of praise amidst an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.

We proceed to the *third* general head of discourse, —To consider the Gospel as a scheme of comfort and relief during the afflictions of life.

Ever since the introduction of sin into the world, human life hath been a scene of misery. Man that is born of a woman is of few days ; and few as they are, they are full of trouble. He is doomed to suffer from the womb. When he comes into the world, he enters on a state of pain ; and from the cradle to the grave, his life is a pilgrimage of sorrow. Where is the kingdom ; where is the city ; where is the family ; where is the individual that is exempted from affliction ? It enters the palaces of the great, as well as the cottages of the low : it invades the throne of the king, as well as the hut of the peasant ; and scarce are the sanctuaries and the altars of the Lord asylums against its approach. The calamities of life are always great ; but when the mind is under the impression of melancholy, and bleeds from recent sorrow, then are they felt in extreme. The cloud sits deep upon the face of things ; the prospect before us is dark and lurid ; and the mind, if not supported, would sink under its woes. It is the great excellence, my brethren, of the Christian religion, that it abounds with consolations in all the evils of life. To the upright, says the Scripture, light shall arise in the midst of darkness. Those who are weary and heavy laden with their woes, if they come to Christ, he will give them rest.

The first consolation which the Gospel proposes to us, is, that there is a particular Providence which

watches over human affairs. It is part of the glad tidings revealed to us in the gospel, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth ; that although his throne be in the heavens, and though the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he condescends to visit the earth, to take up his abode and dwell with men. He who counts the number of the stars, numbers also the hairs of our head ; a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without the will of our heavenly Father. The most ordinary, as well as the most casual events, are under the direction of that arm which reaches from heaven to earth. Ever watching over the world, there is an eye above, which slumbers not nor sleeps. The archer may draw the bow at a venture ; but the arrow is directed by an higher hand. This will administer relief to the mind in all the afflictions of life. Trusting to the Providence of God, the devout mind will rest in hope, and break forth into joy : “ The Lord reigneth, let the earth be glad ; the Lord reigneth, let the multitude of the isles rejoice. His kingdom ruleth over all ; and he will make all things cooperate for the good of those who love him.” Shall not I therefore trust in him who is ever present to help me in the time of need ? Are not these perfections, which are equal to the government of the whole system of nature, more than sufficient to direct my little concerns ? My God is a present help in the time of trouble. He is not far off when grief is near, nor like an absent friend to the distressed. Let the darkness of the tempest surround me ; let the winds blow, and the waves rage, I have an interest in the Ruler of the storm ; I have an interest in him who can say to the winds, “ cease,” and to the waves, “ be still.”

In the next place, afflictions take their rise, not from the wrath, but from the love of God. Did we believe that the world was governed by a malignant being, who made sport of human misery, and took a malicious pleasure in punishing his creatures : Did we consider ourselves as under the dominion of hatred, as objects of the divine vengeance, and pursued

by the Almighty as victims devoted to perdition,—such thoughts would make us miserable indeed. They would sharpen the arrows of adversity, and mingle poison into the bitter cup which we are doomed to drink. Then might we cry out with Job, in the hour of despair, “I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, “I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. The “terrors of the Lord set themselves in array against “me. The arrows of the Almighty are within me, “the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit. Why “hast thou set me as a mark against thee? My soul “chooseth strangling and death rather than life.” These doubts and terrors are now removed. Fear not, O man! who strugglest under the adversities of life, I bring you good tidings of great joy; the afflictions which thou endurest are not the stripes of an hard master, who seeks thy destruction; they are the chastisements of a kind father, who punishes only to reform. The God of love has no pleasure in the misery, or in the death of his creatures. His eye overflows with pity, whilst his hand is lifted up to strike. Whilst he bruises, he binds up the wound. This surely will administer consolations to the wounded in mind, and speak peace to the broken in heart, when they reflect that the evils in their lot are a part of His providence, who doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; that they are not marks of his wrath, but indications of his love.

Further, As a consolation to the afflicted and distressed, Christianity assures us, that the various occurrences in human life are not accidental, nor detached events, but parts of a great plan that was concerted in the councils of Heaven before the world began, and is going on from age to age. If the moral world were a chaos without form, and void of order; if every event in life was separate, unconnected, and final, men, under the pressure of affliction, would often have occasion to complain. But, when we take in the discoveries of revelation, and behold a general order of things established, and a great plan going on;

when we consider that every particular event is a part of the great system of Providence, and conduces to form a perfect whole ; when we call to mind that no part of our life is an ultimate event, but has a reference to a future state, and is only the means to an end, we will acquiesce in the established order of nature, and follow on, active and cheerful, wherever we are called by Providence. In the early part of our life, when we are under the discipline of a master, we are instructed in arts, and trained to exercises, of which we know not then the meaning, nor the use. This life is but the infancy of our being, and a state of moral discipline for a better world ; let us not therefore be surprised or murmur, if many things fall out which seem adverse to our present good. When the Christian considers that the sufferings of the present life are connected with the enjoyments of heaven, and with the improvements of eternity, the unfavourable and hostile appearances of this world will vanish from his view. Familiarised to this grand and magnificent system of things, he will not complain concerning the conduct of Providence, nor think the universe in confusion when he is in disorder. He does not look upon himself, as self-love would suggest, as a whole, separated and detached from every other part of nature ; he regards himself in the light in which he imagines the great Spirit of the world regards him. He enters into the sentiments of the Divine Being, and considers himself as a particle, as an atom in an infinite system, which must, and ought to be disposed of according to the good and the conveniency of the whole.

*Lastly,* As a ground of joyful consolation to the distressed, let me remind you, that afflictions are not only requisite parts of our education for heaven, but that they are also necessary means of our improvement in the virtues and graces of the divine life. Adapted to the progressive and probationary state of fallen man, the administration of Providence assumes a variety of forms. Light and shade, the sunshine of prosperity, and the storm of adversity, succeed each

other; and chequer the scene of human life. In this mixed dispensation of suffering and enjoyment; the wisdom of Providence shines conspicuous. Were we always to be favoured with the smile of prosperity, and the candle of the Lord ever to shine upon our head; we would be apt to grow intoxicated with pride, to prove ungrateful to the Author of our being, and reserve to ourselves some part of that incense which we ought to burn upon his altars. On the other hand, were we always to be under the cloud of adversity, were Providence for ever to frown upon our designs, we would be ready to resign ourselves to despair, and cry out with the good men of old, "Is the mercy of Heaven clean gone? Will he be favourable no more?" This mixed dispensation of Providence is not only most favourable to religion; but is also best adapted to the nature of man. Man is made for suffering as well as for action. There are many principles in the human frame, many faculties of the mind, and many qualities of the heart, which would lie forever latent, were they not called forth to action by the adversities of life. Man was never destined by his Maker to slumber on the couch of repose, and to bask in the sunny season: He was appointed to labour and to action; to struggle with the tempest, to weather with the winter of affliction; to encounter peril; to endure pain; and, by Christian magnanimity and heroism; by patience; by perseverance and invincible vigour, to reach the crown of glory which is reserved on high for all the sons of God. The afflictions of life present an occasion for this spirit to exert itself; and for these graces to appear. If there were no adversities in human life; the scene of action would be limited, the career of virtue would be shortened, and a wide field of moral glory be lost to the world. Had we no trials in our lot, what need were there for the exercise of patience and resignation to the Divine will; which form such a striking part of the Christian character? Had we no afflictions to encounter, and no evils to fear, what occasion would there be for that strength

of mind which enables us to brave the dangers of life, to bid defiance to the evil day, and to repose, at all times, firm and unshaken, upon the arm of the Almighty ? Were there no dangers to combat, why should we take unto ourselves the whole armour of God, the sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation ? Not only does adversity present the occasion of spiritual improvement, but has also in every age produced an host of saints, who, clothed with this divine armour, have fought the good fight, and have come forth conquerors. You have recorded to you the faith of Abraham ; you have recorded the meekness of Moses ; you have recorded the patience of Job ; but had it not been for the trials which they underwent, the dangers they had to combat, and the distresses they had to bear, their glory might have perished, and their names been lost in oblivion. As the nightingale, it is said, when bereft of her young, fills the woods with the music of woe, and, from the impulse of sorrow, warbles her sweetest strains ; so, from the wounded mind, and from the broken spirit, the favour of devotion, and the eloquence of prayer, come up with such pathetic memorial before the throne, that the Divine ear listens delighted. True religion, true virtue, brightens in distress ; she emerges from the deep with tenfold radiance, and never shines with such transcendent, such triumphant, such immortal beauty, as when wandering through the darkness of an eclipse. You see, then, that in these paths you are in the company of the good, and are encompassed with a cloud of witnesses. You are not left alone to climb the arduous ascent. On these mountains, the feet of patriarchs, the feet of prophets, and the feet of martyrs, have trode. On these mountains, a greater than patriarchs, than prophets, than martyrs, appeared.

The *fourth* and *last* thing proposed, was, To consider Christianity as affording a joyful consolation against the fear of death.

Many and various are the evils to which human



life is subjected. To finish the mighty sum of them, and to make the scene end with pain, as it began with sorrow, comes the evil of death. The king of terrors, with his black train of attendants, even when seen at a distance, makes the firmest knee to shake, and the stoutest heart to tremble ; and, when exerting his influence upon feeble minds, and assisted by the power of the imagination, has kept multitudes, all their days under the cloud of melancholy, and under subjection to bondage. It is the great excellence of the Christian Religion, that as it affords consolation in all the evils of life, so it also provides a remedy against the fear of death. Hence the prophet, looking forward unto the days of the Messiah, breaks out into these strains of exultation : “ I will redeem them from death : I will ransom them from the power of the grave : O death, I will be thy plague ! O grave, I will be thy destruction ! ” Hence, says the Apostle Paul, Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also took part of the same, that he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

The evils attending death to men, in a state of nature, are manifold.

One of these is the uncertainty of our future destination. Reason gives us little information concerning the state of the soul when it departs from the body. We see the body mingle with its kindred elements, and return to the dust from whence it was taken. But what becomes of the soul ? Does it too cease to exist, and vanish into air ? Or does it still live and act in another scene ? Here we are lost in conjectures and uncertainty. We see the traveller involved in the cloud of night, but we know not assuredly of any morning that awaits him. The ocean spreads before us vast and dark, but we know not with certainty if it will waft us to any shore. What a disconsolate situation of mind is this ! Afflicted

with the view of our past life ; tormented with present pain ; and hovering over an abyss from which we are uncertain if we shall ever emerge ! To pass for ever into the dominion of darkness ; to go we know not where ! Lost in these doubts, troubled with the fears of futurity, the Roman Emperor addressed his departing soul : “ O my soul, thou art leaving thy once loved haunts, thy former companions, and thy wonted joys ; but into what unknown regions and dark abodes art thou now going ? Alas ! thou canst not tell ! ” These doubts and perplexities are now removed by the coming of Christ. When the Sun of Righteousness rose in our region, it dispelled the shadows of the everlasting evening ; it poured its radiance upon the path of immortality, and brought full to view the scenes of the invisible world. The future scenes of happiness and glory are not only discovered by the Gospel of Jesus, but are set before our eyes. In the inspired oracles, we hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God we see the dead arising from their graves ; a mighty army of saints and martyrs springing with joy from dust and corruption. We see Jesus upon the throne, and the faithful at his right hand. We hear the happy sentence pronounced upon them, “ Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundations of the world were laid.” We see them with palms of victory in their hands, and with crowns of glory on their heads, ascending up on high with their Lord, and sitting down with him upon his throne.

Another evil attending on death is the sense of our sins and transgressions, which then rising up to our memory in black colours, overwhelm us with horror of mind. But to those who receive the privileges of Christianity, the bed of death will not be a scene of terror. With a faith which overcometh the world, they gave up their souls into the hands of him who made them. “ I have indeed sinned, most merciful Father, against Heaven and in thy sight. Mine ini-

quities compass me about. I am covered with confusion, and condemn myself, and often have been afraid lest thy judgment should confirm the sentence of my own heart. But thou art merciful and gracious. Thou hast no pleasure in death. I am unworthy of the least of all thy mercies. But worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive blessing, and glory, and honour, and power. In his death I see the price of my redemption. In his life I see the path which leads to immortality. In his resurrection I see the proof of my own, and evidence of my immortal existence. I have accepted the offers of thy mercy, and have endeavoured to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith I was called. With whatever failings I may have been encompassed, thou knowest that it has been the study of my life to approve myself to thee, and to obtain the testimony of a good conscience. Trusting to thy mercy, and relying on the merits of my Redeemer, Father of all, I come to thee ! With the joy of the Patriarch, I follow thy call into the land unknown."

Thus, my brethren, I have endeavoured to set before you some of the joyful consolations derived from the Gospel of Jesus ; consolations which not only serve to support and animate us under the afflictions of this present life, but which also enter within the veil, and constitute our happiness through everlasting ages. But before I conclude, regard to my duty prompts me to warn and admonish you, that though the glad tidings of the Gospel are proclaimed to all, yet the consolations which they contain are not intended for, and are not conferred upon all who hear the Gospel. It is only they who believe, who repent, who reform, that will ever reap any solid advantage from the Christian religion. The profession of Christianity will avail us nothing. It will avail us nothing to say that we have faith. We may easily deceive ourselves, and make a lively imagination pass for a strong faith. But unless our faith purifies the heart, unless it works by love, unless it

produces the fruits of righteousness, it is no better than the faith of the devils, who believe and tremble. Let me therefore persuade you, never so much as in thought, to separate the ideas of faith and morality ; of belief in Christianity and a good life. If you make the attempt, you are undone for ever.





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## S E R M O N II.

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, Acts xvii. 30.

*And the times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*

**T**HIS is part of a sermon which the Apostle Paul delivered at Athens. The Athenians were the most ingenious and most illustrious people of Greece. Situated in a happy climate, and blessed with the highest degree of liberty which mankind can enjoy, they bent their genius to the cultivation of the sciences and arts. These they carried to such a pitch of perfection, as gained the palm from the contending world, and has attracted the eyes and admiration of all succeeding ages. But to shew the darkness and the ignorance of the human mind when not enlightened by the wisdom which cometh from above, as soon as they turned themselves to religion, they displayed nothing but their own absurdities and follies. In place of a rational and liberal form of religion, a gross and stupid idolatry universally prevailed ; in place of the true God, they bowed the knee to a dumb idol ; and instead of the worship of the heart, consecrated to his service impure and profane observances. Zealous to destroy this fabric of superstition, the Apostle Paul, rising in the midst of an assembly that was convened on the hill of Mars, reproved those masters of science, those lights of the Heathen world, with the boldness and the majesty of an apostle of the Lord. “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious :—the times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.”

Repentance towards God is the great and leading duty enjoined both in the Old and in the New Testament. Along with every revelation of the Divine will; along with every new commission to prophets and holy men to preach this Divine will, the duty of repentance is always inculcated in the strongest terms. The patriarch Noah preached repentance to the world before the flood. John the Baptist began his public ministry by preaching the doctrine of repentance. "Except ye repent, ye shall perish," was the awful denunciation of our Lord. And his apostles constantly began or ended their sermons with exhortations to this duty. This message, so often delivered to the world, I now address to you; and demand your serious attention to this most important subject; And, in further treating upon it, I shall, in the *first* place, Explain to you the nature of repentance; and, *secondly*, Lay before you the motives which ought to influence your minds to the practice of this duty.

The *first* thing proposed, was; To explain the nature of true repentance.

Repentance unto life, as it is well defined in that excellent summary of theology, the Shorter Catechism, is, "A saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of  
" a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the  
" mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full  
" purpose of, and endeavour after new obedience." According to this definition, repentance includes, *first*, A true sense of sin? *secondly*, Grief and hatred of sin; *thirdly*, Apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, the forsaking of sin, and endeavouring after new obedience.

*First*, A true sense of sin. This must be the groundwork of all the rest, because it is impossible to hate what we do not feel. It is impossible to conceive a hatred and aversion against a thing of which we are not sensible, or to flee from a danger of which we have no apprehension. Where there is no sense of

sin; therefore, there can be no repentance. Accordingly the Pharisee, who trusted in himself that he was righteous, was too proud, even when he was praying to God, to confess any guilt of his own. "God, I thank thee," says he, "that I am not as other men are." He was conscious, it seems, of no sin, though inwardly full of rottenness and hypocrisy. Such insensibility is a certain sign of a hardened and impenitent heart, and can proceed from nothing but a gross and conceited ignorance, a wretched inconsideration, or a long continuance in sin, that has rendered the conscience callous and past feeling. This first step of repentance supposes the sinner, in the first place, to be feelingly affected with a sense of his sins; to have his mind enlightened and his conscience awakened by the word of God; to be convinced from thence of the irregularity of his ways, and their contrariety to the holiness of the Divine nature; to labour under the load of his guilt; and in the consciousness of his own ill deserving, to be ready to sink under the number and the weight of his transgressions. Such were the sentiments of David's heart, and such the confession of his tongue: "I acknowledge my transgression; my sin is ever before me; mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a burden they are too heavy for me." This sense of sin is often accompanied with the emotions of fear. For when the sinner, already convicted in his own conscience, begins to reflect upon his past life, and at the same time to look up to God whom he has offended, and forwards to eternity, upon the brink of which he daily stands shivering; what a spectacle of terror must this be to a man who has been long spiritually blind, and whose eyes are but just opened to see this startling scene! And behold, behind him a formidable troop of sins; sins red as crimson, and numberless as the sand upon the sea-shore! Above, a holy and a just God, the Judge of the world, armed with the thunders of his wrath! Before him, the infernal world, disclosing all its horrors, and ready to swallow

him up in perdition ! Doubtless the terrors of the Lord, when thus set in array against a self-condemned sinner, will fill him with fear and dismay, especially when he considers that God is greater than his heart, and knoweth all things.

The *second* step of repentance is, being affected with a grief and hatred of sin. The former was a selfish feeling ; this is a generous passion. The former respects sin as ruinous to the sinner ; this regards it as offensive to God. When the penitent is already affected with a deep sense of the danger of his sin, how will it wound his mind, and pierce him to the heart, to consider that he has not only been long an enemy to himself, but also an enemy to God ; to consider that he has trespassed so far upon infinite goodness ; that he has dallied so long with infinite justice ; that he has mispent the precious talents committed to him of Heaven : that he has abused the faculties of his immortal soul ; that he has been defacing the image of God his Maker ; and that with his own hands he has been excluding himself from happiness, from heaven, and from the presence of the Lord. These, and such alarming thoughts, pierce to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit ; enough to constrain the sorrowful penitent to lift up his eyes in the midst of his torment, and to cry out with Job in the bitterness of his soul, “ I have sinned, and what shall I answer to thee, O thou Preserver of men ? Alas ! the arrows of the Almighty are within me ! the poison of them drinketh up my spirit. But what grieves me most is, that I have offended thee, the Author of my life, and the Preserver of my being ; that I have sinned against so much goodness, and provoked such tender mercy. Mine iniquities deserve thy wrath and vengeance. But thy goodness reacheth from heaven to earth. Thy mercy, like thyself, is infinite. Let this remorse which I now feel, be the only punishment of my sin ; and let me not be finally delivered over to the tormentors. This I request and pray on account of the merit of my Redeemer. His righteousness is all suf-



ficient and meritorious. By it may I obtain favour and acceptance with thee, and be translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God.”

The *third* step in repentance towards God, is an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and a forsaking of sin. This is properly an act of faith. Faith and repentance are twin graces of the soul, and can never be separated. True repentance includes faith, and true faith includes repentance. The mercy of God through a Redeemer being proclaimed in the Gospel, and a new and living way to the holiest of all being set open by the blood of Jesus, the true penitent flies for refuge to the hope set before him, and lays hold on eternal life. He forsakes his sins, and walks in newness of life. He begins with alacrity to run the race set before him, and feels, to his blessed experience, that the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. This is the crowning act of true repentance, and the test of its sincerity. That is not true repentance, when the sinner after feeling some compunctions of mind, some touches of remorse, forms a few feeble resolutions, which he breaks at the first approach of temptation. He is not a true penitent, who, after mourning over his old sins, begins a new course of wickedness. This is only changing one sin for another. A man who has spent his youth in profusion and extravagance, may devote his riper years to avarice and the cares of the world. Such a person is indeed a different man, but he is not a penitent. In like manner, a person who has been at the head of the follies and the vices of the world, who has taken the lead in all fashionable and criminal gratifications, may grow tired of such a course of life, as human nature will tire of every thing : Such a person may take a fit of devotion, and rush into a variety of gloomy superstitions and severities ; but this is not true repentance. This is only passing from one error to another. This is only giving a different direction to your passions. Repentance must effect a thorough

change, or it is no repentance at all. Neither is he a true penitent who, after being affected with remorse for sin, falls into the same course again; who is always sinning and always repenting; and who goes on in a sad circle of making resolutions, and breaking them as soon as they are made. True repentance is repentance from dead works to serve the living God. It consists in confessing and forsaking our sins. It consists in denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and abounding in the fruits of righteousness unto eternal life.

I do not mean by this, that any man in this life is altogether free from sin. Imperfections cleave to the best. Who can say that he has made his hands clean, or his heart pure? Good men oft-times may be off their guard; they may be surprized in the hour of temptation, and be overtaken in a fault; but they will never sin upon a plan; they will never make a system of iniquity; they will not deliberately concert plots of wickedness upon their beds, and rise up to execute with warmth what they have contrived with coolness. The grace of God does not act by fits and starts; is not a transient, but an abiding principle. The Christian is fixed and immoveable, and abounding in the work of the Lord. He is not of those apostates, mentioned by the Apostle Jude, who resemble the morning clouds, that are ever varying their form, and are carried about with every wind: who resemble wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. But he advances from strength to strength; his path is like the light of the morning, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

There is one other part of repentance which I have not yet mentioned, and which merits your serious attention; that is, making restitution and reparation, as far as lies in your power, for the evils you have done. "If I have wronged any man," said Zaccheus when he repented, "Lo I restore him fourfold." Have you wronged any man of his property? Have you

taken away his goods ? Make restitution. Have you wronged any man in his reputation ? Have you taken away his good name ? Make reparation : Confess that you was a defamer : Confess that you was a liar. Have you offended and injured any one ? Ask his forgiveness. Let no false shame hinder you from doing your duty. You have good cause to be ashamed. Be always ashamed to offend ; but never blush for your returning virtue. Let no false shame, therefore, no foolish obstinacy, no pride of heart, prevent you from a thorough reformation. Better be exposed to shame here, than be doomed hereafter to everlasting pains.

The *second* thing proposed, was,—To lay before you the motives to repentance.

And, in the *first* place,—The superior light and information derived to the world by the Christian religion, concerning the rule of righteousness according to which we ought to conduct our lives, suggests a strong motive and inducement to repentance. God indeed never left himself without a witness in the world. He made the firmament bright with his glory, and commanded the heavens, with all their host, to declare their handywork. With his own finger he inscribed the laws of justice and of virtue upon the heart of man. Attentive to this voice of God within, and assisted by those impressions of Divinity without, the moral teachers among the Gentiles struck out many useful discoveries, and taught many valuable lessons of wisdom to the world. They wandered not in the dark concerning the essentials of natural religion. They were not ignorant of the chief duties of life. The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, they discovered by the works of creation ; and having the law of nature written in their hearts, they were a law unto themselves. But the defect which they laboured under, was the want of authority to enforce the discoveries which they made, and the want of a proper sanction to the rules of life which they established. When keen and

violent, the passions of men push them forward; they will not be restrained by the voice of reason and philosophy. On these occasions, men will reply to such an instructor, "Who gave thee a commission to teach and reform the world? Did the voice of heaven come to thine ears? Who invested thee with authority and dominion over the mind? Who appointed thee instructor of the nations, and legislator of the moral world?" The heathen teachers could pretend to no such authority. But Jesus of Nazareth was invested with a divine commission. He descended from heaven to teach the will of God upon earth. He performed miracles in confirmation of his religion. He set the seal of heaven to the doctrines which he taught, and guarded the laws which he established with the sanction of rewards and punishments. Such was the difference betwixt a human teacher and a prophet of the Lord; and such ought to be the difference betwixt the lives of heathens and the conduct of Christians. What signifies the superior excellency of your religion, unless its superiority appear in your life? What avails the light to you, if ye continue to walk in darkness. Unless ye repent, it had been better for you that the kingdom of God had never come amongst you. If ye still walk in the region and shadow of death, it had been better that the day-spring from on high had never risen over your benighted land. The heathens shall rise up in judgment against you, and shall condemn you. It shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, those cities of sin, those monuments of the vengeance of God to all succeeding times; it shall be more tolerable for these, than for those wicked Christians, who have disregarded the voice which spoke from heaven; who have profaned that blessed name by which they were called; and who, by their obstinacy and impenitence, have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing.

*A second* motive and encouragement to repentance,

is the hope and prospect of success. Before the introduction of Christianity, when the world lay in darkness as well as in wickedness, a sense of guilt burdening the conscience, and a dread of future punishment as consequent upon that guilt, drove the nations to a variety of expedients, in order to avert the vengeance of heaven, and make an atonement for their sins. Hence various rites and ceremonies were instituted. Hence so many sacrifices were offered up, and so much blood was shed. Reason indeed could have told them that these means were unavailable; that the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer, could never take away sin. But reason could not assure them, that any other means, that even their repentance would be effectual to that end. Here Revelation steps in to our aid. The Gospel assures us, that the wrath of God is not only averted from men, that He is not only reconciled, but also that he is a God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. The gate of mercy is set open by the blood of Jesus, and an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is promised to all those who sincerely repent of their sins, to all who believe and obey the Gospel. He that confesseth and returneth, shall find mercy. The sacrifices of God are a broken heart and a contrite spirit; a broken and a contrite heart the Lord will not despise. Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, "whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a humble and a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." Seeing then that the favour of God, and all the blessings of the new covenant, are promised to true repentance, will you by your impenitence and unbelief, cut yourselves off from these blessings? When such strong consolation is offered, will you not fly for refuge to the hope set before you? When heaven is opened for your reception, will you refuse to enter in? When the fruits of the tree of life are presented to you, will you not put forth your hand, and take and eat, and live for ever.

A *third* motive to repentance is the assistance of the Spirit, which the Gospel offers. Christianity is called the ministration of the Spirit. The effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost upon the Apostles, which enabled them to speak all languages, and to work miracles, was extraordinary, and intended to cease with that age. But the heavenly Comforter still abides with all the disciples of Christ, to guide them into all truth, and incline them to the practice of every duty. The prophet Zechariah, foretelling the glory of the latter days, or times of the Messiah, says, "It shall come to pass in those days, that I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn and be in bitterness." The Spirit of grace and of supplication then poured out abundantly, shall impress men with sorrow and contrition for their sin; shall incline them to renounce their former sinful ways, to repent of their past transgressions, and to walk in newness of life. This operation of the Divine Spirit upon the mind, does not impel men to action by mechanical influence, and obstruct the exercise of their natural powers. The grace of God does not turn man into a machine. It draws him, as the Scripture happily expresses it, with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man. It acts in such a manner as is adapted to the powers of a rational being, and to the liberty of a free agent. When such gracious aids are offered to us, when the Spirit of God strives in order to reclaim and reform us, it must be a high aggravation of our wickedness to resist his operations, and by our hardness and impenitence of heart, to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. What more could the good husbandman have done to his vineyard than he has done? He calls upon you to repentance by the voice of nature; he calls you by the voice of reason; he calls you by the voice of providence; he calls you

by the voice which spake from heaven : He sends down his Holy Spirit to second these Divine calls, to help your infirmities, to enlighten your darkness, to strengthen your feeble powers, and to work in you both to will and to do that which is his good pleasure. Not only does he prepare the crown of glory, but he also assists you to fight the good fight, and to finish your course, that you may obtain that crown. Not only does he open the heavens to receive you, but he also stretches out his hands to conduct you thither. And if, after all, you resist his Holy Spirit ; if you counterwork his saving plan ; if you defeat the efforts of mercy, the labours of Heaven used for your recovery, your guilt is upon your own head, your ruin is owing to yourselves, with your own hand you push yourselves over the brink into the pit of utter perdition.

In the *fourth* place, as an inducement to repentance, consider the cross of Christ, who suffered the punishment due to our sins. How great must be the evil of sin, and how strong the obligation for us to repent of our sins, when such a sacrifice was required in order to expiate our guilt, and atone the wrath of Heaven. Burnt-offerings, thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil, the first-born offered up for the transgression, the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul, could not suffice. The Lamb of God could alone take away the sin of the world. Look then on him whom thou hast pierced, and mourn. Every groan that he utters, every tear that he sheds, every drop of blood that he pours, calls thee to repentance. View him stretched out on the cross, groaning under the pains of death, inclining his blessed head, and addressing his last words to you, “ Sinners, behold your Saviour ! behold him who was persecuted by Satan and by wicked men ; behold him who was forsaken by God ; behold this head which was crowned with thorns ; behold these hands which were nailed to the tree ; behold this side which was wounded with the spear ; behold the blood that flows from every part ;

sinner, it was shed for you !” Canst thou, O man ! behold that scene without emotion ? Canst thou continue impenitent in the practice of those sins, which brought thy Saviour to that painful and ignominious death ?

