

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT,

A SERIES OF

SERMONS

BY THE MOST

EMINENT DIVINES OF THE SCOTTISH CHURCH,

FORMING A COMPLETE

BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY.

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THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

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SERMON by the REV. T. BROWN, D. D. Glasgow.

QUALITIES OF THE GOSPEL METHOD OF IMPARTING COMFORT AND INSTRUCTION TO MAN.

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE DISPENSATION OF THE SACRAMENT,
ON SUNDAY, 4TH NOVEMBER, 1832,

By the Rev. WILLIAM MUIR, D. D.

Minister of St Stephen's Church, Edinburgh.

"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

AMONG the many things which, under the direction of the Spirit of God, have been written to us in the word of truth, the subject which holds the chief place, is the divine remedy for sin. The application of the subject to ourselves for our personal benefit, supposes that on our part there is the serious consciousness of sin, united, as it ever will be, when it is serious, with the desire and endeavour of being altogether freed from it. The word of God, accordingly, viewed as the means of imparting comfort and instruction, directs its principal influence to comforting and instructing the soul that is brought to such a serious consciousness. The comfort and instruction offered in the sacred writings form the most important of blessings, whether we look to the state of mind which needs them, or to the source of them, or to the design for which the giving of them is intended. The state of mind which needs this comfort and instruction is most necessitous, even one that feels itself impoverished in all good, present and future; the source of all it is the richest, even the wisdom and mercy that are infinite; and the design of it is the holiest, as well as the happiest, even the great scheme that closes in the glory hereafter. The provision of this kind of comfort and instruction, and the actual dispensing of it, are the chief things in the sacred writings; and necessarily so, because the Gospel is peculiarly the religion of penitent sinners. The divine testimony in the gospel addressed to us, proceeds

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always upon the one or the other of these truths, that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; and, that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness: so that without this consciousness of evil, the Christian message, when brought down to us, would be deprived of its power, and even of its meaning. This consciousness of sin, let me add, both marks our entering into the privileges of the Gospel, and also goes along with our reception of them. It marks our entering into the privileges of the Gospel—for pardon were no privilege to us unless we saw our transgressions; sanctification were no privilege to us unless we saw our pollution; grace to enlighten and aid us were no privilege to us, unless we mourned under our native darkness, and saw our need of spiritual assistance; and the hope of heaven were no privilege to us, unless we longed after the unmingled purity of our nature. The consciousness of which I speak goes also along with our reception of the privileges of the Gospel, because the sin that is past and forgiven is still remembered by us; it is kept ever in mind for the purpose of rendering us humble and grateful. Besides, the complete freedom from our native corruption, is wrought out gradually; conversion and regeneration give the grand movement, but not the entire deliverance itself; because holiness, though begun in this life

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can never be perfected in a world that bears so deeply the stamp of transgression. Moreover, the sensibility of holiness always increases as pollution comes to be detected; and the more intimately the characters of God and his laws are understood, and their matchless excellence admired, the more humiliating will be our own want of conformity to their excellence. Again, in our advances towards perfection, we are always seeing a farther reach at every new step of our rising towards it. How evident, then, that the distinguished feature of our Christian character must be that of penitence; that if we say we have no sin, we are but deceiving ourselves; that our chief confession is the confession of our sins; that our unwearied prayer is, "Forgive us our trespasses;" and that this seriousness of the soul, under a deep impression of its guiltiness in the sight of God, effected by divine grace, is the very object which corresponds with the Christian method, and for which the comfort and instruction of the Christian method have been provided. And may not the text lead me naturally to say, that in the dispensing of this comfort and instruction contained in the gospel method, the gracious and wise method which the sacred writers observe, is impressed by the three following qualities:—1st. By an affectionate concern for souls; 2d, by a free and full proposal of Christ to our acceptance; and, 3d, By an exercise of the strictest jealousy over the grand interests of holiness. How affectionately in the gospel method is manifested the concern for souls—language being uttered the very same as the fondest heart breathes over those choice objects of care and tenderness which are found in the relation and character of children! Again, how free and full the proposal of Christ to your acceptance, setting forth his powerfulness as an advocate, as a propitiation so perfect as to be capable of atoning were it applied to them, for the sins of the whole world! And how strict the jealousy which, along with this unlimited offer of grace, is exercised over the grand interests of holiness, since every thing written by the power of the Spirit on the subject of guilt and pardon, is expressly that we sin not?

Surely, in the first place, the most affectionate concern for souls is a quality inseparable from the Christian method. This method speaks to you and me of mercy and salvation. This message tells

us, that the being of infinite power and holiness condescends to regard us with pity and tenderness. This message declares, that justly as we have deserved eternal exclusion from his favour, he yet seeks our restoration to himself: yes, that such is his compassion, that to fulfil the plan of restoration to himself, he did not spare even his own Son. It assures us, that he waits our return with parental solicitude, and will receive us back with the prompt and generous ardour of the father receiving the prodigal; yea, he pleads with us not for a moment to defer the opportunity of returning to his arms, to the new robe, the ring, and the shoes, and the fatted calf, and give joy even to angels, and share in the honour and happiness of children of his family and heirs of his kingdom. It is true the Christian method yields to us no comfort till it has first brought us to the consciousness of our sins; and accordingly, this is ever its prefatory language, "If you say that you have no sin, you deceive yourselves." But this preliminary rebuke is most gracious; its being heard by us, and entering into our hearts with humiliating and alarming influence, is just the proof that he who sends it remembers us, and cares for us, and loves us; that he thinks of us with a father's heart, and would bring us all within the precincts of his family, and thus bestow on us the riches of his love. "O Israel, put on me your help; why will ye die? What can I do more for my vineyard than I have not done? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together. Return unto me, I will heal your backsliding, I will love you freely, for mine anger is turned away. Whosoever will, let him come. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live. Ye shall be my children, saith the Lord Almighty." O what words are these! what a message to be spoken to us on the authority of the eternal God; and not only so, but to be directly sent to us from his own mouth, and conveyed to us with such eloquence from the gracious being whom we have offended, repulsed, and hated! O who may conceive of the ardour and benevolence that dictated the message proclaimed in the Gospel of St. John! This beloved disciple, receiving the very Spirit of his master, as he leant on his bosom at the

supper of the communion, how zeal for the human soul glows in his writings—how he rises above all the other disciples on the subject of the attractive influence of the love of Christ—O how anxiously his heart pants over the members of Christ's family! And if such was the generosity of sentiment in an ambassador of the grace of God, what must be the generosity of the God of all grace himself as he proclaims to us by his Son the message of redeeming love! He himself declares, that he willeth not that any of us should perish, but that all of us should be reconciled to him, and wins us to his family, and rejoices over us as his children. There is a height and a depth, a breadth and a length, of this love of God which passeth knowledge. O that it may secure our regard, touch our hearts, and effectually draw us to those privileges of God's children, which sin had virtually lost to us, and which, even when restored to us, the consciousness of sin is so ready to interrupt and embitter.

It is then for the accomplishing of this desire that, in the 2d place, we are met so particularly and unceasingly with the free and ample proposal of Christ to our acceptance. There is nothing but this proposal that can unite the two seemingly irreconcilable things—our consciousness of sin, and our admission to the privileges of God's children; for Christ is proposed to us because of our sin, and the hope of accepting his salvation to us arises from no view of our personal guilt being in itself less heinous than the personal guilt of others, but simply from the view that we are chargeable before God with what is in itself infinitely hateful. Yet a method of restoring us is proposed.

In this proposal, there is set before us the divine provision for the comfort of the soul that is seriously convinced of sin, and desires to be freed from sin. Christ is set before us as mediator between God and man. In setting Christ before us, the descriptive language employed sets before us the idea of the court, the judge, the accuser, and the criminals. Heaven is the court, and the judge is the Father; and penitent sinners are the parties with whom he is engaged in his mediatorial capacity. He stands at the foot of the judge to meet the charge which the accuser brings against the criminals, but he does not plead any thing for the purpose of extenuating their sins. His appearing implies, more than all

their confessions could do, how exceedingly guilty they are.

Their unworthiness and corruptions are spread out in all their aggravation before the Judge, but he pleads still for their acquittal, their safety, their blessedness; and he does so on the principles of equity, for he who pleads is Jesus Christ the righteous, and it must be on principles of equity on which he pleads. And though he pleads for the unworthy, he is Jesus Christ the righteous still; because the powerfulness of his advocacy is secured by virtue of his own atonement. He became substitute and surety for sinners, as far as it could be done with consistency to his own glorious character. He bore what is equivalent to the penalty for sin—he assumed our flesh; he took part of the same that he might redeem us; he that knew no sin was made a sin-offering for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He is one with the Father, God manifest in the flesh; and being thus an all-sufficient Saviour, he is able to reconcile us. He is God who hath redeemed the church with his own blood; and the magnitude of his love in our redemption is ascertained by the truth that he laid down his life for us; and since in him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily, his obedience, and the satisfaction made in our behalf, have made honourable the law of the Judge, infinitely above what the punishment of our whole race could have effected. He pleads, therefore, this obedience and this satisfaction as glorifying both the mercy and equity of God. He pleads with the Father, who anointed him for the pure purpose of reconciling sinners to himself, by the blessing of his grace, and is ever well pleased with his Son, in having accomplished the designs of his mercy. As in righteousness, therefore, Jesus Christ the righteous pleads, so in righteousness it is that he gains his plea. Grace is extended to sinners, even to the chief. And, lest even the free and ample proposal of Christ now made, should not secure your confidence, there remaineth behind, in the text, a more comprehensive expression still, of its fulness and freeness; for the sacrifice of Christ did not exhaust its power to save in the redemption of the first believers; nor were its precious benefits limited to the people of the Jews, to whom it was first addressed, nor are its blessings kept for any one nation, to the exclusion of any other. No.

He is the propitiation for our sins, but not for ours only. His atonement, as it was applied to all our race, is capable of pardoning all our race. To speak indeed, of its pardoning, though never applied to us, is unmeaning language. It cannot be an atonement for *our* salvation, unless *our* sins are pardoned by it. *Our* sins are not pardoned by it, unless it be applied to *us*; but then to the capability of the extension of the atonement, to the inherent virtue of this atonement, no limits can be set. Not the most inveterate transgressors are placed beyond the reach of its pardoning merit; not the transgression of the darkest stain is removed from its cleansing power. What are all mankind, all that ever have lived, all that ever shall live? They are beings whose numbers can be reckoned, whose rank in the scale of existence can easily be ascertained; but the character of Jesus as God, in our nature, cannot be estimated; it stands forth in glory, which, in moral dignity, sinks infinitely beneath it the whole creation of intelligences.

The propitiation made in his person, my brethren, is to be considered as not only taking away the sins of us who believe, but if the whole world would believe, it is equally capable of taking away the sins of the whole world. Who, then, can doubt the power to benefit his own individual case, of what is thus announced universally full? or who conscious of his need of an atonement, can reasonably doubt that he will receive the blessing of it, especially when he reflects, that even the multitudes that have discarded him, are still invited to come and receive it. Whoever comes, then, to this propitiation—whoever comes to this propitiation bewailing his sins, must not allow a suspicious thought to interrupt that confidence which we are called to repose in the fulness of the atonement, and in the freeness of its offer. Whoever would reason you into the idea, that the propitiation is not able to meet your case, account that person an enemy equally to the honour of the Saviour, and your own peace. Say you to every such accuser—There is an Advocate with the Father. The satisfaction of Christ is an infinite satisfaction. I will not, I ought not, to despair of pardon. I will raise my supplication, in the persuasion of receiving a gracious answer. I look from myself to my Surety—from my guilt to his atonement—from the throne of justice to the mercy seat—from the

judgment that might righteously have consumed me, to that Lamb as it has been slain, whose blood is sufficient to take away my sins. Say all this in the exercise of faith, with humbleness, with repentance for every sin, with a resolution to rest implicitly in the perfection of the propitiation with which God has declared himself well pleased, seeking before all, in the atoning sacrifice, the means of rendering you like in holiness to him who rendered the sacrifice.

But this leads me to state, in the last place, that to the merey of the proposal of Christ, and the affectionate concern for souls, are united the strictest jealousy for the interests of holiness. "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not." The direct result of teaching you forgiveness through the great propitiation of Christ, is moral purity. If forgiveness had been declared as unpurchased by an infinite ransom, the guilt had been lessened in your estimation; and if guilt had been named by extenuating names—if the message brought by us to you, had conveyed the reconciliation of your conscience to God, by certain tidings of an indulgent and endearing exercise of merey on his part towards you, then, whatever temporary ease the believing of our word might have given you, it would have proved itself to right reason never to have come from a God of purity, because the peace it offered was separated from holiness. But O to learn, as you do from the Bible, that the salvation of your souls were utterly hopeless, except for the sacrifice of infinite value; to learn that, in order to the remedy for sin, the counsels of eternal wisdom were employed, a blessed Trinity entering into the covenant of grace—the Father giving up the Son—the Son devoting himself to the Father's will, and the Holy Spirit carrying forward the merciful scheme; to learn that, for remission of sin, an atonement had been presented, the value of which rises beyond the computation of every created intelligence; to learn that the plans of eternal wisdom, that the incarnation, that the sacrifice on the cross, that the mediation of his Son, that the advocacy with the Father, that all has been combined in the work of taking away our sins, how efficacious to render an evil in itself as hateful in your souls as the reality ought to make it? What a power has all this to give the body of sin in your hearts its deadly

wound, and to urge you on to its destruction? These things are all to lead you that you sin not; that you do not spare from your execration and resistance, one habit of feeling or thought which the divine law forbids; that you wage war with the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life; that you mourn over every instance of the reascendency of evil in your soul, and pray that you yield yourselves no rest while you know, that, instead of aiming after universal holiness, there is some portion of sanctity you have not yet thoroughly acquired, and one sin you have not thoroughly forsaken, and that you bring every motive that arises from saving mercy and threatening judgment, to bear upon your souls, to remove you farther from the corruption of the tempter, and attach you closer and closer to the virtues of the Saviour. Thus the Gospel imparts comfort, but only to the penitent; the Gospel gives encouragement, but bear in mind that encouragement is widely separate from licentiousness; it diffuses peace, but peace away from all false security; it fixes your trust in God, but shakes from you every vestige of presumption; the privileges of divine favour are received, but these are to increase your reverence for the divine glory; the blood of the cross is to quench the flame that raged against the sinner, but it is to inflame his soul the more against sin and his sinful propensities; the whole scheme of salvation animates the souls of believers with delight, but the great design is to animate every part of the Christian character to greater fidelity and diligence. While, then, you listen to the message of grace in the gospel, a message which, coming from the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, addresses you with language of most affectionate concern for your souls, and, by drawing you to the privileges of the divine family, would give you in reality what the name of children implies; and while for that very end you early accept the proposal of Christ so free, that not a being who listens to it is excluded, and so ample, as to present a redemption efficacious, if it were applied, to save the whole human race; while you rejoice in all this, never forget that the mercy offered you is offered for your redemption from the power, as well as from the effects, of sin, and that as ye cannot be children of God unless ye are seeking resemblance to your Father's image, and be-

wailing every mark of dissimilarity to your Father's will, and as even the advocacy of Christ cannot save a soul that is uniting the deliberate indulgence of follies, and worldliness, and lusts, to a professed confidence in the Saviour's atonement, so here is the substance of the Gospel; "These things are written unto you, that ye sin not." O! I know that truth—in my heart I feel it! exclaims the penitent believer. Then the scheme of mercy brought in by the Gospel cannot be aught but the harbinger of peace, since the scheme originating in God, introduced by his Only Son, is rendered effectual by the Holy Spirit. I find it written, that the Word of Life was manifest in the flesh, and seen and looked upon in all the glory of the only begotten Son of God; and can I doubt that this was done that I sin not? I find it written, that a most noble fellowship is prepared for believers, even communion with the Father, and the Son, and all the followers of the Lamb who have already washed their robes, and made them white in his blood; and can I doubt that this is written to me that I sin not? I find it written, that to walk in worldliness is to separate the soul from infinite purity; and can I doubt that this is written to me that I sin not? I find it written, that my nature is fallen; that my corruptions are originally great; that the confessing of my sins in an exercise of faith is to bring forgiveness, and thus that blood, in which the Christian trusts, is not only to pardon him, but to cleanse him from all unrighteousness; and can I doubt that this is written to me that I sin not? Well, I am convinced of the holy design of all that is written in the word of God; but, alas! this is the very conviction that oppresses my heart, and is so ready to enfeeble and depress me. I do strive against all sin, yet I sin. I seek the remedy for all disease, yet the disease exists. I have gone to the great High Priest—I have bared my soul to his inspection, yet the leprosy is there, and conscience, though it never questions the efficacy of what is able to reach the sins of the whole world, yet questions the efficacy of my own faith. Thus, many a mourner in Zion is troubled, but we may say to such a mourner in Zion, The language I have now put into your mouth, is an expression of grief for the remains of indwelling sin; and then, if it be really grief on account of sin, it cannot be separated from hatred of sin; and then, if the grief and hatred

be real, they cannot be separated from the desire and effort of being free from sin. The propitiation and advocacy are provided for the soul that is seriously conscious of sin, freed from its remaining power, abhorring its recurrence, and desiring to be freed from it, and at every return into even the conception of evil, hastening to the Saviour. If any one, to whom these marks vouch for his conversion to God, still find that, though habits of sin are broken, yet they are not taken away from him, let him not from that experience despairingly say, that his adoption is now lost, that heaven is now shut against his prayers, and that he can never be readmitted to his Father's face; but let me exhort him to go at once from this lamented experience of still remaining sin,

to the still effectual sacrifice; from this additional proof he has received of his utter want of all personal favour, to that mighty Advocate whose plea can never fail. Let him go, and with earnestness renew his solicitation; and so long as he trusts in the great propitiation, so long as he looks for every blessing exclusively at the hands of the great Intercessor, so long as he has recourse to this comfort and instruction given to penitent sinners, so long as there is love to men who believe, be assured, that for him to cast away from him the hope of acceptance with God, were to cast from him that very plea for acceptance with God, with which the wisdom of God is eternally satisfied. Now unto God the Father, be ascribed, &c. Amen.