*Lastly*, It is another motive to repentance, that God “ has appointed a day in the which he will judge the “ world,” as is mentioned in the verse following the text. That the soul of man survives the body, that there is a state of rewards and punishments beyond the grave, has been the general belief among all nations. Testimonies of this truth every where abound. Whether we turn to the east or to the west ; whether we consult the history of ancient or of modern times ; whether we listen to the accounts of the old world or of the new, we are presented with proofs and evidences of this important doctrine. How this opinion came to be so general, as to form an article in the popular creed of all nations, is a question of some difficulty. To those who have no guide but the light of nature, and who have no supernatural aids to assist the efforts of their own understanding, the arguments on both sides seem to be so equally balanced, that, upon principles of reasoning, it is almost impossible to come to any determination. But, in all inquiries concerning human nature, we ought to attend to the heart more than to the understanding. Almighty God hath endowed us with a sense of moral good and evil. He hath placed within us a principle of conscience, which passeth judgment upon human actions, approving the good, and condemning the bad. This tells us, that in the Divine administration it ought to be well with the righteous and ill with the wicked. In confirmation of this, we see, that by the original appointment of Heaven, and in the daily course of Providence, there is no peace to the wicked ; and that they have great peace who love the law of the Lord. At the same time, we frequently observe in the course of human affairs, that the lot of the wicked falls to the righteous. We see ma-



ny instances in life of good men depressed, and of bad men exalted ; of vice holding a sceptre, and virtue pining in chains. How often have we seen the best of men reduced to eat the bread of sorrow, and to drink the waters of affliction, whilst the worthless and the infamous have rioted in the abundance of life, and enjoyed what their hearts could wish. When such scenes are presented to our eyes, our heart rises within us. Shall it always continue thus, we say within ourselves, shall it always continue thus in a world that is governed by God ? Shall oppressed righteousness never be taken into the protection of Providence, and triumphant wickedness never fall under his censure ? Shall the cry of the innocent, of the oppressed, and of the persecuted, never reach the throne of justice ? Are the wrongs and grievances of the good and the righteous, the wrongs and grievances which they have suffered in the cause of goodness and of righteousness, never to be redressed ? Is wickedness finally to triumph over oppressed virtue ; to triumph over the laws of nature ; to triumph over the providence of Heaven ? Will the time never come when the Almighty shall rise from his throne to adjust and rectify the affairs of the moral world ? If not in this, certainly in some future state he will assume the part of a Judge, to reward the just, and to take vengeance upon the wicked.

All this has at last been fully revealed. It was reserved to the Divine Prophet, who came from the bosom of the Father, to bring life and immortality to light by his Gospel. He taught that God had appointed a day in which he was to judge the world : that the dead were to be raised, and all that ever lived upon the earth to appear at his tribunal. Of this doctrine he gave assurance unto all men by his own resurrection from the dead ; and as surely as he arose, shall we at the time appointed arise. When the mystery of God is finished, the last trumpet will sound. The voice of the Son of God will pierce the caverns of the tomb, will be heard over the kingdoms of the

dead, will re-animate the ashes of thousands of generations, and sit an assembled world at the seat of judgment. By the unalterable appointment of Heaven, every thing has its period. The cedar of Lebanon fades away like the leaf upon its top. Lebanon itself decays in the course of years. States and empires have their day, like mortal man. Limits are set to time, and the world has its last hour. A few generations more having passed away, the day comes which God hath appointed to judge the world : the great day for which all other days have revolved. When this period approaches, heaven opens wide its everlasting doors, and behold the Judge comes forth ! He comes in the glory of his Father ; in the effulgence of unveiled Divinity he comes, attended with all the host of heaven ! Before him the harbinger of his appearance, the destroying angel of nature descends, clothed with a cloud, having his face like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He sets his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth ; he lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears " by him " that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no " more ! " As the doom of nature is denounced, the thunders of heaven for the last time utter their voices ; the laws of nature are dissolved ; the stars fall from the firmament ; the moon is turned into blood ; and that sun, whose beams you now behold, sinks in the darkness of eternal night ; the earth hears its last sentence, and shakes to the centre ; the four corners of the world hear it ; all that are alive hear it ; all the dead hear it, and live ; from the presence of their Creator, the heavens depart like a scroll rolling itself together ; the earth vanishes, and there is no place found for it ; every mountain and every island is fled ; creation fades away to give place to uncreated glory ; the great tribunal is erected ; the books are opened ; the Judge descends ; the world is assembled ; the sentence is pronounced ; the sentence is executed ; down to the prison of darkness and despair, the habitation of unquenchable and everlasting fire,

the wicked are driven, where, bound in chains, they feel the torment of the worm that never dies, and suffer in the flames of the lake whose smoke ascendeth up for ever and ever; whilst enthroned in glory above, and adorned with the beauties of immortality, the righteous ascend with their Lord, and approaching to the fountain of life, partake of those pleasures at the right hand of God, which shall occupy and animate the praises of eternity.

Let me now ask you, my brethren, do you believe what you have now heard? Do you believe that there is a judgment to come, and that each of you shall bear a part in that tremendous scene? I appeal to a witness that cannot lie. I appeal to your own conduct. Do you live and act in such a manner as becomes those who have one day to answer for their actions? Is your conversation in heaven, from whence you look for the Saviour and the Judge? Are your loins girt about, your lamps burning, and you yourselves like unto men who wait for the coming of their Lord? Were the general judgment now to begin, were these heavens to open, and the sign of the Son of Man to appear overhead, could you face his tribunal? Could you lift up your heads with confidence and joy amidst the ruins of nature, and the crash of a dissolving world? If not, I call upon you to repent, and to reform your lives. You are still under the administration of grace, and have the hope of glory set before you. Heaven and immortality are in your offer. God graciously calls you to repentance and newness of life. The Spirit helps your infirmities, and strives to conquer the stubbornness of your spirits. But he will not always thus wait to be gracious. Your day of grace does not last for ever. If mercy reclaims you not, you are delivered over to the hands of justice. If you reject the golden sceptre when it is held out to you, a rod of iron succeeds to destroy the children of disobedience. Repent you must, in one form or other. If your sins affect you not with sorrow and contrition here, they will fill you with unavailable remorse and

despair hereafter. You must either be affected with the kindly emotions of that repentance which is unto life, or be tormented with the stings of the worm that never dies.

Knowing these terrors, we endeavour to persuade men. Happy for men, if they would endeavour to be persuaded ! If these things, my brethren, which you have been now hearing be true ; if it be true that we shall be raised up at the last day ; that the day of judgment shall as surely arise as this morning arose, in obedience to laws which can no more fail to bring it forth than the sun could this morning refuse to arise at the command of its Creator ; if it be true that all of us who are here assembled shall be assembled again around the judgment-seat of God ; if it be true that this is our only state of probation, and that life and death are now in our choice, that heaven and hell are now set before us ; if these things be true, (and true they are, otherwise this book is a collection of fables,) if these things be true,—then, O my brethren, what manner of persons ought we to be !—then, O my God, what manner of persons ought we to be !

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## S E R M O N III.

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2 COR. vi. 2.

*—Behold now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

**T**HERE is not a man upon the earth but who has some sense of religion upon his mind, and intends one day or another to work out his salvation. When we look into the world, we find that all men are just about to reform. However loose in their principles, however profligate in their lives, they seriously purpose to amend their conduct, and the sinner of to-day resolves to be a saint to-morrow. Seeing then that all men are so favourably disposed towards religion ; seeing that all men are in earnest one day to repent, how does it come to pass that so many men never repent ; that such multitudes live and die in their sins ? It is because they delay their repentance ; it is because they put off the day of salvation ; because they begin not a course of reformation, but are only *about* to reform. This infatuation is not confined to the inexperience of our early years ; it extends through every period of life. In this the hoary head is no wiser than the youth of yesterday ; and the same lying spirit that deceived us at twenty, is believed at three-score and ten. In this experience does not make us wise, and when we buy instruction it avails us not. The fool who wanting to cross the river lay down on its bank till the waters all ran by, is but a just emblem of that man who delays his repentance from time to time, who is always purposing, but never performing ; and

who, neither warned by the past, nor alarmed for the future, purposes on to the last, and dies the same. Such is the life which numbers of men lead in the world, spending the prime and vigour of their life in vain pursuits; letting all their religion evaporate in empty resolutions, till, in an hour in which they are not aware, the warning is given: at midnight is the cry made, and, when they seek to enter in with the bridegroom, the door is shut!

That you may understand the expressions made use of in the text, I must recal to your remembrance; that in the language of Scripture, the period of our probation is called a time, a season, or a day. There is an accepted time, there is a season of merciful visitation, there is a day of grace; which, if we let slip; the night cometh, in which no man can work, in which we shall grope for the wall like the blind, in which we shall stumble at noon-day as in the night; and be in desolate places as dead men. This does not arise from a defect of mercy in God, from a defect of merit in Christ, or from a defect of grace in the Holy Spirit; it arises from ourselves, and from the nature of things. Almighty God hath appointed this life to be our state of probation. He hath set apart a time to fix the character for eternity. When therefore, by repeated acts and by long habits, this everlasting character is fixed, no alteration can succeed. To give an instance that may have occurred to the observation of you all; you have seen, or you have heard of criminals who have been trained up from their youth in the practice of vice, who have advanced from lesser to greater crimes, who have been punished according to law, who have been imprisoned, and who have been banished, who have returned from banishment, and for greater crimes have been condemned to die, who from some artifice or incident have escaped in the critical moment, and who, instead of being reformed by all these punishments, have fallen into the same crimes again, and even grown bolder in wickedness. There have indeed been instances of great sinners, who

have turned penitents, and been good Christians; but it is much to be questioned if there be any such instances among those who have been *long* sinners; who have committed iniquity, not by fits and starts, but upon a fixed and determined plan, who have spent in the service of sin all the fire of youth and coolness of age.

Having explained to you the meaning of the phrase used in the text, before proceeding further, take next a view of life, and you will see, that a great part of men let slip the accepted time and day of salvation till it be too late. It is the happiness of most men in countries where the Christian religion is professed, to receive a good education, and to be trained up from their youth in the principles of religion, and in the practice of virtue. But when this period of discipline is over; when a man sets out in life, and becomes his own master, he frequently becomes a different person in that different state, and looks upon the good habits of his youth as some of those childish things which he ought now to put away. If his education has been severe and rigorous; if his parents restrained him in that gaiety of heart and flow of the spirits which is the portion of youth; if he pined in his closet, whilst his equals in age frequented those entertainments which can be enjoyed with innocence, he then generally goes to the other extreme; and plunges with a precipitant step into all the follies and vices of the age. The prisoner having got loose, grows wild and extravagant. Being formerly shut up, he now wants to know the world; and, in order to this, ventures on forbidden paths, resigns the reins of conduct to inclination, and gives a loose to all his desires. Having found his former principles to be inconsistent with the enjoyment of life, he confounds his early prejudices with true piety; for which cause he throws off religion altogether; he becomes a patron and defender of vice; he laughs at every thing that is serious; and perhaps out of contempt to this day, in which we assemble together to worship the God of our fathers;

out of contempt to the sacred rites of his country, which all wise heathens hath revered ; out of contempt to the venerable institutions of our holy religion, spends this day in dissipation and profaneness, and open impiety.

But, not to draw the character with such black stains, let us suppose men at that period passing their days in folly rather than in vice, at the head of every idle scheme, first in every fashionable amusement, and, as the Scripture happily expresseth it, " walking in vain show." Behold them making amusement one of the cares of life ; spending those precious hours, which no power can ever recal, which no future labour can ever compensate, spending those precious hours in vanity and folly, whilst all along they forget the business of their salvation, and are no more affected with the prospect of a world to come, than with a tale that is told. But whilst thus they dance round in a circle of folly ; whilst they solace themselves with the prospect of pleasures rising upon pleasures, never to have an end, and say in secret to their souls, " To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant ;" whilst, like the foolish virgins, they slumber and sleep in the arms of this Delilah, at midnight is the cry made, O man, thy hour is come ! And the trembling soul takes its departure unawares and unprepared to God the judge of all !

To guard you against the fatal error which has undone its thousands, allow me to recommend to your practice the necessity of instant repentance and reformation. In the *first* place, No time is so proper as the present ; *secondly*, If you delay, your reformation will be difficult ; *thirdly*, If you delay long, it may become altogether impossible.

In the *first* place ; then there is no time so proper as the present.

The prodigal son exhibits to us a scene which we often see realized in life : A young man, who had been educated in the paths of virtue, declining from these paths, and going astray into forbidden ground,



from the fond expectation of meeting with some strange, vast, unknown happiness in the gratification of sensual desire. In the course of this unhallowed pilgrimage, he gives loose reins to his mind, he indulges every wandering inclination, he denies himself nothing that his heart wishes for. At last he comes to himself; he sees the folly of his ways, he repents, he resolves, he amends. Such a change of life we can easily conceive. In his former situation, he knew not what he did, he was transported by passion, he went headlong down the torrent. But when once he began to reflect, he found that that was the critical moment of life, which, if he had neglected, his return would have been more difficult. In his former situation, he went forward in the path which seemed right in his own eyes, without looking back. He did not act against the admonitions of conscience, he did not think at all. But if, after his eyes were opened to discern the state of wretchedness and guilt into which he had fallen; if, after this, he had returned to folly again, it would have been much more difficult to restore him by repentance. Let this then be your conduct; whenever you come to the knowledge of your sins, whenever you perceive any thing amiss in your lives, seize the favourable moment, as the proper time to reform.

What is it, I beseech you, that you do by delaying? You allow corruption time to strengthen and fortify itself; you give temptation double force, by yielding to it, not from surprise, but with deliberate consent; you weaken the power of conscience, that check which God appointed to you in your evil courses; and, with your own hand, you throw obstacles in the way of your conversion. You now see you are sinful and undone; you now resolve to repent and amend; you are now setting out in the path which leadeth to life; you are not far from the kingdom of God: but if you resolve, and perform not; if, when you are once engaged, you draw back; you then fly off from the path of life to the way of destruction; you throw yourself farther from the kingdom of God than if you had never

set out. At once, then, at once make your escape from the allurements of sin ; break the chains by which you are held ; cut off all the avenues and approaches to the sin that beset you ; give no time to the enemies of your soul to collect their strength ; by faith and repentance now enter into the way that opens into the heavens ; when you say, with sincere purpose of heart, " I will arise and go to my Father," in that moment arise and go to thy Father ; *now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation.

In the *second* place, By delaying, your conversion will become extremely difficult.

Thou sayest, O man ! that thou wilt repent in some future period of time ; but thou knowest not the danger of such a resolution. It is amazing to think with what ease we can impose upon ourselves. In spite of all his boasted wisdom, man is more simple than the beast of the field. Do you consider, my friends, that delaying from day to day, and from year to year, that postponing the work of your salvation to some future period of time, is little better than a fixed determination that you will never begin it at all ? Do you reflect, that the time to come, if it ever comes, will be the same to you *then*, that the present time is to you *now* ? There will occur the same difficulties to deter you, the same pleasures to allure you ; the same dangers to terrify you. Objects will then be as present, and strike the senses as strongly as ever ; and the time of reformation will still be to-morrow. Nay, it will then be more difficult to be saved than it is now. You will have more sins to repent of ; more bad habits to subdue ; a more corrupted nature to put off. It is a remarkable fact, and deserves your most serious attention, that, among all conversions recorded in Scripture, there is not one of a sinner who delayed his repentance. Among all the returning penitents there mentioned, there is not one in the situation of a Christian, who daily hears the Gospel without its having any effect upon his life. Zaccheus, upon hearing Jesus Christ proclaim the glad tidings

of salvation, yielded to the influences of that grace to which he had hitherto been a stranger, and surrendered himself to a call which had never been made before. The apostles, in the course of their ministry, converted Jews and Gentiles. They converted the Jews, by proposing to them an idea, which was new to them, the Lord of glory, whom they with wicked hands had crucified and slain. They converted the Gentiles, by working miracles, in proof of their divine commission, and by preaching the doctrines of salvation to them, which they had never heard before.

But what new methods can we attempt with *you*? Is there any motive to repentance which hath not already been urged upon you? Is there one avenue to the heart which has not already been tried, and which has not already been tried in vain? Shall we address ourselves to your conscience, to give you the alarm? But alas! you have often heard its voice, you have often disregarded its voice, and by efforts too successful, have lulled it into a profound sleep. Shall we address ourselves to your hopes, by describing to you the joys of heaven, the rivers of pleasures which are at God's right hand, the happiness of the blessed, the triumphs of eternity? All these have been already presented to your eyes, and to all these you have preferred the enjoyments of an hour. You have sold your birth-right to immortality for a sordid gratification, and you now only mind earthly things. Shall we endeavour to alarm your fears, by setting before you the horrors of hell, the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power? These have been traced out to you an hundred times, and you have learned the fatal art of freeing yourselves from the fears of them. Shall we implore you by the grace of the Gospel, and by the tender-mercies of the God of Peace? But alas! you have undervalued his mercy, you have turned his grace into wantonness. Shall we set before you the image of a Saviour dying on the cross for the redemption

of the world ? But alas ! a crucified Redeemer hath been often preached to you, the memorial of his sacrifice hath been renewed in your sight, and after all, you have counted his blood as a common thing ; you have looked upon the Son of God suffering on the cross with as much unconcern as the Jews of old, when they cried out, “ Away with him, away with him ! ”

In the *third* place, By long delaying, your conversion may become altogether impossible.

Habit, says the proverb, is a second nature : and indeed it is stronger than the first. At first, we easily take the bend, and are moulded by the hands of the master ; but this nature of our own making is proof against alteration. The Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, and the leopard his spots ; the tormented in hell may as soon revisit the earth ; as those who have been long accustomed to do evil, may learn to do well. Such is the wise appointment of Heaven to deter sinners from delaying their repentance. When the evil principle hath corrupted the whole capacity of the mind ; when sin, by its frequency and its duration, is woven into the very essence of the soul, and is become part of ourselves ; when the sense of moral good and evil is almost totally extinct ; when conscience is seared as with a hot iron ; when the heart is so hard that the arrows of the Almighty cannot pierce it ; and when, by a long course of crimes, we have become what the Scripture most emphatically calls, “ vessels of wrath fitted for destruction ; ”—then we have filled up the measure of our sins ; then Almighty God swears in his wrath that we shall not enter into his rest ; then there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for wrath, and indignation, which shall devour the adversary. Almighty God, weary of bearing with the sins of men, delivers them over to a reprobate mind, when, like Pharaoh, they survive only as monuments of wrath ; when, like Esau, they cannot find a place for repentance, although they seek it carefully with tears ; when, like the foolish virgins,

they come knocking, but the door of mercy is for ever shut.

Further, let me remind you, my brethren, that if you repent not now, perhaps you shall not have another opportunity. You say you will repent in some future period of time ; but are you sure of arriving at that period of time ? Have you one hour in your hand ? Have you one minute at your disposal ? Boast not thyself of to-morrow. Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. Before to-morrow, multitudes shall be in another world. Art thou sure that thou art not of the number ? Man knoweth not his time. As the fishes that are taken in an evil net, as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil hour. Can you recal to mind none of your companions, none of the partners of your follies and your sins, cut off in an unconverted state ; cut off, perhaps, in the midst of an unfinished debauch, and hurried with all their transgressions on their head, to give in their account to God the Judge of all ? Could I shew you the state in which they are now in ; could an angel from heaven unbar the gates of the everlasting prison ; could you discern the late companions of your wanton hours overwhelmed with torment and despair ; could you hear the cry of their torment which ascendeth up for ever and ever ; could you hear them upbraiding you as the partners of their crimes, and accusing you as in some measure the cause of their damnation !—Great God ! how would your hair stand on end ! how would your heart die within you ! how would conscience fix all its stings, and remorse, awaking a new hell within you, torment you before the time ! Had a like untimely fate snatched *you away then*, where had you been *now* ? And is this the improvement which you make of that longer day of grace with which Heaven has been pleased to favour you ? Is this the return you make to the Divine goodness for prolonging your lives, and indulging you with a longer day of repentance ? Have you in good earnest determined within yourself that

you will weary out the long-suffering of God, and force destruction from his reluctant hand?

I beseech, I implore you, my brethren, in the bonds of friendship, and in the bowels of the Lord; by the tender mercies of the God of Peace; by the dying love of a crucified Redeemer; by the precious promises and awful threatenings of the Gospel; by all your hopes of heaven and fears of hell; by the worth of your immortal souls, and by all that is dear to men; I conjure you to accept of the offers of mercy, and fly from the wrath to come. “Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation.”

All the treasures of heaven are now opening to you; the blood of Christ is now speaking for the remission of your sins; the church on earth stretches out its arms to receive you; the spirits of just men made perfect are eager to enrol you amongst the number of the blessed; the angels and archangels are waiting to break out into new alleluiahs of joy on your return; the whole Trinity is now employed in your behalf? God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, at this instant call upon you, weary and heavy laden, to come unto them that ye may have rest unto your souls!

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## S E R M O N    I V .

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LUKE xv. 18.

*I will arise and go to my Father.*

THE parable of the prodigal son is one of the most beautiful and affecting pieces of composition which is anywhere to be found. The occasion on which it was spoken, and the persons to whom it was addressed, are well known to you. Dropping, therefore, what was peculiar at the first narration, I shall consider it as representing in general the return of sinners to God by true repentance.

Such a return is not a single act in the Christian life ; it is the habitual duty of every man who is subject to infirmities and defects. For such is the weakness of human nature in this imperfect state, such is the strength of temptation in this evil world, that frail man is often led astray before he is aware. Alas ! in our best estate we are but returning penitents ; and to the last hour of this mortal life we stand in need of amendment.

We may observe the following steps in the return of the prodigal to his father's house ; *first*, His restoration to a better mind, by means of consideration. " When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare !" *Second*, Ingenuous sorrow for sin, accompanied with faith in the Divine mercy. " Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee." *Third*, A resolution to return to a sense of duty. " I will arise and go to my father." And, *fourth*, His

immediate performance of that resolution. "And he  
"arose, and came to his father."

*First*, His restoration to a better mind by means of consideration. "He came to himself."

With great propriety is this expression used ; for a wicked man is *beside himself*. Madness, saith Solomon, is in the heart of the sinner. As madness is a disease of the rational powers, so is vice of the moral. Sin, in like manner, unhinges the whole frame of the moral being, tinges with its baleful colours every sentiment of the heart, and presents to view a spectacle more melancholy still,—a being, made after the image of God, sinking that image into the resemblance of a brute, or the character of a fiend. Mad, however, as such persons are, they are not always so. Sin cannot always keep its ground. The evil principle has its hour of weakness and decline. There is no man uniformly wicked. The exertion is too strong to last for ever. Nature does not afford strength and spirits sufficient to keep a man always in energy. The most abandoned have fits and starts of soberness and recollection. There are lucid intervals in the life of every person. At such a time is the crisis of a man's character. At such a time the prodigal son came to his right mind. At once the spell was broken and the enchantment dissolved. He is amazed, he is confounded to find himself degraded from the rational character ; cast down to the herd of inferior animals ; making one at the feast where the vilest of brutes were his associates and companions. Then the false colours with which fancy had gilded his life, vanish away. The flattering ideas which imagination and passion presented to his mind, disappear in a moment. Disenchanted from the delusions of the great deceiver, what he esteemed to be the garden of Eden, he finds to be a desolate wilderness. "Then he came to himself."

You know that when a man recovers from a fit of lunacy, and is restored to his reason, the mind annihilates the lurid interval, forgets the events of such a



state like a dream, and resumes the train of ideas it had pursued in its sound state. Thus, the penitent in the parable, awaking as from a dream, recovering as from a delirium, transports himself into the time past, his former life recurs to his mind, his father's house rises to view, he recalls the first of his days before he went astray. Happy days of early innocence and early piety, before remorse had embittered his hours, or vice corrupted his heart! Happy days! when the morning arose in peace, and the evening went down in innocence; when no action of the past day disturbed his slumbers by night; when no reflection on the riots of the night threw a cloud over the succeeding day; when he was at peace with his own heart; when conscience was on his side; when reflection was a friend; when memory presented only welcome images to the mind; when, under the wings of paternal care, he was blessed in his going out and coming in; when his father's eye met his with approbation and delight.

Having viewed the picture, he compares it with his present situation. Sad contrast! By his own folly, a vagabond in a foreign land; banished from all that he valued and held dear; cut off from the joys of his better days; languishing out life under the most abject form of misery; pining under poverty; sunk into servitude; feeding swine, and himself desiring to partake with them in their husks; miserable without, but more miserable within; a spirit wounded by remorse, a heart torn by reflection on itself, an accusing conscience, which told him that he merited his fate, and which held up to him his past life, in its blackest colours of folly and guilt. Astonished at himself, startled at his own image, which, in its true colours, he had never seen before, he was ashamed of his conduct, and came to a better mind. Such were the effects of consideration, and such will ever be the effects of consideration to those who duly-exercise it. Why does the sinner go forward in the error of his ways? Because he does not consider. "Heat

“ O heavens ! give ear, O earth ! the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib ; but my people do not consider.” *Consider your ways*, is the voice which God addresses to mankind in every age ; and unless you consider, the calls of the gospel and the offers of grace are made to no purpose. The world which is to come has no existence to you but what you give it yourselves ; the eternity that is before you, the happiness of heaven, and the pains of hell, are no more than dreams, unless you realize them to yourselves, unless you give them their full force, by bringing them home to the heart. When a man reviews the error of his ways, nothing is wanting to a further reformation but reflection and thought. Think, and the work is done. “ I considered my ways,” saith the Psalmist. What was the consequence ? “ I turned my feet unto thy testimonies.”

The *second* step in the return of the prodigal, is ingenuous sorrow for sin, accompanied with faith in the Divine mercy. “ Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.”

We are formed by the Author of our being to feel contrition, for the offences we commit. This pungent sense of infirmities, this penitential sorrow for errors and defects, is a beauty in the nature of man. It is an indication that the sense of excellence exists in its full vigour, and the mark of a nature that is not only improvable, but that also is making improvements. When a man seriously considers that the tenor of his life has been irregular and disorderly ; that much of his time has been misemployed, and great part of it spent altogether in vain ; that he has walked in a vain show, unprofitable to himself or others, an idler upon the earth, a cumberer of the ground ; that by his negligence and perversion of his powers he has been lost to the world which is to come, has married the beauty of his immortal spirit, and stopt short in the race which conducts to glory, honour, and immortality ; when he further considers that his offences have extended to his fellow-men, that by his conduct he has

been the cause of misery to others, has disturbed the peace of society, done an injury to the innocent,—such reflections in a heart that is not altogether callous, will awaken contrition and sorrow.

This penitential sorrow will be increased when he considers against whom he has offended ; that he has sinned against infinite goodness, and saving mercy, and tender love ; that he has resisted the efforts of that arm that was lifted up to save him ; that he has rebelled against the God who made, and the Saviour who redeemed him. This is one of the characteristics of true repentance. The penitent does not mourn for his sins as being ruinous to himself, so much as for their being offensive to God. The returning prodigal, in the address he makes to his Father, dwells not upon the misery he had brought upon himself, upon the ruin to his character, his fortune, and his expectations in life. “ I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight.” What grieves me most is, that I have offended thee ; that I have sinned against goodness unspeakable ; against that goodness to which I am indebted for the care of my infant years ; against that goodness to which I owe my preservation ; against him who visited me while I was flying from his presence ; who supported my powers while they were employed against him. It is my Benefactor whom I have offended ; it is my best Friend that I have injured ; it is my Father himself against whom I have risen in arms.

This sorrow for sin is accompanied with faith in the Divine mercy. To wicked men, labouring under the agonies of a guilty mind, the Deity appears an object of terror. They figure to themselves an angry tyrant with his thunder in his hand delighting to punish and destroy. Like Adam when he had sinned, they are afraid, and flee from the presence of the Lord. But from the mind of the penitent these terrors vanish, and God appears, not as a cruel and malignant power, but as the best of beings, the Father of mercies, and the Friend of men, as a God in Christ reconciling the

world unto himself. Encouraged by these declarations, the penitent trusts to the Divine goodness, and flies for refuge to the hope set before him. It is the wicked man only that despairs. Horrors of conscience and forebodings of wrath affright and overwhelm the sons of reprobation. Such horrors felt Cain and Judas Iscariot. But the penitent never despairs. He sinks indeed in his own eyes, and throws himself prostrate on the ground, but still throws himself at the footstool of mercy, not without the faith and the hope that he will be taken into favour. The language of his soul is, "Though I am cast out of thy sight, yet will I look again to thy holy temple. I will arise and go to my Father, for though I have offended him, he is a Father still. He now sits upon a throne of mercy, and holds a sceptre of grace. At thy tribunal, former offenders have been forgiven, and former sinners have been taken into favour. To thy ears the cry of the penitent has never ascended in vain. Thou art ever nigh to all who call upon thee in sincerity of heart. When we tend to thee, at the first step of our return, thou stretchest out thy hand to receive us." So different is that repentance which is unto life from the sorrow of the world which worketh death. Different as the look of melancholy upon the face of the virtuous mourner, is from the unkindly glow which burns the cheek of shame : different as the tender tears which a good man sheds for his friends, are from those bitter drops which fall from the malefactor at the place of execution.

The *third* step is a resolution to return to a sense of duty. "I will arise."

Without determined purposes of amendment, contrition is unavailing and ineffectual. The Deity is not delighted with the sufferings of man. Sorrow for sin is so far pleasing, as it softens the heart and makes it better. It is the resolution of amendment, the purposes pointed to reformation, that make the broken heart and the contrite spirit an acceptable sacrifice ; such is the nature of true repentance ; it flows not so

much from the sense of danger as from the love of goodness.

In true repentance, there is not only a change of mind, but a change of life. When the day-spring from on high arises on him who is in darkness ; when God says, Let there be light, the scales fall from his eyes, a new world breaks upon his sight, futurity becomes present, and invisible things are seen ; then first he beholds the beauty which is in holiness, and tastes the joy which flows from returning virtue. In that happy hour he forms the pious purpose, and seals the sacred vow to be holy for ever. Then he prefers the peace which flows from virtue, and the joy which ariseth from a good conscience, to every consideration. Then the servants of God appear to him the only happy men ; and he would rather rank with the meanest of these, than enjoy the riches of many wicked. “ Great God, withhold from me what thou pleasest, but give me to enjoy the approbation of my own mind, and thy favour. I would rather be the humblest of thy sons, than dwell in the tents of wickedness. None shall enter into the New Jerusalem, and sit down at the right hand of the Father, but they who prefer the testimony of a good conscience, the smiles of Heaven, and the sentence of the just, to all the treasures of the world.

Had the penitent not been in earnest, false shame might have prevented or retarded his return. Conscious of guilt, and covered with confusion, how shall he appear before his friends and acquaintance ? “ I know (might he have said) the malice of an ill judging and injurious world. The sins which are blotted out of the book of God’s remembrance are not forgotten by them. Let me fly rather to the uttermost parts of the earth, retire to the wilderness untrod by the foot of men, and hide me in the shades which the beams of the sun never pierced, than be exposed to the scorn, and contumely, and reproach of all around me.”

But the penitent was determined and immoveable.

\* \* \* \* *The rest of the MS. was not legible.*

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## S E R M O N V.

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1 COR. ii. 12,

*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but  
the Spirit which is of God.*

**T**HERE are two characters, which, in Sacred Scripture are set in perpetual opposition, the man of the earth, and the citizen of heaven. The first character pertains to that class of men, who, whatever speculative opinions they entertain, yet, in practice, consider this life as their only state of being. A person of this character centres all his regards in himself; confines his views entirely to this world, and, pursuing avarice, ambition, or sensual pleasure, makes these the sole objects of pursuit. Good dispositions he may possess, but he exercises them only when they are subservient to his purposes. Virtues also he may cultivate, not for their own sake, but for the temporal advantages they bring along with them. The citizen of heaven moves in a nobler sphere. He does not indeed affect the character of sanctity, by neglecting his temporal concerns. He looks upon the maxim of David, as inspired wisdom, "If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself." But although he has his temporal interest in his eye, he has a higher interest in his heart. What is necessary, what is useful, will often be a subject of attention; but what is generous, what is lovely, what is honourable, what is praise-worthy, become the chief objects of pursuit. He cultivates good dispositions from a sense of their beauty, previous to his experience of their utility; he esteems the possession of virtue more than the

Earthly rewards it procures ; he lives in a constant discharge of the duties of life in this state, and with a well-grounded faith, and an animating hope, looks forward to a better world, and a higher state of being.

These two characters, which divide all mankind, are always represented in Scripture as inconsistent and incompatible with each other. It is impossible, says our Lord, at one and the same time, to serve God and to serve Mammon. If any man love the world, says the Apostle John, the love of the Father is not in him. The principles that actuate these characters, are represented in the text as two spirits opposite to one another, the spirit of the world, and the spirit which is of God. The spirit of any thing is that vital principle which sets it a-going ; which keeps it in motion ; which gives it its form and distinguishing qualities. The spirit of the world is that principle which gives a determination to the character, and a form to the life of the man of the earth ; the spirit which is of God, is that vital principle which gives a determination to the character, and a form to the life, of the citizen of heaven. One of these spirits actuates all mankind. While, therefore, I represent the striking lineaments in these opposite characters, take this along with you, that I am describing a character which is your own : a character which either raises to eminence, or sinks down to debasement.

In the *first* place, then, the spirit of the world is mean and grovelling ; the spirit which is of God is noble and elevated. The man of the earth, making himself the object of all his actions, and having his own interest perpetually in view, conducts his life by maxims of utility alone. This being the point to which he constantly steers, this being the line from which he never deviates, he puts a value on every thing precisely as it is calculated to accomplish his purposes. Accordingly, to gain his end, he descends to the lowest and the vilest means ; he gives up the

manly, the spirited, and the honourable part of life ; he makes a sacrifice of fame, and character, and dignity, and turns himself into all the forms of meanness, and baseness, and prostration. The Prophet Isaiah, with infinite spirit, derides the idols of the Heathen world. " A man," saith he, " planteth a tree, and " the rain doth nourish it : he heweth him down " cedars, and taketh the cypress, and the oak ; and of " the tree which he planted, he maketh to himself a " god. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule, he " marketh it out with a line ; he fashioneth it with " planes, and maketh it after the figure of a man ; and " then he worshippeth it as a god. Part thereof he " burneth in the fire, with part thereof he maketh " bread, and with the residue he maketh a god." Similar to this is the creation of these earthly gods. Read the pages of their history, and behold them rising to divinity by compliance, by servility, by humiliating meanness, and the darkest debasements. How dishonourable often is that path which conducts to early grandeur ! and how mean a creature frequently is he whom the world calls a great man ! So low and grovelling is the spirit of the world.

It is a spirit of a different kind that animates the citizen of heaven. He is born from above ; he derives his descent from the everlasting Father, and he retains a conscious sense of his divine original. Hence, Christians, in Scripture, are called, " noble ;" are called the " excellent ones of the earth." It is unworthy of their celestial descent, it is unbecoming their new nature, to stoop to the meanness of vice. The citizen of heaven scorns the vile arts, and the low cunning, employed by the man of the earth. He condescends indeed, to every gentle office of kindness and humanity. But there is a difference between condescending, and descending from the dignity of character. From that he never descends. He himself ever feels, and he makes others feel too, that he walks in a path which leads to greatness, and supports a character which is forming for heaven. Such is the differ-



ence between the spirit of the world, and the spirit which is of God. Suppleness, servility, abject submission, disgrace the one ; dignity, elevation, independence, exalt the other. The one is a serpent, smooth, insinuating, creeping on the ground, and licking the dust ; the other is an eagle, that towers aloft in the higher regions of the air, and moves rejoicing in his path through the heavens.

In the *second* place, The spirit of the world is a spirit of falsehood, dissimulation, and hypocrisy : the Spirit of God is a spirit of truth, sincerity, and openness. The life which the man of the earth leads is a scene of imposture and delusion. Show without substance ; appearance without reality ; professions of friendship which signify nothing ; and promises which are never meant to be performed, fill up a life which is all outside. With him the face is not the index of the mind, nor the tongue the interpreter of the heart. There is a lie in his right hand. He is perpetually acting a part, and under a mask he goes about deceiving the world. He turns himself into a variety of shapes ; he changes as circumstances change ; he goes through all the forms of dissimulation, and puts off one disguise to put on another. He does not hesitate to counterfeit religion when it serves a turn, and to act the saint in order to gain his ends. Hence the spirit of the world hath often passed for the spirit which is of God ; and Satan, under this disguise, hath been mistaken for an angel of light. Such is the spirit of the world.

The spirit which is of God is a spirit of truth, sincerity, and openness. The citizen of heaven esteems truth as sacred, and holds sincerity to be the first of the virtues. He has no secret doctrines to communicate. He needs no chosen confidants to whom he may impart his favourite notions ; no private conventicles where he may disseminate his opinions. What he avows to God, he avows to man. He expresseth with his tongue what he thinketh with his heart. He will not indeed improperly publish truths ;

he will not prostitute what is pure and holy ; he will not, as the Scripture says, throw pearls before swine ; but neither will he on any occasion partake with swine in their husks. He is what he appears to be. Arrayed in the simple majesty of truth, he seeks no other covering. Supported by the consciousness of rectitude, he holds fast his integrity as he would guard his life. Such is the difference between these characters. The man of the earth turns aside to the crooked paths and insidious mazes of dissimulation ; the citizen of heaven moves along in the onward track of integrity and honour. The spirit of the world seeks concealment, and the darkness, and the shade ; the spirit which is of God loves the light, becomes the light, adorns the light.

*Thirdly*, The spirit of the world is a timid spirit ; the spirit which is of God is a bold and manly spirit. Actuated by selfish principles, and pursuing his own interest, the man of the earth is afraid to offend. He accommodates himself to the manners that prevail, and courts the favour of the world by the most insinuating of all kinds of flattery, by following its example. He is a mere creature of the times ; a mirror to reflect every vice of the vicious, and every vanity of the vain. His sole desire is to please. If he speak truths, they are pleasing truths. He dares not risk the disapprobation of a fool, and would rather offend against the laws of Heaven than give offence to his neighbour. To sinners he appears as a sinner ; to saints he appears as a saint. In the literal sense, he becomes all things to all men, without aspiring to that faith which would set him above the world, or to that spirit which would enable him to assert the dignity of the rational character. He is timid, because he has reason to be so. Wickedness, condemned by its own wileness, is timorous, and forecasteth grievous things. There is a dignity in virtue which keeps him at a distance ; he feels how awful goodness is ; and in the presence of a virtuous man, he shrinks into his own insignificance.

On the other hand, the righteous is bold as a lion. "I fear my God, and I have no other fear," is the language of his heart. With God for his protector, and with innocence for his shield, he walks through the world with an erect posture, and with a face that looks upwards. He despises a fool, though he were possessed of all the gold of Ophir, and scorns a vile man, though a minister of state. The voice of the world is to him as a sounding brass, or tinkling cymbal. The applauses or the censures of the high or the low affect him not. Like distant thunder they vibrate on his ear, but come not to his heart. To him his own mind is the whole world. There sits the judge of his actions, and he appeals to no other tribunal upon the earth. He possesses the spirit which rests upon itself. He walks by his own light, he determines upon his own deeds. Supported by the consciousness of innocence, and acting with all the force of providence on his side, he has nothing to fear; knows that he can no more be hurt by the rumours of the idle, impious, and hypocritical, than the heavens can be set on fire by the sparkles that arise into the air, and that die in the moment they ascend. Animated with this spirit, the feeble becomes strong in the Lord. Apostles, who on former occasions had been weak and timid, whom the voice of a woman frightened into apostacy, who deserted their Master in his deepest distress, and hid themselves from the fury of the multitude; these Apostles no sooner felt the impulse of this Spirit, than they appeared openly in the midst of Jerusalem, published the resurrection of Jesus to those priests and elders who had condemned him to death, and discovered a boldness and magnanimity, a spirit and intrepidity, which shook the councils of the Jewish nation, and made the kings of the earth to tremble on their thrones.

In the *last* place, The spirit of the world is an interested spirit; the spirit which is of God is a generous spirit. The man of the earth has no feeling but for himself. His own interest is his only object; he

never loses sight of this; this is his all; every line of his conduct centres in this point. He has a design in every thing he does. As the prophet Malachi says, "He will not shut the doors for nought." He deliberates not whether an action will do good, but whether it will do good to him. That generosity of sentiment which expands the soul; that charming sensibility of heart which makes us glow for the good, and weep for the woes of others; that Christian charity which comprehends in its wide circle all our brethren of mankind; that diffusive benevolence, reduced to a principle of action, which makes the human nature approach to the Divine, he considers as the dreams of a visionary head, as the figments of a romantic mind that knows not the world.

But the spirit which is of God is as generous as the spirit of the world is sordid. One of the chief duties in the spiritual life is to deny itself. Christianity is founded upon the most astonishing instance of generosity and love that ever was exhibited to the world; and they have no pretensions to the Christian character who feel not the truth of what their Master said, "That it is more blessed to give than to receive." This is not comprehended by worldly men, and the more worldly and wicked they are, the more it is incomprehensible. "Does Job serve God for nought?" said the first accuser of the just. Yes, thou accursed spirit! he serves God for nought. Thy votaries serve thee for lucre, and profit, and filthy mammon; but the children of God serve him from reverence and love. Rewarded, indeed, they shall be in heaven, while thine are to be tormented, and by thyself in hell; but they account that to be a sufficient reward which they have even here in their own hearts,—the consciousness and the applauses of generosity.

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## S E R M O N VI.

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LUKE xi. 13.

*—How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him !*

IN the beginning of this chapter; our Lord prescribed to his disciples a pattern of prayer. He discovered the Deity to them under the tender name of a Father; and he taught them to approach the throne of Grace with the affection and the confidence of children. To encourage them still more to the practice of this duty, he assures them of success upon their perseverance in devotion; and to impress his instructions in the strongest manner upon their minds, he delivers a parable to them, which he concludes with these words: “ Ask, and it shall be given you; “ 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 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 offer him a scorpion? 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 that ask him?” As if he had said, “ I have told you that God is your Father; that his ear is ever open to your cry, and that his hand is ever stretched out in your behalf. You that are fathers can judge of the paternal affection. If you see a child in distress, will your bowels of com-

passion be shut against him? When he utters the voice of sorrow, will you turn a deaf ear to his complaint? Will you refuse to stretch out the hand to save him from the pit, and instead of relieving him, push him down into destruction? There is no father so barbarous, and no heart so cruel. If you, then, evil and corrupted as you are; if, clothed as you are with human frailties and infirmities, you know how to give good gifts unto your children; if the workings of nature, and the yearnings of paternal affection, prompt you to perform good offices, how much more will the infinite benevolence of the Deity prompt him to bless all his offspring, and open his bountiful hand to the whole family of heaven and earth! As the Most High God, who inhabiteth eternity, excels his meanest creature, the being of a day, so far doth the infinite benignity and everlasting love of your Father in heaven exceed the fondest affection of an earthly parent."

In further discoursing to you upon this subject, I shall explain what is meant by giving the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps these words may refer to the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, when they received the gift of tongues, and were endued with the power of working miracles. Though these words may include this meaning, yet they chiefly refer to the ordinary influence of the divine Spirit, which extends to every generation; which is the principle of the spiritual life within us, and continues with the faithful in all ages. Reason and revelation concur in assuring us, that the great Creator hath never withdrawn himself from his works. Above us, around us, and within us, God is seen, God is felt. The vast universe is one great temple, which he fills with his presence. As he is ever present in the world, he is ever employed. The hand that at first stretched out the heavens, still supports the pillars of the firmament. The breath which kindled the vital heat of nature, still keeps the flame a-

live and glowing ; God still acts through all his works preserving and upholding the whole system of things, and carrying forward the designs of infinite wisdom and goodness. His providence is a continued exertion of creating power. As he is employed in the material, he acts also upon the moral world. The Father of spirits communicates himself to holy men, enlightens their understandings with divine knowledge ; by secret ways, at once strengthens and ravishes the mind, and fills them with a conscious sense of his own presence. Hence the wisest among the heathens, guided only by the light of nature, acknowledged the necessity of supernatural aids, and taught that nothing great or good could be performed without the influence of a divine Spirit. But as this doctrine hath been by some denied altogether, and by others involved in mysticism and absurdity, it will be proper to give you that just and rational account of it, which the Scripture authorizes.

There is hardly any one thing of which mankind may be made more sensible from their own experience, than the necessity of divine aids. For, alas ! the balance in human nature, between reason and appetite, between the powers of the mind, and the inclinations arising from the body, is in a great degree lost. There may be, and there once was, a more harmonious temperament in the human frame. The rational part of our nature was better enlightened and more vigorous ; the passions and appetites of the animal part moved under its controul. But that state of innocence is no more. Our nature is now degenerated ; we find a law in the members warring against the law of the mind. This disorder of our frame is more and more increased by those false notions of happiness which we are apt to imbibe, and by the many bad examples among which we pass our early years, inso-much, that by the time that we are grown up to the full power and exercise of reason, we find ourselves brought under the dominion of sensual and wicked inclinations. How then shall we recover our liberty ?

How shall we regain the original rectitude of our nature, and obtain a victory over the vices which war against the soul? Is nature, such as it now is, sufficient for these things? Is reason alone an equal match for the passions and desires of the heart, broke loose from all their restraints, authorized by custom, and inflamed by example? Can we cease to do evil and learn to do well, purely of ourselves, and be able to turn the stream of our affections from sensible and earthly things, to objects worthy of the choice and pursuit of a reasonable nature? Can we, in short, convert ourselves by our own strength, and turn from the power of Satan unto the living God? Are we sufficient for these things?

We are not. When we would do good, evil is present with us: the sensual part of our nature obtains dominion over the rational; we are chained down to the earth, while we attempt to soar to the heavens. Here, therefore, God hath graciously interposed for our recovery. As he sent his Son into the world to redeem us from the guilt of sin and the curse of the law, he gives us his Holy Spirit to deliver us from the dominion of sin, and to translate us from the bondage of Satan into the family of Heaven, and the glorious liberty of the children of God. Hence he is said to work in us both to will and to do that which is his good pleasure. We are said to receive the Spirit, and our bodies are styled the temples of the Holy Ghost.

Concerning this Spirit given to those that ask him, I observe, in the *first* place, That his influence is consistent with the freedom of a reasonable being. The assistance which we receive from above, both in our first conversion from sin, and through the whole course of a religious life, are entirely rational, and have only a persuasive and moral influence. They do not resemble the inspiration of the prophets of old, which was sudden and violent, and overpowered the mind: which superseded the use of reason, and suspended for a while the exercise of the natural faculties.



The prophets were but the instruments of the Spirit; but we work together with God. The grace of Heaven does not take away the powers of the mind, but exalts them. It does not destroy the natural liberty of the mind, it makes us free indeed. If a man loses his free agency, he ceases to be man. He is a machine, and is acted upon. In opposition to this, God is said, in Scripture, to draw us with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man: that is, in such a manner as is most consistent with freedom of choice, and agreeable to the constitution of a reasonable nature. Reason being the noblest faculty of the human frame, it first partakes the influence of the divine Spirit. Its views are enlarged to take in the system of divine truth, and its power is increased to govern the whole man. These divine aids extend to the heart and the affections, place them on proper objects, and give them their noblest joys. In short, they take in the whole of the Christian life. They inspire good resolutions and purposes of new obedience; they carry us on, and encourage us in the ways of righteousness; they render the practice of our duty easy and delightful, and bring us at last to the enjoyment of uninterrupted and everlasting happiness.

Thus you see, that the influence of the divine Spirit is in a way agreeable to the frame of human nature, gentle and persuasive; not controuling or obstructing the use of reason, but by the use of reason influencing the will, moderating the affections, and regulating the whole conversation. It is no argument against the reality of such divine aids, that they are not distinguishable from the operation of our own minds, and that we feel them not in a sensible and striking manner. How difficult is it in our own character to distinguish what is natural from what is acquired; to distinguish between the natural treasures of the mind, and those foreign stores which she imports from education. The Spirit of God acts in such a manner as is most agreeable to the faculties of the mind. It is in

this manner also, that God acts in the material world. Whatever is done in the heavens, or in the earth, or in the sea, is brought about by divine providence. Yet all that chain of causes and effects, from the lowest up to the throne of God, we call by the name of the course of nature. But what is this? The course of nature is the energy of God.

In the *second* place, I observe, concerning the influence of the Spirit, that its reality is only known by its operation and effect upon our lives.—“Marvel not,” said our Lord to Nicodemus, “that I said unto you, Thou must be born again, The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit.” That is, as if he had said, the influences of the Spirit are indeed imperceptible to sense, and cannot be distinguished in the precise moment of their operation, but they are visible and certain in their effects; and in the fruits which they produce. A life of obedience and holiness, therefore, is the proof, and the only proof, that the Spirit dwells in us. The fruit of the Spirit, say the Scriptures, is goodness, and righteousness, and truth. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, meekness, and temperance. The life, then, my friends, the life is the criterion and test by which we shall know if we are born of the Spirit. There are indeed other marks, easier attained, which some people have found out to themselves. A light within, a call from heaven, a secret voice, and an extraordinary impulse, these are often the effects, not of a divine favour, but of a weak understanding, and a wild imagination, and often of something worse, even of arrant hypocrisy and unblushing imprudence. These indeed are the marks of a spirit which hath often appeared in the world, but which is very different from the Spirit of God. These are the symptoms of that intolerant and persecuting spirit, the offspring of darkness and of demons; which, excepting a few favourites, pursues the

human race with unrelenting hatred in this world, and consigns them over to eternal pains in the next. This is a spirit which hath slain its thousands. Fire and sword marks its approach; its steps are in the blood of the just, and it shakes the rod of extermination over the affrighted earth. But the Spirit of God is the Spirit of love. It fills us with affection and benevolence towards all our brethren of mankind. For he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God dwelleth in him.

This doctrine of the Spirit dwelling in us, and assisting us to perform good works, furnisheth a strong argument for humility. Why boastest thou, O man? What hast thou which thou hast not received? From God descendeth every good and every perfect gift. We can do nothing of ourselves, not even so much as to think a good thought. It is by the grace of God that we are what we are. He graciously accepts of our sincere endeavours to please him; and at last rewards those services, which by his grace he enables us to perform. Let us therefore be sensible of our own imperfections, and give all the praise to him. Let this stir us up to activity in our Christian course. The proper use and improvement of this doctrine is not to sit still and take our rest, because God gives us his Holy Spirit, but relying on the assistance of his Spirit to move forwards in our Christian race. Seeing God worketh in you, therefore work out your salvation. Up, therefore, and be doing, seeing the Lord is with you. You not only act with the force of Providence on your side; you have not only the Captain of Salvation fighting with you; but you have also his Spirit within you, leading you on to victory.

In the *last* place, Let us express our gratitude and praise to this divine Guest, who vouchsafes to be our guide and our comforter; let us be careful not to grieve and offend him by wicked actions, lest he withdraw himself from us: and let us always remember, that He who is a pure and a holy Spirit, cannot dwell in polluted hearts, and in temples that are not his own.

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## S E R M O N VII.

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ISAIAH XXVI. 20.

*Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee.*

**W**ITHOUT viewing these words in connection with what goes before or follows after, I shall consider them as containing an exhortation to religious retirement. Man was intended by his Creator for society. All the powers of his frame, the faculties of his mind, and the qualities of his heart, lead him to the social state as the state of his nature. But although man was made for action, he was also intended for contemplation. There is a time when solitude has a charm for the soul ; when weary of the world, its follies and its cares, we love to be alone, to enter into our chamber, to shut the door about us, and in silence to commune with our heart. Such a retirement, when devoted to pious purposes, is highly useful to man, and most acceptable to God. Hence the holy men are represented in Scripture as giving themselves to meditation ; hence Jesus Christ himself is described as sending the multitude away, and going apart to the mountain.

An opinion once prevailed in the world, and in many parts of it still prevails, that all virtue consisted in such a retreat ; that the perfection of the Christian life consisted in retiring from the world altogether, in withdrawing from human converse, in shutting ourselves up in the solitude of a cell, and passing our days in barren and unprofitable speculation. Such notions of a holy life have no foundation

in the word of God. Moses and the prophets, Jesus and the apostles themselves, acted a part in public life, and enjoin their disciples not to withdraw from the world, but to go about doing good ; not to wrap up their talent in a napkin, but to improve it by their industry ; not to put their light under a bushel, but to make it shine before men. The retreat, therefore, which Scripture recommends is temporary and not total ; is not the retreat of a monk to his cell, or a hermit to his cave ; but of men living in the world, going out of it for a time, to return with greater improvement. To retire at times into the closet for these purposes, is of general obligation upon all Christians. To induce you, therefore, to the practice of this duty, I shall now shew you the advantages which thereby you may expect to reap.

The advantages attending religious retirement are these : it takes off the impression which the neighbourhood of evil example has a tendency to make upon the mind ; it is favourable for fixing pious purposes in the mind, and strengthening our habits of virtue ; it brings us to the knowledge of ourselves ; it opens a source of new and better entertainment than we meet with in the world.

In the *first* place, Religious retirement takes off the impression which the neighbourhood of evil example has a tendency to make upon the mind. The world, my friends, is not in general a school of virtue ; it is often the scene of vanity and vice. Corrupted manners, vicious deeds, evil communications, surround us on every side. From our first entrance into life, we become spectators of the vicious, and witnesses to the commission of sin. This presence of the wicked lessens our natural horror at a crime, it renders the idea of vice familiar to the mind, and insensibly lulls asleep that guarded circumspection which ought always to be awake. Besides this contagion of evil example, the unhappy proneness of men to imitate the manners of those with whom they live, adds strength to the temptations of the world. Our favourable o-

pinion of the person extends to the action he commits; and by our fatal fondness of imitation, we do what we see done. Our way then in the world lies through snares and precipices; we see and we hear at the peril of our souls. The contagion in which we live, transfuses itself into our own minds. How often is the purity of the closet lost amid the pollution of the world! The good resolutions of the morning give way to bustle and business, or to the career of pleasure; and the day that began with innocence and devotion ends in vanity and vice. Temptations in every form assault your innocence, and the adversary of your soul is for ever on the watch. One false step may send you to the bottom of the precipice. One word spoken in passion hath given rise to quarrels that have lasted through life. A single glance of envy, of revenge, or of impure desire, hath raised a conflagration which could only be quenched by blood. To avoid the pollution with which the world is infected, to keep off the intrusion of vain and sinful thoughts, enter into thy chamber, and shut the doors around thee. There the wicked cease from troubling, there the man who is wearied of the world is at rest. There the glare of external objects disappears, and the chains that bound you to the world are broken. There you shut out the strife of tongues, the impertinencies of the idle, the lies of the vain, the scandal of the malicious, the slanders of the defamer, and all that world of iniquity which proceeds from the tongue. In this asylum thy safety dwells. To thy holy retreat, an impure guest dares not approach. Enjoying the blessed calm and serenity of thy own mind, thou hearest the tempest raging around thee and spending its strength; the objects of sense being removed, the appetites which they excited, depart along with them. The scene being shifted, and the actors gone, the passions which they raised die away.

In the *second* place, This devout retirement is favourable for fixing pious purposes in the mind, and strengthening our habits of virtue. We are so formed by the

Author of our nature, that the material objects with which we are surrounded, raise ideas in us, and make impressions upon us merely by their own nature, and without any assistance from ourselves. There are motions in the body which are involuntary and spontaneous, and there are impressions in the mind which are as much out of our power. At the presence of certain objects, we feel certain passions whether we will or not; we cannot command the emotions which arise in the mind; on many occasions we are merely passive to the influence of external things. When imminent danger threatens; or the shriek of jeopardy is heard, the heart throbs, the blood takes the alarm, and the spirits are agitated without our direction or consent. As the nature of the plant is affected by the soil where it grows; as the nature of the animal is affected by the pasture where he ranges; so the character of the man who never thinks, who never retires into himself, arises from the mode of life in which he is engaged. His mind is in subjection to the objects which surround him. He passes from object to object as the scene changes before him, and he is delivered over from passion to passion, according to the events which vary his life. Thus in society we are in a great measure governed by accidents, and the mind is passive to the impressions which it receives.

But in solitude we are in a *world of our own*. We can call up what ideas, and converse with what objects we please. We can say to one desire, "Go," and to another, "Come." Dazzled no longer with the false glitter of the world, we open our eyes to the beauties of that better country which is a heavenly one; stunned no more with the noise of folly, we can listen in silence to the still small voice. Escaped from the broad way, we set out on the narrow path. That is the place, and then is the time to seal the useful truth, and to fix the pious purpose. Then you can best recollect your native strength, and stir up the grace of God which is in you. Then at leisure you

can reflect by what temptations you were formerly foiled, that you may guard against them in the time to come; foreseeing the evil day, you will look out for the best support when it comes; and putting on the whole armour of God, you will be able to resist the fiery darts of the evil one, and to go forth conquering and to conquer. By these means, the good thoughts which were scattered up and down your life will be collected together, and settle in a fixed purpose of new obedience. The various rays thus converging into one, will kindle into a fervent flame.