THE TENDENCY OF THE WORD OF GOD TO PRODUCE SANCTIFICATION;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, 9TH DECEMBER, 1832,

By the REV. THOMAS BROWN, D.D.

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"Sanctify them through the truth: thy word is truth."—JOHN xvii. 17.

THE two great points to which these words naturally direct our attention, are, the necessity of sanctification, and the manner in which that sanctification is effected. In formerly discoursing from these words, I endeavoured to point out the necessity of sanctification, the necessity of being renewed, of being made like to God, from the following considerations:—First, That it formed part of the salvation of Christ Jesus. It is not merely deliverance from guilt and punishment—it is not merely deliverance from transgression, that constitutes salvation, but deliverance from its power and dominion, to a resemblance of the divine nature. Next, I said, it was necessary, in as far as it was corresponding to the divine character. There is no view of God more evident than this, that God is a God of holiness; that sin is that abominable thing which God hates, and that he cannot look upon it without abhorrence. Next, I endeavoured to point out the necessity of sanctification, arising from the command of God. This is to be found in every part of the divine record. Next, I endeavoured to prove it as necessary in order to evidence our faith and

union to Christ. Faith without purity is vain. Next, I showed you that it was necessary for the advancement of God's glory, and the interests of Christ's kingdom in the world. It is not to be expected that any thing but a holy Christian can be instrumental, and beneficial, in advancing the cause of religion in the world. Next, I showed you it was necessary for the peace of our minds. Without purity there can be no peace. God has said it, and he knows our constitution, that there is no peace to the wicked. Next, I said it was necessary in order to qualify us for the heavenly kingdom. We must be like God if we would enjoy a hereafter; there must be a meetness for heaven, as well as a title to heaven. Such were some of the points I enlarged on at considerable length. I endeavoured then to show, that sanctification, to be real must be universal; it must extend to the whole man, to the thoughts, words, and actions, to the affections and desires of the heart, and to the outward conduct. It is not for you and me to say, I am partly sanctified. The work of the Spirit of God is not confined to this part or that, but the whole man is

brought into subjection to the Lord Jesus I observed, also, that it was progressive. "Sanctification," the Shorter Catechism tells us "is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man, after the image of God, and are enabled, more and more, to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness." This is the nature of sanctification. It proceeds, from small beginnings, to a great increase. It is just like a grain of mustard seed, scarcely perceptible at first, but it goes on till it becomes a great tree. It is thus that it operates on the heart and mind; upon the whole outward, as well as upon the whole inward man. It is like the morning light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. I then showed you also how it was attained; it is God's work—we cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean. If the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, no more can they that are accustomed to do evil learn to do well. It is the work of divine power, and that divine Redeemer, who has said, "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," can subdue all people to his will, can conquer the hardest and stoniest heart, can bring their whole desires into captivity to himself. It is His work, not merely at the commencement: the great artificer must be at the laying of the foundation stone; and not only so, but superintending and assisting to the close, from the first to the last, through all the intermediate steps of our advancement in holiness, till we arrive at the fulness of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus—till we be no longer fitted to live in this world of sin and corruption—till we be translated into the world of purity, where no sin is to be found. The whole is the work of God; he must begin and carry forward, and he must perfect. This was shown from the declarations of God's word, and from the experience of the people of God. They know that their own efforts are fruitless and unavailing, unless God be with them to strengthen, help, and uphold; but the word of God tells us that God makes use of means. Our Lord, when he prays to his heavenly Father that his disciples might be sanctified, says, "Sanctify them through thy truth—thy word is truth;" and we do not hesitate to affirm, that it is by the word of truth, either communicated in writing, or addressed orally to men, that the church has been extended, and that

the salvation of individuals in that church is promoted, and their relation to Christ, their turning to God, their growth in grace, their establishment in peace, purity, and meetness for heaven, secured. It is the word of salvation that is preached unto perishing sinners, and it is of essential importance to the most advanced Christian as well as to him that is just beginning to lisp, as it were, the language of praise; it is just of as much importance to those that have made the greatest progress in the divine life, as to those who have made the least; just of as much in the end, as in the beginning. And how valuable must be that word, when it is considered that it comes home to all circumstances, that it is a light to the feet, and a lamp to the path, that it comforts in distress, soothes in the hour of sorrow, and upholds in the hour of death!

But how does the word sanctify us? It is to this that I am now to turn your attention. In the first place, it has a tendency to sanctify, by the discoveries it makes to us; secondly, by the motives it presents to us; and thirdly, by the examples it holds out to us. In the first place, the word has a tendency to sanctify us, by the discoveries it makes. Where there is ignorance of divine things, there cannot be much purity; where the mind is darkened, the heart must be corrupted—the life cannot be holy. No doubt, much knowledge maketh mad, and much religious knowledge too, there may be, without any sanctity of character. A man may be profoundly learned in the truths of religion, and yet the light of his own mind may be darkness: he may still continue, notwithstanding all he knows of the ways of God, in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity; he may not be, in any degree, conformed to the divine will and image; he may look unto the Lamb of God, but not behold him in the mirror that is held up to him; and, beholding him in the mirror of salvation, he may go and forget what manner of person he is. But this is not the natural tendency of the thing—this is not the design, and this is not the effect of sacred revelation, nor was the word of God communicated for this purpose. Its tendency is good, if it be used well; but it may be perverted—familiarity with it may defeat the gracious purpose the Lord had in view in communicating it to us. Its tendency is holy; for what does

the word of God make known to us? It reveals his character to us in all its plenitude, and illustrates that character, and delineates all the features and attributes of Deity, in a way fitted to solemnize the mind, and show that he is glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises, as well as doing wonders. It contains the history of Divine Providence, in God's dealings with the children of men. It reveals the whole truth of our fallen and lost condition, and responsibility, and weakness, and guilt, and condemnation. It unfolds to us the divine will, the holy commands and precepts by which the Lord would have our hearts and lives to be regulated. It reveals and makes known to us another world—its certainty, its nature, and our interests in it, and our future destiny there. It makes known the character that shall be blessed, and that character that shall be made to drink eternally of the cup of wrath. It tells of the all-sufficiency of Christ, and of the all-perfect and finished salvation made known to us by him. It tells us of the Spirit—of its sanctifying influences, and of the means of our being brought under their power. It informs us, in the plainest and most unequivocal terms, that the pure in heart alone shall see God, and that without holiness, no man shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Now, I would just ask any rational, thinking being, if he reads attentively what is said on the various topics of God's word—if he studies the record of unerring truth, is it possible that he can do so, without feeling something of the influence that these truths are fitted to produce? The great design of God, in imparting a revelation to sinful man, was not to amuse the fancy, to gratify curiosity or please the taste, but to benefit the soul, to sanctify the heart, and regulate the life. The great object of revelation, is not to awaken speculation about its contents, but to excite a practical regard to its truths. The great object of God in making himself known to us in all the excellence and greatness of his power, in all the discoveries of his mercies and grace, is just to beget a love of, and trust in, his perfections, and imitation of his character. The great object of revealing the law and the gospel, is to make us feel sin's guilt and deformity, and seek for, and rejoice in, a way of deliverance from it; so that, if the word is read and heard in the way in which, and for the purpose for which, it has been

communicated—and if there be a taking of that word home, and an application of its various contents to ourselves; it is naturally fitted to sanctify and make us holy. "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass," says the apostle, "the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." It is true, that faith in the word is essential; a believing, a practical conviction, that the record is true and faithful, is needful to render it efficacious in the way we have been speaking; but if there be a believing, a realizing view of the truths of the gospel, we will feel their transforming tendency, without which we cannot be sanctified by the leading views of the truth as it is in Jesus; and the more frequently, and steadily, and habitually, a person does read the divine record, the more will he become acquainted with the glorious truths which it contains; and the more he knows of them, the more ardently will he love them; and the more he loves them, the more will he long to be conformed to them. Thus it appears, that the more we are made acquainted with the discoveries of the Bible, the more clearly we see, and the more firmly we believe, its contents, the more shall our hearts be moulded into a likeness of God, into a resemblance of the divine nature; and the more closely we hold converse with God in his blessed record, the more abundantly shall our conversation, our outward man and life, be adorned with all the fruits which are to the praise, and honour, and glory of God's name. In this manner, then, does truth become efficacious in producing that purity of heart which is to the salvation of souls, and that resemblance to Christ, without which no man shall see the Lord.

But, in the second place, the word of truth has a tendency to purify our hearts and lives, by the motives it presents to us. I cannot here enter on the consideration of all those varieties of motives and inducements, by which the Lord, in his word, works on the human heart. He addresses all the feelings and powers of the human mind, touches all the different springs and cords of the human heart—and for what purpose? Just to induce sinners to forsake the ways of unrighteousness, to lead them to the relinquishment of sin as their great enemy, and to lead them to choose God as their chief portion and their

chief good. By pointing to the necessity of holiness to the attainment of present peace and future enjoyment, he stimulates us to emulate and struggle to attain them. By communicating to us the exceeding great and precious promises, the word has opened up to us the life that now is, and that which is to come. Recording grace here, and glory hereafter, in connexion with a renewed heart, he awakens our hopes, and leads us to press forward to the measure of holiness attainable here. And the apostle tells us, that there are such glorious promises communicated, in order that the Christian may be made partaker of a divine nature, and raised above the pollution and corruption of the world. The full relation believers stand in to God, as made known in the record—that noble relation of sons and coheirs with Christ, which is their sure portion and future inheritance, is frequently urged on them as a powerful inducement to holiness. They are reminded of their holy and high vocation, not for any mean purpose, but to raise them above the sensualities and corruptions of the world, and to induce them to aim at nobler principles and practices, and to have conversations becoming the Gospel—to be blameless and harmless as the sons of God—to be followers of God as dear children. The Almighty also works on the fears of the human heart, to lead men to keep at a distance from all that is sinful, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. He reminds them, that if they forget his statutes and yield to temptations, they shall be visited with stripes and punished with rods; and that if they draw back he can have no pleasure in them. But of all the principles and motives that the Gospel affords for the promoting of the sanctification of the heart and life, the love and the grace of the Redeemer appear by far the most conspicuous, and the most influential. If the heart be not operated on by this exhibition of love that passeth all understanding, to loathe sin and forsake it—to cherish holiness and to desire it—and to sacrifice all that the Lord would have us to do, I know not any consideration likely to operate in melting and subduing that heart. We have nowhere such an exhibition of sin as in the volume before us—nowhere such a satisfying proof of God's hatred of sin, and God's love of holiness. We have nowhere such a proof of God's determination to punish sin, as we have here—nowhere

such a manifestation of mercy, and such a display of love, and such exhibitions of unmerited favour and grace, as we have in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ—and nowhere such manifestations of the humility and abasement of the Son of God in becoming the son of man, as in the depth of his sorrow and the severity of his suffering, in the lowliness of his life and ignominy of his death. The apostle says, "Christ is made unto us sanctification," and he means he is the procuring cause of all those divine influences through which the regeneration of our nature is effected, and that through him, as the great living head, all healing and sanctifying influences proceed; but I think we are directed to a believing view of Christ, and I do conceive that a believing view of the humility and suffering, and persecution, and death, of the Lord Jesus Christ, is of all motives the strongest to lead us to watch and pray, that we may die unto sin and live unto righteousness. If there be a single individual who can contemplate all that Christ underwent, from his cradle to his grave, to purify him; the reproaches of his enemies, the treachery of his friends, the desertion and the hiding even of his father's countenance, the bodily agony and mental distress to which he was subjected, without being filled with adoring gratitude and transporting admiration; I know not how his heart is constituted. If there be one who can consider sin as causing the Lord of Glory to veil his divine majesty, and stoop to the condition of a servant—as awakening the regions of hell against him, and turning the wells of consolation into streams of wrath, and the smiles of paternal love into a dark, cold frown,—without being animated with irreconcilable hatred to sin, the procuring cause of all this, he must have a heart hard as the adamant, and insensible as that of the devils themselves. And when, in addition to all this, the Christian reflects that his life and his happiness, and his eternal glory, are procured at this extraordinary price, and could not have been secured by any other means, and that otherwise he must have died eternally, and been eternally miserable; when he thinks of what Christ did suffer, that he might serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life, that he might not live unto himself, but unto him that died for him, surely every purpose of his heart, every

prayer of his lips, every desire of his soul, must be, that as he is not his own, but bought with a price, he should glorify God in his body, and in his spirit, which are his. And I consider, then, these motives to be of the most stimulating and animating nature. I do indeed admit that all the meltings of divine love, all the threatenings of divine wrath, fall upon the ears of men insensibly, without ever begetting any impression that is of a salutary, or of a sanctifying nature. A deadly stupor, a torpid insensibility, has seized upon them, the effect of Satan's delusion, and sin's benumbing influence; but if there be considerations that can by possibility work on the human heart—if there be motives that can by possibility weigh with the human soul—if every feeling and affection of the mind be not dead and extinguished, and if man will at all attend to them; they must tell on his sensibilities, and must be followed by a regenerating and renewing influence. God has adapted them to the real state and circumstances of human nature; and Christ knows them, and knows their effects; and therefore he says in his prayer to his heavenly Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth;" "for faith," saith Paul "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" and it pleased God by it to save them that believe, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

The last circumstance I would bring under your notice is, that God sanctifieth by the truth, by the examples of holy living that the word of truth exhibits and brings under our notice. It was customary with the ancient philosophers, to have the walls of their schools adorned with the images of the great and illustrious in former times, that in contemplating them, their disciples might be led to admire their originals, and be stimulated by their exertions and attainments, and led to transcribe the graces by which they were adorned into their own characters. And we have recorded in the pages of inspiration, the lives of several of God's people for the same reason, that we may imitate this cloud of witnesses, who, through faith and patience, have been made heirs of the promises, that we may be induced to follow their ways, and lay aside every besetting sin, and copy that holiness and sanctity of heart by which they were dis-

tinguished. There is no part of the Word of God, written aforetime, that was not written for our learning and instruction; and there is no grace, no character delineated in the page of inspiration, that is not designed to be of universal benefit in influencing the sentiments and regulating the conduct. They are held up to our view either for imitation or warning—either as objects we should copy after, or as beacons we should avoid. We find that there is no species of human writing more powerfully fitted, or more peculiarly adapted to interest the affections and affect the heart, than the sketches of life which are occasionally brought under our notice—and sacred biography is powerfully calculated to produce this effect also; for the picture is drawn by whom? By the finger of God himself. Every feature is correctly and justly delineated; nothing is concealed, nothing is exhibited but what is requisite either to stimulate on the one hand, or to deter on the other; and I conceive that the beauties of holiness, or the deformities of vice, are made more captivating or detestable when exhibited to the view in the lives of the godly, or in the examples of the unrighteous; and in this way are far more apt to make a deep and lasting impression on the mind than any abstract view that can be given of holiness; than any lessons against sin, and in favour of piety, that could be inculcated. When any grace or virtue is strongly enforced, under the impression that the standard is far too high, and the requirement far too rigid, however the mind may approve, there is an impression of its unattainableness and impracticability; but when the character required of us is actually carried into real life, and that by men of like passions with ourselves—by men who have the same infirmities, and temptations, and difficulties to encounter—by men who have no other resources than we ourselves have; our fear of failure is thereby dissipated, our confidence gains strength. For what have we to copy after, and what is the object of our ambition? We aim at what is not beyond the reach of others; the footsteps that are attainable we tread; and through the aid of Divine grace, we overcome and are successful. But what is the history of any of the people of God in the volume of inspiration, but the history of God's providential dealings with them—the history of what God effects in them and by them, and the pledge

of him who is faithful and true, of what he will work in his own people who are faithful and true, to the end of time? For why are their lives drawn in the page of inspiration, but to stimulate us to go and do as they did, and live as they lived? God is therefore merciful and gracious in bringing before us the lives of such as had the same corruptions to struggle with as we, and yet by Divine grace overcame them; who had the same road to travel, yet reached the end of their journey; who have been washed with regeneration, and had their robes made white in the blood of the Lamb, and now serve Him without ceasing in his Father's temple above. It is scarcely possible to study with attention and interest the lives of these holy men of God, which the Spirit of God has brought under our notice, without feeling our hearts made better by the contemplation. It is impossible to mark the fortitude, the faith, the patience, the humility, and devotedness to God, and holy living that adorned their characters, without feeling strong eagerness to possess their spirit, to be as they were, to live their life, and die their death. No—the very failings, the very stumblings and follies of these individuals, are not without much important benefit to us in the way of our sanctification, inasmuch as they remind us of our own, teach us to be humble before God, warn us to take good heed to ourselves, and point to the rocks on which these holy men have split, and show what we ought to avoid and guard against. But if the exhibitions of holiness, in the lives of the Scripture worthies, thus awaken admiration, touch and allure us, and beget in us a resemblance to them, how much more captivating and improving must be the life of Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith? If such imperfect preachers of righteousness delight us, what must be the effect of the all-perfect model of excellence, of the life that was stained with no guilt? If a heart only partly purified and renewed be lovely in our eyes, what must that life be that was spotless, and that character that was adorned with every good and perfect gift? What must be that character that was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from all sin? Yes, when the eye is steadfastly turned to Jesus, and we look at him with fixedness of attention and anxiety for improvement, under a desire to copy after him, and to have something of the spirit and mind that adorned him, a transformation will take place. Beholding Jesus, as in the

divine glory, we shall be changed into the divine image, from glory to glory. It is true that unless the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to our souls no renovation will take place; the Word is a hammer to break the hard heart, but still that hammer is in the hand of Omnipotence; the Gospel is powerful to the salvation of sinners, still that Gospel is the power of God, to the attainment of that salvation. It is in God's hand to render it efficacious for accomplishing the purposes for which it is revealed; and he has rendered it efficacious in every age of the church for convincing and converting sinners, and building up saints in holiness.

Now, having brought this subject before your notice, I would ask, Are we using this word for the purpose of sanctification? Do we take the word of God in our hands, and do we peruse its sacred pages, and pore over its divine comfort, and listen to the message it brings to us for the great leading end, that we may be sanctified, that we may be restored to the divine image, and become holy and happy? My brethren, if we would attain the end, that end we must have in view, we must use the word, whether in reading or hearing, for the grand purpose for which it was designed, and that was to make us holy as God is holy. Indeed, unless this great object is desired—the word of God will not return void, for it will accomplish what he pleases)—as far as we are concerned, the end has been defeated; and yet I do fear that too many, in reading and hearing, lose sight of this great end, that they may know God, and conform to God's will and image, and be ripened for the world of unsullied purity. Is this the end you have in view? No end will be of any avail if this be not gained; you and I may read and hear to our dying hour, still if this end be not gained, of what use will it be to us at the last! I fear too many lose sight of this; for though you were masters of revealed truth—though you were acquainted with all its contents, with its doctrines, its precepts, and its promises, yet unless it lead to your satisfaction, the truth in you is but a tale that is told—nothing better than a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal—nothing but a broken cistern that can hold no water. You see that Christ made this prayer for his disciples, “Sanctify them through thy truth—thy word is truth.” He prays to God that this may be the case. Make it the subject of prayer for yourselves. Read the word of

God with this prayer; Sanctify me with this truth, that it may make me wise unto salvation—that it may purify and renew this my hard heart. The word has often been read, and God has often borne testimony to it as affecting his gracious designs in the soul. I believe that God has not left himself without a witness regarding its power, and that many have felt it in their hearts to be the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation—that some have felt it to be the light of life to their souls—enlightening their minds, subduing their hearts to his love and his obedience—breaking the fetters of sin, and restoring them to the liberty of free-born souls. If this have been so with you, the word will be a precious word for you; it will sweeten your solitude—it will attend you in society—it will be the manna of your life, the treasure of your soul, and you will hide it and keep it fast in your hearts, that you may not sin against God.

Again, my friends, what degree of sanctification do you possess—what degree of the image of Christ do you possess? When I speak of sanctification, remember I do not mean external reformation of manners—this is very good in its place: I do not mean a mere outward conformity to the word of God—that may be manifested by one in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity: but I mean an inward conformity to God, a deliverance from the slavery and defilement of sin. Sanctification is nothing less than that a man be brought to the entire conformity of his will to the will of God, and to the obedience of every command. Is this the case with you, my friends? How many are there who profess to believe in the authority of God's word, that are unacquainted experimentally with this great work upon their souls! Now, I ask you, what rise in the scale have you made with regard to the Gospel? I do not look for the extinction of sin, but its subjection, and its increasing subjection; and as it declines, for the image of God to be advancing in

your souls. If the good work is begun it will be carried on; but are you seeking for the overthrow of sin?—Seek for its overthrow by the word and by prayer. Your sanctification from first to last, is of grace—your conformity to Christ can only be effected by the word of God—He works by means, and renders these efficacious to the ends for which they are designed. You may not understand, and may not be able to explain, how it works, no more than you are capable of explaining fermentation by leaven; but if it be a real change, that change will be perceptible; and although you may lament that you feel that it is so very small compared to the means you have enjoyed, yet its reality you will feel, and you will be anxious that God would perfect it in your hearts, rooting out every root of bitterness. If you are sanctified in any measure, you will be looking to the world where there is no defilement with longing anticipations. Wearied souls look to heaven as a place of rest from toil; sorrowful souls look forward to heaven as a place of deliverance from grief; afflicted souls look forward to heaven as a place of rest from pain; captive souls look forward to heaven as a place of godlike liberty; and sanctified souls look forward to heaven as a place of complete freedom from sin. Feeling the remains of corruption, experiencing the struggles of the flesh against the Spirit, knowing the yielding of the soul to temptation, you will be saying, Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might flee away from this vain and sinful world, and be with Christ, so that I might be in that world where I may breathe a purer atmosphere, and mingle with a purer society! And oh, have your eyes directed upwards in prayer, that the word of God may be the means of sanctifying you, of renewing you, of rendering you meet for the enjoyment of it! The Lord of his infinite mercy prepare us for heaven where are fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore! Amen.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOSEPH SOMMERVILLE, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN MACGILCHRIST, Edinburgh.

THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE AFTERNOON OF SABBATH, 21st OCTOBER, 1832,

By the Rev. JOSEPH SOMMERVILLE,.

Minister of St. John's Chapel, Glasgow

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."—JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

THERE are few delusions more fatal, and yet more common, than that of persons labouring to negotiate a treaty betwixt the service of sin, and the service of holiness, striving to reconcile the claims of Christianity with the claims of the world, to make compatible the homage due to the Creator, with the obedience and slavery required by the creature. Such individuals profess to entertain a veneration for the perfections and worship of the Deity; they acknowledge their readiness to submit to the obligations of piety; they own the legality of the divine authority; they evince an indefinite love and longing after the spiritual privileges and pre-eminences of the saints; and it would afford them the highest satisfaction, when the storms and conflicts of mortality are past, to be landed safe on the shore of paradise, and to be introduced to the perfect beatitudes and triumphs of immortality.

For the sake of reaping so invaluable a harvest of felicity; for the purpose of attaining to so brilliant a consummation of glory, they are willing to forego not a few temporal conveniences, and to submit to not a few sacrifices of ease and coarse indulgence; to cultivate certain principles, and to prosecute a particular course of conduct; to abstain from criminal pursuits, and to practise various restraints and personal mortifications. At the same time, they feel their habits of sin to be inherent and inveterate; their addiction to selfish and constitutional indulgences, violent and inordinate; their propensity to consult

their favourite tastes, and to gratify their sensual inclinations, too vehement to be relinquished.

The demands of religion they hold to be inconsistent with the requirements of worldly pleasure; they feel themselves to be too much curbed and fettered by the laws of the Gospel, and they will not yield to the crucifixion of every corrupt affection, exercise that abnegation of self and sin, or make that entire and unconditional surrender of themselves to the influences of the truth, and to the power and life of godliness, which, nevertheless, they must acknowledge to be their supreme duty and highest interest.

In this dilemma, they labour for an accommodation of matters; they pant for a compromise of principle; they become solicitous to adopt a system of half measures; they are fain to see an alliance struck between the objects of sense and the things of the spirit—between the interests of time and the interests of eternity; while they are most desirous to unite, in their own persons, the opposite and distinctive characters of a friend of God and a friend of the world—a disciple of Christ and a votary of Belial; and they strain to secure the enjoyments of carnality, while they would not fall short of the recompense of righteousness. In a word, the summit of their ambition is, to reap all the advantages and delights peculiar to the two conditions—a state of nature and a state of grace—a state of unregeneracy and a state of conversion; to live on

amicable terms with the adherents of both parties; to maintain a kind of see-sawing between the votaries of dissipation and the children of holiness—to aim at once for earth and heaven; to “fear the Lord and to serve their own gods;” to have all the combined happiness which the gratifications of sense and time can afford, and to inherit all the felicities which Christianity can minister, and which immortality can supply.

But surely, my friends, it would be a superfluous waste of time and arguments, to stop to demonstrate the impossibility of uniting things so essentially distinct and discordant in their natures—of reconciling what is so absolutely and perfectly at variance—of harmonizing interests so totally dissimilar—of amalgamating elements, in their very essence, of utter and eternal contrariety.

Though the population of this globe is composed of many different races of men, discriminated by a thousand graduated shades of spiritual character and situation, yet are they all comprehended by the Spirit of God under two divisions only—the church and the world; believers and unbelievers; those who are in a state of spiritual death and condemnation, and those who are in a state of spiritual life and reconciliation; children of God, and children of the devil; heirs of grace, and heirs of wrath; those who are in Christ Jesus, and those who “lie in the wicked one.”

Between those two great and opposite classes, there is, even in this present life, “a great moral gulf fixed,” so that they who would pass from the one society to the other, are unable; and the broad line of separation and seclusion cannot, on any account, be violated. “He that is not with me,” says Christ, “is against me.” “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Be assured, then, that in a matter of such infinite moment as this, it is impossible you can be any thing else than exclusives, or ean, with any degree of safety or consistency, stand in doubt or incertitude. You must, of necessity, be either the friends or the foes of God; either the devoted servants of Christ, or the avowed despisers of the great salvation; you must be enlisted either on Jehovah’s side, or on that of his adversary; for on

no account can you, in this question, belong to an equivocal race, or occupy an intermediate or middle position.

In many cases of every-day life, neutrality is not only lawful, but commendable. In many questions of intricate solution, and difficult interpretation, implicating the reputation, the property, or happiness of our fellow men, where the evidence is dubious, and almost equally balanced, it may be the dictate at once of wisdom and discretion, to hold the judgment in suspense, and to come to no decision. In domestic feuds, in private dissensions, and in the fierce collision of stormy passions, it may be often advisable to stand neutral, and to take part with neither set of combatants, seeing interference may tend to irritate, rather than to reconcile—to exasperate, rather than to allay, animosities; to foment, rather than to heal, divisions. But it is far otherwise in matters of religion, and in the high interests of immortality. Here no reserve can be admitted—no demur or debate sanctioned—no discreet caution allowed—no indifference tolerated; for in this case, every motive, as it is most obvious, must be urgent and immediate, that you make an option, that you choose your side, and that you resolutely, and inflexibly, and for ever, adhere to it.

As you have, then, been constituted moral agents, left to the freedom of your own wills, with a capacity to choose and determine for yourselves, we ask you, in the language of the text, “whom you will this day serve?” And in propounding to you this question, it is the farthest possible from our intention to insinuate, that we regard it as one of small import, or of trivial or temporary moment, which may be evaded, disregarded, or postponed, without great detriment or hazard to your eternal interests. On the contrary, we avow, that we consider this question as one of transcendent consequence, and infinite magnitude, proposed, not as the Shibboleth of a party, but as the grand and paramount concern of all; that it embraces whatever can, to an immortal spirit, be most dear and vital—being auspicious or fatal to all his hopes for eternity, productive to him of unmeasured benefit, or of incalculable disaster. We do unequivocally and solemnly avow, that the one side of the alternative is life, that the reverse of the alternative is death; that paradise is

on the one side, and perdition on the other; that the one choice lays the foundation of an empire of felicity and of glory, greater and happier a thousand-fold than heart ever conceived; while the other decision will impregnate an infinitude of existence with lamentation, woe, and despair. In making your option, too, in this matter, you must stand solely on your own responsibility. You must of necessity be a party in this case, to your own eternal shame or renown, to your own enduring bliss or misery. The very nature of the case precludes the adoption of all coercive and compulsory measures. It rests with yourselves to determine, on which side the scale shall preponderate. The decision is committed into your own hands. The whole is left to your own discrimination and choice. Nothing remains for us but to make the proposals. Like advocates, we can do no more than state the case and plead the cause. You, the judges, sit and hear it tried, must weigh and sum up the evidence, return the verdict, and by that determination stand or fall for ever.

We propose, then, in the first place, to submit for your adoption, one of the two sides of the alternative specified; and, in the second place, to advert to the particular time when this election is to be made.

I. We are to submit to your choice one of the two sides of the alternative proposed. And the first particularized, is the tragical or fatal side.