In the *third* place, By means of religious retirement, thou wilt be brought to the knowledge of thyself. This is a part of our superiority to thy other creatures, that we are not confined to present objects; that we can extend our view beyond the province of sense, and turn our attention wherever we please; throughout the whole system of nature. The mind can arrest itself in its motion, and become the object of its own contemplation. The noblest of sciences is to know ourselves. But however useful and important this study is, there is none with which we are so little acquainted. Delighting to wander abroad, and familiar everywhere, you are strangers at home, strangers to your own character, strangers to your own hearts, strangers to all that is most important for a rational creature to know. You give your thoughts to wander through the whole world; on the wings of imagination you fly from pole to pole; but you never descend into yourself. For what reason art thou so averse to know thyself? Because thou art afraid of losing thine own good opinion; because thou wantest to impose upon thyself, and then to impose upon the world. For this cause, thou darest not appeal to thine own mind, thou darest not meet thy heart alone. Thou avoidest the light, lest thine evil deeds should be made manifest. Thou fliest from the God within, as Adam when he had fallen fled from the Lord, because thou art afraid. What can be more suspicious than for reasonable creatures



to decline the bar of reason? What can be more shameful than for those who have an understanding, not to be able or willing to give an account of their actions to themselves? What can be more reproachful than for men to allow themselves in a course of life, which they have not the courage or the confidence to reflect upon.

Sinner! deal plainly with thyself. If thou wert not ashamed of thyself, why, in the name of the all-knowing God, shouldst thou decline conversing with thyself? If all were well at home, what should make thee so fond of rambling abroad, and losing the remembrance of thyself in a croud of vain amusements? Here, here is the cause of thy love of noise and hurry, and tumult, and dissipation, and perpetual diversions: thy aim is by this means to escape from thyself, to employ and divert thy mind, that it may not be forced upon such an ungrateful subject. Yet here wisdom begins. Thou never canst ascend to the knowledge of Him whom to know is life eternal, without knowing thyself; and thou canst never know thyself, without retiring from the world, without stripping off whatever is artificial about thee, without throwing off the veil which thou wearest before men, and devoting thy secret hours to serious consideration. Enter then into thy chamber, shut the doors about thee, commune with thine own heart, be still, say with the Psalmist, "Search and try me, O Lord; see if there be any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

In the *fourth* place, Retirement and meditation will open a source of new and better entertainment than you meet with in the world. You will soon find that the world does not perform what it promises. The circle of earthly enjoyments is narrow and circumscribed, the career of sensual pleasure is soon run, and when the novelty is over, the charm is gone. Who has not felt the satiety and weariness of the king of Israel, when he cried out, "All is vanity and vexation of Spirit?" Unhappy is the man who in these

Cases has nothing within to console him under his disappointment. Miserable is the man who has no resources within himself, who cannot enjoy his own company, who depends for happiness upon the next amusement, or the news of the day.

But the wise man has treasures within himself. He has a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed. The hour of solitude is the hour of meditation. He communes with his heart alone. He reviews the actions of his past life. He corrects what is amiss. He rejoices in what is right, and, wiser by experience, lays the plan of his future life. The great and the noble, the wise and the learned, the pious and the good, have been lovers of serious retirement. On this field the patriot forms his schemes, the philosopher pursues his discoveries, the saint improves himself in wisdom and goodness. Solitude is the hallowed ground which religion in every age has adopted as its own. There her sacred inspiration is felt, and her holy mysteries elevate the soul; there devotion lifts up the voice; there falls the tear of contrition; there the heart pours itself forth before Him who made, and Him who redeemed it. Apart from men, you live with nature, and converse with God.

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## S E R M O N   V I I I .

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ISAIAH lvii. 21.

*There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

**I**T is universally agreed, that the works of creation demonstrate the being and the attributes of the Deity. The invisible things of God, even his eternal power, his unerring wisdom, and his infinite goodness, are every where legible throughout the great book of Nature. It is very astonishing, however, that many persons, who from the *creation* of the world infer the existence and perfections of the Deity, should, from the *government* of the world, infer the necessity of a day of judgment to rectify the course of Providence, and vindicate the ways of God. The works of God must certainly be uniform and of a piece. According to the representations of Sacred Scripture, the day of judgment was not appointed to account for the conduct of Providence, but to pass sentence on the actions of men. All the administrations of God are conducted with supreme wisdom and goodness. He is for ever employing the power of his providence to favour the cause of righteousness, and to diffuse happiness over the world. When the blessed above sing the wonders of creating power, and cry out, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty;" they also add, "Just and true are all thy ways, thou King of saints." If the Almighty is possessed of infinite perfection; if, as the Scriptures assert, he loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, we may naturally infer it to be one of his eternal decrees, that righteousness and happi-

ness, that sin and misery, must be inseparable in the course of things.

Notwithstanding the force of the arguments that prove this truth, opinions pretty general prevail to the contrary. Many persons are of opinion that the wicked man has more enjoyment in life than the good man has; that virtue exposes us to many evils; and that if it were not for a future state, Christians would be of all men the most miserable. The origin of this opinion it is not difficult to unfold. It is natural for men to judge of the course of things, by what happens in their own lot. When we are in a prosperous situation, when the candle of the Lord shineth upon our heads, all nature puts on a face of beauty, and wears a smiling appearance. But, when adversity and a train of afflictions come in their turn, the eye of the impatient sufferer tinctures every thing around him with its own baleful colours. To his disordered mind, darkness seems to involve the system of nature, malignant demons to usurp the sceptre of Providence, and invade the throne of God. Hence the many complaints of good and holy men in sacred writ, that the righteous were cut off from the earth, whilst the wicked flourished like a green bay-tree. But these were not the maxims which governed their lives; they were only sudden exclamations made in the moments of impatience under distress. The universal voice of Scripture is expressly on the other side, "Say ye to the wicked, It shall be ill with him; say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. Great peace have they who love the laws of the Lord."

In further treating upon this subject, I shall endeavour to shew you, that there is no peace or happiness to the wicked, whether you consider him as a subject of the divine government, as a member of society, or as an individual.

In the *first* place, then, Let us consider the wicked in his religious capacity, as a subject of the divine government.

Religion is the distinguishing quality of our nature, and is one of the strongest features that marks the human character. As it is our distinguishing quality, so it possesses such extensive influence, that however overlooked by superficial inquirers, it has given rise to more revolutions in human society, and to more changes in human manners, than any one cause whatever. View mankind in every situation, from the earliest state of barbarity, down through all the successive periods of civilization, till they degenerate to barbarity again, and you will find them influenced strongly by the awe of superior spirits, or the dread of infernal fiends. In the heathen world, where mankind had no divine revelation, but followed the impulse of nature alone, religion was often the basis of the civil government. Among all classes of men, the sacrifices, the ceremonies, and the worship of the gods were held in the highest reverence. Judge what a strong hold religion must have taken of the human heart, when, instigated by horror of conscience, the blinded wretch has submitted to torture his own flesh before the shrine of the incensed deity, and the fond father has been driven to offer up with his own hands his first-born for his transgression, and the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul. It is possible to shake off the reverence, but not the dread of a Deity. Amid the gay circle of his companions, in the hour of riot and dissipation, the fool may say in his heart, that there is no God; but his conscience will meet him when he is alone, and tell him that he is a liar. Heaven will avenge its quarrel on his head. Judge, then, my brethren, how miserable it must be for a being made after the image of God, thus to have his glory turned into shame. How dismal must the situation be for a subject of the divine government to consider himself as acting upon a plan to counteract the decrees of God, to defeat the designs of eternal Providence, to deface in himself the image and the lineaments of heaven, to maintain a state of enmity and war with his Creator, and to associate with the

infernal spirits, whose abode is darkness, and whose portion is despair !

Reflections upon such a state will give its full measure to the cup of trembling. Was not Belshazzar, the impious king of Babylon, a striking instance of what I am now saying ? This monarch made a feast to a thousand of his lords, and assembled his princes, his concubines, and his wives. In order to increase the festivity, he sent for the consecrated vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple of Jerusalem ; and in these vessels, which were holy to the Lord, he made libations to his vain idols, and in his heart bade defiance to the God of Israel. But, whilst thus he defied the living God, forth came the fingers of a man's hand, and on the wall, which had lately resounded with joy, wrote the sentence of his fate ! In a moment his countenance was changed, his whole frame shook, and his knees smote one against another, whilst the prophet in awful accents denounced his doom : " O man, thy kingdom is departing " from thee !" Although Providence should not now particularly interpose to punish thee, O guilty man ! yet the sentence of thy doom is written in thy heart, and there is a prophet within, who, upon the commission of crimes, will tell thee, that for these the kingdom of heaven is departed from thee.

In the *second* place, As wickedness makes a man miserable in his religious character, so does it also in his social.

However corrupted men may be in their lives, their moral sentiments are just and right ; that is, although from an immoderate self-love we may excuse wickedness in ourselves, yet such is the force of conscience within, so deeply rooted in the mind is the eternal difference between good and evil, that, by the very frame of our natures, we abhor wickedness in others. When we are conversant in the world, or give our attention to a story that is a faithful picture of human manners, from the impulse of natural feeling, we attach ourselves to the side of innocence ; we take

part with the virtuous hero, and consider his enemies as our own. There is no vice but what tends to make a man contemptible or odious to society. Against the greater and more atrocious crimes, the sword of the law is for ever drawn, and its stroke is death. Other vices which come not under the cognizance of the laws, either have ways of punishing themselves, or are marked with public infamy. Pride makes every affront a torment, and puts a man's happiness in the power of every fool he meets with. The envious man is literally his own tormentor, and preys upon his own bowels. The drunkard exposes himself to the derision of mankind, and falls into follies that cover him with shame in his sober hours. Does not a habit of intoxication deprive a man of all sense of decency, indispose him for the business of life, and render him a sorrow to all his friends? Will the atheist conciliate the love of men by shewing us that he possesses not the fear of God? Is not the miser pointed at with the finger of scorn, and doomed to the double curse of hoarding and guarding? Is not a liar universally odious, and does he not prepossess us against him, even when he speaks truth? Do not fraud and dishonesty mar a man's fortune, ruin his reputation, and hinder his success in life?

In truth, my brethren, there is not a sin but what one way or another is punished in this life. We often err egregiously by not attending to the distinction between happiness and the means of happiness. Power, riches, and prosperity, those means of happiness and sources of enjoyment, in the course of Providence, are sometimes conferred upon the worst of men. Such persons possess the good things of life, but they do not enjoy them. They have the means of happiness, but they have not happiness itself. A wicked man can never be happy. It is the firm decree of Heaven, eternal and unchangeable as JEHOVAH himself, that misery must ever attend on guilt; that when sin enters, happiness takes its departure. There is no such thing in nature, my brethren,—

there is no such thing in nature,—as a vicious or unlawful pleasure. What we generally call such, are pleasures in themselves lawful, procured by wrong means, or enjoyed in a wrong way ; procured by injustice, or enjoyed with intemperance ; and surely neither injustice nor intemperance have any charm for the mind ; and unless we are framed with a very uncommon temper of mind and body, injustice will be hurtful to the one, and intemperance fatal to the other. Unruly desires and bad passions, the gratification of which is sometimes called pleasure, are the source of almost all the miseries in human life. When once indulged, they rage for repeated gratification, and subject us, at all times, to their clamours and importunity. When they are gratified, if they give any joy, it is the joy of fiends, the joy of the tormented ; a joy which is purchased at the expence of a good conscience, which rises on the ruins of the public peace, and proceeds from the miseries of our fellow-creatures. The forbidden fruit proves to be the apples of Sodom and the grapes of Gomorrah. One deed of shame is succeeded by years of penitence and pain. A single indulgence of wrath has raised a conflagration which neither the force of friendship, nor length of time, nor the vehemence of intercession, could mitigate or appease, and which could only be quenched by the effusion of human blood. One drop from the cup of this powerful sorceress, has turned the living stream of joy into waters of bitterness. “ There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,”

If a wicked man could be happy, who might have been so happy as Haman ? Raised from an inferior station, to great riches and power, exalted above his rivals, and above the princes of the empire, favourite and prime minister to the greatest monarch in the world. But with all these advantages on his side, and under all these smiles of fortune, his happiness was destroyed by the want of a bow, usual to those of his station, from one of the porters of the palace. Enraged with this neglect, this vain great man cried out in the pang of dis-



appointment. "All this availeth me nothing, so long  
"as I see Mordecai sitting at the king's gate." This  
seeming affront sat deep on his mind. He meditated  
revenge. A single victim could not satisfy his ma-  
lice. He wanted to have a glutting vengeance. He  
resolved for this purpose; to involve thousands in de-  
struction, and to make a whole nation fall a sacrifice  
to the indulgence of his mean-spirited pride. But,  
as it generally happens, his wickedness proves his  
ruin, and he erected the gallows on which he himself  
was doomed to be hanged !

In the *third* place, If we consider man as an indivi-  
dual, we shall see a further confirmation of the truth  
contained in the text, "That there is no peace to the  
"wicked."

In order to strengthen the obligations to virtue,  
Almighty God hath rendered the practice of sin fatal  
to our peace as individuals, as well as pernicious to  
our interests as members of society. From the sinner  
God withdraws his favour and the light of his coun-  
tenance. How dark will that mind be, which no  
beam from the Father of lights ever visits ? How joy-  
less that heart which the Spirit of life never animates !  
When sin entered into paradise, the angels of God  
forsook the place. So from the soul that is polluted  
with guilt, peace, and joy, and hope, those good an-  
gels, vanish and depart. What succeeds to this fami-  
ly of heaven ? Confusion, shame, remorse, despair.

*Cætera desunt.*

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## S E R M O N IX.

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PSALM lxxviii. 1.

*Give ear, O my people, to my law.*

THIS is the call which God addressed to his ancient people, and which at sundry times and in divers manners he addresses to the world. It is the voice of the Almighty to mankind in every age. His voice all nature hears, and his law all nature obeys. The sun moves in the path marked out for him by his Creator; the moon keeps her appointed course, and the host of heaven proceed from age to age in their original beauty. The seasons know their time, and the earth obeys the law impressed upon it at first. The elements confess their Lord; the tempest hears his voice, and the sea submits to the mandate which said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther; here shall thy waves be stayed." The orders of celestial spirits, the principalities and powers of heaven, obey the command of their King, minister to the purposes of his providence, and, in acts of goodness, or on errands of mercy, perform his pleasure.

Throughout all nature, one being alone is deaf to the voice, and disobedient to the command of God, that is, the *sinner*. He alone has departed from his sphere, has rebelled against the law of his nature, and rejected the universal dominion of the Deity in the universe. To recal him from this rebellious state, to replace him in his original station, and restore him again to the kingdom of God, is the end of true religion. For this purpose Moses and the Prophets were inspired, Jesus and the apostles were sent. For this pur-

pose the heaven was opened, the Almighty appeared, and the voice uttered to the world, "Give ear, my people, to my law."

Your obligation to obey this law will appear, if you consider that it is the law of your nature, that it is the law of heaven, that it is the law of society, and the law of happiness.

In the *first* place, It is the law of your nature.

When God created man, he did not leave him to act at random, or to live in a state of anarchy. He gave him a law, the emanation of eternal wisdom and the transcript of Divine perfection. The same fingers that upon Mount Sinai wrote the commandments upon tables of stone, had written them before-hand upon the living tables of the human heart. The foundation of morality is laid deep in human nature; its principles result from the constitution of our frame; and its authority will be supreme, while there is a mind to discern, or a heart to feel, or a conscience to judge. Darkness is not more different from light, nor bitter from sweet, than good is from evil, and virtue from vice. You are no more masters of the emotions that rise in the mind, than of the sensations which rise in the body. You can no more give the law to internal nature than to external nature. You may as well call the sun to come down from the firmament, as aim to extinguish the light of heaven which shines in the breast. Inferior animals are incapable of morality. They have no law but instinct, they are left to obey the call of appetite, and to follow blindly the prevailing impulse. But it is not so with man. Reason is his law; and the dictate of virtue is the dictate of nature. The question with him is not, what is the call of appetite? but what is the voice of reason? not what is the prevailing impulse? but what is the impulse which ought to prevail?

If, therefore, you disown the obligation of this law, you renounce your nature and unman yourself. If you claim an exemption from the authority of reason,

and sentiment, and conscience ; if you take the licence to indulge every appetite and every passion without restraint or controul, you may ;—but first come down from your rank in the scale of being ; break off all intercourse with rational creatures ; depart from the society of men ; go to your equals ; herd with the animals of the field, and eat grass with the brutes that perish : there display humanity degraded : exhibit thyself a monument of folly and guilt, to be pointed at by the hand of scorn, and to be shunned like the pestilence. If ever, like the Monarch of Babylon, thou shalt rise from thy degraded state ; if ever thine understanding shall return, and thou shalt be able to lift up thine eyes to heaven, like him thou wilt praise, and extol, and glorify the King of heaven, and give ear to that law which he promulgates to the armies in heaven and to the inhabitants of the earth.

In the *second* place, Your obligation to obey this law will further appear when you consider that it is the law of Heaven.

It comes to you not only recommended by your own authority, but it comes enforced by a higher authority, that of God himself. The appearances of the Almighty, to confirm the law, the prophets, and the gospel, were made for the instruction and improvement of those who saw them ; and are recorded for the instruction and improvement of those who read them. The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth, from the rising of the sun to where he goeth down. The first promulgation of the law was from Mount Sinai. To strike a rude and barbarous people, to reclaim a perverse and obstinate generation, it was requisite that the arm of power should be stretched out, and that the majesty of terror should be displayed. Accordingly, when the law was given from Sinai, there was blackness, and darkness, and tempest ; there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount ; and when Moses

brought the people from the camp to meet with God, they trembled as one man ; and hill Sinai was altogether on a flame, and the smoke thereof went up as the smoke of a furnace, for the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the mountain quaked ; and when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, God called Moses up to the top of the Mount, and gave the law.

The same precepts that were given upon mount Sinai, Jesus Christ came to confirm and to extend. At his first public appearance, in his sermon on the mount, he republished, restored, and perfected the law. The new dispensation indeed was different from the old. The God of Abraham dwelt in darkness, and was clothed with terror. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ dwells in light, and is clothed with grace. Miracles of power confirmed the one ; miracles of grace distinguished the other. We come not to Mount Sinai, but to Mount Zion. At the publishing of the gospel no fire descended, no thunders rolled : at the publishing of the gospel, when our Saviour, being baptized, entered upon his ministry, the heaven was opened over his head, the Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove, the messenger of peace, and a voice came from the overshadowing cloud, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Revelation then concurs with reason in establishing the law, and to the voice of nature is added the voice of God. Such an authority you will not despise. You will not join with the impious king of Egypt, who hardened his heart, and said, " Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice ?"

In the *third* place, Our obligation to obey the law will be further manifest, when we consider, that it is the law of society.

That righteousness exalteth a nation, and that vice is not only a reproach, but also a depression to any people, are truths so universally received as to require no confirmation. All lawgivers in all ages have thought so, and made it their object to cultivate jus-

tice, and temperance, and fortitude, and industry, conscious that public virtue is the source of public happiness. Philosophers and moralists have been of the same opinion ; and have taught, with one consent, that the good morals of the people were the stability of the government, and the true source of public prosperity. Practice and experience have confirmed the truth of these speculations. If we consult the history of the most renowned nations that have made a figure in the world, we shall find that they rose to greatness by virtue, and sunk into contempt through vice ; that they obtained dominion by their temperance and probity of manners, and a serious regard to religion ; and when they grew dissolute, corrupted, and profane, they became slaves to their neighbours whom they were no longer worthy to govern. Public depravity paves the way for public ruin. When the health and vigour of the political constitution is broken, it is hastening to its decline. When internal symptoms of weakness appear, the least external violence will accomplish its dissolution.

It is a duty, then, which we owe to society, and to our country, to observe the rules of righteousness ; for in order to be good members of society, and true patriots, we must be virtuous men.

To shew your obligation to give ear to this law, let us, in the *last* place, consider that it is the law of happiness.

This, in some measure, follows from what has been already said ; for if virtue be necessary to the happiness of public societies, it is also necessary to the happiness of private families, and of private men, unless we can suppose the body politic to be flourishing, while every individual is in misery and distress. In consulting for others, all agree that virtue leads to happiness ; but if for others, why not for you ? When you consult for them, you have no passions to darken your understanding and perplex your judgment. When you consider with coolness and with candour, the observation and experience that all of us have had

occasion to make will be sufficient to convince you, that the law of the Lord is truly favourable to the interests, and friendly to the happiness of man ; that it corresponds to the just dictates of the mind, and consults the best affections of the heart. What does it forbid ? desires, passions, and vices, from which, for our own sakes, we should abstain, though there was no such prohibition. It forbids the gratification of desires which would lead us to ruin ; the indulgence of passions, which are the troublers of human life, and the source of our greatest misery ; the commission of vices which waken remorse, and deliver us up to the tormentors. What does the law of the Lord command ? What is lovely, and pure, and praise-worthy ; what tends to make men peaceable, gentle, humane, merciful, benevolent, and happy.

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## S E R M O N X.

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ROMANS v. 7, 8.

*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die : yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

**T**HE Apostle Paul, the author of this epistle, was bred at the feet of Gamaliel, and instructed in all the learning of the Jews. To his Hebrew literature, he superadded the erudition of the Gentiles ; for we find him in his epistles quoting their celebrated authors, and alluding to their remarkable customs and the events in their history. These verses which I have now read, carry an allusion and reference to a distinction of characters which prevailed among the Jews, and to some illustrious actions performed by the Romans, to whom he addressed this epistle.

The Jews distinguished men with respect to their characters, into sinners, just men, and good men. Sinners are those who violate the laws of God and man, who disturb the public peace, and are bad members of society. A just man is one who does no injury to his neighbour, who gives no cause of offence to the world, who pays his debts, who conforms to the letter of the law, and who is not deficient in any of the great duties of life. A good man is one who goes farther ; who is not only innocent but useful ; who is not only decent but exemplary ; who is generous, beneficent, public-spirited ; who sacrifices his ease, his pleasure, his safety, and, when his country calls for it, who sacrifices his life for the public



good. Such was the character of this Apostle himself. In order to propagate the Christian religion among the nations, the greatest blessing of God to the world, in order to diffuse the knowledge of this religion, he gave up all that was dear in life, undertook long and hazardous journeys, exposed himself to the dangers of the deep, to the chains of captivity, to the sword of the persecutor, to the derision and hatred of Jews and Gentiles. Accordingly, he met with this return, which he here mentions as being sometimes made to superior goodness; for we read in the sixteenth chapter of this epistle, that he found persons who for his life would have laid down their own.

The Apostle also in these verses alludes to some illustrious actions performed by the Romans, to whom he addresses this epistle. The love of their country was the darling passion of that great people. All the soul went out in this generous ardour, and every private affection flowed in the channel of the public welfare. Judge what a strong hold it must have taken of the heart, when it glowed even in the female breast; when the wife encouraged the husband, and the mother exhorted the son to die for their country. It was a principle in the breast of every Roman, that he owed his life to his country. This being the spirit of the people, gave birth to many illustrious and heroic actions. The spirit of patriotism glowed among the people for many ages of the republic; one hero sprung from the ashes of another; and great men arose from age to age, who devoted themselves to death for the public good. These being the most celebrated actions in the history of mankind, the Apostle here compares them with the death of Jesus Christ. Following the train of thought suggested by the Apostle, I shall shew you the infinite superiority of that love which prompted Jesus to die for the sins of the world, to that patriotism which prompted the heroes and great men of old to die for their friends or for their country.

In the *first* place, then, Those who devoted them-

selves to death for their friends or their country, submitted to a fate which they must one day have suffered : But Jesus Christ, who is the true God, and possesseth eternal life, submitted to death for our redemption.

We are all born mortal creatures. Sprung from the dust, we return to the dust again. The sentence of the Lord is passed upon all flesh, and there is no exemption from the law of mortality. We know not how soon our last hour may come. The darts of death are continually on the wing ; the arrow of destruction flieth by night, and smiteth at noon-day ; victims are daily falling at our right hand, and at our left, and we know not how soon we too may fall a sacrifice. He, therefore, who exposes himself to danger, or devotes himself to death for the good of others, only anticipates the evil day, only resigns a life which he must soon part with, and submits to a doom which, sooner, or later, he must lay his account to endure. But Jesus Christ was the King eternal and immortal. His outgoings were from everlasting, and he is God blessed for ever. He would have remained happy in himself, happy in the contemplation and enjoyment of his own perfections, happy in the administration and government of the moral world, though he had never cast an eye of pity upon mortal man. He would have inhabited the praises of eternity though man had never been redeemed. Yet for our sakes he left the glories of the heavens, he veiled his Divinity in a form of flesh, he took our nature with all its infirmities upon him, he submitted to every affliction which embitters human life, and he suffered an excruciating, an ignominious, and an accursed death. For the salvation and the happiness of the world which he had made, the King of kings appeared in the form of a servant, and the Lord of life was crucified at Jerusalem. A crown of thorns was put on that head where the diadem of nature was wont to sit. Where is the deed of human virtue that can stand in comparison with this meritorious exertion of the Divine be-

nevolence? All the perfection of created nature fades before it, and is but a foil to set off the brightness of redeeming love.

In the *second* place, Those among the sons of men who devoted themselves to death for the good of others, made the sacrifice for their friends, for those by whom they were beloved; but Jesus died for his enemies.

We are united to our friends by the strongest ties of affection; we are interested in all that befalls them, and adopt their joys or their sorrows. Long habits of attachment, and a mutual intercourse of good offices, draw close the cords of friendship, and make them twine with every string of life. Hence we are fellow-sufferers with our friends in distress; we are afflicted in all their afflictions; so that suffering a great temporal evil for them, is in reality removing a load from our own minds. Thus strongly are we attached to our friends, nor is the charm less which binds us to the community. The sacred name of country, strikes us with veneration; we feel an enthusiasm for our native land; when it is in danger, hardships are cheerfully undergone, and death scarce appears an evil in such a glorious cause. Such inducements there are to him who dies for his friends or his country. But Jesus died for the redemption of his enemies, for those who threw off their allegiance to him, who rebelled against his authority, and rose up in arms against their benefactor. Their groans would never have reached his ear, nor afflicted his heart, had he not graciously inclined to sympathise. The misery of mankind would never have disturbed the happiness of the Divine nature, would never have thrown a cloud over the serenity of the heavens, nor made a pause in the alleluias of the blessed, had he not chosen to bear their sorrows. It was unmerited goodness, it was sovereign mercy, it was pure benevolence, it was love truly divine, that moved him to interpose in our behalf. He saw the race of men on the very brink of destruction; he saw the bottomless pit just

opening to swallow them up, and, in the moment of danger, the Redeemer appeared, gracious to pity, mighty to save. A cloud had long been gathering over the nations, the hand of the Omnipotent was stretched out in wrath, the thunder of his power was ready to burst over a devoted world, when the Patron and Intercessor of the human race stepped in, and stayed the avenging arm with the words of mercy : " Lo, I come to do thy will. Sacrifice and burnt-offerings thou dost not desire. On me let thine anger fall. Let me die, that these may live."

In the *third* place, He who dies a martyr for the public good, departs with honour ; but Jesus made his departure with ignominy and shame.

It is honourable, it is glorious, to die for the public good. He who falls a martyr to the happiness of mankind, is supported by the native fortitude of the soul, is carried forward by the consciousness of a good cause, is encouraged with the admiration and applause of the world, and becomes famous to all succeeding times. To him the temple of fame spontaneously opens its gate, his name is repeated with applause, honours are paid to his memory, and he is the heir of perpetual praise. Circumstances of such a nature take away the terror of death. The secret consciousness of a great soul, the approach of an event which is so glorious in itself, and so beneficial to the world, the anticipation of the praises of succeeding times, exalt the man, and fill him with the elevation and magnanimity of virtue. Few enjoyments in life can be compared with a death so glorious. But Jesus Christ submitted to the ignominious death of the cross. The greatest trial and exercise of virtue, is when an innocent man submits to the imputation of a crime, that others may be free from the punishment. This our Lord did. In his life he was branded with the blackest names, and accused of the most flagitious crimes ; branded with the names of publican and sinner, accused of associating with the profligate, and of being in compact with the powers of darkness. But at his

latter end, in a peculiar manner, he endured the shame. He was betrayed like an impostor by one of his disciples, apprehended like a robber by a band of soldiers, led like a malefactor through the streets of Jerusalem, nailed like a murderer to the accursed tree, and, in the sight of all Israel, died the death of a traitor and a slave, that he might atone for the real guilt of men. In all these respects, the merit of Jesus was infinitely superior to the heroism of men. As the heavens are higher than the earth, as the Most High God excels the offspring of the dust, so much superior was his love to their beneficence.

To conclude, Let me ask you, my brethren, what impression does the love of Jesus make upon your hearts, what influence does it exert upon your lives? They whose minds are dazzled with the ideas of false glory, with arms, and conquest, and fields of battle, and triumphal processions, and songs of victory, may not be disposed to relish those acts of heroism which have nothing of the sword in them. But to the mind that is freed from vulgar prejudice, and acquainted with true glory, the triumphs of Jesus will appear, the greater that they are the triumphs of peace, that they were not obtained at the expence of slaughtered thousands, nor erected on the ruin of nations, but rose on the basis of general happiness, and everlasting life to all good men.