If you listen to no other but the dictates of your own carnal and unrenewed inclinations; if it seem good unto you to follow the popular current; if you are determined to exhibit the last excess of madness and wretchedness, and to be guilty of the most daring and atrocious deed of self-destruction which it is possible for a creature to perpetrate; if such be the incurable fatality of your nature, the invincible hardihood and intractability of your mind, your confirmed regardlessness of every consideration of glory, happiness, and self, and your utter insensibility to the highest claims of tenderness, generosity, and gratitude, then choose the service of idolatry—embark in the basest thralldom to which Satan can degrade his votaries—be the veriest slaves of your own natural corruptions—the most devoted martyrs to the servitude of that iniquity, whose fruit is shame, and whose wages is death. If you have been smitten with judicial blindness of eyes, and seared

hardness of conscience; if the great enemy of souls has, by the potency of his sorceries, and by the brilliancy of his enchantments, so fascinated your minds, and so debauched your hearts, as to make you stumble at every step, and receive erroneous impressions from every object; if, in the science of spiritual arithmetic, you discover such a stultification of intellect, and incapacity of moral discrimination, as to prefer a life fleeting as the shadow, to an existence of infinite duration; if you deem the pampering of the appetites, and the gratification of the propensities of the “vile body,” as of weightier consideration than the improvement of the powers, and the assurance of the well-being of the never-dying spirit; if the most evanescent and unsatisfying of animal indulgences far overbalance, in your estimation, the purest and the sublimest of celestial ecstasies; if flames and torments unutterable have deeper charms for you than triumphs and transports inconceivable, if you wish to be the “greatest architect of ruin” that ever existed, the destroyers of the largest amount of righteousness and felicity which the world ever beheld, then declare yourselves at once to be the devotees of ungodliness, and the heirs of wrath. Plunge headlong into every excess of criminality and frenzy; cast away from you the last desire and hope of salvation; pronounce boldly and fearlessly the decision, that you have “judged yourselves unworthy of everlasting life;” and say in a spirit betraying an equal defiance of the thunders of divine judgment, and the pleadings of divine compassion, “Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice? we know not the Lord, neither will we serve him; for we have loved strangers, and after them will we go.”

If you greatly prefer the pleasures and pursuits of a present world; if it have attracted and satisfied your fondest regards; if a predilection for its degrading slavery, its ever fluctuating frivolities, and its ruinous excesses, has become the darling and dominant passion of your soul, then see that you adore no other idol than the world—that its spirit and maxims be identified with all your sentiments, and tastes, and mental operations—and that you permit no other object to interfere with its claims of affection, or to dispute with it the rights of supremacy. See, that you bow implicitly, and without control, to all its pernicious, demoralizing manners:

that you permit its pageants and its pomps, its trappings, and its airy nothings, to intoxicate your imagination, to steal away your senses, and to cultivate a vulgar admiration. Let it be farther proved and proclaimed, by every principle of character, by every syllable of speech, and by every feature of external deportment, that you are the unceremonious and unscrupulous votaries of sin—assuming an unbounded license of folly and vice—making fashion your only law, the flesh your only god, and pleasure your only pursuit.

In “walking in the counsels and in the imagination of your heart,” you may, if it so please you, violate with remorseless scorn all the established rules of piety and virtue; you may smile with contemptuous disdain at the maxims of ancient wisdom, at the sobrieties and the godliness of former days. You may applaud and imitate every thing, merely because it is of foreign importation, modish and current, however vicious in principle, and however contaminating in its tendencies. You may also overleap all the ordinary barriers which divine wisdom and grace have erected, to fence in the way of transgressors, to prevent them from precipitating themselves over the verge, into the bottomless abyss that yawns, beneath; and you may deride all the most solemn warnings and cautions that have been enforced upon you; and you may, with reckless despite, spurn at the most powerful safeguards which reason and revelation, which law and conscience have created, for averting the catastrophe of your endless destruction, and for shutting you up to the enjoyment of everlasting redemption. “Choose you this day,” that you will not pause at the commission of any iniquity, however flagrant; that you will not quail for the consequences of any conduct, however irrational or revolting; that you will comply with every invitation to sinful indulgence; and that you will not avoid even the last extremes of delinquency. If the service of darkness and unrighteousness have for your taste the highest attractions, then embark your whole soul’s affections in that cause—labour in it zealously, and labour in it incessantly. Let no scruples damp your ardour; let no fears or difficulties cause you to flinch or swerve one hair-breadth from the road that leads to hopeless and inevitable perdition. Let all the combined considerations of prudence

and self-interest be awed into silence; all the ties of duty, and all the obligations of generosity, be disclaimed and dissolved; let no eloquence of love, no solicitations of friendship, no menaces of wrath, and no promises of richest mercy have efficacy to move or to melt your hearts. Let neither the terrors of hell alarm nor the hopes of paradise allure you. Let neither the eternal compassions of the Father, the expiring tears and agonies of the Son, nor the expostulations and beseechings of the Spirit of grace, be able to unnerve or soften, or to drive you from the career of folly, self-willedness, and contumacy, on which you have so boldly entered, and along which you may be advancing with fearful and portentous celerity. If you choose this day to give yourselves up to the thrall of your turbulent passions, and to become the slaves of all ungodliness, then drown every rising conviction, strangle in the birth all boding apprehensions, and all gloomy forecastings of the future. Let the reproofs and the reproaches of the divine Word, the rebukes of an outraged law, the pleadings and the pathos of a still importunate Gospel be utterly condemned; and let the tender expostulations of pious relatives, the frequent and urgent admonitions of the ambassadors of Jesus, the appointments and the discipline of a corrective Providence, with all the other appliances and expedients of exuberant grace in all their rich variety, and concentrated union of moral force, fall blank and bluntless on the soul, and be scornfully repelled, even as the surges of the chiding main are indignantly thrown back and churned into spray, on the impregnable ramparts of an iron-bound strand.

2. But if you choose, as we trust in God you will, an opposite course; if you prefer, as we pray Heaven you may, the service of Jehovah to the service of Satan—the pleasures of holiness to the pleasures of unrighteousness; if the dedication of yourselves to the worship and enjoyment of the Almighty have more attractions for you than devotedness to the vile slavery of the world; if you give a preference to felicities that are unclaying and unperishable, to flashes of momentary hilarity, and to bursts of carnal and obnoxious merriment, then stand not for a moment in fatal hesitation, but range yourselves at once under the standard of the Cross, and resign yourselves, without

reserve and without condition, to the faith and obedience of the Gospel—to the love and service of God, your Saviour and Sanctifier. Be assured, that if vital Christianity be to you any thing, it must be your all in all. If salvation be a pearl, it is one of infinite price, and you must feel it to be your primary duty and superlative interest to sell all, to relinquish fortune, life itself, if required, and the inheritance of a whole material universe, did you possess it, in exchange for a treasure so inestimable—a prize so far above and beyond all calculation. If you are sincerely desirous to have your guilt cancelled, your persons accepted, and your title to the immense and inexhaustible benefits of salvation secured beyond the possibility of alienation, cling with avidity to the divine and all-sufficient righteousness of the Redeemer; and if you are truly solicitous to be the subjects of a moral transformation; that you may feel God's service to be at once your dignity and delight, apply with fervent assiduity and perseverance to the renovating and purifying fountains of the spirit of holiness. Let there be no oscillation in your will—no vagueness in your purposes, but be distinguished for the exclusiveness with which you attach yourselves to the cause of religion, on which so many mighty and great interests are depending.

If you desire to be Christians, be so in deed and in truth. God is not to be mocked. Let your intentions be unequivocal, your declarations overt and avowed, your life unambiguous, and your character above all suspicion. Let every feeling, and word, and action, be distinctly indicative of the cause you have espoused, the side for which you have arrayed yourselves, the sanctified society with which you consort, and the illustrious heritage which you have chosen. Let no earthly objects divide and distract your attention from the prosecution of every holy aim, and from the attainment of every moral perfection. Let no solicitations of folly or pleasure allure you from the cross of Jesus, no proffers of reward or recompense from any quarter seduce you to a compromise of principle, breach of engagement, or violation of fidelity. If you have enlisted on the side of the great Mediator, and taken the oath of fealty to his service, then see that you live on terms of intimate and devoted fellowship with him; that

there be an endearing interchange of all tender offices and sympathies between you; that you are powerfully attached to his person, to his righteousness, to his laws, and to his people; that he habitually lives in your thoughts, in your confidence, in your affections, in your hopes, and through your entire and undivided being; that you are his true and trusty followers, and that your hearts are fast and faithful to every impression made upon them by his word and by his power, by his spirit and by his providence. Let it be demonstrative that the Saviour reigns paramount in your souls—that you yield implicit submission to every tittle of his will—that his character is the model of your perpetual imitation—and that his commandment is the standard of all your holy obedience. Let it be farther apparent, that you bear a close resemblance to Christ in all his moral imitable attributes,—in piety and patience, in meekness and humility, in heavenly mindedness and in universal sanctity. If you profess your faith and attachment to the Gospel, if you avouch yourselves to be the servants of the living God, then let all the distinctive and discriminating evidences of that illustrious relationship beam forth bright and conspicuous from the inner temple of the mind; let all the characteristics and divine excellences of the renovated man be brought out into warm and vivid manifestation in your history. Shun the very appearance of evil; let sin be dethroned both in your heart and in your life. Abjure all communication with the world, in its spirit and in its pleasures, in its principles and in its practices. “Taste not, touch not, handle not,” the charmed poisoned cup which it mingles and proffers to intoxicate the senses, to bewitch the reason, and to provoke criminal desire. Hold no dallying with its follies, no flirtation with its vanities, make no concession to its demands, but keep a retired and separate walk; maintain towards it a distant and studied reserve. And farther, make no secret of the election you have made, and the interest to which you have sworn inviolable constancy. Hesitate not for an instant to avow your sentiments, to assert the character you are determined to sustain; the affections you are resolved, by the grace of God, to cherish; the exalted motives from which you profess to act; the noble ends you have in view, and the

glorious destination on which your ambition is devotedly centred. Let your profession, your principles, and all your actions clearly and unequivocally testify, that you consider you have no intrinsic interest, no inherent or permanent portion, in the riches, honours, or possessions of this earth; that you estimate yourselves in no other capacity than that of short lived strangers, making a precipitate passage through its territories, and hastening to another and eternal country, to the enjoyment of a fortune, splendid and sublime as are the stars, and enduring as is immortality itself. Let it be therefore distinctly evident, from your whole conversation, appearance, and accoutrements, that you are on a journey; let the sandalled feet, and the girt loins, the lights burning; and the staff in hand, bespeak your character, profession, and pursuit. Let every thing bear attestation to the fact, that you consider you have a work to execute of great difficulty and of infinite importance, on the issue of which the whole burden of the destinies of endless ages is staked. and, therefore, you cannot permit your attention to be for a moment diverted away from this one grand and all-absorbing business of your existence, or your faculties to be engrossed by an inferior object; that you are the citizens of another world, with high prerogatives, refined tastes, and exquisite moral sensibilities, and cannot therefore stoop to be detained by trifles, or amused with levities, or entertained with vulgar debasing indulgences; but must act up to the dignity of a celestial pedigree, and to the nobility of a divine nature, and must walk, speak, and deport yourselves, in every respect, as becomes the heirs of God, the kings of heaven, and the high priests of eternity!

II. We are, in the second and last place, briefly to advert to the special time when this option is to be made, and this decision come to.

The text specifies and limits it to the present hour—to this fleeting moment of existence. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." In every relation and condition of human life, we know how much depends on the cultivation of favourable junctions, and the improvement of propitious moments. The greatest revolutions that have taken place, the most splendid victories that have been won, and the most permanent conquests that have

been achieved, have all depended upon a judicious estimate and critical application of time. In this point of view, even minutes are of incalculable value, seeing the most important transactions that have illustrated and signalized the world have hinged upon them. If it be true, what a writer has observed, "that it is possible to live a thousand years in a quarter of an hour," it holds still truer, that a few minutes lost or improved, may decide the complexion of our whole destiny for eternity. A single hour devoted to the best purpose, may suffice to reverse the entire existence of an immortal spirit, as was exemplified in the case of the dying malefactor who was suspended by the Redeemer's side, and in that of the three thousand souls converted by a few brief sentences spoken by the Apostle Peter; while it is a position of equal verity, that ages, even illimitable duration itself, will be altogether ineffectual in neutralizing or remedying the deplorable consequences of talents wasted, privileges abused, precious opportunities frittered away, during the flow of a few winged months of this mortal existence. You may, therefore, be this very moment within an hour of endless ruin or everlasting salvation. And does not this serve to convince you, that the present time—this very day—this very night—may be the knot or conjuncture to which the whole issues of your intellectual, spiritual, and interminable being are intrusted; when you may be building a superstructure of dignities and felicities on a scale the most magnificent, or be entailing and perpetuating all the unbearable and aggravated miseries of a violated law and a despised Gospel.

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," because if you do not now cast yourselves into the arms of Divine compassion, repose unlimited faith in the merits and mediation of the Redeemer, and "repent as in dust and ashes" your keeping this vital question in a state of suspension and abeyance can only be the means of multiplying all the difficulties that lie in the way of your salvation, and probably defeating or preventing the accomplishment of it altogether. Procrastination may stave off, but it can do no more than simply stave off, its own immediate crisis. This faltering and delaying can only tend awfully to increase the perils you brave, and the hazards you run, to charm reason and

conscience to sleep, to nourish and confirm those habits of lethargy and carnality on which this reluctance, and even aversion to practical Christianity is grafted. Every day's delay is augmenting the power, and consolidating the dreadful influences, of iniquity over you, entangling you deeper and deeper in the pollutions and snares of the world, in widening the breach between you and God, in piling up fresh materials of offence and condemnation, and in making your case proportionately hopeless and desperate. "Choose you this day whom you will serve," because if you do not now comply with the pacific overtures of redemption, embrace God as your only portion, and his service as your only delight, another offer of life may never be made to you, another opportunity of exercising saving repentance, may not again be afforded. Many circumstances may conspire to defeat or frustrate so blessed a consummation—the exceeding deceitfulness of sin, the illusions of a present evil world, the absorbing cares of business, the pomps and amusements of life, severe bodily weakness, mental imbecility or sudden dissolution; and just as you are going on debating the point, wishing to speculate a little longer on the subject, continuing to alternate between what you shall choose and what you shall reject, the door of grace may abruptly close, your last hope may be wrested from you, and your doom sealed for ever. In fine, "Choose you this day whom you will serve," because time is rushing to its conclusion with every man and woman of this generation, with ominous and precipitate speed; and when the curtain of death falls upon you—and it falls often suddenly, and generally when least expected, and on those who are worst prepared for it—it will reveal the fallacy and the inefficiency of the whole stock of those subterfuges and shifts, palliations and excuses, which mark in all the unregenerate so strong a disposition to evade and parry off, from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from month to month, and from year to year, the united force of arguments amounting to moral demonstration in favour of immediate faith and moral reformation. On the day of solemn reckoning and retribution, will it not be an aggravating feature in the guilt of many, that they were ever forming vague and undefined plans of amendment but never carried them into effect; that

they were ever making maguanimous resolves but never executing them; ever on the point of joining themselves to the Lord, and yet consuming their whole existence in worshipping and doing sacrifice to the idols of time; and will not the severest doom be reserved for "those slothful and undutiful servants," who knew their Master's will, but did it not; "who, when required to go and work in the vineyard, said, We go, but went not?"

Seeing, then, that there is equal hazard and criminality in every moment's delay, in a business so critical and so momentous as the restoration of the soul to God's favour and image, and the insurance of its eternal well-being, we would, with all earnestness, press it upon you as your first, your predominant, and your ultimate interest, to give yourselves to God now, to give yourselves to God wholly, and to give yourselves to God for ever. This is your paramount obligation, your supreme interest, your distinguishing honour. It involves also the only infallible hope of your final salvation. The Gospel, while it unfolds a remedial economy admirably adapted to all the diversities of our most necessitous and destitute condition, and is replete with blessings of the first magnitude, and of the richest variety, and which blessings are gratuitously tendered to all, as they were purchased for all, and are needed by all, has nevertheless revealed and bequeathed them to the human race upon the express understanding that they meet with an instantaneous and cordial reception: while no excuse will be sustained, and no apology admitted, on any ground or pretence whatsoever, for hesitation or delay, which, in every case, is held in Scripture equivalent to a disparagement, or actual disclaiming, of the whole generous and gracious proposals. The entire word of inspiration, from beginning to end, is most definite and specific on the point of the present, and that only, being "man's day;" and all its overtures of mercy are restricted and circumscribed to this revolving, fleeting hour. The Gospel language of invitation and promise to sinners is ever couched in the present tense; and it does not hold out one distinct hope or pledge that its calls, if unanswered or disregarded to-day, will be repeated to-morrow, or at any future time. Its voice is never to be heard but in the accents of precipitation and despatch; its messages of love and

forgiveness to perishing criminals are all sent by an express, while it exhausts the vocabulary of denouncement and condemnation of every form of parley and truce, of tampering and temporizing. It inculcates, in the most urgent and peremptory tone, "Flee from the coming wrath. Hasten your escape from the stormy wind and tempest. Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountains, lest thou be consumed. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying, in David, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice. Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day." And while we read of nothing relating to faith, repentance, and salvation, which is not spoken of as critical and hazardous in the extreme, if deferred to some future and indefinite period; and while every menace is levelled, and every admonition is pointed, against faltering and procrastination, every Gospel blessing is proffered, every distinction and pre-eminence of salvation is pledged, and will infallibly be conferred upon those who yield compliance with its pressing summons, and who immediately accede to its treasures of grace, which are on a scale of magnitude and glory that transcend all cost and all calculation. "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto you. Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God, that he may establish you to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto you a God, as he hath said unto you." If you will this day, then, "Choose the Lord to be your God," we proffer to you, in his name and by his authority, that you shall be presently installed in the possession of all the benefits and immunities of the Redeemer's purchase without deduction and without qualification; that you shall instantaneously emerge from under the dark shadows of the Fall, that mighty and mysterious eclipse of humanity, into the effulgence of the light, and the plenitude of the joy, of a renovated, heaven-born nature; and the silent tide of oblivion shall instantly close for ever over all your past and greatest sins; and you shall be immediately admitted within the privileged circle of the redeemed of the Lord, shall have discerned to you the prince of honours, and the meridian of felicities; that your brow

shall be encircled with a double diadem of life and righteousness; that a patent to all the titles and the illustrious dignities of the nobility of the heaven of heavens shall be made out for you, which nothing in time or eternity can alienate or rescind, that paradise shall unlock for you its everlasting gates, and the soul of grace and godliness be poured into your expanded hearts; and you shall behold the interminable future through a vista of brightest hopes, and inherit a name immortal in the records of glory; and while you continue on earth your spirit shall be bathed in a flood of heavenly bliss, and from habitual communion and intercourse with the Godhead, prayer shall swell into praise, praise into adoration, and adoration into rapture!

Awake, then, awake from this delirium and trance. Rouse from this extreme and passive torpidity of soul, and shake off the inexplicable stupor that has fallen upon your spirits. Be alive to the affecting realities of your perilous situation; sit not a moment longer in silent and abstracted musing, but precipitate your escape from impending disaster and death, and hasten this mighty question, so long pending, to an immediate and final adjustment. We do entreat, that all other cares and avocations be for the time suspended, and your whole faculties bent to the furtherance of this one grand concern; we implore, that all other interests, being immeasurably inferior and subordinate, be silent before this overwhelming interest of the soul; we call upon your strenuous and sustained application in contending for the last great stake of life; and we beseech you, if any good feeling and conviction be now at work, that you fan the holy flame, and entirely resign yourselves to the Divine impulse; for oh! the course of many of you is now almost run, and your life hangs by a single hair, and the term of grace and opportunity is wearing rapidly away. "Wo unto us, for the day goeth away; for the shadows of the evening are stretched out;" and God only knows what the next hour may develop, and on what new perils each successive morn may break. The sunshine is fast fading away; the storm is brewing, and will quickly burst, every moment's delay may cost a life, and a solitary spark may ignite the train of an endless conflagration. All things have now come to a point. Half measures will no longer suffice; this is the very brunt

and crisis of your eternal fate. Now is the ultimatum of Gospel remonstrance and solicitation with you. This is the solemn and momentous juncture, when you must secure or lose your everlasting interest in the great redemption; when your answer to the grand question must be clear and categorical, affirmative or negative: for yet another hour and the high game of time is up with you, and the last stake will be played for good or evil, for life or death, for two worlds, of ecstasy or of agony, through the utmost range of an unbounded existence. You have gone too far now to recede. The passes of flight are insuperably barred. You are too deeply and personally implicated in this matter ever to retract. You are shut up, and all your destinies, spiritual and eternal, are concentrated within this narrow verge. Escape is impossible; you are hemmed in on every side, and your last retreat is cut off. Either, then, you must immediately, and on the spot, surrender at discretion to the proposals of amnesty and tenderest clemency; consent to be pardoned and redeemed, to reign in life, to flourish in renown, and to be crowned with endless felicity; or to be condemned as renegades, taken with the weapons of rebellion in their hands, and adjudged to never-ending shame and punishment. And let the truth be branded into your inmost heart, that at whatever conclusion you arrive in this case, and whether you make your option this day or not, the circumstance will assuredly not prevent the transit of this day into the womb of the past. However lightly you may hold, and however wantonly you may riot away, the successive winged hours of this poor mortal span, the loss of each hour is an important abstraction from the scanty remnant of a most fragile and fugitive life. Your hesitancy and delay will not retard for one moment the sun, which has mounted the heavens this morning, from going down at his appointed time; your dreaming and yawning away of this brief term of grace will not preclude its rushing to its conclusion with equal and portentous speed; even if the very existence and happiness of the whole universe were suspended on the phenomenon, the shadow upon the dial-plate would not go backward this evening,

by one degree; and were it to be the means of averting the whole catastrophe of your immortal doom, time would not stop for you one wave of its unstaying and resistless tide.

Oh! flee, then, to the sovereign and infallible refuge set before you in the Gospel. Avail yourselves of the noble and all-efficient remedy instituted by God for your deliverance from wrath, and restoration to his friendship and moral likeness; improve and apply for your perfect salvation, the admirable and inexhaustible provisions of infinite wisdom and everlasting grace. "And what thou doest do quickly." Put not the question of heaven or hell, bliss or misery, salvation or destruction, one hour longer in quarantine, but bring it to a summary and solemn bearing. Give in, this very instant, your submission to the overtures of reconciliation and peace; expedite your escape to the broad and imperishable Rock of Ages, that rears its head aloft, far above the surrounding surges, for the protection and security of exposed, shipwrecked sinners. Return like the dove, after wandering over the face of the earth, seeking rest and finding none, to the ark of your salvation. Throw yourselves into the everlasting and outstretched arms of the once suffering and slain, but now the ascended and life-giving Redeemer, who is beseeching you by all the pains and agonies he ever bore for you, by all the immortal hopes he has built for you—by all the overflowing compassions he has manifested for you, and by the ten thousand claims which he has established upon your admiration, confidence, and obedience, that ye come to him, that ye may be justified, renovated, and glorified. And let the trumpet of gospel mercy, as it vibrates with thrilling transport through your frame, be cordially and joyfully responded to; and let its tenders of love, and oblivion of all guilt, be more grateful to you, than the proclamation of life to the condemned malefactor on the scaffold; its purifying and refreshing fountains, more welcome than streams in the desert to the parched and prostrate caravan; and the discovery of its splendid heritage of rest and glory, more delightful to your eyes, than the sight of harbour to the sea-sick and tempest-beaten mariner!

THE OBLIGATION OF CHRISTIANS TO INTEREST THEMSELVES IN THE PRESENT
AND FUTURE WELL-BEING OF ALL AROUND THEM;

A Sermon preached in behalf of the Edinburgh Young Men's Society on Sunday, 30th Dec., 1832,
By the Rev. JOHN MACGILCHRIST, Minister of the United Secession Church, Rose Street.

(ABRIDGED.)

"Am I my brother's keeper?"—GEN. iv. 9.

THERE is nothing of which men, even with the light of revelation, have formed so false and so defective an estimate as sin. The definition of sin is indeed short and simple—"the transgression of the divine law"—words which, though men can repeat and hear with unbroken tranquillity of mind, and undisturbed repose of feeling, are felt, by all who have any just conceptions of the divine character and government, to be of tremendous import. Various are the principles by which we may estimate the malignity and demerit of sin. How dark and revolting does it appear when His character is considered, of whose law it is the violation! He whose will the sinner tramples under foot is infinitely the greatest and best of beings, necessarily possessed of every perfection, of all that can command our admiration or secure our love, the fountain of all that is good and fair in the moral and the material universe; for what is all that we admire in nature and in man, but an emanation from Him who is their uncreated source?—all is the result of his transcendent excellence. How strikingly the deformity of sin appears when we consider the relation in which the human being stands to his Creator and Benefactor! for has not the Being who forms, sustains, and upholds him, a right to his love and obedience? Must not that be odious, in every sense, which is an insolent rejection of the authority, and violation of the will, of him who is his bountiful and indulgent parent, whose whole conduct towards him is a melting illustration of the infinite benignity of his nature? The odious nature of sin appears also when we view it in relation to the law itself, of which it is the transgression, which is itself essentially true, and is just the shortest way in which the Supreme Ruler could tell his offspring how they could be happy; for happiness and obedience to the law are bound together as by an adamantine chain. How strikingly, too, the infinite malignity of sin appears in the amount of misery and mischief which, if unchecked by a superior power, it would produce in the universe. It would poison every source of happiness, blight every blossom

of hope, mar every tone of harmony within the limits of creation; it would dethrone the Supreme Ruler, and establish malignity and anarchy. This is not speculation. We appeal to the visible and palpable consequences of sin that come within the observation and experience of every one. Look to the constitution and course of the material world, and contrast the present system of things with the fair machine as it came from the hand of its divine author. Look to Paradise, the home of our first parents, and in what fair and immortal charms was nature there arrayed? There never did the bloom disappear on the approach of winter; the soft breath of perpetual spring was never disturbed by the agitation of the storm. No marvel that there nature should shine in her fairest and most attractive charms, for there sin had not shed its polluting influence. Now, contrast this scene with any that now surrounds you. Where can you turn without seeing inanimate nature groaning and travelling in pain under the curse of the Almighty—the earth dreary by winter's desolation, broken and deformed by the earthquake, scorched by the thunderbolt, and seathed by the volcano. Look at the effect of sin on the character of man as a moral being. Look at that fair character in Paradise, reflecting in every faculty and affection, and in almost every feature, the image of his Maker. Look at him, again, when he had become subject to sin, and how awful the change! And how soon did the plant of depravity, in the bosom of fallen man, reach its maturity, and yield its bitter fruits! How soon did murder, in its most hideous form appear! Cain rising up against his brother Abel and putting him to death—for what? Because his own works were wicked, while those of his brother Abel were righteous. The atrocious offender was summoned into the presence of his God, probably on the Sabbath after the perpetration of the crime, and the question was put to him, "Where is Abel, thy brother?" With hardened indifference to the authority, and omnipotence, and omniscience of Jehovah, he retorted, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The question

of the Almighty, and the answer of Cain, imply, I apprehend, the following important principles: first, That every human being is bound, by the most powerful considerations, to interest himself in the present and future well-being of all around him; second, That every human being has means and opportunities, less or more available, for the discharge of this duty; and, finally, That, in the improvement of our youth, for these means and opportunities every one must give an account to God.

That an enlightened regard to the spiritual and eternal interests of others, is recognised as a duty by nature and revelation, none of you, I trust, is disposed to question. You have only to look into the law, written by the finger of God, to know, that six out of the ten requirements are based upon this very principle. That this is the principle into which the requirements of the second table are resolvable, is attested by God himself, who tells us that the law is summed up in sincere love to God, and active love to man. The spirit of that requirement, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is diffused through the whole of revelation, and is exemplified in the life of the faithful in every age. If we have any just conceptions of the nature of the divine law, especially as it is exhibited in the Gospel, we will feel, that, in a great degree, every one of us is his brother's keeper; that in a most important sense, we are intrusted with the interests of all who are within the sphere of our influence, in whatever form, or by whatever means, our interest may be extended to them; and that we are bound to take a deep, lively, and sincere interest in the spiritual and eternal well-being of those around us. For this we must consult and provide by all the resources within our reach; and to the accomplishment of this, we must devote ourselves with all the zeal, activity, and perseverance which a profound sense of our duty requires. He who denies this, professes himself a stranger to that blessed temper in relation to others, which it is the grand aim and design of the Gospel to form in all who believe. Nor must this interest in the well-being of others be confined to the narrow circle of relatives and friends. No! They have the first and highest claim upon our affection; yet within the boundaries of this circle it must not terminate, but embrace all to whom, by any possibility, it can be made

to extend. This the parable of the good Samaritan shows, in which our Lord so beautifully replied to the question, Who is my neighbour? It matters not who the person is—brother, neighbour, stranger, or enemy—the obligation to the duty is the same; the spirit of the precept remains unaffected by any peculiarity in the object of our benevolent regard, in urging us to do good to all, as God may give us opportunity. By a regard to this duty, every genuine Christian is in a greater or less degree distinguished. It may be less developed in genuine Christians than we could wish; but wherever godliness is found, there will also be found a portion of it. It is to this we owe the benevolent institutions which are the glory of our country, and which throw their refreshing influence over the parched wastes of agony and wo. How different is the world—contracted, selfish, and reckless of the misery of others, inasmuch as it does not regard the sufferings it may produce, provided its own imagined interests are secured! Need I say of the person whom a cold and heartless selfishness has severed and withdrawn from his fellow-men, freezing every sympathy, which even the instincts of humanity might have awakened in his bosom, that the language of his heart is, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Turn we from this revolting character to the affecting considerations, by which every child of Adam is urged to interest himself in the well-being of all around him. I shall not now refer you to the general good—to the great and lasting advantages that would result to society universally, were all its members acting on benevolent principles, and promoting the well-being of others. I pass to those sublime motives which should actuate the Christian—the charity of God, and the example of the Saviour. The moment you admit that an enlightened regard to the spiritual and eternal interests of others is recognised and enjoined by the divine law, not only revealed in the Gospel, but confirmed and enforced by many additional motives, that moment are you constrained to the discharge of this duty by all the considerations of divine authority—considerations which, in all rational and religious minds, will be quite decisive as to the mode that is to be pursued. The example of the Saviour is extremely touching. Where is there a word or action during his whole history that has the most distant approach to selfishness?

Was not the sublimest benevolence, in union with perfect piety, the very soul of his character? Did he not breathe, and live, and suffer, and die for others; and is he not at this moment appearing in the presence of God, not for himself, but for us? Can the Christian contemplate this sublime manifestation of the highest benevolence, without feeling the force of the glorious example, and being constrained to cultivate and exemplify the same blessed temper?

But this brings me to the second division of the discourse—That all are furnished with means and opportunities less or more available for the discharge of this duty. This duty, as enjoined on human beings, presupposes many evils to be removed, many wants to be supplied, much suffering to be mitigated and relieved. The benevolent principle must embody itself in anxious solicitude, in judicious arrangement, in painful and persevering exertion, in much self-denial in the cause of others, ere their real interests can be effectually promoted. And where is the individual to whom God has not, in some degree, imparted the means of promoting this great end? Is it the heathen who are to be enlightened abroad, or the ignorant who are to be instructed at home? Who may not do something to effect this? Do not the treasures of the Bible, and Missionary, and Tract Societies, lie open to receive the least contribution that even poverty may spare? And how many have it in their power to become personal instructors of the ignorant, by conducting Sabbath schools, or by circulating tracts? How many are there in this opulent city who have it in their power to search out the retreat of virtuous poverty, and minister to its wants by private bounty? Are the afflicted to be solaced? Where is the man that may not enter the chamber of the sick?—where is the person that may not pour the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit? Is it the rich, whom profligacy has reduced to the very lowest stage of depravity, destitution, and misery, who is to be reclaimed? Even he is not to be left forsaken; for though there are who may shrink from such characters,

they have only to lend their aid to the refuge of the destitute, and their purpose of love may be effectually secured. When the disposition to do good exists, marvellous is the power of devising new modes of benevolence. Can I point to a more beautiful illustration of this remark than to the Young Men's Society? One would have thought that the field of benevolent enterprise had been completely preoccupied. But no. The young men here, and elsewhere, feeling the importance of personal virtue, and knowledge, and improvement, and fully persuaded of the necessity of adopting some system of intellectual and moral training, and convinced of the advantages that would result from union and co-operation, have formed themselves into an association for these enlightened and laudable purposes. Nor is this the only, or even the more important, object at which they aim. Perceiving the danger to which young men are often exposed when withdrawn, in the pursuit of business or education, from parental direction and control, and exposed, it may be, to the contagion of bad example, they have constructed their Society so as to bring, by all prudent means, within its hallowed bounds these young men, that they may be saved from the evil, perhaps from the perdition, to which the force of fashion or the power of temptation might hurry them, and be rendered in future life not only useful, but ornamental to society. A nobler aim, I hesitate not to say, the most enlightened Christian philanthropist could not propose to himself. I honour from my soul these young men. They are, in a most impressive sense, their brother's keeper, and the eternal well-being of all within their reach is in a manner intrusted to their care. Having glanced at the character of this Society, may I not be permitted to ask, Is it not the duty of all to lend it their countenance and aid? Let an enlightened public see to it, that amid the various claims presented to them, many of them seasonable and urgent, the Young Men's Society be not overlooked. To give effect to any institution, funds are in some degree necessary, and who are to supply these but a benevolent and discerning public?