Are you then actuated with a proper sense of gratitude to this Captain of our salvation? The temporal hero and deliverer is received with a tribute of applause; every heart beats with admiration, and every tongue is vocal in his praise. Let us also celebrate the Prince of Peace, the Redeemer of our fallen race, who delivered us from everlasting wrath, and opened a way to the heavens by the blood of his cross. Beautified with his salvation, let us rejoice in the Saviour, saying with the Apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Jesus Christ." Let us also love Him who first loved us. Let us give the chief place in our hearts to that Divine Friend of mankind, whose affection to us was stronger than death.

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## S E R M O N XI.

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PROVERBS xii. 26.

*The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.*

**T**HE sentiments of men concerning virtue, and their own particular practice, form a very strange and striking contrast. Notwithstanding their own irregular or imperfect conduct, a general feeling, with regard to morality, pervades the human species. Philosophers have differed about the origin of moral distinctions, and delivered various theories concerning virtue ; but the people who judge from their feelings have no system but one ; and whenever right or wrong become the subject of decision, if the fact be fully explained, the voice of mankind is uniform and constant.

Without this moral sense, or sentiment, the question with regard to virtue had never been started at all, nor exercised the ingenuity of the greatest and best spirits in every age of the world. For, independent of the national religions, men arose among the heathens who strove to improve, or reform their countrymen, the lights of one age shone to another, the great and the good not only left their example, but lifted up their voice to ages which were to come.

Religion gives its powerful sanction to the maxims of morality, and this volume was written to republish that law which is engraven on the heart.

The book from which these words are taken, was the work of a great king, who sometimes left the throne to adorn it the more, and, retiring from the splendid follies of a court, consecrated his hours to

the benefit of all posterity. It was addressed by Solomon to his son, and contains such ideas of religion, and urges such motives to virtue, as are most effectual with the young, representing them as the perfection of human nature, and the true excellence of man. "The righteous," says he, "is more excellent than his neighbour." With great propriety is this picture set before the young; for the love of excellence is natural to the youthful mind. What is manly, what is generous, what is honourable, are then the objects of admiration and pursuit; fired with noble emulation, each ingenuous disciple aspires to be more excellent than his neighbour.

The objections against a holy life have proceeded on maxims directly contrary to the text. The inducements to vice, which have been powerful in all ages, are the same that were presented by the tempter to our first parents. Wisdom was promised, "Ye shall be wise to know good and evil;" the attractions of ambition were presented, "Ye shall be as gods;" the allurements of pleasure were added, and the forbidden fruit recommended as "good for food and pleasant to the eye." If, in opposition to these, it shall be shewn, that the righteous man is wiser, and greater, and happier than his neighbour, the objections against religion will be removed, the ways of Providence will be vindicated, and virtue established upon an everlasting foundation.

In the *first* place, The righteous man is wiser than his neighbour.

There is no part of his nature in which man is so earnest to excel, and so jealous of a defect, as his understanding. Men will give up any part of their frame sooner than this; they will subscribe to many infirmities and errors; they will confess a want of temper, and the proper government of their passions; they will even admit deviations with regard to the lesser moralities, but never yield the smallest iota in what respects their intellectual abilities.

No wonder that man is jealous of his understanding,

for it is his prerogative and his glory. This draws the line between the animal and the intellectual world, ascertains our rank in the scale of being, and not only raises us above inferior creatures, but makes us approach to a nature which is divine. This enters into the foundation of character ; for without intellectual abilities, moral qualities cannot subsist, and a good heart will go wrong without the guidance of a good understanding. Without the direction and the government of wisdom, courage degenerates into rashness, justice hardens into rigour, and benevolence becomes an indiscriminate good nature, or a blameable facility of manners. Where then is wisdom to be found, and what is the path of understanding ? If you will trust the dictates of religion and reason, to be virtuous is to be wise. The testimony of all who have gone before you, confirms the decision. In opposition, however, to the voice of religion, of reason, and of mankind, there are multitudes in every age who reckon themselves more excellent than their neighbours, by trespassing against the laws which all ages have counted sacred, the younger by the pursuit of criminal gratification, the old by habits of deceit and fraud.

The early period of life is frequently a season of delusion. When youth scatters its blandishments, and the song of pleasure is heard, " Let us crown " ourselves with rose-buds before they are withered, " and let no flower of the spring pass away ;" the inexperienced and the unwary listen to the sound, and surrender themselves to the enchantment. Not satisfied with those just and masculine joys which nature offers and virtue consecrates, they rush into the excesses of unlawful pleasure ; not satisfied with those fruits bordering the path of virtue, which they may taste and live, they put forth their hand to the forbidden tree. One criminal indulgence lays the foundation for another, till sinful pleasure becomes a pursuit that employs all the faculties, and absorbs all the time, of its votaries.



There is no moderation nor government in vice. Desires that are innocent may be indulged with innocence ; pleasures that are pure may be pursued with purity, and the round of guiltless delights may be made without encroaching on the great duties of life. But guilty pleasure becomes the masters and the tyrants of the mind : when these lords acquire dominion, they bring all the thoughts into captivity, and rule with unlimited and despotic sway.

Look around you. Consider the fate of your equals in age, who have been swept away, not by the hand of time, but by the scythe of intemperance, and involved in the shade of death. Contemplate that cloud which vests the invisible world, where their mansion is fixed for ever. When the sons of the Siren call you to the banquet of vice, stop in the midst of this career, pause on the brink, look down, and while yet one throb belongs to virtue, turn back from the verge of destruction. Think of the joyful morning that rises after a victory over sin ; reflection thy friend ; memory stored with pleasant images ; thy thoughts, like good angels, announcing peace, and presaging joy.

Or, if that will not suffice, turn to the shades of the picture, and behold the ruin that false pleasure introduces into human nature. Behold a rational being arrested in his course. A character that might have shone in public and in private life, cast into the shades of oblivion ; a name that might have been uttered with a tear, and left as an inheritance to a race to come, consigned to the roll of infamy. All that is great in human nature, sacrificed at the shrine of sensual pleasure in this world, and the candidate for immortality in the next, plunged into the irremediable gulf of folly, dissipation, and endless misery.

*Cætera desunt.*

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## S E R M O N   X I I .

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DANIEL xi. 32.

*The people that do know their God, shall be strong.*

THE follies and vices which disfigure human life, do not always proceed from a principle of depravity. The thoroughly abandoned who sin from fore-thought and contrivance, who commit iniquity upon a fixed plan, and who are wicked merely from a love of wickedness, I hope and believe are not a numerous class. The indiscretions and vices into which men fall, I am apt to imagine proceed often from a weakness of mind, rather than from a badness of heart. There is a certain feebleness in the springs of actions, a facility of disposition, a silliness of soul, which marks the character, and runs through the life of many men, as pernicious to them in the conduct of life, as a principle of actual depravity could be. Persons of this class, properly speaking, sustain no character at all. They assert not the rights of an independent Being, they make no original efforts of mind, but patiently surrender themselves to accident, to be guided by events, and to be fashioned by those with whom they live. They have not strength of mind to stand alone, they dare not walk in a path unless it is beaten. Feebleness, fluctuation, timidity, irresolution, fill up the period of their insignificant days, and often betray them into crimes as well as indiscretions.

This weakness of mind is not only pernicious but criminal. There are mental defects that are incon-

sistent with a state of virtue. The Sacred Scriptures never draw the line of distinction between intellectual and moral qualities, but prescribe both as requisite to form the character of the righteous man. Hence a sound mind, as well as a good heart, is mentioned as an ingredient in the character of a saint. Hence, in the sacred books, religion and virtue go under the name of *wisdom*, vice and wickedness under the name of *folly*. Hence intellectual qualities become the subject of divine precept, and we are called upon to be wise and to be strong, as well as to be holy and to be pure. In opposition to the feeble-minded, it is said in the text, that they who know their God, or are truly religious, are strong. Religion, when rightly understood, and virtue, when properly practised, give nerves and vigour to the mind, infuse into the soul a secret strength, and, presenting a future world to our faith, make us superior to the dangers and temptations of the present.

To shew what this strength is, I shall set before you some of the most remarkable scenes in human life in which the feeble-minded give way, and in which they who know their God are strong. This strength then inspired into the mind by the knowledge of God, makes us superior to the opinion and fashion of the world, superior to the difficulties and dangers of the world, superior to the pleasures and temptations of the world, and superior to desponding fears at our departure from the world.

In the *first* place, It makes us superior to the opinion and fashion of the world.

To sustain an amiable character, so as to be beloved by those with whom we live, to maintain a sacred regard to the approbation of the wise and good, and to follow those things which are of good report, when at the same time they are pure, and lovely, and honourable, is the duty of every honest man. But unhappily the bulk of the world is not composed of the wise and good; religion and virtue are not always in the fashion; to fix the rule of life, therefore, by the

public approbation or dislike, is to make the standard of morality uncertain and variable. According to this doctrine, the Christian life would be the work of mere caprice, there would be a fashion in morals as well as in dress, and what is virtue or vice in one age or country, would not be so in another. In such critical cases, when truth is to be defended, or integrity to be held fast against the current of popular opinion, the feeble-minded are apt to make shipwreck of the faith. The feeble-minded man rests not upon himself, he has nothing within to support him, he thinks and acts, and lives by the opinion of others. "What will the world say?" is the question that he puts to himself on all occasions. Thou fool! look inwards; thine own heart will tell thee more than all the world. This pusillanimous deference to the opinions of others, this criminal compliance to the public voice, will make you lose your all, your soul.

Hence, in certain companies, men are ashamed of their religion. They lend a pleased ear to arguments that shake the foundations of their faith: they join in the laugh that is raised at the expence of all that they hold sacred and venerable, and themselves assume the spirit, and speak the words of profaneness, while the heart often secretly agonizes for the liberties of the tongue. In opposition to such characters, the man who is truly religious, performs his duty through bad report as well as through good. The applause of such fools as make a mock at sin, he despises. His standard of moral conduct, is his own conscience well informed by the word of God. He knows that the fashion of the world passeth away, and vice or folly is not recommended to him by being practised by others. He remembers the words of his Master, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed." He dares to be singular and good: "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I."

In the *second* place, This strength inspired by true religion, makes us superior to the difficulties and dangers we meet with in the world.

The feeble-minded man is intimidated upon the slightest occasion : he starts at difficulties, and shrinks from dangers, whenever they present themselves. Happy to catch at any subterfuge, he finds, or makes a thousand obstacles to the discharge of his duty ; and when any thing great is to be done, " there is a lion in the way." What infinite mischief has this pusillanimity done in the world ! How often has the best and most generous cause been lost by the weakness of its defenders ! How often have the most innocent and worthy characters suffered by the shameful cowardice of their friends ! How often have men purchased to themselves an inglorious ease, an infamous tranquillity, at the expence of character and conscience, and every thing great and good !

Very different is the character of him who is strong in the Lord. When he is assured he is in the right path, he sees no obstacles in the way. Nothing is difficult to a determined mind. Through the divine aid, resolution is omnipotent. To the unwearied efforts of persevering courage, art and nature have yielded : and there is a ladder by which the heavens may be scaled. Through Christ strengthening him, the man of God can do all things. No appearance of difficulty, no form of danger, no face of death terrifies him from doing his duty. He gives up his possessions, his country, his parents, his friends, his wife and children, his own life also, rather than desert the post of honour assigned to him by Providence. " None of these things move me," saith an apostle, " neither account I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy. What mean you to weep and to break my heart ? for I am willing not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."

This was not the vain boast of men who were brave when the day of battle was distant, and who, in the midst of tranquillity, talked of despising danger. It was the speech of one who acted what he spoke. To the confirmation of it, we can adduce a cloud of wit-

nesses, an host of martyrs, multitudes of all nations, and ages, and conditions, for whom the flames of the tormentor were kindled to no purpose ; against whom the sword of persecution was drawn in vain ; who held fast their integrity, though they knew death to be the consequence, and followed their Redeemer in a path that was marked with blood. Among these martyrs, doubtless there were many who naturally were as feeble, and flexible; and timorous, as any of you are : but when they were inspired with this hidden strength, and were supported by the everlasting arms, the timorous waxed valiant, and the feeble became strong in the Lord.

*Cætera desunt.*

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## S E R M O N XIII.

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EXOD. xxiii. 2.

*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.*

**I**MITATION is one of the great characteristics of the human species. As the passion for society is strong in the breasts of all rational creatures, the gratification of it is sought after as one of the highest enjoyments of life. The same passion that impels us to society, impels us to take part with our companions in their interests and inclinations. Insensibly and without thought we fall into their customs and their manners ; we adopt their sentiments, their passions, and even their foibles, and follow the same course as if we were actuated by the same spirit. This principle appears in children even in the infant state. From their earliest years they love to mimic whatever strikes the organs of sense ; and soon as the young idea begins to shoot, and the embryo of the manly character to appear, they form themselves insensibly upon the model of their parents, and the persons with whom they converse. To this, and not to any fancied physical cause, is owing that strong and striking resemblance, which we frequently find between the parents and the offspring ; a resemblance as remarkable in the temper and character, as in the features of the face.

This principle is not confined to individuals, it extends to nations. There is a national character, a national spirit, and even a national mode of thinking, down the current of which we are insensibly carried. When any novelty, any improvement in art or in

science, makes its appearance in a nation, it flies from man to man, and from place to place by a kind of contagion, till it has overspread the whole country. So powerful is sympathy, and the love of imitation among men : and thus are our minds framed by the hand of our Maker, to accord with those of others ; like the strings of musical instruments in unison, when one is struck, the rest correspond to the impression, vibrate in the same key, and sound the same note. As this principle is implanted in us by the Author of our nature, it must no doubt be intended for great and important purposes. It serves to strengthen the bonds of society, to promote friendship and love, and is the aptest and most successful means, not only to teach wisdom and goodness, but also to inspire them.

But as all principles have their unfavourable and vicious extreme, to which they may be carried, so likewise hath this. Here, therefore, hath the Almighty interposed, and set bounds to it which it ought not to pass, and on the farthest verge of innocence hath engraven this inscription, “ Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther ; here shall the progress of thy imitation be stayed ; ” or, as it is expressed in the words of our text, “ Thou shalt not imitate men in their wickedness ; thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.”

In further treating on this subject, I shall, in the *first* place, endeavour to shew you by what means we are to keep ourselves from following a multitude to do evil ; and, in the *second* place, adduce some arguments that urge the necessity of this duty.

The *first* thing proposed, was to shew you by what means we are to guard ourselves from the multitude that do evil.

And, in the *first* place, In order to this, let us be early and firmly established in the principles of our holy faith. When we look about us into life, and behold how many persons enter into the world, without having their minds instructed, or their hearts esta-



blished in the great principles of virtue and religion, we cannot be surprized that they go astray on occasion of the first temptation, and follow the multitude to do evil. Perhaps they have acquired some general knowledge of Christianity, but their knowledge of it is merely speculative, has played round the head, but has not reached the heart. Accordingly, as mere speculation is utterly unfit to combat the strength of passion, and the violence of temptation, they soon fall off, and sink into all the corruptions of the world around them. This course of life is well described in the beautiful parable of the sower and the seed : " Behold a sower went forth to sow ; and as he " sowed, some seeds fell upon the stony places, " where they had not much earth, and forthwith they " sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth ; " and when the sun was up they were scorched, and " because they had no root, they withered away." That is, they had received the knowledge of the Christian religion, but they had not attained to that true faith, which is not barely an assent of the understanding to speculative truth, but which is also a principle of action which purifies the heart, works by love, and regulates the whole conversation.

It is education chiefly that forms the human character ; and it is a virtuous and religious education that forms the character of the Christian. The mind at that early and innocent period, being untainted with actual guilt, and all alive to every generous impression, bends without labour to the force of instruction ; is easily formed to all the beauties of holiness, and, by frequent and repeated acts, acquires habits of devotion and virtue. The principles that are then imbibed, and the habits that are then acquired, although they may be sometimes shaken and weakened by the contagion of evil example, are seldom or never entirely obliterated. When the good seed is thus sown, we have the promise of Almighty God, that he will grant it the increase, and cause it to spring up into everlasting life. When the Christian doctrines are

thus received, not merely as articles of belief, but also as principles of action, through the blessing of God, they will attain the ascendant over the unruly passions, and exert such an entire influence over the mind, as will enable it to resist temptation, and to come off triumphant. When the good foundation is thus laid, the winds may arise, and the rains may descend; the tempest may blow and beat upon the house, but the foundation of the structure shall not fail, for it rests upon a rock.

*Next*, In order to preserve our innocence and integrity uncorrupted from the world, let us beware with what company we associate. Evil communication corrupts good manners. It is not indeed always in our power to avoid falling into the company of the wicked, but it is always in our power not to make such persons our confidants and companions. It is the grand secret of life, both with respect to virtue and to happiness, to select good and worthy persons to be our friends and companions; such persons, with whom we would not only wish to live, but also desire to die. Such persons whom we would not only choose to be the companions of our careless hours, but also the partners of our enjoyments through all eternity.

There is something in the friendship and familiarity of good men, extremely great and honourable to human nature; and there are some considerations in Christianity that carry these to their highest perfection. The great commandment of our Lord to his followers, was to love one another. In the holy sacrament of the supper, we are united together in such intimate bonds of union, as to become members of one body. We have one faith, one hope, one baptism, one Lord, the Father of all, one Saviour who died for the sins of the world, one Spirit who dwells in the hearts of the faithful. We are fellow-heirs of the same grace of life, fellow-expectants of the same heavenly rewards.

Under these considerations, the friendship of good men would be attended with the most beneficial ef-

fects. They would support each other in the temptations and afflictions of life, and by quickening each other's diligence, provoke one another to love and to good works. Such associations of good and worthy persons, in times of public degeneracy and corruption, are spoken of in Scripture with the highest honour. "Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it : and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels ; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

*Further,* In order to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, let us acquire firmness and fortitude of mind. There is no principle in human nature that is attended with a train of more dreadful consequences, than that facility of manners, that simplicity of disposition, that weakness of soul which is easily persuaded from its resolution, to comply with every proposal. This good nature, as it is falsely called, is the worst nature in the world, and is the occasion of more calamities, and of more crimes, than the actual inclination to wickedness. To oppose the actual vicious inclination, Almighty God hath endued us with an understanding to discern its evil, and with a conscience to check its progress ; but this pernicious feebleness of mind has the appearance of sociableness and of virtue, and, by that appearance, deceives us to our ruin.

Persons of such a character make no original efforts of mind. They seem born to enlist under a leader, and are the sinners or the saints of accident.

Fortitude of mind, and strength of resolution, are requisite for every purpose of human life. In particular, they are necessary to keep us from the contagion of evil example. Let us be cautious in laying down resolutions, let us be cautious in concerting plans of action : but when we have once resolved, let

us be immutable. ~~When~~ we have chosen our path, let us hold on, though the temptations of life should beset us on one hand, and the terrors of death on the other,—not suffering the commotions of the world, nor even the changes of nature, to shake or to disturb the more stedfast purpose of our souls. The most valuable of all possessions is a strenuous and a steady mind, a self-deciding spirit, prepared to act, to suffer, or to die, as occasion requires.

This is not an ideal character, which exists only in description. God hath never wanted his thousands who have not bowed the knee to the idols of the world. We can reckon up a venerable company of Patriarchs, and a Sacred society of Prophets, a holy fellowship of Apostles, an innumerable army of Martyrs and Confessors, who were found faithful in the midst of the faithless, who approved themselves the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of an evil and profane generation: and having received the recompence of reward, are now sitting on thrones, and singing hosannah in the heavens.

The contemplation of their lives should animate us to run the race that is set before us, with the same alacrity and zeal. Did we frequently and seriously call up to our remembrance, the lives and the virtues of those who are now inheriting the promises; did we, by faith and contemplation, represent to our minds those unseen rewards of which they are now in possession, we would feel our hearts burn within us; with zeal and emulation, we would inhale a portion of the same divine spirit, and beholding as in a glass reflected, their virtues and victories, we would be changed into the same image, from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the living God.

*Cætera desunt.*

N. B. The Sermon which was delivered in its finished state, by the Author, from this Text, was much admired by his hearers. The above is only a part of it, and a first copy.



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## S E R M O N   X I V .

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PSALM cxxii. 6.

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.*

**F**ELLOW-CITIZENS, we now assemble, in obedience to the command of our Sovereign; to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and for the prosperity of those that love her: Loyalty to our king; and love to our country; are the passions which ought to animate us on this day\*. That attachment which good citizens bear to their country; has ever been esteemed a virtue of the highest class. Not to mention the Greeks and the Romans, the history of the Israelites, with which you are better acquainted; presents us with grand and striking instances of patriotism and public spirit: They never mention the names of Zion and Jerusalem; without gladness and rapture. The words which I have now read to you, seem to have come from the heart; and breathe this spirit in the most lively manner.

During their captivity, when they sat by the rivers of Babylon, the Jews thought upon Zion, and wept: When they prayed to heaven, they turned their faces towards Jerusalem. At their return from captivity, they are described as halting on a hill, over which they had to march, taking a fond look of Judea, from which they had been banished so long; bursting into tears at the view, weeping as they went forward, at the recognizance of their ancient country, and their native land. Our Saviour, who was a pattern of all goodness, set us an example of this virtue. He loved his country, and uttered that celebrated ex-

\* Upon a fast-day, during the American war.

clamation of patriotism, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem; how often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings!"

As we now meet to pray for the peace or welfare of our Jerusalem, (for in the language of Scripture, peace is put for all kinds of prosperity), I shall endeavour to shew you, at this time, wherein the public welfare consists.

It consists in the national liberty, the national wealth and industry, the national defence, and the national character.

The *first* ingredient in the public happiness is liberty; a privilege invaluable, but frequently misunderstood, and still more frequently abused. Absolute liberty to do what we please, is absolute power. If one alone, or a few possess this, the rest are in slavery; if all have it, the whole must be in confusion. In order to prevent mutual encroachments, and ascertain each person's claims, liberty must be secured by a constitution, and guarded by law. In the state of nature, men are not only free, but independent; among the wandering tribes of savages, none claim authority over others; but as such a state cannot subsist long, whenever men enter into formed society, they give up some of their natural rights, in order to preserve the rest; they no longer wield the sword of justice themselves, it is given to the magistrate; they intrust their property to the laws, and their protection to the king.

Still, however, that is the happiest form of government, which best secures the natural rights of men. It is here that the British constitution triumphs. Possessing advantages which no other form of government ever possessed, it stands forth the envy of the neighbouring nations, and a pattern to succeeding times. Liberty is the birthright of every Briton. That grand charter of nature to her children is established and confirmed by law. The constitution, like the providence of Heaven, extends its gracious regards to all; while it protects the poor in the possession of their legal rights, it checks the insolence of the great,

and sets bounds to the prerogative of Majesty itself, saying to the king, "Thus far, and no farther does thy power extend." All the members of the state are represented in the great council of the nation, and have a voice in the Legislature; the subjects are taxed by their own consent. There is no despotic, or discretionary power, in any part of the constitution. No action must be deemed a crime, but what the laws have plainly determined to be such; no crime must be imputed to a man, but from a legal proof before his judges; and these judges must be his fellow-subjects and his peers, who are obliged by their own interest, to have a watchful eye over encroachments and violence. "We must ever admire as a masterpiece of political wisdom, and as the key-stone of civil liberty, that statute which forces the secrets of every prison to be revealed, the cause of every commitment to be declared, and the person of the accused to be produced, that he may claim his enlargement, or his trial, within a limited time." By these means, Great Britain hath become what ancient patriots wished, a government of laws, and not of men. Highly favoured nation and happy people, if they knew their felicity, and did not, upon occasions, by their own fault, turn the greatest of civil blessings into a curse!

In the *second* place, The national welfare consists in the national industry and wealth. It is a vulgar error to suppose, that the greatness of a nation depends upon the number of its inhabitants. It is not the number of the people, but their being usefully employed, that adds to the true grandeur and felicity of a state. A nation is a great family, where every member has a sphere marked out, and a part to perform, and which if it abounds with the idle, must fall to ruin. "Men crowd where the situation is tempting, and multiply according to the means of subsistence." Present the proper objects; let the mechanic arts be cultivated; let manufactures abound, and commerce flourish; and citizens will come from the east, and from the west, and from the

south, and from the north. Every thing in the world is purchased by labour and by industry.

Our passions and desires are the causes of labour and industry. When a nation introduces manufactures and commerce, new desires are created, and new passions are raised; men increase the enjoyments, and refine upon the pleasures of life. Not satisfied with what is *necessary*, which is a vague term, and has a reference to the fancy, and to the habit of living, they look out for what is comfortable, what is elegant, and what is delicate in life. In order to supply these recent wants, the possessor of land, the manufacturer, and the merchant, redouble their labour and attention. Thus new industry is excited, greater numbers of men are employed, the grandeur of the sovereign, and the happiness of the state come to coincide. By this means, a stock of labour comes to be laid up for public use.

Trade and industry are in reality nothing but a stock of labour, which, in times of peace and tranquillity, are employed for the ease and satisfaction of individuals; but in the exigencies of the state, may in part be turned to public advantage. The cultivation of these arts is favoured, and forwarded in our country, by that security which we enjoy. What every man has, is his own. The voice of the oppressor is never heard in our streets. The hand of rapacious power is never stretched out to rob the industrious of the fruit of his labour.

*Thirdly*, The public welfare consists in the national defence. The police of every well-modelled state has a reference to war and to national safety. The legislator of Sparta, one of the most famous of the ancient republics, thought that nations were by nature in a state of hostility: he took his measures accordingly, and observing that all the possessions of the vanquished pertain to the victor, he held it ridiculous to propose any benefit to his country before he had provided that it should not be conquered; a most necessary provision; for unless a state be sufficient for its own



defence, it must fall an easy prey to every invader. It was the intention of nature, that nations, as well as men, should guard themselves. Hence lessons of war are delivered in Sacred Scripture, and principles of emulation and dissension are strongly implanted in the soul of man. Human nature has no part of its character, of which more striking examples are given in every part of the globe. What is it that stirs in the breasts of ordinary men when the enemies of their country are named? Whence are the prejudices that subsist between different provinces and villages of the same empire and territory. What is it that excites one half of the nations of Europe against the other? The statesman may explain this conduct upon motives of national jealousy and caution; but the people have dislikes and antipathies, which proceed from sentiment, not from reasoning. Among them the materials of war and dissension are laid without the direction of government, and sparks are ready on every occasion to kindle into a flame.

This being the disposition of the people, happy is that institution which prevails in a part of this island\*, of putting arms into the hands of the people, of making every citizen a soldier in his turn, and by this means having a force at hand to rise in arms at any sudden emergency. When such a system of military arrangements takes place, the prosperity of a state becomes independent of single men; there is a wisdom which never dies, and a valour which is immortal. A state may hire troops, but valour is not to be bought; the wealth of a nation will procure soldiers to fight its battles, but let it not be forgot, that the possessions of the fearful are easily seized, that a timorous multitude falls into rout of itself. Ramparts may be erected, and the implements of war may be furnished by a pacific people; but let it be remembered as an eternal truth, that there is no rampart which is impregnable to valour, that arms are only of consequence when they are in the hands of the

\* Originally published before the institution of Scottish Militia.

brave, and that the only price of freedom is the blood of the free. When an ancient Spartan was asked what was the wall of his city ? he pointed to a band of brave men ; a defence more permanent and more effectual than the rock and the cement with which other cities are fortified.

*Lastly*, The public welfare consists in the national character. That righteousness exalteth a nation, and that vice is not only a reproach, but also a depression to any people, are truths so universally received, as to require little confirmation. All lawgivers in all ages have thought so, and made it their object to cultivate justice, and temperance, and fortitude, and industry, conscious that public virtue is the source of public happiness. Philosophers and moralists have been of the same opinion, and have taught, with one consent, that the morality of the people was the stability of the government, and the true source of public prosperity. Practice and experience have confirmed the truth of these speculations. If we consult the history of the most renowned nations that have made a figure in the world we shall find, that they rose to greatness by virtue, and sunk to nothing by vice : that they obtained dominion by their temperance, their probity of manners, and a serious regard to religion ; and that when they grew dissolute, corrupted, and profane, they became slaves to their neighbours, whom they were no longer worthy to govern. Public depravity paves the way for public ruin. When the health and vigour of the political constitution is broken, it is hastening to its decline. When internal symptoms of weakness appear, the least external violence will accomplish its dissolution. Besides the natural tendency of virtue to make nations great and happy, if we have just notions of divine providence, if we believe that the perfections of God are at all concerned in human affairs, virtuous nations will be his peculiar care, and under his immediate protection ; he will counsel their counsellors, cover their armies in the day of battle, and crown them with victory and peace.

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## S E R M O N   X V .

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H E B R E W S ix. 27.

*It is appointed to men once to die ; but after this the judgment.*

**D**EATH is the conclusion of all events ; of all that ever have been, and of all that ever will be. The schemes of the base, the plots of the ambitious, the projects of the visionary, the studies of the learned, all terminate here. However different the paths be that we take in life, they all lead to the grave. Whilst, therefore, we make death the subject of contemplation, and meditate upon the house which is appointed for all living, let us take this thought along with us, that we shall bear a part in those scenes which we now describe, and that we are meditating on a fate which will one day be our own.