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN ROXBURGH, A.M.

THE ANNUAL SERMON AGAINST THE ERRORS AND CORRUPTIONS OF THE CHURCH OF ROME;

PREACHED IN THE TRON CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON NOVEMBER 2, 1832,

By the Rev. JOHN ROXBURGH, A.M.

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."—2 PETER i. 19.

IN order to that peace and unity which Christ bequeathed to his Church, and which all Christians expect ultimately to prevail, it is necessary that there exist some rule of faith and manners; nor can the diversity of sentiments that obtains amongst us ever terminate, and all men become of one mind and one way, till it be determined who is the Judge of controversies. Thus, the first means to be adopted in order to put a stop to growing errors, is to settle what is the standard of truth. This inquiry must take precedence of every other.

As travellers, also, to a future world, where we hope to inherit eternal life, it is indispensable, to sustain our faith and patience by the way, as well as to the attainment of our ultimate object, that we should possess an unerring guide, in whom we may repose implicit confidence, to direct us in our pilgrimage—that, amid the clouds and darkness which at present surround us, we should have some sure word of prophecy, to which we may do well to give heed, till its light is quenched and its assistance rendered unnecessary by the dawning of the eternal morning, and we can salute the rise of the day-star in the distant horizon.

It being admitted, then, by both parties on the Roman controversy, that, in order to the harmony of the Church on earth, and the attainment of salvation hereafter, some rule of faith is necessary, it is agreed that such a rule exists somewhere, and also that it is sufficient to answer all the

ends designed by it. But when we come to inquire what that rule is, we find them widely at variance; and it is with the view of considering on which side the truth lies, that we have selected the text we have just made,—not, you will observe, for the purpose of exposition or illustration, but because we humbly conceive that it strikingly describes the certainty and authority of that standard to which we confine ourselves, compared with the dark and devious paths into which the members of the Latin Church have been led by those supplements which they have framed to supply its imagined defects. And, while in such a discussion, we would seek, as our first aim, the promotion of these great and fundamental principles on which we hold all pure and undefiled religion to be based, we would study to maintain a spirit of kindness toward those from whom we differ, and a respectful deference to their opinions and judgment. Truth needs not the aid of raillery or bitter invective in order to win its way to the understanding and heart; and as a disposition to indulge in these is particularly apt to be generated by an examination of the artifices which the Roman priesthood have employed to delude their votaries, it is the more necessary to guard against an inclination so natural. For it will be allowed by all, that the state of mind produced by a violent and irritating assault on long cherished errors, is not that in which we are most ready to adopt the opposite truths; and that even confutation the

most triumphant, if not conducted with a respect to the feelings of our adversary, has a tendency only to rivet him more closely to his erroneous opinions, by awakening in their behalf the virulence of party spirit. Not that we should carry this spirit of conciliation to the sinful extent of declining to represent facts as they stand, or to call things by their right names, but only so far as may render it evident to the minds of our Roman Catholic brethren, that while we are honest and conscientious enemies to their doctrines, we still feel the blessed sympathies of love, and have embraced the exalted sentiment of one of our best Protestant divines, who, engaging in controversy with a vindicator of the Church of Rome, tells him, "This I undertook with a full resolution to be an adversary to your errors, but a friend and servant to your person; and so much the more a friend to your person, by how much the sincerer and more rigid adversary I was to your errors."

With these preliminary observations, we proceed to the subject proposed for consideration; and we shall best accomplish our design by an explanation of the two opposite rules of faith—an examination of the evidence on which they are received—and of their practical tendencies. The rule to which Protestants appeal for the determination of controversies and the trial of private spirits, and which they hold to contain all the important and mysterious truths necessary to salvation, is plainly declared in our Confession of Faith, inferior to none in our own, or any language, as a summary of divine truths. After enumerating the books which we acknowledge as Canonical, carefully excluding those commonly called Apocryphal as not of divine inspiration, it thus proceeds:—"The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not on the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God, (who is truth itself,) the Author thereof; and, therefore, it is to be received, because it is the word of God. Our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts. The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set

down in Scripture, or, by good and necessary consequence, may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them."

Such is our confession in regard to the standard of truth; and it may be supported by the following very obvious considerations:—First, All Scripture having been given by inspiration of God, and for the express purpose of teaching what duties are to be practised, and what doctrines to be believed, we argue, that to suppose it imperfect, and insufficient for the purpose designed by it, is to impugn the wisdom and goodness of its Author; and this is done by setting up another rule of faith in competition, or as of equal authority, with it. Secondly, We acknowledge no other standard than the written word of God, because we have no satisfactory evidence that any other is the word of God; and, as everlasting life is a gift which he alone can bestow, so he alone can discover the means by which it is to be attained. Whatever we receive as the rule of life, we can receive only as divine authority; for then only can we be secure of the truth and sufficiency of the rule, and that it will not lead us into errors fatal to our final peace. Now, the evidence which we have for the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures is, the constant, universal tradition of the Church, consisting in an unbroken and effective chain of historical testimony, reaching from our own time to the age of the Apostles. The succession of witnesses has never been interrupted, so that these books have survived, uninjured, the encounters of time, and the persecutions and debates of adverse powers, and may be received with as much—yea, with far more—certainty than the laws and statutes made by kings and senates in remote ages. This preservation from oblivion and corruption, they have owed chiefly to the circumstance of their having been committed to writing; for,

after our Lord's death and ascension, as his Apostles were not to be always with us, it became necessary that the valuable instructions which dropped from his lips should be preserved in written words—that his doctrines and precepts should be inscribed on monuments less perishable than the memory of man—and that his example should be set forth for imitation in sure and authentic memorials of his history. And this certain and safe method has God followed for the benefit and comfort of believers: in their gospels and epistles the lips of the Apostles still preserve knowledge in the Church; in perusing them, we continue to receive instruction at the fountainhead, and to draw pure water from the wells of salvation, not after it has become thick and turbid by the impure or poisonous admixtures which ignorance, treachery, or levity, may have mingled with it, as it flowed along the stream of time, now lashed into foam by the harsh and boisterous passions of man, and again slow and slothful, and silently receiving the corrupt effusions of his vile affections. But the testimony of believers is not the only evidence which we have, that the books received by us as the written word of God were indeed the production of persons immediately and divinely inspired, and by them communicated to the Church. We have the authority of the enemies, as well as of the friends, of the Gospel, for many of the facts which it records: the written testimony of Jews and Heathens, as well as of the earliest Christians. We receive it also partly on account of its own reasonableness, and the signature and stamp of God's Spirit, which appear in the majesty and heavenliness of its matter and style, and the efficacy of its doctrines—partly on account of the striking testimony which one part of it bears to another—and partly in consequence of the strict conformity of sentiment maintained by the various and distant writers who were engaged in its composition, the sameness of spirit which everywhere pervades it, the minuteness and accuracy, the simplicity and artlessness of its details; all which qualities produce such a harmony and correspondence throughout, and render the Bible so complete and consistent a scheme of religious truth, that we may venture the assertion, it is impossible to add or to take from it, without in-

juring the beauty and proportions of the fabric. Such is the beautiful provision which God has made for the conviction of our understanding, as if to teach us, that whatever communication comes from Him, will not only convey the most important and necessary intelligence, but be attended by such manifold evidences, and stamped so plainly with the seal of heaven, as to leave no room to doubt of its divine original.

This leads us to remark, as a third reason for confining ourselves to the written word of God—and the written word of God only—as the standard of our faith, that in this public and infallible rule, whose heavenly origin is established by such multifarious proofs, we are strictly forbidden to add to, or take away from, the words therein contained. In giving the moral law from mount Sinai, the Almighty specially enforced obedience to the second commandment, by declaring himself a jealous God—jealous of his own glory and sovereignty; and this attribute is manifested not only in his zeal for his own worship, but in his solicitude lest his law should be made void by human traditions. This concern appears, first of all, from the fact, that in the Scriptures the Holy Spirit sends us continually, not to the church, nor to tradition, but to Scripture itself, to learn whether these things were so, alleging God's authority in his own word, as a sufficient ground on which to believe whatever it reveals. "To the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The rich man in the parable, for example, when pleading with Abraham to dispatch an extraordinary messenger from the regions of death on an embassy to his five brethren, is reminded, that they have Moses and the prophets, and that if they hear not them, they would not be persuaded though one rose from the dead. The Bereans also are commended, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily; and our Saviour commands the Jews to search the Scriptures, seeing they are they which testify of him, enforcing the injunction by a question which shows what importance he attached to written records: "If ye believe not Moses' writings, how shall ye believe my words?" Again, the sufficiency of Scripture as a rule of faith, appears from

the properties which are attributed to it by the divine Spirit. It is described as "a sure word of prophecy," unto which we do well to give heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place. It is a "lamp unto the feet," by which we may be directed, as if enveloped in the shadows of night, in all the particular actions of our life; and it is a "light unto the path," by which we are guided, as by the sun during day, in our general walk and conversation. While such is its power to enlighten the eyes and make wise the simple, it possesses likewise a singular efficacy to move the will, to force convictions on the mind, to lay open to inspection the most hidden sources of our vices and errors, and savingly to awaken the conscience. It is no lifeless and feeble instrument of instruction, but is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Now, if the Scriptures do exhibit the whole extent of our relations to the Supreme Being, and the excellency and spirituality of his law; if they discover to us the alienation of our hearts from the fountain of life, and a supernatural remedy for our sins by a Redeemer; and if, by displaying the necessary consequences of our depravity, and the happy fruits of obedience to the way of salvation, which they disclose, they are fitted to draw us to that Redeemer by the cords of love, what need have we to seek farther, and dig amid the dusty traditions of the elders, and the antiquarian rubbish of the fathers, for another foundation to our faith? Such an undertaking may, at least, be deemed a work of supererogation, and, as such, may very properly be abandoned; since, besides that it can be of no benefit to ourselves, it cannot in any way advantage a more worthless neighbour. Certainly the Bible, laying down whatever men are bound to believe and practise, in all ages and countries of the world, is a perfect rule, and worthy of the universal King and Lawgiver; it is able to make us wise unto salvation, and thoroughly to furnish us unto all good works. We are confirmed in this persuasion, when we consider by what express terms its fulness and sufficiency are declared, and by what solemn denunciations any additions to it are forbidden. Just let us revert to the

two passages from which we have now quoted. Timothy is exhorted by the apostle Paul, to continue in the things which he had learned and had been assured of, knowing of whom he had learned them; and that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. And then follows that striking declaration:—"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In another place, the same Apostle says, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed." And the apostle John, having completed the canon of Scripture, by his Apocalypse, denounces this frightful curse (or rather the Saviour through him) against the person who may add thereto or diminish from it: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

While, for the reasons now assigned, we maintain a supreme reverence for the written Word of God, as the rule of our faith and manners here, as the law by which we shall at last be judged, and to which, as the final appeal in every question of a moral and religious nature, we reject not all ecclesiastical history, nor the records of ancient writers, respecting the usages and customs of the church. In passages of doubtful interpretation, we may often be assisted to the proper sense, by knowing how they were understood by the earliest Christians, and what practices they were meant either to reprobate or approve; and there are some doctrines which, as our Confession expresses it, "may be deduced from Scripture by good and necessary consequence," such as the Lord's day, baptism of infants, and singing of psalms in the public worship; and in these we are confirmed by constant church usage. In these cases, however, tradition

has no more weight with us than human opinion; our reference is ultimately to the law and to the testimony; and if it correspond not with the scope and spirit of this word, we hold that there is no light in it. Nothing but what is enforced by the express declaration of the Word, or by just consequence drawn from it, is considered necessary to christian faith and practice, though "there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed." These circumstances, or innocent customs, we neither reject because anciently practised, nor regard when the law of edification requires that they be omitted.

From the principles now laid down, we are enabled at once to determine, what is the province of reason and faith in reference to the Scriptures. A book having reached us, professing to have come from God, we are bound, in the first instance, to give a most religious attention to its evidence, in order to satisfy ourselves whether its claims are founded in truth; and, its divine origin once satisfactorily established, our next duty is, by the common rules of interpretation, to judge what is its import; in other words, what are the doctrines and precepts which it inculcates. This is the office of reason. The office of faith is, to receive with undoubting confidence, on the testimony of God, what has been reasonably proved to have been revealed by him; and this faith, with the saving understanding of the truths made known in his Word, our Confession, in accordance with the declarations of the Word itself, asserts to be from the inward work and illumination of the Holy Spirit.

The general conclusions which we draw from the preceding statements and reasonings, are these: That the Scriptures of Truth, penned by the writers under the direction and influence of the Holy Ghost, by them communicated to the Church, and transmitted to us by the constant universal tradition thereof, are the only rule of faith and manners; That it is sufficient for any man's salvation that he believe this rule—that he endeavour to believe it, in the true sense of it; And

that he who humbly, and without prejudice, sets himself to study it, as a guide to his steps, will find it so complete as to need no addition—so clear and certain as to require no external interpreter; in other words, that by thus studying and endeavouring to believe it, he will be secure from erring fundamentally and fatally. If we shall appear to have spent too much time in the proof of these very evident propositions, let it be considered, that did our Roman Catholic brethren concur with us in acknowledging them, the controversy between them and us would soon cease to disturb our harmony; since, for the distinguishing doctrines of their faith, no evidence can be alleged from the holy Scriptures. By the articles of their creed it is affirmed—and to find a shadow of proof for their professed doctrines, they are compelled to affirm—that the Scripture, of itself, is so imperfect a standard of faith, that without the supplement of unwritten tradition, it is insufficient to the attainment of salvation; and that its import is so obscure and uncertain, that without some infallible interpreter it is little better than a dead letter. Thus, they are at utter variance with us; first, as to the sufficiency of Scripture; secondly, as to its perspicuity and certainty.

I shall now support this representation of their tenets by quoting the words of their standards; but as the history of an error is often the best confutation of it, some account of these standards may first be introduced. By this course we shall at least guard ourselves against the charge of falsely, or erroneously, stating their sentiments—of taking the opinions of private persons for the authorized articles of their faith; for, notwithstanding the boasted unity of their church, and immutability of their creed, their doctors so temporize in the statement of their doctrines, and these doctrines are built on such different grounds—some being established by general synods, some founded on decrees of popes, and others entertained on tradition, custom, and common agreement—that even in matters of notable consideration, it is no unfrequent or trifling difficulty to discover what are truly their principles.

The origin of the Council of Trent may be traced to the Reformation. Pope Leo X., employing the power usurped by his predecessors, and suffering from the pain

of an exhausted exchequer, about the year 1516 sent abroad into all the kingdoms of Europe his collectors, with letters and bulls authorizing them to grant promises of pardon and salvation to all who were willing to pay for such commodities, and to establish public offices for the receipt of money raised by the licenses which they sold for eating eggs, milk, cheese, and flesh, on days of fasting. The Christian world was in a profound calm, and every heretic exterminated, when, in prosecution of the sale and defence of indulgences, Tetzel, a Dominican friar, arrived at Wittenberg. Before this time, Luther, an Augustine friar, a man of learned education, and naturally susceptible of serious impressions, having quitted the pursuit of the law, and happening to find a copy of the Bible, which lay neglected in the library of his monastery, had applied himself so closely and assiduously to the study of it, as to be thought qualified for the chair of theology in the university of that city. Incensed at the impudence and covetousness, and perhaps at the success, of the pardonmongers, he began to inveigh against their infamous traffic; the consequence of which step was to bestir the whole christian Church, and to shake the empire of superstition to its foundation. Luther's constant appeal was to the Scriptures, by which test he offered himself to be tried by a general council, but was refused. At length, the daylight increasing, and the darkness of Popery going down the sky, it became manifest, even to the adherents of the Church of Rome, that a public convention could no longer be delayed. After being repeatedly demanded of three successive Popes,—Leo X., Adrian, and Clement VII., who all excused themselves from granting the satisfaction required—it was summoned by Paul III., who sent out a bull of intimation in May, 1542. The professed design of the synod was to reunite the Church, so much divided by the progress of the reformed doctrines; but as the Pope's influence overruled all its decisions, it tended only to widen the breach, and render the difference irreconcilable. We are indebted to it, however, for an authorized version of the dogmas of the Catholic creed; for its decrees having been honoured with the papal confirmation, and all the faithful having been commanded inviolably to observe them, they have ever

since been held as a standard of the doctrines of the Latin Church.

The Tridentine Council, overruled by the influence we have now mentioned, were naturally indisposed to abandon the lucrative practices and superstitious observances which had crept into the Romish Church; so, unable to find any countenance or support for them in the ancient canon of the Holy Scriptures, they had recourse to two expedients, by which they might protect their errors and abuses, without appearing altogether to discard the written Word. They determined, in the first place, to extend the rule, so that their corruptions might take shelter under its shade, by adding to it, as of equal authority, an innumerable multitude of private, unproved, and unwritten traditions, together with the Apocrypha, of all which the Pope claims to be the custodian; and thus, instead of squaring their faith by the rule, they framed the rule to suit their faith. Secondly, to make all safe, they decreed that no man should dare to interpret or expound Scripture in another sense than the holy Mother Church hath held, and doth hold, whose right it is to fix the interpretation of the holy Scriptures; and this Church, be it understood, to which so important a trust is committed, is either the Pope, or an ecumenical council, or council and Pope conjointly: for the high Romanists, denominated *Transalpines*, contend for the personal infallibility of the Pope; while the low Romanists, distinguished by the name *Cisalpines*, are so far persuaded of the infallibility of a general council, as to maintain, that for heresy or schism the Pope may be lawfully deposed by it. Such are the differences of opinion that exist even in the bosom of the holy, the uniform, the unerring, and immutable Mother Church.

But it is time to justify these representations by a reference to the decisions of the synod whose history we have now given. In regard to traditions, the decree of the Council of Trent contains in substance, "That the synod, aiming to preserve the purity of the Gospel, promised by the prophets, published by Christ, and preached by the Apostles, as the fountain of all truth and discipline of manners, (which truth and discipline are contained in the books and unwritten traditions, received by the Apostles from the mouth

of Christ, and dictated to them by the Holy Ghost, and passed from one to another,) doth, according to the example of the fathers, receive with equal reverence and pious affection, all the books of the Old and New Testaments, and the traditions belongiug to faith and manners, as proceeding from the mouth of Christ, or dictated by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church." Then, setting down a catalogue of the books, the decree concludes, "If any one will not receive, as sacred and canonical, all the books, with all their parts, as in the Catholic Church they are accustomed to be read, and are contained in the old Latin vulgate edition, and shall wittingly and purposely despise the acknowledged traditions, let him be accursed." In regard to the interpretation of Scripture, the Council, in its decree respecting the use of the sacred book, ordains, "That for the purpose of bridling licentious wits, no person, confiding in his own skill in matters of faith and morals pertaining to edification of Christian doctrine, and twisting Sacred Scripture to his own acceptations, shall dare to interpret the Scripture against the sense which has been, and is, held by the holy Mother Church, (to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the sacred writings,) or against the unanimous consent of the fathers. That if any should contravene this decree, they should be declared by the ordinaries, and punished according to the statutes."

Such are the decisions of the Tridentine Fathers. It may be interesting now to hear some of the learned Catholic doctors, and we subjoin the reasoning of Bellarmine. This man was an Italian Jesuit, who flourished in the sixteenth century, and was one of the ablest controversialists of his time. In 1599, he was honoured with a cardinal's hat, in reward, no doubt, of his valuable services to the Pope, whose cause no one ever defended to greater advantage; and yet he had the misfortune to incur the serious displeasure of Sixtus V., by not insisting, in one of his works, that the power which Jesus Christ gave to his viceregent was direct, but only indirect. The name of this writer is to be met with in almost all the works which appeared in defence of the principles of the Reformation during the first half of the seventeenth century, and even much

later. As an antagonist he seems to have been regarded as of gigantic strength and stature by Protestant divines; and we may well apply to him what Warburton says of Hobbes, "The press sweats with controversy; and every young churchman militant would try his arms in thundering on his steel cap." At his death, he gave proof of his Roman devotion, by leaving one half of his soul to the Virgin Mary, and the other half to Jesus Christ. The sentiments of this author respecting the rule of faith, while they coincide exactly with the decrees of the Council of Trent, are accompanied with somewhat like argument. His words are, "Apostolic traditions unwritten, have the same force as written apostolic traditions;" and he assigns as a reason, "The Word of God is not alike, nor does it possess any authority because written on pieces of parchment, but because it has proceeded from God, either immediately, or through the medium of the Apostles," a very sound observation, we admit, if the Apostles were now living, so that we could take the tradition from their mouths, or if it were proved by satisfactory historical evidence that it had ever come from them; meantime, they being long since gone to God, we shall trust rather to the authentic writings they have left us, than to man's treacherous memory, and his corruptible love of the truth. The question regarding the interpretation of Scripture, Bellarmine resolves into this, "Where does the Holy Spirit reside? For," he continues, "we think that his Spirit, although it be often granted to many private men, yet is assuredly to be found in the Church, that is, in a council of bishops confirmed by the Pope, or in the Pope in conjunction with a council of the other pastors;"—which opinion of the learned Jesuit is directly at variance with the declaration of our Lord—"No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." A few lines farther on, Bellarmine has the following assertion, "Here in general we affirm, that the church, that is, the Pope, with a council in which all Catholics convene, is judge of the true sense of Scripture, and of all controversies."

These dogmas, inculcated upon the people, render it easy to account for the popish dislike of the Sacred Scripture, and their superstitious value for traditions—for their being better skilled in the observances of lent and ember-week, in the worship of relics, images, and saints and in the doctrine of purgatory, than in the vital doctrines of man's misery and salvation. Indeed, some of their doctors have not feared to recommend frequent declamations against Scripture, and that, with rhetorical artifices, its darkness, lameness, and blemishes, should be complained of; while, on the other hand, the necessity, authority, and certainty of unwritten tradition, should be strenuously contended for, and mainly urged for the confutation of heretics. Others, again, in their violent hostility to the instruction of the common people, have characterized our English translations as damnable, and described the unlicensed and unlimited perusal of the Word of God as an invention of the devil.

We proceed, however, to examine their standard of divine truth more at large, with the view of stating some leading considerations which may be borne in the memory. And we would call you, first of all, to observe how artfully the Roman system is contrived to retain the people in spiritual bondage, and with what perfect consistency its priesthood inculcates the necessity of implicit faith, that is, faith without evidence, or even in opposition to it. The disciples of one of the Grecian schools of philosophy, we are informed, were subjected to the purgatory discipline of five years of silence, a judicious expedient to repress impertinent curiosity, and prevent the inconvenience of contradiction. But in the Roman school of Christianity, the pupils are required not only to restrain speech, but to suspend the exercise of their reason, during the term of their natural lives; for of what use is Scripture evidence, or argument, to him who has come under an obligation to adhere to the doctrines and decisions of the Church, whatever they may be, and to forego his own opinions and judgment in all matters of religion? Her teachers even are not ashamed to admit the correctness of this inference. The language of Dr. Norris, principal of Stonylhurst, and of Dr. Doyle in Ireland, has been, that "Members of the Romish Church cannot

consistently enter into an examination of doctrinal points with members of a Protestant Church; because all doctrinal points between them and the Reformed were fully discussed and finally set at rest by the Council of Trent, the decisions of which are to be revered as the dictates of the Holy Ghost." *Rome has spoken, and the controversy is at an end.* The same powerful voice which thus suddenly terminates all argument, compels every Catholic to decline all farther investigation into the grounds of his belief; since no conclusion can be more evident than this, that if we allow the claim of any Church to be the infallible interpreter of the sacred writings, the sacred writings must inevitably lose their value in our eyes, and cease to be deemed worthy of examination; for why search the Scripture, in compliance with our Saviour's command, if after our search we must at last receive, as the articles of our creed, the decrees of him who has usurped the authority of supreme judge of the mind of the Spirit? The tenets of the Romanists in regard to tradition, tend in like manner to sacrifice christian liberty to the intrigues of a corrupt faction; and at once to degrade human reason, and lessen the estimation in which the sacred record ought to be held. For who are the keepers of the divine and apostolic traditions? The Church. On whose authority are they delivered as such? On the authority of the Church; which, as we have seen, some understand to centre in an ecumenical council, some in the Pope and a council together, and others in the Pope alone, who is thus made an epitome epitomized. The obvious consequence is to lead to a right of usurpation on the part of his Holiness, his cardinals, and bishops, over the consciences of Christians, to betray the Church into their hands, and render it subservient to their own private ends and interests. This tendency may be made obvious by the following simple and familiar illustration:—Suppose that after king John, at the instant solicitations and demands of his barons, had granted the *Great Charter* to his subjects, he had constituted a court, claiming on its behalf to be the infallible interpreter of the terms of the charter, and asserting the charter to be incomplete without the addition of such traditions as the court might think fit to append to it as of equal authority.

is it not manifest that, such claims being admitted, the charter would cease to be a rule to private individuals, that its authority would be superseded by that of the court, its pretended interpreter, and that it would be vain for any one to appeal to it, when he thought the privileges it conferred infringed; since, however simple its language, he might be told, that the supreme court, in accordance with the unanimous consent of the fathers, explained it differently from him, or had preserved some unwritten tradition, to be received with the same reverence and pious affection, with which the import of the charter must be made to coincide. Now, the conduct we have supposed in this hypothetical case, has been exactly the conduct of the Court of Rome; and thus it is, that the great charter of Christian freedom is rendered null and void to the members of the Latin Church, not by any solemn repeal or abrogation, but by a usurped power on the part of their teachers to add to it what they please, and to interpret it as they please.

It is, then, with the consistency of system that the Roman Church requires implicit belief and obedience from those who belong to her communion; and since her rule of faith necessarily leads to so irrational a doctrine, a powerful objection may be urged against it from its consequences, on a similar principle to that which our Saviour instructs us to apply to false prophets, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." If Christianity be a scheme (as we hold it to be) capable of standing the strictest scrutiny of reason, that rule of faith cannot be scriptural, the reception of which involves, that we shall deem ourselves obligated to believe at command, to forego the use of our judgment in forming our creed, and to submit to a spiritual despotism more degrading than any which can be claimed merely over our persons. And as it cannot be scriptural, so neither can it be rational. In point of fact, implicit faith is an impossibility with men who have been once accustomed to the unfettered exercise of their faculties. The restlessness of thought, once awakened, cannot be lulled asleep. In consequence of those natural and unalienable rights which belong to the human mind, and which, although willing, it cannot resign, it is put beyond our ability to dispose of our convictions as we can dispose of our goods and chattels; and the

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power to enslave our own understanding reaches no farther than to a hypocritical pretence of opinions which we do not in truth hold. When Henry VIII., for example, having denied obedience to Rome, and assumed in his own person, the authority of Pope over England, issued his celebrated edict, commanding the real presence of the true and natural body and blood of Christ, under the kinds of bread and wine, to be believed throughout all England, it was manifestly impossible for any man to yield such belief who found the evidence of reason and sense to be opposed to the doctrine commanded. In such circumstances, the only alternative left was to dissemble and equivocate, or to submit to the punishment of heretics; or, to quote another instance, when Tetzel and Eckius found that by arguing on rational grounds they were not likely to convince the judgment and resolve the doubts of Martin Luther, as to the scriptural nature of the doctrine of indulgences, did they advance a single step toward the proof of their position to any intelligent inquirer after truth, by having recourse to the Pope's authority, and insisting, that he not being able to err in matters of religion, and having published indulgences to all the faithful, it was, therefore, necessary to believe them as an article of faith? We cannot avoid remarking how much these absurdities, this entire reliance on human authority, and total disregard of reason and evidence, have tended to give a show of justice to the accusations advanced by infidels against our holy religion, and to the taunts and reproaches they are in the practice of throwing out against its appointed guardians. Dr. Tindal, a man notorious for his hatred of Christianity, represents divines in all ages as, "for the most part, mortal enemies to the exercise of reason and even below brutes;" a sentiment to be expected from a man who had found christian divines too acute and learned to be discomposed by his sceptical subtilties, but to which, it is to be regretted, the absolute tyranny exercised by the Roman priesthood over the understanding and conscience of their flocks has given too much countenance.

Before passing from this branch of the subject, it will be proper to take notice of a defensive argument sometimes employed by Catholics; and this is the more necessary on account of the disrepute into which creeds and confessions have lately fallen

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with certain parties, more unfriendly, it is to be suspected, to the doctrines which they contain than to the practice of methodizing our religious principles, since they can very well bear with compositions that agree with their own sentiments. The argument is, that although the reformed churches profess a supreme regard for the authority of Scripture, yet each of them, by claiming to decide what doctrines are scriptural, and requiring of her members an admission of the doctrines thus decided on her authority, virtually substitutes her authority for that of Scripture. Now, in order to detect the fallacy which lurks in this reasoning, let it be considered, that for the purposes of edification and administration of religious ordinances, it is indispensable that Christians should be united into a regular and orderly society. There can be no order among a multitude without confederation, still less the successful prosecution of a common object; and it is equally impossible that a community can hang together without confraternity and friendship. Division necessarily brings with it confusion and dissolution; and unity is the soul which gives life and vigour to every society. Hence the necessity that the members of a christian communion should be consociated by some common bond, by mutual consent to certain principles, forming the terms of communion. And hence, again, arises the necessity of some test or symbol of faith, by which a church may ascertain any one's fitness to be admitted within her pale. It is to supply this desideratum that every well-regulated church has drawn up an exposition of that form of sound words which it deems itself obliged to hold fast, and which it appeals to, not for the proof of doctrine, but to prove the agreement in respect to the doctrine of her members and ministers. The appeal still lies open to the Holy Scriptures, and the Church condemns no one as a heretic who differs from her in her view of divine truth; so that, whoever adheres to her communion, by the very act of adherence declares her confession of faith to be the confession of *his* faith; and her claim to authority resolves itself into nothing more than a public expression of the conviction of her individual fallible members in the soundness of their belief.

Besides, while Scripture commands the preaching of the Word, it prescribes no particular method; and confessions and creeds, therefore, may be reckoned but a

peculiar mode of instruction, possessing the advantage of presenting divine truths in a compendious form, and as they are mutually connected and subordinated. They are not put in the place of Scripture any more than catechisms or homilies, but for proof of the doctrines set forth in them, the reader is continually referred to Scripture; and he who does not think these of a scriptural character, is at liberty, with perfect impunity, possibly with profit, to leave the Church whose doctrines they are.

With the observations now made on the subject of the Catholic rule of faith, viewed in both its branches, we must at present content ourselves. The remarks which follow shall be confined to the doctrine of traditions.