In the *first* place, Let us consider death as an event, the period of which is uncertain.

In the days when Noah entered into the ark, they did eat, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage ; and the flood came, and destroyed them all. On the day that Lot went out of Sodom, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded ; and it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. As it was in the days of Noah, and in the days of Lot, even thus, my friends, shall it be to you when the day of death cometh. In the present state of things, the soul of man is blind to futurity. Surrounded with material objects, and occupied in present affairs, we make these the sole objects of attention ; we find in them

the only sources of attachment, and overlook those spiritual and distant events on which our future life and happiness depend. Hence, we are always surprised with our latter end, and the day of the Lord cometh like a thief in the night. No instruction can make us so wise as to consider our latter end; no warning can incite us to set our houses in order, that we may die; and no example give the alarm so strong as to set us on serious preparation for meeting with God. Void of thought, and careless of futurity, we live on from day to day, like the victim that plays and dances before that altar where its blood is to be shed. Even after the longest life, and under the most lingering sickness, death comes unexpected; the arrow is still unseen that strikes through the heart.

This is not peouliar to a few men; it describes a general character, and is exemplified in all the classes of life. This infatuation does not arise from ignorance. You all know that death is certain; you all know that it is generally unexpected. You assent to every thing that we can say upon this head, that there is no action of life but what may lead to its end, and no moment of time but what may be your last. You need not be informed, that death spares no age; your own observation presents you with many instances of persons cut off in all periods of life. In that church-yard, you see graves of every length, on those monuments of mortality you read the histories of the promising boy, of the blooming youth, of the man in middle life, and of the hoary head; mingled together in sad assemblage amongst the abodes of the dead. You can reckon up instances of persons cut off in a sudden and unexpected manner, of a Herod who was struck amidst the applauses of the people; of a Jezebel who was thrown headlong from that window where she had prepared to display herself to the people; of a Belshazzar who was slain at a banquet, when he was carousing with his princes, his concubines, and his wives; and of a Holo-

phernes, who met his fate, surrounded with his army, and crowned with victory and fame.

With all these in your memory, you act as if you were *immortal*. Even the death of those who fall around us, and before our eyes, affects us not with serious concern. One person opposed us in a favourite object, and we rejoice at his decease; another stood in our way to preferment and power; the death of a third opens to us a prospect of rising to wealth and fortune: we profit not by all these lessons of mortality; the voice from the tomb sends us back to the world, and from the very ashes of the dead there comes a fire that rekindles our earthly desires. We look upon all our neighbours as mortal; we form schemes to ourselves upon their decease, but forget all the while that we ourselves are to die. O foolish and infatuated race, will you always continue deaf to the voice of wisdom? Will neither the instructions of the living, nor the warnings of the dead, induce you to serious thoughts? Will you continue to lengthen your prospects, when perhaps you stand upon the very verge of life; and can you enjoy the feast, when the sword hangs over your head, by a single hair? Who knoweth what a day may bring forth; the morning has smiled upon multitudes, who before the evening hath slept the sleep of death. Who knoweth how soon you may be hurried to the judgment-seat of God? The ears which hear these sayings may soon be shut for ever: and the heart which now throbs at the thought, may, in a little, be mingled with the clods of the valley. Some who last Lord's day worshipped within these walls, are now gone to the eternal world, and God only knows how soon some of us may follow.

Seeing then that life is so uncertain, that the thread thereof breaks at every blast, let me exhort you to set apart some time for serious meditation upon your mortality. Let it be on some solemn occasion, in the silent hour of night, when deep sleep falleth on man, when midnight closeth awful all the world, and

naught in nature is awake but God and thee : there ; in deep and solemn meditation, think over the terrors of that house which is appointed for all living, and with the ancient patriarch, say to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister. Ask seriously at your own heart, " Should these eyes never open upon the light of another day ; should the awful mandate issue forth from the Almighty Arbiter of life and death, — This night, this night thy soul shall be required of thee ; " could you, without fear and trembling, face the tribunal of God, the Judge of all ? If frightened nature starts back and trembles at the thought of instant dissolution, make your former life pass before you in review, compare it with the law of God : if your former misspent time comes up before you in sad remembrance ; if your past transgressions stare you in the face, and point to the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, instantly and without delay, whilst the gate of heaven is yet open, whilst the throne of mercy is yet accessible, prostrate yourselves before God in deep humility and abasement, mourn over the sins of your past life in bitterness of soul, believe in a crucified Redeemer, who died for the sins of the world, implore compassion and forgiveness from the Father of mercies, through the merits of Jesus Christ. Thus continue fervent in prayer and supplication, and in the exercise of faith and repentance ; give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eye-lids, till you have made your peace with God, till you feel within yourselves that peace which passeth all understanding, that joy which is unspeakable and glorious. Thus continue at solemn and stated occasions, to consider your latter end, till death shall grow familiar to your mind, till the grave shall gradually lose its terrors, and the Sun of righteousness arise upon you in full glory.

In the *second* place, Let me remind you, that a good life is the best preparation for death. You may lay it down as a maxim confirmed by universal experience,

that every man dies as he lives : and it is by the general tenor of the life, not a particular frame of mind at the hour of death, that we are to be judged at the tribunal of God. It is a dangerous mistake which prevails amongst men, that it is sufficient for their eternal happiness, if they feel some serious emotions at their latter end. If your life has been wicked, what will it avail you, that on your death-bed you have been actuated with sorrow for your offences ? Judas Iscariot felt such a sorrow when he went to his own place. Late conversions are not to be trusted to, and death-bed repentances are generally nothing more than the first gnawing of the worm that shall never die. Suppose death to halt a little, the sick person recovers, washes his couch with floods of penitential tears ; a thousand vows of amendment are made ; but if repentance lasts no longer than sickness, the disease and the devotion go off together ; the man returns to walk in his former ways.

Be blameless, therefore, and harmless in the general tenor of your life. Keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. Let not the sun go down upon one unrepented sin. Make it your business every night to review the actions of the foregoing day. If, through the frailty of nature, or the force of temptation, you have sinned against God, prostrate yourselves before the throne of grace, ask pardon through Christ. As you would not wish to yourselves distress, and anguish, and tribulation, at the day of death ; as you would not wish to bring down your gray hairs with sorrow to the grave ; beware of persisting in a course of unrepented sin.

Notwithstanding, however, of the utility of such meditations, there is no subject on which we are so reluctant to fix our attention as our mortality. We shift from one speculation, and from one pursuit to another ; we give our thoughts to wander through immensity, but cautiously avoid this theme which touches us so near ; but this is the point where wisdom begins. We can never live as we ought, till we

have learned how to die. I mean not by this, that we should make death the constant subject of our meditation, and have funerals always passing before our eyes. This would withdraw us from life altogether ; would indispose us even for its business and its enjoyments ; but although we cannot always employ ourselves in such meditations, let us at times give this subject its full weight ; that certainly merits some place in our thought, which is the great close of our being here. It is awful, indeed, I acknowledge, my friends, to make approaches to the mansions of the dead ; it is melancholy to think upon the fall of this goodly structure, which was built by the hand of the Most High ; but fall it assuredly must. The present moment hastens us on to our last hour. Let us, therefore, prepare for an event which we cannot avoid. We may learn some lessons from the tomb, which will avail us through all eternity.

In the *third* place, I shall consider death as becoming present to us, and endeavour to give you that view of it which you will one day have.

None, indeed, ever returned from the invisible world to describe the bed of death, and tell us the agonies of the last hour. But up to that hour we can trace the man, and survey him stretched upon the bed from which he is to rise no more. A death-bed discovers the real character of men ; dissimulation is then at an end. At the close of the scene, the mask drops off, and the man appears in his true colours. Then, then, often for the first time, a man turns a serious eye upon himself ; cut off from all connection with the living world ; bidding adieu for ever to all below the sun ; entering within the dominions of the dead, and about to appear before the judgment-seat of God ; surrounded by the sad circle of his friends and attendants, he reads in their trembling looks that all is over with him, that his hour is come ; then the allusion vanishes that was spread upon all earthly things ; then the past rises up, often rises in bitter remembrance ; then the future rushes upon his view with all its dark and unknown terrors ;



then the sense of Deity revives, which, however disguised, lies at the bottom of every heart ; then conscience, rising up in majesty supreme, holds out such a picture of the eternal world ; as convinces the most unbelieving mind ; convinces him, that a future state is not the dictate of a wild imagination, is not the figment of priests and lawgivers, to terrify the ignorant, and to keep the people in awe ; he sees and feels that it is an awful reality. When the time of his departure is announced by the cold sweat and the shivering limbs, and the voice faltering in the throat, he casts a last look, perhaps a sad one, on all that he leaves behind. Then the whole creation fades from his view, the world seems to be dissolved, and, to the closing eye, nothing appears but God alone ; that God, before whose tribunal he is summoned to appear.

If this fate shall one day be ours, what manner of persons ought we now to be ? At that hour, the very best shall wish that they had been better, and after all the preparation that we have made, we shall wish that we had made more. Let this thought have its influence in determining us to the choice of objects which we pursue, and the course of life which we embrace. The greatest part of mankind, having no fixed or certain plan of life, have no choice in the objects which present themselves, but give the loose rein to a wandering inclination, and follow on without thinking, where accident points the way. Here, therefore, let us often pause, and seriously ask ourselves, Is the course of life which I am now engaged in, of such a nature that it will bear a review upon the bed of death ? Are the motives of my present conduct, and the reasons which now determine me to action, so strong and well-founded, that I could plead them in my defence at the bar of eternal justice ? If that is not the case, consider and be wise before it is too late. Why should you vex yourselves in vain ? Why should you pass your time in such a manner, as to make its end bitter ? Why will you treasure up to yourselves anguish, and remorse, and tribulation, and make no other use of the present time, but to embitter

your last hour? Be consistent with yourselves. You cannot live the life of the wicked, and die the death of the righteous. Let, therefore, your course of action be of that kind, that draws no repentance after it; then shall your path in life be like the morning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Having thus set out, and made progress in the ways of righteousness, you will look forward with joy. This will cause the evening of your days to smile, and the stream of life to run clear to the last. Let this consideration moderate our attachment to earthly things. What profit hath a man in that sore travel to which he is appointed under the sun? Why should we vex ourselves in vain, deny to ourselves the enjoyments of life, withdraw sleep from our eyes, and peace from our minds? Why should we add to the evils of life, and carry about with us a burden to the grave? Even with a view to present tranquillity and enjoyment, this is folly of the first magnitude; but, when we take in the consideration of a future life, it is worse than folly, it is sin. If we are entirely immersed in the concerns of this world; if earthly things occupy and engross our whole attention, what shall we do when God taketh away the soul? How will the closing eye contemplate the pomp and glitter of life, the evil of avarice, the bustling of ambition, and all this circle of vanity to which we are now enchanted? Use this world, therefore, as not abusing it; let not the business or the pleasures of it take hold of your heart, make them not essential to your happiness, sit loose to them, remember that the fashion of this world passeth away, and that death soon puts a period to the scene, which no wise man would wish to last for ever.

In the *fourth* place, By making the thought of death present to us, let us regulate our conduct with respect to the friendships which we form, and concerning the animosities which we entertain.

Affection and friendship are the best and most valuable part of human nature. The heart of man wishes to be kind, and looks around for objects. This fund

of generous love is often misapplied ; this favourable bias of humanity is often perverted ; sometimes by that general and indiscriminate good nature which looks upon all men as alike ; sometimes by frivolous attachments, founded upon a conformity of trifling dispositions ; and sometimes by a more criminal alliance, by a partnership in iniquity. In the course of business, indeed, we must converse with persons of all kinds. No man has the choice of the companies into which he may fall ; but every man has the choice of the friends with whom he cultivates more intimate connections. In forming these connections, therefore, let us look forward to the time when they shall be dissolved, and let us live only with such persons with whom we would desire to die.

This thought should also check us in the animosities which we are apt to entertain. In the present state of things, where men think so differently, where opposite passions are felt, and interfering interests occur, dissensions will naturally arise. And, where men have not the aid of philosophy to restrain, or the influence of divine grace to subdue, their passions, these will often be attended with dismal effects. From this root proceeds the wormwood which embitters the cup of human life. But when the blood begins to cool, when the passions grow calmer, reason re-assumes its office, greater moderation will prevail ; things will appear in a different light ; honest and candid men will then look back with pain upon those excesses to which they have been carried by the impetuosity of passion. However some men choose to live, all men would wish to die at peace with their neighbours ; there is no enmity in the grave ; there is no discord in the house which is appointed for all living : there friends and foes rest together in peace, and the ashes of those who were mortal enemies mingle together in friendly alliance. Let us, therefore, now cultivate those benevolent dispositions to all men, and live in those habits with our neighbours, which we would wish to prevail in us at the hour of death.

These exhortations, my young friends, I address particularly to you. You are apt to reckon yourselves privileged from death ; you put the evil day far off ; you promise to yourselves a length of happy days, and think that melancholy reflections upon mortality, are ill suited to the bloom of your years, and the gaiety of your spirits. " Let the old," you say, " think upon death ; let those who are drawing nigh " to the grave, prepare for that better world to which " they are advancing ; but sure it is the duty of " the young and the gay to make the most of life." True ; and in order to make the most of life, you must conquer the fear of death. The king of terrors, when not subdued, is the most formidable of all foes. In every path of life he will meet you, and haunt you like a ghost : even at the banquet his form will appear ; he will blast you in the midst of your joy, and turn the house of mirth into a house of mourning. Trust not, O man, to thy youth, nor presume upon impunity from the destroyer. How often, when the tree puts forth buds, and spreads its blossoms to the sun, does the wind of the desert come and blast the hopes of the year ? The widow of Nain wept over her son, who died, fair in the prime of life ; and many a parent hath followed his child to the grave, crying with bitter lamentation, " Would to God that " I had died for thee, my son ! my son !" Your own experience may enforce this truth. None who now hear me, but have seen their equals in age cut off, and younger than they laid in the grave. As, therefore, you are always in danger, be always on your guard. Instead of filling you with gloom and melancholy, this is the true way to prevent them. Having subdued the last enemy, you have none other to fear. Adopted into the family of God, interested in the merits of Christ, entitled to the glories of immortality, you go forward through life and death, conquering and to conquer. Then all things are yours ; death is a passage to a better life, and the gate to immortality.

Much more is it incumbent on you, my aged friends, to consider your latter end. Why stand you here all the day idle? Consider how vain, and foolish, and sinful, it is to be forming schemes of long life, when you are within the threshold of the house of death? Consider how terrible will be the hour, if you have never thought of death till you come to die; like Jonah, to be awakened from a sound sleep, and to be cast into the ocean. Look into life, behold a young generation rising around you, and you yourselves left alone in a new world. Look into the records of mortality, into the repositories of the dead, and hear your equals in age calling to you from the tomb, and warning you to prepare for that fate which is theirs to-day, and may be yours to-morrow. Embrace, therefore, the opportunities of grace which you now enjoy. Whilst the Prince of Peace extends the golden sceptre, kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and he perish from his presence. Be wise, and consider your end that is so near.

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## S E R M O N   X V I .

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MATTHEW xi. 30.

*My yoke is easy, and my burden light.*

JESUS hath lately been addressing to you the gracious invitation which here he gives to penitent sinners. With his invitation you have testified your compliance. Last Lord's day you confessed at these tables, that you were weary and heavy laden with the yoke of the world ; that you came to Jesus in hopes of finding rest to your souls ; and that you were resolved to learn of him, and to take his yoke upon you. The good confession, my friends, which you then witnessed, the happy choice which you then made, you will never have cause to repent. The world, indeed, will represent religion to you as a heavy burden and a galling yoke ; but I assure you, upon the authority of Jesus Christ, and upon the testimony of all his disciples, that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light ; that his commandments are not grievous, and the ways he points out to his followers, are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace.

The ease and pleasure of the Christian life, is to be the subject of the present discourse. But, before I enter upon it, I have one observation to make, which is, That in order to taste the joys of religion, we must have been accustomed to its government, and made advances in the divine life. We never can have a taste for any pursuit till we be acquainted with it : we can never enter into the spirit of any science, till that science be familiar to us. To those who have long engaged in a course of wickedness, the duties of religion will at first be grievous and irksome,

because they oppose strong prejudices and confirmed habits of vice. But when these bad habits are removed, and good ones are contracted, when a man acquires the temper, and enters into the spirit of religion, he then feels the joy which a stranger intermeddles not with. Give a musical instrument to an unskilful person, we hear nothing but harshness and discord from every string: the artist alone makes music and harmony accompany all the motions of his hand. Religion is an art, and like an art is to be learned before it be understood.

In the *first* place, the Christian life is a life of ease and pleasure, on account of the principle from which the Christian acts:

The Christian is not a slave who obeys from compulsion, nor a servant who works for hire; he is a son who acts from ingenuous affection and filial love. When the Christian contemplates the goodness, and tender mercies, and loving-kindness of God, particularly his inexpressible love in the redemption of the world by Christ Jesus, he is constrained to new obedience, by the most powerful of all ties, by the cords of love, and the bands of a man; thus reasoning, and thus feeling, that if one died for all, then they which are alive ought not to live to themselves, but to him who died for them. Gratitude to a benefactor, affection to a father, love to a friend, all concur to form the principle of evangelical obedience, and to strengthen the cord that is not easily broken. Love, then, is the principle of the Christian life: love, the most generous passion that glows in the breast of man, the most active principle that works in the human frame, the key that unlocks every finer feeling of the heart, the spring that puts in motion every power of the soul. Pleasant are the labours of love. Short is the path, and cheerful the journey, when the heart goes along. A determined mind, enamoured of the object it pursues, removes mountains, and makes the crooked paths straight: the fire cannot extinguish, nor the waters quench its force; it reigns supreme in the

heart, and diffuses a gaiety over every path of life. By its influence labour is rendered easy, and duty becomes a delight.

In the *second* place, The ease and pleasure of the Christian life will appear, if we consider the assistance we receive from above.

“Work out your salvation, for it is God that worketh within you every good work and word.” There are difficulties in the Christian life ; I have no intention to deceive you, my friends ; you will often find it difficult to act the proper part ; to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man ; to keep your passions within the bounds of reason ; to subdue your irregular inclinations to the obedience of faith, and to hold fast your integrity uncorrupted amid the temptations of the world. These, and many other difficulties will beset you in running the Christian race. But let me remind you, that one half of the pleasures of human life arise from overcoming difficulties ; and to overcome these difficulties which surround us, God bestows the influences of his Holy Spirit. The Lord is ever nigh to them who call upon him in the sincerity of their heart. To those who wait at the salutary stream an angel descends to stir the waters. God never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain. He never neglected the prayer that came from the heart : he never forsook the man that put his trust in him.

If you were left to climb the arduous ascent by your own strength alone, then the Christian life would neither be easy nor pleasant ; then you might sit down in despair of ever attaining the top. But whatever duties God calls you to, he gives you abilities to perform them. According as your days are, he hath promised that your strength shall be. His grace is sufficient for us ; his strength is made perfect in our weakness. No, my friends, God hath never withdrawn himself from the world. The Father of Spirits is ever present with his rational offspring ; he knows their frame, he helps their infirmities, assists their graces, strengthens their powers, and makes per-



fect what concerns them. He assists the feeble, he revives the languishing, he supports the strong. He aids the efforts of the captive, who endeavours to break loose from the fetters that hold him ; he favours the ascent of the devout mind, that, with the confidence of faith, rises to himself, and he forwards the pilgrim, journeying to his native country. The good husbandman superintends the vine which his own right hand planted. He waters his vineyard with dews from heaven, and breathes ethereal influence on those trees of righteousness that shall adorn the paradise of God.

Hast thou not felt him, O Christian ! restraining thy evil inclinations, suggesting holy thoughts, kindling heavenly affections, and drawing thee to thy duty with a hand unseen ? Hast thou not felt him as a Spirit within thy spirit, imparting secret strength, animating thy frame as with new life, actuating thy faculties, purifying thy passions, begetting in thee an abhorrence of sin, and a love of righteousness, and making all thy graces shine out with fresh beauty ? How easy and delightful then will the Christian life be, when you have divine aids to strengthen, support, and assist ! It is God himself who is on your side ; it is God himself who works with you ; his wisdom is your guide, his arm is your support ; his Spirit is your strength ; you lose your own insufficiency in the fulness of infinite perfection.

In the *third* place, It will appear, that the Christian life is easy and pleasant, if we consider the encouragements the good man receives.

The good man waits not for all his happiness till he come to heaven : he hath treasures in hand, as well as possessions in hope : he hath a portion in the life that now is, as well as in that which is to come. There is a sense of moral good and evil implanted in the mind ; a principle of conscience which condemns us when we do ill, and applauds us when we do well. This principle is the chief foundation of our happi-

ness, and gives rise to the greatest pleasures and the greatest pains in human life. By means of this moral sense, there is no peace to the wicked. Inward struggles, strong reluctance and aversion of mind, precede the commission of sin. Sin, when committed, is followed by guilty blushes, alarming fears, terrible reviews, startling prospects, and remorse, with all its hideous train. Against the sinner, his own heart rises up in judgment to condemn him; the terrors of the Lord set themselves in array against him; a fire not blown consumes him. "There is no peace to the wicked." The foundations of peace are subverted in his mind; he is at enmity with himself; he is at enmity with his fellow-creatures; he is at enmity with God. It is *not so* with those that take upon them the yoke of Christ. When pure religion forms the temper, and governs the life, all is peaceful and serene; the man is then in his proper element; the soul is in a state of health and vigour; there is a beautiful correspondence between the heart and the life; all is serene without, all is tranquil within. Delivered from the anxieties that perplex, and from the terrors that overwhelm the guilty man, the Christian resigns himself to peace and joy, conscious that he possesses a temper of mind which is acceptable to God, and leads a life which is useful to men. In the heart of such a man there is a blessed calmness and tranquillity, like that of the highest heavens.

But there is more than a calmness and tranquillity. The air may be calm and tranquil, when the day is dark; the sea may be smooth, when there is a mist upon the waves; the sky may be tranquil, when it is overcast with clouds; but the pious and virtuous mind resembles a sky that is not only calm, but bright; resembles a sea that is not only smooth, but serene; resembles an unclouded sky, beautiful with the rising sun. There are joys in the Christian life, unknown to transgressors; there is a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed, that refreshes the city of God; there are secret consolations.

tions reserved for the just ; there are silent pleasures that flow into the pious mind : there is a still small voice that comes to the pure in heart, and bids them be of good cheer ; there is an inward peace of God that passeth all understanding, there is a joy in the Holy Ghost, resulting from the well-grounded hope of a happy immortality, that is unspeakable and glorious.

When the heart is thus pure, it becomes the temple of the Deity ; and as a temple is consecrated with the presence of God, “ If a man love me, and keep my words, my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.” Who can describe the joy of those happy moments when a present Deity is felt, when God manifests himself to his people, so as he does not to the world, when our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ ! Then a foretaste of immortality is given, the joys of the blessed are let down, and heaven descends to men.

In the *fourth* and last place, The ease and pleasure of the Christian life will appear, if we consider the joyful prospect that is set before us.

The Christian has joys in this life ; but he is not confined to these. His hopes do not terminate with life ; they extend beyond the grave. Death puts a final period to the happiness of the wicked man ; but it is then that the happiness of the righteous man begins. We are assured in Sacred Scripture, that there is a kingdom prepared for the righteous from the foundation of the world, when they shall enter into rest from all their labours, and sufferings, and sorrows of this mortal life ; when they shall enter into a state where no ignorance shall cloud the understanding, and no vice pervert the will ; where nothing but love shall possess the soul, and nothing but gratitude employ the tongue ; where they shall be admitted to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the First-born ; where they shall see Jesus at the right hand of the Father, and shall sit down with him upon his throne ; where they

shall be admitted into the presence of God shall behold him face to face, and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory ; that glory which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

To conclude, It may be observed, that it hath been the fate of Christianity in all ages, to suffer more from its friends than from its enemies. Attacks from the enemies of our faith have generally proved subservient to its propagation and success ; but the misrepresentations and injuries of its friends have often wounded it in a vital part. One of the greatest of these misrepresentations, and one of the most flagrant injuries that ever was done to religion, was to represent it as a burdensome service ; as a grievous and a galling yoke, to which no man would submit, but from the terror of eternal punishment. What adds to the injury, this has sometimes been done by persons of real seriousness, who, unhappily possessed of a gloomy imagination, and who, probably, in some period of their days, having been guilty of crimes, have been so deeply affected with remorse and contrition, that they have continued all their lifetime subject to bondage. But blessed be God, my friends, that such unfavourable and forbidding delineations of religion have no foundation in truth. In these volumes, Christians are called upon to rejoice evermore. Religion promises happiness to us in the life which now is, as well as in the life which is to come. The Wisdom that is from above, is represented as having length of days in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. The prophets and apostles ransack heaven and earth for images to express the joys of the just ; they bring together the most beautiful and most delightful objects in the whole compass of nature, and introduce the inanimate parts of the creation as joining in the happiness of the good ; the hills and the mountains breaking forth into singing, and all the trees of the wood shouting for joy. All concurs to prove the truth in the text, " My yoke is easy, and " my burden is light."

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## S E R M O N XVII.

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### HEBREWS ii. 10.

*For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

**W**HEN Christianity was first published to the world, the earliest objection that was raised against it, arose from the low and suffering state in which its Author appeared. It was a stumbling block to the Jews, and seemed foolishness to the Greeks, that a prophet sent from heaven to enlighten and reform the world, should lead a life of indigence and obscurity, and make his exit with ignominy and with pain.

If we consider the character and prevailing opinions of the Jews and the Greeks at the time when our Saviour appeared, we shall see the reason of the unfavourable reception which they gave to his doctrines. The Jews had been the favourite people of God. By signs and miracles, and mighty works, he had delivered them from a state of slavery in Egypt, had conducted them through the wilderness, and at last given them a settlement in the promised land. The arm of the Lord was made bare in their behalf, the sea was divided to make way for them, and the waters stood as a wall on their right hand and on their left. During their wanderings through the wilderness, a pillar of fire conducted them by night, and a pillar of cloud by day. Manna descended to them from heaven, and water sprung from the flinty rock. Accustomed to

these great and marvellous exertions of the divine power, in the days of the Messiah they expected still greater and more marvellous. If a God was to descend, they looked for him in the whirlwind, they looked for him in the earthquake, and when the still small voice came, it was neither heard nor regarded. Besides this, they had imbibed false notions concerning Messiah, and the nature of his kingdom. They misinterpreted the ancient oracles; which foretold his coming; they took the magnificent style of prophecy for literal description, and, in place of a spiritual Saviour, expected a temporal prince. Accordingly, at the time when our Saviour appeared, the whole nation was intoxicated with the idea of a triumphant conqueror, who was to deliver them from the Roman yoke, to erect an universal monarchy on earth, and to make Zion the seat of empire, and capital of the world. To persons under the influence of these prejudices, a suffering Messiah was a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.

A different set of prejudices prevailed in Greece. The Greeks were an ingenious and an active people. Situated in a fortunate climate, and blessed with the highest degree of liberty which mankind can enjoy, they bent their genius to the cultivation of the arts. Smitten with the love of wisdom, they gave up their paternal estates to attend the school of philosophy. They journeyed from region to region, and traversed the world, to bring home fresh accessions of knowledge, and new improvements in the arts. Under these favourable circumstances, Greece arose to fame, and beheld an age of glory; which is unrivalled in the records of history. The ideas of virtue and of merit amongst any nation are founded upon the splendid examples with which their history abounds, and upon a perfection in those arts which they cultivate, and in which they excel. The Greeks excelled in the arts to which the imagination gives birth, as well as in the sciences, which reason brings to maturity, and their history abounded with the

most splendid instances of public spirit, of heroic friendship, and of intrepid valour. Dazzled with the lustre of these arts, and with the glory of these virtues, they fixed the standard of excellence by them, and had no admiration to bestow upon the humble Prophet of Nazareth, and the mortifying doctrines of the cross. As they had been a stumbling-block to the Jews, to the Greeks they seemed foolishness.

It is then a subject worthy of our contemplation, to inquire into the reasons that might move Almighty God, thus, in direct opposition to the prejudices and expectations of both Jews and Greeks, to appoint the Captain of our salvation to be made perfect by a state of sufferings. It is hence proposed to shew the expediency and propriety of appointing such a Captain of our salvation. This will appear, from considering our blessed Saviour in these four capital views of his character; as the founder of a new religion, as a pattern of all perfection, as a priest who was to make atonement, and a king who was to be crowned with glory.

In the *first* place, If we consider our Saviour as the author of a new religion, his appearance in a suffering state frees his religion from an objection which applies with full force to every other religion in the world.

Amongst all the nations whose history we have recorded, the laws gave birth to the religion. The public faith was modelled by the sovereign authority, and established by the sovereign power. The prince was also the prophet. The religion which he established, was such as suited the genius of the people, the nature of the climate, or the views of the sovereign; and, in short, was nothing more than a mere engine of civil government. When we take a view of Christianity, a different scene presents itself. Here we see a religion published by a person, obscure and unknown, amongst a nation hated and despised to a proverb, one day to become the religion of the world and to be propagated by the efforts of a few illiterate

fishermen, who had to combat against the prejudices of the Jews, the superstition of the Gentiles, the wisdom of the philosophers, the power of armies and of kings, the ancient systems of religion established over the whole world, and the combined wit, and genius, and malice, of all mankind.

Had our Saviour appeared in the pomp of a temporal prince, as the Jews expected him ; had he appeared in the character of a great philosopher, as the Greeks would have wished him, often had we heard of his power and of his policy, and been told, that our religion was more nearly allied to this world, than to the other. But when we hear the Author of our faith declaring from the beginning, that he must suffer many things in his life, and be put to an ignominious and tormenting death ; when we hear him forewarning his disciples, that they were to meet with the same fate ; these suspicions must for ever vanish from our mind. Thus our religion stands clear of an objection from which nothing, perhaps, could have purged it, but the blood of its divine Author.

In the *second* place, If we consider our Saviour as a pattern of virtue and all perfection, the expediency of his appearing in a suffering state will further be evident.

One great end of our Saviour's coming into the world was to set us an example, that we might follow his steps. But, unless his life had been diversified with sufferings, the utility of his example had been in a great measure defeated. What we generally call a perfect character, is a cold insipid object, that does not interest mankind. Were it possible for nature to realize the man of virtue, as drawn by those who misrepresent the Stoic philosophy ; a man without the feelings of nature, and the weaknesses of humanity, proof against the influence of passion, and the attacks of pain ; we would turn aside from such a caricature of humanity, and exclude the faultless monster from the number of our species. No example can make any impression upon the minds of men,



But the example of men of like passions with themselves. Let us suppose, that the life of an angel were exhibited to the world, it might afford a pleasant subject of contemplation. But the question would naturally arise, What is this to me? This does not belong to my nature; I discover here no traces of my own character; no features of humanity. On the other hand, to set up an imperfect example for our imitation, would be attended with still worse consequences. We know, from the instances of the saints recorded in Scripture; how apt men are to quote their imperfections as an excuse for themselves; and by copying after these, come short of that perfection to which they might have arrived.

Both these defects are remedied in the example of Jesus of Nazareth. His example is perfect; and at the same time, has all that effect upon us which the example of one of our brethren would have had. When we behold the man Christ Jesus involved in distresses similar to our own; clothed with all the innocent infirmities of our nature, and groaning like ourselves under the sinless miseries of life; we are touched with the feeling of his infirmities and his pains; our passions take part with the illustrious sufferer, and we behold him in some measure brought down to our own level. It is from these shades that this picture derives its beauty, derives its effect upon the world; and that, notwithstanding of the glory that surrounds it, we recognize our own image, we trace the features and the lineaments of humanity; and by these, are drawn to copy after such an illustrious pattern of excellence and perfection.

The suffering state in which our Lord appeared, not only conduced to the efficacy of his example, but also to its more extensive utility, by presenting an ample theatre for the sublimest virtues to appear. It is observed by an historian, in relating the life of Cyrus the Great, that there was one circumstance wanting to the glory of that illustrious prince; and that was, the having his virtue tried by some sudden

reverse of fortune, and struggling for a time under some grievous calamity. The observation is just. Men are made for suffering as well as for action. Many faculties of our frame; the most respectable attributes of the mind, as well as the most amiable qualities of the heart; carry a manifest reference to a state of adversity, to the dangers which we are destined to combat, and the distresses we are appointed to bear. Had the Greeks consulted their own writers, they would have given them proper information on this head. To approve a man thoroughly virtuous, said one of their sages, he must be tortured, he must be bound, he must be scourged, and having suffered all evils, must be empaled or crucified.

Who are the personages in history that we admire the most? Those who have suffered some signal distress, and from a host of evils have come forth conquerors. If we look into civil history, need I call up to your remembrance the patriots of Greece, the heroes of Rome; the wise, the great, and the good of every age, who grew illustrious as they grew distressed, and in the darkest hour of adversity shone out with unwonted and meridian splendour. If we look into sacred history, we shall find, that the good and holy men, who are there pointed out as patterns to the world, like the Captain of their salvation, were made perfect through suffering. The most illustrious names that are recorded in the book of life, the patriarchs of the ancient world, the prophets of the Jewish state, the martyrs of the Christian church, are witnesses on record of this important truth, that the most honourable laurels are gathered in the vale of tears, and that the crown of glory sits brightest on the brows of those who have gained it with their blood. Jesus of Nazareth, too, was appointed to learn obedience by the things that he suffered. All the virtues of adversity shone forth in his life. The patience that acquiesces with cheerfulness, in all the appointments of Providence, the magnanimity which triumphs over an enemy by forgiveness, the charity

which prays for its persecutors, are striking and conspicuous parts of his character. But we injure his merit as a sufferer, if we consider it only as breaking out in single and occasional acts of virtue. His sufferings themselves, his condescending to become a victim for the sins of men, and to die for the happiness of the world, is an infinite exertion of benevolence that admits of no comparison, that is transcendent and meritorious. The consideration of this, more than the circumstances of his departure, more than the rocks which were rent, than the sun which was darkened, than the dead which arose, had we been present at the scene, should have made us cry out with the centurion, "Surely this man was the *"Son of God."*

In the *third* place, If we consider our Saviour as a priest, who was to make an atonement for the sins of men, the expediency of his making this atonement by sufferings and death, will be manifest. It is one of the doctrines revealed in the New Testament, that the Son of God was the Creator of the world. As therefore he was our immediate Creator, and as his design in our creation was defeated by sin, there was an evident propriety that he himself should interpose in our behalf, and retrieve the affairs of a world which he had created with his own hands. But it is evident, at first sight, that redemption is a greater work than creation; that it requires a more powerful exertion to recover a world lying in wickedness, to happiness and virtue, than to create it at first in a state of innocence. In the work of redemption, therefore, it was expedient, that there should be a brighter display of the divine perfections, and a greater exertion of benevolence than was exhibited in the work of creation. Now, if God, without a satisfaction by sufferings, and by a mere act of indemnity, had blotted out the sins of the world, such a display of the divine attributes would not have been given: But by the Son of God's appearing in our nature, and suffering the punishment which was due to our sins, a

scene is presented, on which the angels desire to look. This, in the language of Scripture, was the glory that excelleth; here the Almighty made bare his holy arm, and gave testimony to the nations what was in the power of a God to effectuate. Hereby all the perfections of the divine nature were glorified. That immaculate purity, which cannot look upon sin, and that astonishing love which could not behold the ruin of the sinner, were awfully displayed. The majesty of the divine government was sustained, and the rigour of the law was fulfilled; justice was satisfied; mercy without restraint, and without measure, flowed upon the children of men. In short, more glory redounded to God, and greater benevolence was made manifest to men, than when the morning stars sung together at the birth of nature; and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

In the *last* place, If we consider our Saviour in that state of glory to which he is now ascended, the propriety of his being made perfect by sufferings will more fully appear. Because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, therefore hath God highly exalted him, hath given him a name above every name, and committed to him all power in heaven and in earth. By the appointment of Providence, suffering hath ever been the path to honour. Ought not Christ, therefore, also to have suffered, and to enter into his glory? As, upon earth, he submitted to the lowest degree of abasement, and appeared in the form of a servant, he is now in heaven exalted to the highest pinnacle of honour, and appears in the form of God. As, in his state of humiliation he was poor, and had not where to lay his head, he is now the Lord of nature, and inherits the treasures of heaven and of earth. Instead of the mock title of King of the Jews, which they wrote upon his cross, he is now in very deed the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. Instead of the crown of thorns which pierced and wounded his blessed head, he is now for ever encircled with a crown of glory.

What dignity does it reflect upon all our race, that one who wears our likeness, who is not ashamed to call us brethren, now sits upon the throne of Nature, now holds in his hand the sceptre of Providence, and exercises uncontrouled dominion over the visible and invisible worlds ! What abundant consolation will it administer to Christians in all their afflictions, what openings of joy will it let down into the vale of tears, when we recollect that the Governor of the world is a God who partakes of our own nature, who, in the days of his humanity, had a fellow-feeling of all our wants ; who, like ourselves, was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; who, by consequence, will be more apt to sympathize with his fellow sufferers, and to send relief to those sorrows of which he himself bore a part !

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## S E R M O N XVIII.

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GALATIANS VI. 14.

*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

[Preached at the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.]

**M**Y ways are not as your ways, and my thoughts are not as your thoughts," said the Lord to the Old Testament church. And never, surely, did the Eternal Wisdom so disappoint the expectations, and blast the hopes of men, as by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Had men been consulted concerning the state in which it was most proper for the Messiah to appear, they would have introduced him into the world with all the circumstances of external pomp and splendour; they would have put into his hand the sceptre of dominion over the nations, and subjected to his kingdom all the people of the earth, from the rising to the setting of the sun. A Messiah whose glory should not strike the senses, whose kingdom was not to be of this world, who was to be made perfect through sufferings, who was to triumph by humiliation, who was to become victorious by a shameful death, and in whose humiliation, and sufferings, and cross, the world was to glory; that was an idea which never presented itself to their minds, and which, if it had presented itself, would have been immediately rejected, as having no form nor comeliness, for which it could have been desired: yet, such was the method contrived by Infinite Wisdom to accomplish the redemption of the world. One great

end of all the divine dispensations; has been to humble and confound the *pride* of man. It was pride that at first introduced moral evil into the world. It was pride that tempted the angels to rebel against their Maker, that brought them down from the mansions of light, to the abodes of darkness and despair. It was pride that tempted our first parents to disobey the divine commandment. The language of their apostasy was, "I will ascend into the heavens; I will rise above the height of the clouds; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will be like the Most High." Pride, although not made for man in his best estate, hath not forsaken him in his worst. Even the fall did not efface the strong impression from his mind. As if he had continued the same noble being he came from the hands of his Creator; as if he had been still the happy lord of the inferior world, he retained the consciousness of his original excellence when that excellence was no more; he surrendered himself to delusions which flattered his vain mind; he tried paths to elevation and worldly greatness; he even appropriated to himself the attributes of the divinity, and, possessed with the madness of ambition, arrogated to himself those honours which are due to God only. Hence the world deified mortal men, worshipped as its creators those to whom it had lately given birth, and adored as immortal and divine the human creatures whose death it had beheld.

As men fell by pride, it was the appointment of Heaven that he should rise by humility. This doctrine was early delivered to the world. God testified by his prophets, that he knew the proud afar off; that the proud in heart was an abomination to him; but that he would hear the cry of the humble; that though he dwelt in the high and holy place, he would dwell also with that man who was of a humble and contrite spirit. But more than instructions were requisite to reform the sentiments, and change the spirit, of a world which had been so much intoxicated with

dreams of earthly greatness, and so long enchanted with spectacles of human glory. Accordingly, it pleased God, in the fulness of time, to send forth his own Son into the world, in fashion as a man, in the form of a servant, to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and hath appointed all Christians to glory in his cross, nay, to glory in nothing else. "God forbid that I should glory, save "in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

These words might give occasion to many useful discourses. All that I intend at present is, to shew you by what means we are to glory in the cross of Christ.

In the *first* place, then, We are to glory in the cross of Christ, by frequently meditating upon the circumstances of his death and passion.

The human actions and events in which we glory, become often the objects of contemplation; they present themselves spontaneously to the mind, and become the favourite ideas of the soul. We turn them on all sides, we view them in every light, we delight in them, we dwell upon them, we make them our meditation day and night. Surely, then, it becomes us to revolve often in our mind this great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, and dying on a cross for the salvation of the world.

The angels in heaven, as we are told in Scripture, desired with earnest eyes to look into the sufferings of Jesus; much more should we make the sufferings of Jesus the object of our meditation, for he took not on him the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abraham.

Call up to thy mind, then, O Christian! the doleful circumstances of thy Saviour's passion, the sad variety of sorrows which he suffered, the torment of body and agony of mind which he underwent, the cruel, the ignominious, and accursed death which he endured: Make these things present to thy mind, till the blended emotions of contrition and sorrow, of awe and wonder, of joy and pleasure, of gratitude



and love, take possession of thy heart. Can you not "watch with me one hour?" said our Lord to his disciples when he entered into his agony: "Can you not watch with me one hour?" saith our Lord to his disciples in every age, when they are about to renew the memorials of his death and passion. Agreeably to his dying charge, accompany thy Redeemer, O Christian! in the last scene of his sufferings: Look to him with such a lively sense and feeling of his sorrows, till like Paul, thou art crucified with Christ. While all nature is thrown into disorder, while the rocks are rent, and the dead arise, wilt thou continue unmoved? Wilt thou continue harder than the rocks, and more insensible than the ashes of the dead? No; while thou thus musest, holy affections will be kindled, and the heavenly fire will burn; from the altar which was erected on the hill of Calvary, a living ember will touch thy lips, and purify thy heart.

In the *second* place, We are to glory in the cross of Christ, by giving his death that rank in our estimation, and that place in our affections, which its importance requires.

When we glory in any thing to an extraordinary degree; we prefer it to all others, we give it the chief place in our heart, and rest our happiness in a great measure upon it. And thus it becomes us to glory in the cross of Christ; thus it becomes us to prefer it to all things, to give it the highest place in our heart, and to rest our eternal happiness on it alone. The manifestation of the Son of God is, in all regards, the most wonderful of the divine works, and to us in particular is the most important event that distinguishes the annals of time. His death upon the cross was the most splendid part of his mediatorial office; the most illustrious instance of his love to men, and the most meritorious act of his obedience to God. By his death, the wrath of God was averted from the world, and the atonement requisite for the sins of men was made. By his death, the glories of the Godhead

shone out with new lustre, the majesty of the moral law was not only sustained, but rendered illustrious, and a dignity was reflected on virtue which it had never known before. To his death we are indebted for the pardon of our sins, for adoption into the family of Heaven, and for our hopes of a happy immortality in the future world. His death upon the cross quenched the fire of hell, and set open the gate of heaven for a repenting world to enter in.

In the cross of Christ, therefore, we do not glory aright, if we admire only the circle of virtue which shone out in his suffering state : if we admire only the patience with which he submitted to all the appointments of Providence, the fortitude with which he encountered all the dangers of life, the magnanimity which induced him to forgive his enemies, the charity which prompted him to pray for those who had bound him to the accursed tree, and that noble principle of love to mankind, the spring of all his undertakings as our Redeemer : This merit we must do more than admire : upon it we must rest as the ground of our acceptance with God, and the foundation of our title to eternal life. The blessed above ascribe their salvation, not to their own righteousness, but to the merits of their Redeemer ; “ Unto him that loved us,” is the strain of their song, “ Unto him that loved us unto the death, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be praise, and honour, and blessing.” “ These are they,” said the angel to the Apostle John, “ who have come out of great tribulation ; they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore are they before the throne.”

Our virtues are insufficient to procure our acceptance with God, or merit a title to happiness in the life to come. Even man, in his state of innocence, could not pretend to have merit with his Creator. By the law of his nature he was bound to render obedience to that God from whom he received his being, and from whom he owed his preservation. The moral law was the law of his being. When he

had done his best, he did no more than was his duty. If man, then, in a state of innocence, could not claim the crown of heavenly glory, as the reward of personal merit, shall man in a state of guilt pretend to have merit with a holy God, with whom evil cannot dwell, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? Supposing the day of judgment arrived, where is the man that durst face the tribunal of the Almighty, and demand one of the thrones of heaven upon the footing of personal righteousness? The most arrogant presumption durst not aspire so high. But, blessed be God, that though we are unworthy, yet worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive blessing, and honour, and praise, because he hath redeemed us by his blood, and hath given us a right to sit down with him upon his throne. To fallen man the cross is the tree of life; there grow the fruits which are for the healing of the nations; fruits which, if we take and eat, we shall live for ever.

In the *third* place, We are to glory in the cross of Christ, by commemorating his death in the holy sacrament.

Those events in which a nation glories the most, those events which restored or secured to them their liberties, from which they begin an era of happy time, are commemorated with a laudable spirit of joy. A day is set apart, that the memory of such glorious deeds may be transmitted down to posterity, and that the names of those who distinguished themselves on the occasion, as patriots or as heroes, may receive a just tribute of praise from all succeeding times. Agreeably to this, the Christian church hath in all ages set apart certain times to keep in remembrance this most important event, the death and passion of our Redeemer. It was the commandment of our Lord himself; it was his commandment, given in that night in which he was betrayed, it was his last commandment to his disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me." And surely the disciple who loves his Lord, will be cautious how he disregards his dying

charge. There are, indeed, persons in the world who bear the Christian name, and who, notwithstanding, never join in this solemn ordinance. Although they were baptized into the faith of Jesus, and have never publicly renounced Christianity, yet, instead of glorying in the cross, they seem to be ashamed of it, and testify plainly to the world, that they pay no regard to the dying charge of their Lord; and that they would blush to be seen at a communion-table. How such persons can reconcile their conduct to any sense of duty, to any idea of Christianity, is beyond my capacity to discover. Sure I am, if they have any conscience, if they have any reflection, if they have any feeling at all, it will interrupt their peace of mind in life, it will shut up the chief avenues to comfort in their last moments, and prevent that tranquillity and fulness of joy which is then the portion of the Christian, to think that they have lived in the wilful neglect and contempt of an express injunction of their Lord, and may have, in some degree, incurred the guilt of those whom the Apostle declares to have trodden under foot the Son of God, and to have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they might have been sanctified, an unholy thing.

You say you are unfit to approach the table of the Lord. Let me ask you, are you fit to *die*? Do you think it more solemn, more awful, to witness a good confession at these tables, than to appear before the judgment-seat of God? Do you think, that they ought to be received to the society of the blessed above, who never joined themselves to the communion of the saints below? Do you think, that Jesus will admit those to sit down with him on his throne in heaven, who were ashamed to sit down with him at his table on earth? What is, then, I beseech you in the holy sacrament, to banish any decent and good man from these tables? We sit down at the table of the Lord, to give thanks unto God for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world; to express our regard and gratitude to our Redeemer, who loved us

unto the death ; to unite ourselves to all the faithful and the good, as being members of the same body, and to bind ourselves by solemn vows to the practice of whatever is amiable, and excellent, and praise-worthy. And if there be any man so void of gratitude and love to God his Creator, and to Jesus Christ his Redeemer, as to be averse to acknowledge the favours he has received ; if there be any man so dead to the feelings of the heart, to benevolence and love, as to have no bowels of love for his brethren of mankind, if there be any man so lost to the sense of virtue, and to the beauty of holiness, as to see no charms, to feel no attractions, in those things which are lovely, and pure, and honest, and of good report ; then, indeed, he is unfit to sit down at the table of the Lord, he has neither portion nor lot in this matter ; he is also unfit to join with Christians in any religious duty ; nay, he is unfit to perform a decent part as a member of civil society.

I address these things to those who absent themselves from this ordinance, from a wilful disregard : to those who are restrained by their unhappy fears and scruples, I speak in a different language, and such persons I can assure, that they who, after serious and diligent, and mature preparation, still think themselves unworthy, are not the least acceptable guests at the table of the Lord. Do you feel a grateful sense of the love of Jesus to mankind, particularly that amazing act of his love, in giving his life as a ransom for the world ? Have you such a value for the covenant established by your Saviour's blood, that you are resolved to accept of it with gratitude, and adhere to it with all your soul ? Have you such a regard to holiness and universal goodness, that you determine to lead decent, and pious, and exemplary lives ? If you have these, come to express that gratitude, to accept that covenant, and to seal those vows at the foot of the cross. Jesus breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax. The humility of the heart will not banish the Eternal Spirit from taking up his residence with you.

In the *fourth* and *last* place, We are to glory in the cross of Christ, by living to those purposes, and for those ends for which Jesus died.

We glory in the Reformation from Popery, when we maintain and defend that pure religion which was then established. We glory in the Revolution, when we support the rights and maintain the liberties which were secured to us at that memorable period ; and, in like manner, we glory in the cross of Christ, when we fulfil the intention, and answer the purpose for which Jesus died. Jesus died, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. In this view, Christians, your whole life is glorying in the cross of Christ. When you suppress the motions of irregular desire, when you conquer the excess of passion, and subdue the vices which war against the soul, you are glorying in the cross of Christ ; for he, upon the cross, crucified those your enemies, and died that you might be delivered out of their hands. When you check in yourselves the spirit of animosity, when your heart relents towards him against whom your wrath was kindled, when you forego resentment, forgive an injury, and hold out the ready hand of reconciliation to your offending brother, you are glorying in the cross of Christ ; for he, upon the cross, displayed a most amazing instance of forgiveness, in praying for those who brought him to that accursed death. When your heart expands with benevolence to mankind ; when you feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and rescue the oppressed ; when you feel the distresses of your unhappy brethren, and relieve them, or give a tear to the distresses you cannot relieve, you are glorying in the cross of Christ ; for he, upon the cross, exhibited a most illustrious instance of benevolence, in giving his life for the happiness of the world. When you yield to the sweet impulse of natural affection, when you indulge the tender sensibilities of the heart, when you cultivate the spirit of a generous friendship, and join in the endearing offices of social life, you are

glorying in the cross of Christ ; for he, upon the cross, gave us a most amiable display of these virtues : one of his last acts on earth was an act of natural affection and friendship ; from the cross he recommended his mother to the care of the friend whom he loved.

In short, whenever you make advances in the divine life, and add to your faith virtue, and to virtue patience, and temperance, and brotherly kindness, and charity ; whenever you do a good deed, whenever you think a good thought, you are glorying in the cross of Christ ; for he, upon the cross, perfected this character, and finished the pattern of universal goodness, for the world to study, to imitate, and to admire.

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## S E R M O N. XIX.

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JOHN xix. 30.

—*It is finished.*—

[Preached at the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.]

**T**HESE are the last words of Jesus. The words which he uttered when his hour was come ; when, in the presence of a great assembly, he breathed out his soul in agony upon the cross. It was ordered by the providence of God, that as Jesus by his death was the Saviour of the world, he should die publicly, when all Israel from Dan to Beersheba were assembled at Jerusalem.

There is something grand and awful in assembled multitudes of men, especially when convened on any great occasion, such as to pass sentence of life and death. In that silence of the mind, that awful pause of thought, the human genius is agitated strongly ; it labours in expectation, and fills up the dreadful interval with emotions of terror and astonishment. When therefore, at this period, all Judea was present to celebrate the paschal solemnity ; when the great council of the nation, the chief priests, the scribes and elders convened in Sanhedrim, added dignity to the multitude ; when Pilate the governor of Judea, and Herod the tetrarch of Galilee, with their attending armies, displayed the grandeur of the Roman empire, and sustained the majesty of the masters of the world ; when all these were assembled at the time of the death and crucifixion of a Prophet of the Lord, how



great would be the agitations of the multitude? What astonishing ideas would strike the mind, when they heard the expiring Prophet cry out, "It is finished!" When in a moment they saw that the face of nature was changed; when they felt the earthquake which shook the nations; when they were struck with the darkness which veiled the sun; when they were surrounded with the inhabitants of the eternal world who arose from their graves,—would not they then think, indeed, that all was finished, that the last hour of nature was come, and that the world was departing with its Creator?

Never from the time that the idea of creation arose in the Divine Mind, did an hour revolve that laboured with such vast events. To this great point of view, as to the deciding hour in the annals of time, as to the crisis of the moral world, all the preceding ages looked forward, and all succeeding ages looked back. The grand question was now deciding, Whether happiness or misery should finally triumph in the universe of God? From this event the powers of hell dated the rise or fall of their dominion. The fate of the creation was now weighing in the scales. All eternity rested upon this hour.

Whilst we are now assembled to commemorate these great events, and to renew the memorials of thy death and passion, be present with us, most blessed Jesus! May we behold thy face, not as it was then, covered with anguish and tears, but smiling upon us, with heavenly complacence! Fill our hearts with love to thee, and lead us joyfully up into thine holy altar.

"It is finished," said our Lord, when he expired upon the cross. What was then finished? the following events. God had early manifested to the fathers his purpose of grace to redeem the world. He chose a peculiar people from whom the Redeemer was to descend, and appointed a dispensation of religion to prepare the world for his appearance. By the death of Jesus, this ancient dispensation was finished.

Jesus Christ, foretold by all the prophets, had now

appeared unto Israel. As the prophet of the world, he published a new religion which he adorned by his life, which he confirmed by his miracles, and which he had now sealed with his blood. By the death on the cross, his mission to the Jews, as the Author of a new religion, was finished.

From the beginning of the world, God had appointed sacrifices to make atonement for sin. These could not, by any virtue of their own, propitiate the Deity, or purify the soul from pollution. A more perfect sacrifice, therefore, was necessary in order to atone the divine wrath. By the death of Jesus, this atonement was finished. Jesus Christ, thus constituted the Prophet of the world, and the Priest who was to make atonement for the sins of men, was to be made perfect through suffering. By the appointment of Providence, he was to suffer before he entered into his glory. By his death on the cross, these sufferings were finished.

That is ; the Old Testament dispensation was finished, the mission of Christ to Israel, as the Author of a new religion was finished, the atonement requisite for the sins of the world was finished, and the sufferings of the Messiah were finished.

In the *first* place, then, The ancient dispensation, which had been erected, and the plan of Providence which had been carrying on to introduce the time of the Messiah, were now finished.

When our first parents had broken the covenant of innocence, had forfeited their title to immortality, and exposed themselves to the sanction of the violated law, the Judge descended to pronounce their sentence. But along with the terrors of the Judge, he mingled also the grace of the Saviour ; and when he pronounced their doom, he comforted them with the hopes of mercy. He discovered to them his benevolent design of redeeming the world by a mediator who was to interpose in their behalf, and gave them the gracious promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. Thus, no sooner had

man fallen, than the Redeemer was promised, who was to repair the ruins of his fall. In the following ages, the Providence of God seems to have been entirely occupied in preparing the world for this great event. If he manifests himself to the patriarchs, it is to shew them the day of the Messiah afar off ; if he inspires the prophets, it is to foretell his appearance ; if he chooses a peculiar people, it is to render them the depositaries of the promises concerning his coming ; if he appoints sacrifices, ceremonies, and religious rites, it is to trace beforehand the history of the Messiah. Do you read of the blood of the paschal lamb, which being sprinkled on the doors of the Israelites, secured them from the destroying angel ? It was a figure of Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, who, as our passover, was sacrificed to deliver us from eternal death. Do you read of a rock, which being smitten, furnished waters to a great people ? That rock, says Paul, was a figure of Christ, from whom proceed fountains of living water, springing up into everlasting life. Do you read of a brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness, which cured the Israelites ? It was a type of the Son of man who was lifted up on the cross for the salvation of the world. In short, the whole legal economy, the whole system of Levitical worship, was intended to prefigure, and to introduce, a better dispensation.

The plan of Providence which had been carrying on to prepare the world for this great event, was not confined to the Jewish nation ; it extended over the whole earth. This was the great end of all the designs of the Deity, and furnishes the key to all the divine dispensations. “ If empires rose or fell ; if war  
“ divided, or peace united the nations ; if learning  
“ civilized their manners, or philosophy enlarged their  
“ views, all was, by the secret decree of heaven, made  
“ to ripen the world for that *fulness of time* when  
“ Christ was to publish the whole counsel of God.” What a magnificent conception, my friends, does it give us of the divine government, when we behold

the princes, the kings, and the masters of the world, entering one after another upon the stage of time, to prepare the way of the King of kings !

If, in the Gentile world, a plan was carrying on to prepare the nations for the coming of the Messiah, among the chosen people a dispensation was erected to typify and prefigure the great events of his life. The economy which was established, the sacrifices which were appointed, the ceremonies in their church, and the events in their history, all concurred to this great end. Do you read of a continual burnt-offering ? It was a type of him who, through the eternal Spirit, offered up himself a sacrifice without spot unto God. Do you read of the paschal lamb ? It was a type of that Lamb which was slain from the foundation of the world. The law only paved the way to the gospel. Moses and the prophets were but the harbingers of the Messiah. This ancient dispensation was now come to a close ; and when our Saviour on the cross cried out, *It is finished*, “ the law ceased, “ the gospel commenced.”

In the *second* place, the mission of Christ to Israel, as the author of a new religion was finished.

God had never left the nations without a witness of himself. In the early ages of the world he sent forth his light and his truth. He manifested himself to the fathers, and taught them the knowledge of the true religion. From time to time righteous men were raised up, and a succession of prophets and of martyrs was carried on, whose lives and doctrines distinguish and adorn the several ages of the world. One nation was chosen above the rest, to whom the living oracles were committed. The particular revelations which had been delivered in the patriarchal ages, the various rays from the Father of lights which had been scattered over the earth, were here collected, and shone out with new splendour. Nevertheless, though God was the Author of this dispensation, though he himself was the King of Jeshurun, and a Lawgiver to Israel, the economy which he establish-

ed among his own people, was not intended to be immutable, or make the comers thereunto perfect. It is one of the great laws by which this world is governed, that no perfection of any kind is attained of a sudden. There is a rise and a progress in the works of nature. This holds in all the productions of the natural, and in all the improvements of the moral world. This also seems to have regulated the divine conduct with respect to the dispensations of grace.

“The light of religion was not poured upon the world all at once, and with its full splendour; the obscurity of the dawn went before the brightness of the noon-day. The will of God was at first made known by revelations, useful indeed, but dark and mysterious. To these succeeded others more clear and perfect. In proportion as the situation of the world rendered it necessary, the Almighty was pleased farther to open and unfold his gracious scheme.” The light increased as it shone. Star after star arose to enlighten and bless the earth, till the dayspring from on high appeared. As in the early period of our days the instructions which we receive look forward to manhood, and the various steps we take conduct us to future life; so in this infancy of the church, a dispensation took place which was only intended to introduce a better. Every thing in the Jewish dispensation, testified that it was not intended to last for ever. The presence of God circumscribed to one nation, the place of acceptable worship confined to Jerusalem, the numerous rites and burdensome ceremonies of the Mosaic law, the typical and shadowy nature of the whole dispensation, shewed that it was nothing more than a temporary institution, appointed to introduce a more perfect worship, and to prepare the world for a new dispensation, which was to comprehend every nation of the earth, and to extend through all the ages of the world.

Accordingly, Moses, the Jewish legislator, after he had established their government, and formed their laws, tells them that another prophet should arise a-

mong them, and deliver a new revelation. "Thus saith the Lord, I will raise up a prophet to you from among your brethren; I will put my words in his mouth; him shall ye hear in all things." Accordingly, the Old Testament church never rested upon any revelation which was made to them, but always looked forward to the promised era when the great Prophet should arise, who was to fill Zion with judgment and righteousness.

As the Old Testament economy, in its best estate, was but a temporary institution, in the progress of time it was greatly corrupted. After the return from the Babylonish captivity, there was a strange degeneracy among the people of God. The spirit of prophecy ceased, and the intercourse between heaven and earth was shut up. The Jews had been at all times remarkably prone to superstition and idolatry. Neither the instructions of their lawgiver, nor the thunders of Sinai, nor the sword of the heathen, nor the chains of captivity, could cure them of this perverse spirit. The true prophets had always endeavoured to lead them from the observance of these precepts which were "not good, of those statutes by which a man could not live;" but in the decline of the Jewish nation, their public teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees, accommodated themselves to the prejudices of the people. They collected the various rites and traditions of antiquity, and formed them into a regular system of superstition. They explained away the sense and spirit of the Sacred Scriptures. They had recourse to what they called the moral law, never committed to writing, but delivered, as they pretended, to Moses, and from his time handed down by tradition from age to age. By this they subverted the moral law, and made the word of God of none effect by their traditions.

If the situation of the Jews called thus loudly for reformation, what might be expected in the Gentile world? If such was done in the green tree; what would be done in the dry? They were without God,

and without hope in the world. Their religion consisted entirely of superstitious observances, and had no connection with virtue: their worship was a system of abominable rites; their temples were haunts of lewdness and impiety; their gods were monsters of cruelty, rage, and all the vile passions which disgrace humanity. The doctrine of the soul's immortality, which had been but obscurely revealed to the Jews, was only a conjecture among the heathens. Their wise men saw the evil, but could not discover the remedy. They confessed their own ignorance, and with humble expectation looked for a prophet of the Lord, to make a revelation of the divine will to man.

Whilst thus the people wandered in gross darkness, whilst the cloud sat deep over the moral world, at last the groans of the nations reached the ears of mercy; the voice of nature mourning for her children, was heard in heaven. He who dwelleth there rose from his throne. The Almighty rose in mercy, and sent his own Son to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel. The Sun of Righteousness arising in our region, dispelled the darkness which involved the nations, revealed all the heavens to mortal view, and poured its radiance upon the path of immortality. The great Prophet discovered the mystery which had been kept hid from ages. He declared the whole counsel of God. He spoke as never man spake, and he lived as never man lived. His mission from God he proved by performing miracles and works which God only could perform; to these he constantly appealed as a testimony from heaven, and as the finger of God witnessing in his behalf. Accordingly, when the high-priest asked him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of God? he answered nothing. Had his disciples been standing by, they might have replied, What need is there for the inquiry? You who have the key of knowledge, search the Scriptures, inquire at Moses and the prophets, who foretold and described his coming. In-

quire at John the Baptist whom you held to be a prophet, and who pointed him out to the people as the sent of God. Inquire at the companions and witnesses of his life, if an impostor had ever so many works of innocence and sanctity. Inquire at the lost sheep of Israel whom he brought back to the path of life. Inquire at the multitude whom he fed with a few loaves. Inquire at the blind whom he restored to sight. Inquire at the dumb who now speak his praise. Inquire at the diseased whom he raised from the bed of affliction. Inquire at the dead whom he raised from their graves. Inquire at the seas and tremble, which heard and obeyed the voice of their Master. Inquire at the heavens, which thrice opened over his head, to publish to the world that he was the beloved of the Father. And if these suffice you not, inquire at hell itself, and receive the testimony of the devil whom he dispossessed,—that he was, “the holy One of God.”

Having thus confirmed his doctrine by his miracles; having adorned it by his life, it only remained that he should seal it with his blood. And when now he bowed the head upon the cross, his mission to Israel, as the Author of this new revelation, was finished.

In the *third* place, The atonement which was requisite for the sins of the world was finished.

As Almighty God created the world, he claims the right of taking it under the superintendency and direction of his providence. In order to attain the ends of his administration, he acts upon a fixed plan, and according to wise and righteous laws. If there were no fixed plan of providence, and no system of laws to govern the world, the order of society would soon be subverted, the happiness of the human race would be destroyed, and the earth be reduced to one vast scene of anarchy, confusion, and uproar. That these laws may have their full effect, they must be guarded with the terrors of a penal sanction, and when violated be put in execution in order to intimidate offenders, and prevent transgression in the time to



come. The Judge of all the earth would not do right unless he executed his righteous laws, and punished those crimes which tended to the subversion of order; and extinction of happiness; in human society. If men, then, throwing off their allegiance to heaven, violate his righteous laws, and expose themselves to his wrath and vengeance; justice requires that they be punished for their sins; and the honour of the Godhead is pledged for the fulfilment of the threatening denounced against sin. But all of us have thus incurred the divine displeasure; and become obnoxious to the sanction of the moral law. Our first parents disobeyed the divine commandments, broke the covenant of innocence, and involved us, their posterity, in the ruins of their fall. We have added innumerable transgressions of our own to that original apostacy. We have neglected the good which it was in our power to perform, and committed the evil from which God commanded us to abstain. We have sinned against the clearest light; in opposition to the greatest goodness, and in the face of direct threatening; times and ways without number we have exposed ourselves to the wrath of God.

But it is one of the most obvious dictates of reason, that punishment must ever attend on wickedness, that the soul which sinneth ought to die. But if sin be thus severely punished, if sinners be dealt with according to the maxims of rigorous and unrelenting justice, what shall become of the human race? Here lay the difficulty that stood in the way of our redemption. If, on the one hand, sin was forgiven without satisfaction, and the sinner taken into favour upon every new application for mercy, such an undistinguishing exercise of lenity; such a facility of forgiveness, would only serve to embolden offenders and multiply crimes. If, on the other hand, rigorous justice held the balance; if the thunder-bolt was aimed at the head of every offender; the race of men must perish from the earth. Hence, the Divine Being is introduced in Scripture, as deliberating with

himself, as being straitened how to reconcile the seemingly jarring attributes of mercy and justice, and how to make the happiness of men accord with the honour of his laws. “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, O Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.” Herein appears the wisdom of that plan concerted for our redemption, through the sacrifice of Christ, by which these seemingly jarring attributes are reconciled, in which mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. Hence, in that eucharistic hymn which the angels, at the nativity of our Lord, sung to the shepherds, when they ascribed glory to God in the highest, they also proclaimed peace upon earth, and good will towards fallen man. By this atonement, all the perfections of the Deity were glorified. That immaculate purity which cannot look upon sin, and that astonishing love which could not behold the ruin of the sinner, were awfully displayed. The majesty of the divine government was sustained; the honour of the law was vindicated; justice, in its rigour, was satisfied; mercy, without measure and without restraint, flowed upon the children of men. The gate of the heavenly paradise was set open wide to a returning world; the angel with the flaming sword, who guarded the tree of life, was removed, and a voice heard from the throne of mercy, “Take, eat, and live for ever.”

As this doctrine concerning the atonement and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, is one of the fundamental articles of our holy faith, God, in the course of his providence, had prepared the world for its belief and reception. A sense of guilt lying upon the mind, and the fear of punishment from that Judge, who will render to every man according to his works, drove the sinner to some expedient for atoning the wrath of an offended Deity. It is very extraordinary, that among all the people of the world, the method of making atonement for sin was invariably the same.

All the nations of antiquity, that are to be found in the records of history, all the modern nations whom recent discoveries have brought within the sphere of our knowledge, however they may have differed in customs and manners, have universally and invariably agreed in making atonement for sin by offering sacrifices to the Deity. This fact is the more extraordinary, as such a method of propitiation is not founded on nature, is not the dictate of reason, nor the result of any feelings of the human frame. If we consult with reason, reason will tell us, that the Deity can never take any pleasure in the tortures, or in the blood of innocent animals; reason will tell us that it is impossible that the blood of bulls or of goats, or the ashes of a heifer, can avail to satisfy the divine justice, or purify the soul from sin. A practice, therefore, so universal, not founded on nature, nor deducible from reason, can be accounted for no otherwise, but by considering it as the remains of those ancient traditions delivered to the descendants of Noah, and by them handed down to succeeding ages. Here we cannot but admire the wisdom and watchful care of Providence, that whilst many other traditions perished in the course of time, and are in the gulf of oblivion, this was kept intire all over the world, in order to prepare the nations for the reception of Christianity, which establishes the capital doctrine of an atonement for sin upon a sacrifice.

Not only were sacrifices in general use among the heathens; but also, among the most celebrated nations of antiquity, illustrious personages had arisen, who, inspired with generous patriotism, had, in cases of danger and calamity, devoted themselves to certain death, to save their country. These self-devoted heroes, these martyrs to the good of mankind, were held in admiration by their countrymen, first in the song of praise, and highest in the temple of fame. After the publication of Christianity, it was no difficult task to transfer the praise and veneration which was paid to these temporal deliverers, to that Divine

Lover of mankind, and Redeemer of our race, who offered himself up a sacrifice for our sins, and died for the happiness of the world. Hence, the atonement requisite for the sins of the world was finished.

In the *fourth* place; The sufferings of the Messiah were now finished; and naught but glory was to follow.

It seemed expedient to Infinite Wisdom, to set up the Son as head over the great family of God. It was in this capacity that he created the earth : for it is one of the doctrines revealed to us in the New Testament, that the Son of God was the Creator of the world. As he, therefore, was our immediate Creator, and as his intent in our creation was defeated by sin, there was an evident propriety; that he himself should interpose in our behalf. The fall of man was the loss of so many subjects to Christ their natural Lord, in virtue of his having created them. Redeeming them; was recovering them again, was re-establishing his power over his own works. In the epistle to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul runs a parallel between the relation in which Christ stands towards us as our Creator, and the new relation he acquired in virtue of his redemption. In the first view, he styles him the image of the invisible God; the first-born of every creature ; for by him were all things created; and by him all things consist. In the second view, he calls him the head of the body, the church, the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. " For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself."

The scheme of thought which runs through the passage, seems to be this ; that as we owed to Christ our first life, it was also expedient that we should owe to him our second ; that, as he was the head of the creation, and made all things, so, when God thought fit to redeem the world, it pleased him that Christ

should also be the head of this new work, the first-born from the dead himself, and the giver of life to every believer. This much we collect from the Apostle's reasoning, and plainly discern, that the pre-eminence of Christ, as head of the church, is connected with his pre-eminence as head of the creation, and his being set over the great family of God. Jesus Christ, thus constituted the Redeemer of mankind, and the Captain of our salvation, in the discharge of his office, was to be made perfect through sufferings.

In the present state of humanity, the character cannot be complete without the virtues of adversity : we are made for suffering, as well as for action ; there are many principles in the human frame, many faculties of the mind, many qualities of the heart, which would be for ever latent, were they not called forth to action by danger and distress ; there is a hidden greatness in the mind of man, which afflictions alone can bring to light. When we are bereft of all human help, when Heaven seems to forsake us, and the earth to fail beneath our feet, it is then that the soul asserts her native strength, summons all her virtue to her aid, and exhibits to heaven and earth an object worthy of their contemplation and regard. Afflictions thus supported by patience, thus surmounted by fortitude, give the last finishing to the heroic and the virtuous character. Thus the vale of tears is the theatre of human glory ; that dark cloud presents the scene for all the beauties in the bow of virtue to appear. Moral grandeur, like the sun, is brighter in the day of the storm, and never is so truly sublime, as when struggling through the darkness of an eclipse.

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## S E R M O N    X X .

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JOHN xi. 25.

*I am the Ressurrection and the Life.*

[Preached at the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.]

“ I SAW in the right hand of him that sat on the throne,” said the Prophet of the New Testament,—“ I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and on the back-side, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders said unto me, Weep not : behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”

In this mysterious manner, the Apostle, who ascended in the visions of God, and saw into past and future time, represents the restoration of mankind to life. When man had fallen from his state of innocence, and all flesh had corrupted their ways, Almighty God, with eyes that for ever overflow with love, looked down upon the earth. He beheld the world ; not as he had beheld it at first, when the morning stars sang together, when all the sons of God

shouted for joy, and when he himself pronounced that all was fair and good ; that very world he now beheld involved in confusion and uproar ; the original state of things marred ; the order of nature destroyed ; the laws of Heaven overturned : his once beautiful and happy creation defaced and laid in ruins. He beheld his rational offspring, whom he had adorned with his own image, whom he had appointed to immortality, fallen from their primitive innocence, debased with ignorance, depraved with guilt, subjected to vanity, and appointed to dissolution. Following the footsteps of sin, which had thus laid waste his works, he beheld *death* advancing with swift steps ; extending his dominion over the nations, and shaking his dart in triumph over a subjected world. He saw, he pitied, and he saved.

Although offended with the guilty race, he would not cast them off for ever. His time of visitation was a time of love. In mercy to mankind he devised a scheme for our restoration and recovery. But man was not now, as in innocence, in a condition to treat with God by himself. Between sinful dust and ashes, and infinite purity, there could be no communication. A Mediator, therefore, was requisite to make peace between heaven and earth, and where was such a Mediator to be found.

Accordingly, at the declaration of the gracious purpose of God, for the future happiness of the world, when the book of life sealed with its seven seals was brought forth, a strong angel proclaimed with a loud voice, “ Who is worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof ? ” Who is worthy to mediate between an offended God and guilty man ; to unfold the secret purpose of the Most High, and to give life to a world that is dead ? There was silence in heaven, and silence in heaven there might have been for ever ; but in that moment of mercy, the crisis of our fate, the Son of God interposed ; “ I am the resurrection and the life, by me shall the world live. I will for-

“sake these mansions of glory, and dwell with men.  
“They who now wander in darkness, I will bring to  
“light, and life, and immortality ; they are now under  
“sentence of death ; that sentence shall be executed  
“on me, and I will purchase for them life everlasting :  
“they have now gone astray into the paths of perdition,  
“I will point out to them the way that leads to the heavens.”

In this manner did Jesus Christ become the resurrection and the life. As the Prophet of the world, he gave us the assurance of life and immortality ; as the Priest of the world, he purchased for us life and immortality : and as the King of the world, he set before us the path that leads to life and immortality.

In the *first* place, then, as the Prophet of the world he gave us assurance of life and immortality.

Curiosity, or the desire of knowledge, is one of the earliest and one of the strongest emotions of the human soul. No sooner does the mind arrive at maturity, but it proceeds to examine the objects around it, and to extend its researches wider and wider over the whole circuit of creation. With peculiar earnestness man turns his attention to his own nature, and becomes the object of his own contemplation. But here clouds and darkness surround him. He perceives himself a stranger in a wide world, where the plan of nature is very imperfectly known, where the system of things is involved in much obscurity, and where the Author of the universe is a God who hideth himself. Life appears to him as an intermediate state ; but he is ignorant of what was before it, and is as ignorant of what is to come after it. He observes symptoms of decay and marks of mortality on all the productions of nature, the human race not exempted from the general law. He sees his friends and companions, one after another, perpetually disappearing ; he sees mankind, generation after generation, passing away ; passing to that awful abyss to which every thing goes, and from which nothing returns. But



whither do they go when they depart? Have they withdrawn into everlasting darkness? Or do they still act in another scene? We see the body incorporate with its kindred elements, and return to the dust from whence it was taken. But what becomes of the soul? Does it, too, cease to exist? Is the beam of heaven for ever extinguished? Is the celestial fire which glowed in the heart for ever quenched? Or, beyond the horizon which terminates our present prospect, does a more beautiful and perfect scene present itself, where the tears shall be wiped from the eyes of the mourner, where the wicked shall cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest?

If we consult our affections, we will be inclined to believe in a future state. Nature is loth to quit its hold. The heart still wishes to be kind to the friends whom once it loved. Imagination takes the hint, and indulges us with the pleasing hope of one day meeting again with the companions whom we dropt in life. The perfections of the Deity favour these wishes of nature. If God be infinitely wise and infinitely good, he would not have brought us into being only to see the light and to depart for ever. Would a wise builder have erected such a noble fabric to last but for a moment? On the other hand, if we consult the analogy of nature, the horrors of annihilation surround us. All the works of nature seem only made to be destroyed. The leaf that falls from the tree revives no more. The animal that mingles with the earth never rises to life again. Appearances also make against us. The mind seems to depend much upon the body. The temper of the one arises from the state of the other. When the external senses decay, the faculties of the soul are impaired. When the blood ceases to flow, the spirit evaporates, the last stroke of the pulse seems to put a final period to the whole man.

Between these fears and these wishes of nature, no conclusion can be drawn. After the maturest inves-

tigation, and deepest reasoning, all that we arrive at is uncertainty. We see the traveller involved in the cloud of night, but we know not of any morning that awaits him. The ocean spreads before us, vast, and dark, and awful, but we know not if it will waft us to any shore. What a disconsolate situation is this to a serious inquiring mind? These thoughts would perplex us at all times; but if they affect us with anxiety in the gay and smiling scenes of life, how will they overwhelm us with horror, when our feet stumble on the dark mountains, and the shadows of the everlasting evening begin to close over our head? In that hour of terror and dismay, how shall the wretched man support himself, who knows not the hope of immortality? Afflicted with the view of his past life, tormented with present pain, and hovering over an abyss from which we know not if we shall ever emerge, how must it embitter the last hour, and mingle despair with the pangs of dissolution, to think of our bidding adieu to the living world; to go perhaps for ever into the dominion of darkness, into the region of shadows, into the land of forgetfulness, where, for any thing we can tell, we shall be as though we had never been! To such persons, the end of life must be insupportable. Their setting sun goes down in a cloud, and the long night closes over their head in its darkest and deepest shade.

But when the Sun of Righteousness arose in our region, it dispelled the shadows of the everlasting evening; revealed all the heavens to mortal view, and poured its radiance upon the path of immortality. Our Saviour did not propose his doctrines as controvertible opinions; he confirmed them by proofs and miracles. Did he teach the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body? As an infallible confirmation of these doctrines, he himself arose from the grave, and being the first-born from the dead himself, he gives life to the world. The good man need not now live in a state of anxiety about his fu-

ture existence, or mourn for his deceased friends as those who have no hope ; we know that our Redeemer liveth, we know that we shall in like manner revive.

There is a time appointed, when the year of the redeemed shall come ; when the everlasting morning shall dawn ; when the voice of the Son of God shall pierce the caverns of the tomb ; shall be heard over the dominions of the dead ; shall re-animate the ashes of all that ever lived upon the earth, and raise a glorious and immortal army from the bosom of corruption.

In the name, and by the authority of Him who was once dead, but is now alive, and lives for evermore, I am this day to give you the bread of life, and deliver into your hand the pledges of immortality. It is the voice which Jesus this day addresses to you from these tables, “ I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me shall never die.”

In the *second* place, Jesus Christ, as the Priest of the world, purchased for us life and immortality.

When man came from the hands of his Creator, he was innocent, and therefore happy, and immortal. For although, in the present degenerate state of human nature, the imperfect virtue of good men neither insures their happiness here, nor merits an everlasting reward hereafter, yet, if we suppose them in a state of innocence or confirmed goodness, we can neither set bounds to their enjoyments nor their existence. The ideas of perfection and felicity are inseparable : wherever pure virtue is, it is in paradise ; all good beings throughout the universe are happy. Righteousness is by its own title, immortal. The spring of innocence, and the fountain of life, for ever mingle their streams.

Accordingly, as the world, when it was first created, contained in it no principles of decay, so man, its noblest inhabitant, harboured in its nature no seeds of dissolution. The world, if it had not been cursed, had moved on in its original beauty, fresh, in undecaying vigour, and fair with perpetual youth ; and

man, if he had never fallen, would only have exchanged an earthly paradise for a heavenly one. For, as we are told, God created not death, and there was no poison of destruction in the world which he made. Immortality was a part of his image, which he conferred upon our first parents. Amid the garden of Eden a tree arose, the sacramental pledge of life, and sign of immortality to man. And if man had never fallen by tasting of its fruits, he would have lived for ever. But, by the fall death entered into the world. On the day that man became a sinner he died. The man who was made after the image of God, died ; the man who was created immortal, died ; and there remained a lifeless form, a guilty and a mortal creature, doomed to earn his bread with the sweat of his brows, to drag out a threescore and ten years of wretchedness and pain, and then to return to the dust from which he was taken.

How art thou fallen from heaven, son of the morning ! How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed ! The celestial spirits, appointed the guardians of Eden, knew our first parents no longer ; they recollected no traces of original innocence in a form so fallen : They discerned none of the lineaments of heaven in a face so clouded with guilt. They drove out the man : Drove him out from the garden of Eden, where he had access to the tree of life ; drove him out from the society of all those good beings who were at once happy and obedient ; drove him out from the presence of the Lord, with which, in paradise, he had been often blessed.

Behold him now in his fallen state ! Behold, O man ! and mourn over this image. Fallen from the dignity of his nature, and in ruins ; the beauty of innocence defaced ; the splendour of heaven obscured ; cut off from the career of glory and immortality ; his name erased from the book of life, no more to claim alliance with the father of spirits, no more to rank among those happy sons of God, who present them-

selves before the Lord ; no more to behold His countenance in bliss, in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore ! Such was the state into which man was brought by the fall ; the sentence of death passed upon him ; the gate of heaven shut against him ; the wrath of an offended God hung over his head. To persons in this state, what consolation would it bring, to hear of an immortality beyond the grave, if it was to be an immortality of misery and torment ? To hear of heaven, and be cast down to hell ; to be told of the rivers of pleasure, which are at God's right hand, while they were doomed to drink the unmingled cup of his wrath !

But the Great Restorer of our race, the Redeemer of mankind, not only as a prophet discovered to us a future state, but also as a Priest, purchased for us eternal happiness in that future state. It was the guilt of our sins that shut the gate of heaven against us, that subjected us to the wrath of God, and to misery in the world to come. But Jesus Christ, as our Surety and Redeemer, fulfilled that law which we had broken ; endured that wrath which we had deserved ; made an atonement for those sins which we had committed ; and by the righteousness of his life, by the efficacy of his sufferings, by the merit of his death, he satisfied the justice of God ; he blotted out the sins of the world ; he abolished death ; he purchased life ; he quenched the fire of hell, and opened the heavens for the righteous to enter in. Thus, what the first Adam, the man of the earth, had lost, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, restored again. By the sacrifice of himself, which we are this day to commemorate, he ransomed us from destruction ; by his death upon the cross, of which we are this day to renew the memorials, he purchased the life of the world.

Yes, O Christian ! the ransom was paid. While thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil,

were insufficient, a price of higher value was given; while the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, were unavailable; a sacrifice of greater efficacy was offered up. The fund of heaven was exhausted; the treasures of eternity were bestowed; the blood of the Son of God was shed upon the cross.—Yes, O Christian! the ransom was paid. Liberal to you is the divine benignity; free to you the blessing of life flows. But, the anguish which thy Redeemer felt, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; the groans which he uttered; the tears which he shed; the fears which came upon him in the hour of darkness; his bloody sweat during his agony in the garden; the earnest prayer which he offered up, that the cup of wrath might pass from him for a time; his complaint of dereliction upon the cross, when he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” These testify at what a price the blessing was bought. Yes, O Christian! the ransom was paid. When this awful event was transacting; when the great hour of sacrifice was solemnizing; astonishment seized the world. All nature laboured in expectation, when the eternal life of her children was procuring. An earthquake rent asunder the rocks, and shook the earth from its foundations. The sun, beyond the course of nature, suffered eclipse in the heavens; unusual darkness, at noon, overspread the nations; the invisible world, through all its mansions, felt that tremendous hour. The dead arose from the grave. With astonishment the host of heaven looked down. Man alone, for whom these wonders were wrought, man alone was an unconcerned spectator of the event.—Yes, O Christian! the ransom was paid. Behold the victim led to the sacrifice, patient, uncomplaining, marking the way with his own blood. Who is it they drag like a murderer to Mount Calvary? Who is it they are stretching on a cross, and nailing to the accursed tree? Prince of life! Lord of glory! Saviour of men! Great High

Priest of the world ! we cannot call upon thee to come down from the cross, for thou art now purchasing eternal life for us !—Yes, O Christian ! the ransom was paid. The sacrifice which was offered up, was accepted by God. Jesus, before he bowed upon the cross, cried out, “ It is finished.” As a full confirmation that the merit of his sacrifice was available to purchase everlasting life, he rose from the dead on the third day; and is now ascended up on high, to take possession of those heavens he hath purchased for his people, and is now preparing a place for them in those mansions which are in his Father’s house.

In the *third* place, As the King of the world; he sets before us the path that leads to life eternal.

Having, as a Prophet, opened up a future world to mortal view ; having, as a Priest, purchased life eternal in that future world, as a King he marks out the way by which we may ascend to take possession of that eternal life which he hath purchased for us. The gate of heaven is set open by his blood ; but they alone who walk in the path which he hath appointed shall enter in. You come to these tables, not only to receive instruction from Jesus as a Prophet, not only to profess your faith in him as a Priest, but also to recognize his authority as a Legislator, and to vow obedience to him as a King.

One of his first appearances on earth was in his legislative capacity. One of the first acts of his ministry was to publish a system of laws for regulating the life of his disciples. Moses is celebrated for having been faithful in his house, and for having ordered every thing in his tabernacle, according to the pattern shewed him in the mount. No less faithful in his house was the Prophet like unto Moses, the Minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. He hath given us the purest and most effective precepts, for the regulation of our life: He hath pointed out our duty in every instance with such clearness, that he that runneth may read. The King

of that future world which he hath purchased by his death, hath made the path that leads to it, not only plain, but luminous.

It shall come to pass in those days, saith the Prophet Isaiah, (describing the times of the Messiah), that the “ eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears “ of the deaf shall be unstopped ; the lame shall leap “ as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing : “ For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and “ streams in the desert.—And a highway shall be “ there, and it shall be called the way of holiness ; “ the unclean shall not pass over it ; but the redeem- “ ed shall walk there, and way-faring men, though “ fools, shall not err therein.” Such is the perfection of the Christian law ; such the purity of those morals which Jesus delivered, such the beauty of the Gospel as a rule of life, as to have gained the love and admiration of many who have disbelieved its doctrines. But he gave them a still higher lustre by his example. The perfection of the Christian law, the purity of those morals which Jesus delivered, the beauty of the Gospel, as a rule of life, appeared nowhere to such advantage as in the life of our Lord. There you contemplate holiness, not as a dead letter, but as a living form ; substantial, present, speaking to the world. He trode before you the path that leads to heaven. It is pointed out by his precepts ; it is marked by his example ; it is consecrated by his blood.

Would you learn what virtue is, would you be in love with virtue, would you practise virtue, contemplate the life of Jesus ; study the life of Jesus, imitate the life of Jesus. He to whom the Jews preferred a robber and a murderer, was fairer in his life than the sons of men, and purer in his heart than the angels of God. That head which they crowned with thorns, was ever intent on benevolent deeds, and at that very moment of time meditated their good. Those feet which they bound to the cross, went about on errands of mercy. Those hands which they nailed to the ac-



cursed tree, were lifted up in devotion to God, or stretched out in beneficence to men. Jesus, through his whole life, marked out the path which leads to the heavens. Walk in that path, Christians ! You shall arrive at heaven ; and be of that happy number, who are to inhabit the mansions prepared for you, by him who is, “ the resurrection and the life.”



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