The first and most obvious ground of objection to tradition as an historical medium, is its great uncertainty and liability to corruption, whereby it is rendered next to impossible, in most cases, to satisfy any intelligent inquirer that the narratives transmitted by it are authentic and genuine. We acknowledge our sense of this uncertainty and corruptibility in the ordinary transactions of life, and in matters of common history, by the prudent hesitation with which we receive details which rest merely on hearsay, and for which we have not the authority of the original narrator and witness. So frequently are we imposed on with false reports in our intercourse with the world—and even truth, by passing through various hands is so apt to be blended with error, and embellished with fictitious circumstances, that there is little wonder we are thus cautious and sceptical in regard to rumours, however current, of which we have not investigated the origin and credibility. Suppose, for example, that, having been a witness to any extraordinary occurrence, I should feel desirous to convey an account of it to some friend at a distance, and that, instead of my account being transmitted in writing, it should be passed verbally through the medium of six or seven messengers, there is every chance that when it would reach my friend in his remote retirement, it would no longer be a narrative of what I had seen or heard, but a motley mixture, produced by a treacherous memory in one, by liveliness of imagination and love of exaggeration in another, or by the censoriousness of a third, fond of interweaving his own reflections with every tale. More especially would the truth be endangered

if the narrative affected in any way the *interests* of the persons intrusted with the transmission of it. Some dishonest knave, perhaps, might not hesitate entirely to corrupt it, or two of them might combine to give it a sinister interpretation, in order to serve their own selfish ends. Thus it is manifest that every successive person to whom the tradition is committed increases its uncertainty, and the risk of its being vitiated; and hence the inestimable advantage of writing, which is capable of conveying our personal testimony to all ages and countries, and leaves to tradition nothing more than the genuineness of the inscribed record.

But it is unnecessary to have recourse to any hypothetical case in order to illustrate the present objection. Romanists concur with Protestants in the belief, that when man was created, God communicated to him a revelation of his will, which, after the Flood, received, along with several additions, a remarkable confirmation, and was committed to tradition, to be by that means passed from generation to generation. The history of this revelation among the Gentiles, by whom it was not preserved in writing, is known to all; how, in the course of time, it became more and more corrupted by idolatrous admixtures, and was so metamorphosed by the mythologizing humour of poets, philosophers, and historians, as to be scarcely discoverable under the strange and mystic disguise with which they invested it. To turn to another instance—will any Romanist undertake to give a relation of any of those unrecorded acts to which the apostle John refers when he says, “Many other things did Jesus, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books which should be written.” Here was “ample room and verge enough” for trying the virtue of tradition; yet how sadly deficient is our information regarding any one of the innumerable circumstances alluded to by the evangelist? Is it not plain from this, that the Scriptures have been written for the very purpose of preventing the corruption and oblivion inevitably consequent on oral tradition?

For what purpose, otherwise, did Jehovah, in ordaining the law of the Old Testament, engrave the decalogue in stone with his own finger? For what purpose did he command Moses, and the prophets who succeeded him, to write in a book the

revelations which he vouchsafed them, if not to intimate the necessity that sacred truths should be transmitted by a less corruptible medium than verbal tradition? And can it be believed that things necessary to salvation would be left by an all-wise being to be established by a species of proof so uncertain, and so liable to be vitiated, that it would not be admitted in evidence by any court of law in this country? The Evangelist Luke, indeed, assigns as the reason for committing to writing his account of our Lord's life that those he wrote to might know the *certainly* of what they had been instructed in. The Evangelist John also, in the conclusion of his gospel, tells us, that though Christ did many other things which were not written in that book, yet the facts recorded “are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name.” Strange, therefore, would it be, if the evangelists and Apostles, having been divinely directed to commit to imperishable memorials the truths of the Christian doctrine, for the benefit of all succeeding generations, and writing with the assistance, and under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, should have happened to omit any particulars; stranger still, if they should have taught one system of doctrines to the Churches in writing, and whispered, at the same time, a contradictory appendix, to be conveyed by word-of-mouth to prosperity.

In this, then, have Christians their security, that the Bible has come down to them with such proofs of genuineness and authenticity as no other book possesses; but this Romish value for private and improved tradition would rest our faith on a basis on which no historian of credit would undertake to certify the most trifling occurrence.

The above reasonings and facts fully warrant the conclusion, that until the successors of the anathematizing doctors of Trent give us a perfect catalogue of the traditions which they hold to be divine and apostolical, and trace them up to apostolical origin through an unbroken line of narrators, of whom no one was deceived, nor wished to deceive, their pretended right to give authority to unwritten traditions can be deemed nothing else than the assumption of a power to corrupt the truth by mingling with it their own fables and opinions, as these may be found to suit their designs of

worldly ambition, and as circumstances may admit of their successful promulgation. The condition here required, it is important to observe, they are by their principles obliged to fulfil; because, while the Romish Church claims infallibility in matters of faith, it has neglected to advance the same claim in matters of fact. Now, the decisions of the Council of Trent, are rested on an alleged fact, namely—that the traditions which it determined to be obligatory, and which are pleaded in vindication, among other doctrines, of transubstantiation, purgatory, the seven sacraments, invocation of saints, worship of God in an unknown tongue, and the communion in one kind—that these traditions were received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ, or dictated to them by the Holy Ghost, and have, in every age since, been preserved and acknowledged in the Catholic Church. Consequently, the Tridentine Fathers were bound to substantiate, by historical evidence, the fact here alleged, before the superstructure of doctrine and practice which they have built on it can be admitted; since their infallibility extended not to facts, but to doctrine only. And if any Romanist feel disposed now to undertake the task which the Council of Trent should have fulfilled, as a preparatory labour to the promulgation of their doctrinal decrees, let his evidence be brought from the writers of the first three centuries, whose testimony alone can be received in proof of the *apostolic origin* of the traditions. It is to no purpose to adduce copious quotations from the fathers of the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, when religion, it is argued, had become corrupted by idolatrous admixtures. The thing to be established, we repeat, is the *divine and apostolic origin*; and no testimony can be conclusive on this point, unless it form part of a chain of evidence reaching to the age of the Apostles themselves. Now, on mounting to this early, and only-sufficient, evidence, we find the fact, so far from favouring, directly to discomfit the pious reverence and affection which the Latin Church professes for tradition; we find, not only no proof to establish the apostolic origin of those traditions on which so many of her practices and doctrines are founded, but the clearest proof, that in the first and purest times of Christianity, nothing was deemed essential to salvation but what is

propounded in the written Word. Ireneus, whom the Romanists even claim as an advocate for their supplemental tradition, is an unexceptionable witness, that in the second century, the writings of the Apostles were regarded as the sole source from which christian doctrine and practice are to be learned. “The disposition of our salvation,” says he, “we know not through any other persons than those by whom the Gospel has come to us; which then, indeed, they themselves orally preached; but which afterwards, according to the will of God, they traditionally handed down to us, in the *written word*, as the future basis and column of our faith.” Tertullian, likewise of the second century, writing against Hermogenes, says,—“Let him show that it is written; if it be not written, let him fear that we which is destined to those who either add to, or diminish from, the written word.” Even so late as the fourth century, the great Augustine subscribes to the same sentiment,—“Let us not hear,” he says, “this *I* say, this *you* say; but let us hear, Thus saith the Lord. These are God’s books, to whose authority we on both sides consent, and which we on both sides believe. There let us seek the Church, there discuss our cause. Let those things be removed from amongst us which we allege, one against another, from any other source than the divine canonical books.” Thus unanimously do we find the early fathers consenting to the principle, that the final appeal should be *to the law and to the testimony*; thus expressly does the only tradition which can be admitted in the debate, as historically substantiated, condemn the decision by which the Tridentine Fathers sought to give authority to that confused chaos of fabulous legends, on which their unscriptural practices are founded. Ours, then, is the old as well as the true religion—if, indeed, the old religion is to be determined by the old rule. It is a favourite question with Romanists, which they seem to think sufficient to pose the proudest intellectual power, “Where was your religion before Luther?” To which we may confidently reply, “Where theirs never was, and never will be found, namely, in the Bible”—a rule, we may add, of much longer standing than councils, canons, constitutions, or traditions of men, or even the bulls of the Pope himself.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. DAVID RUNCIMAN, Edinburgh.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN JOHNSTON, Edinburgh.

ANNUAL SERMON AGAINST THE ERRORS AND CORRUPTIONS OF
THE CHURCH OF ROME ;

Preached by the Rev. JOHN ROXBURGH, A. M.—Concluded.

DID our time permit, it would not be difficult, in farther elucidation of the argument, to trace a striking resemblance between the manner in which the Jewish doctors of old made void, by their traditions, the commandments of God, and the manner in which the Romish doctors have, by the same means, vitiated or entirely superseded some of the most important christian ordinances. The Scribes and Pharisees complained in our Lord's time, that his disciples transgressed the *traditions of the elders* : so they called them, because they pretended that they were delivered by God to Moses, when on the Mount ; by Moses communicated to Aaron and his sons ; by them handed down to the seventy elders who formed the great Sanhedrim, or chief council of the Jewish nation ; and by the elders, in continued succession down to their own days. But although they claimed for their Pharisaic traditions a divine origin, our Saviour did not fail to give the true genealogy of them : " Why," he says, " do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men ? " In like manner would the priests of Rome fain persuade us, that all those ecclesiastical traditions with which their canonic theology abounds, were dropped from the mouth of Christ, conveyed from the Apostles, and so handed down by the Church through successive ages ; though, when we come to examine their apostolic origination, we find them not a whit less spurious than their fellows of the Mishna and Gemara. The Latin Church, again, dignifies its traditions with all kinds of illustrious titles, adorning them with the epithets *divine* and *apostolical*, and professing to regard them with

the same *reverence* and *pious affection* as Scripture itself. Just so did the Pharisees and their successors, the Talmudists, adorn and dignify their oral law, reckoning it the soul of the written law, from which the latter derived life and sense ; and, like the Popish divines, deeming it a much greater sin to break a tradition of the Church, than to violate a commandment of God. The Tridentine Fathers commanded that the canonic traditions, however contradictory they might be to evidence and common sense, should be received with blind and implicit submission, and pronounced an anathema on whoever should despise them. In this also they followed the example of their archetypes, the ancient Pharisees and the modern Rabbins, who hold it the blackest sin to recede from the words of the elders, and abhor as little better than devils those who reject them. It is indeed a very natural expedient to claim a divine authority for those merely human inventions or fables to which we wish to give currency, and accordingly we find it practised by pagans, as well as among the ancient Jews and modern Christians. There is nothing dearer to man than to exercise dominant influence over the opinions and fortunes of his fellow-men ; but a powerful obstacle to success is the repugnance of mankind to human control. The simplest method of overcoming this, is to give forth our dogmas as delivered by divine tradition, or proceeding from divine inspiration ; by which device, though we ascribe the honour to God, we virtually retain the power in our own hands ; yea, we confirm our authority by deriving it from heaven, and so operating on the superstitious feelings of our race. It was nothing else than this prudential consideration which led Numa Pompilius,

Lycurgus, and Solon, and the several other great founders of laws and worship in ancient times, to pretend inspiration, or the response of some oracle, for the institutes which they delivered; and could the Church of Rome consolidate her influence without a similar aid, she would soon cease, we suspect, to insult the reason and common sense of mankind by asking us to receive as of divine origin, the legendary fables with which she deludes her votaries.

In conclusion, it may be proper to take notice of two arguments which Romish divines sometimes urge in their defence—the only two which appear to have even a superficial appearance of reasoning. The first is, that Moses having derived from tradition his knowledge of the antediluvian world, and of the events that occurred till long after the flood, tradition must either be deemed satisfactory historical evidence, or we must be under the necessity of rejecting the account given by Moses of all transactions of which he had not personal knowledge. To this we simply reply, that supposing the transactions referred to not to have been previously entered into any certain records, to be so preserved to the memory of posterity, (and there is no evidence that this was the case,) we possess, in regard to the traditions authenticated by Moses, that rational evidence which is so remarkably wanting to prove the certain and uninterrupted transmission of the Romish traditions. There was an undoubted, unmixed, lineal descent from father to son in the Jewish nation, they being prohibited all mixture by marriage with the families of another people; and hence they were secured against the chief cause of confusion in the tradition of other nations—namely, the frequent alliances and intermarriages with foreign families. Thus, in the time of Moses, it was no difficult matter to trace their lineal descent as far up as the deluge, and even up to Adam. Noah was living in some part of Adam's time; Shem, the son of Noah, was probably living in some part of Jacob's: and how easily the general tradition of the ancient history might be continued thence to the time of Moses, will appear when we consider, that the number of the families agreeing in it were increased—that they were incorporated by the common bond of religion—that their interest lay in preserving the tradition entire and uncorrupted, for their hopes

of possessing Canaan, and their title to it, depended on the promise made to Abraham, their forefather—and withal, when we consider the length of men's lives in those early ages.

Another answer to the argument is, that Moses wrought the most undeniable miracles in attestation of his divine mission and the authority of his law. And it would be absurd to suppose, that the Almighty would employ any one as an instrument in making a revelation of his will to mankind, and would permit him to mingle with this revelation a motley mixture of opinions, fables, and legends, without any note of distinction. When the Latin Church can furnish evidence of this kind, and as well substantiated, for their traditions, it will then be time to inquire into their apostolic origin.

The second argument of the Romish divines is not more valid than the one to which we have just replied. They say, "You admit the Scripture to be the word of God, on the authority of tradition—why not receive narrations, institutions, and ordinances on the same authority?" The fallacy here may be detected by putting a parallel case. We admit, for example, the narrative of Livy, the Roman historian, to be his on the authority of uninterrupted tradition or consent. Shall we therefore receive, with equal reverence, those books of his which have come down to us, and the events and circumstances which tradition might assure us were recorded in the books that have perished? This answer supposes the Romanists correct in the premises from which their objection sets out. But, secondly, we deny the correctness of the premises. We do not receive the written word of God on the limited traditionary authority on which the Fathers of the Tridentine council have established so large a portion of the Latin creed: nor is the testimony of the Church the only reason of our believing the Bible. In the first place, we receive it, because we have the consent of the *whole* Church to it, and have had, ever since it was published to the world. And, in the second place, we believe it, because, in addition to the unanimous and uninterrupted testimony of the Church, we have all those evidences of an internal kind which are furnished by the majesty of its style, the purity of its doctrines, the harmony of its parts, and its general scope

and design. But we have already illustrated this point so fully, as to render it unnecessary farther to enlarge in reply to the objection.

We have thus completed, then, as was designed, a comparative view of the Protestant and Catholic rules of faith, of their evidence and practical tendencies. It may safely be left to each individual to draw the conclusions warranted by the previous discussion; and if, in the progress of it, we have forgotten the caution, or seriousness of expression, with which the subject should be treated, our error must be ascribed to the eagerness inspired by argument, and which, regarding only the position to be proved, overlooks for the time the feelings and prejudices of the parties concerned in the controversy. Notwithstanding the length to which our remarks have already extended, we cannot dismiss the subject without a few observations, justified, it appears to us, by the occasion.

Of late years the tide of popular feeling has set in with unwonted force in favour of the members of the Roman Church—a result, perhaps, chiefly to be attributed to the unnecessary severities by which they had long been crushed, and the sympathy which never fails to be excited in behalf of the oppressed. In so far as this disposition to conciliation has for its object to meliorate their social and political condition, with security to our Protestant institutions, no charitable Protestant can object to it; but in such changes in our national affairs as have been lately witnessed, it is to be feared, lest a spirit of mistaken liberality, which may be unaccompanied with much danger in civil transactions, should extend to religion, and manifest itself in concessions at the expense of truth and of principle. Nothing, indeed, is more to be dreaded amongst us than that mawkish liberalism, inconsistent with all greatness and manliness of character, which holds no fixed religious tenets, and affects to consider it a matter of indifference what system of faith, if any, prevail throughout the land. And is it not to a tendency to some such fastidious and fallacious aversion to controversy, that we must in a great part ascribe the disappointment of those friends to a scriptural creed, who were induced to lend assistance to the removal of Catholic disabilities, in the hope, that political hostility being

tamed, or altogether subdued, our Catholic brethren would be brought to listen to reason and argument? Why, you cannot speak of argument but you are reminded, and *that* by professing Protestants, of the asperities of religious animosity: you cannot propose any measure for withdrawing the veil of ignorance which darkens their minds, without exposing yourself to be reproached with bigotry and intolerance. Alas! how sadly has the lofty and uncompromising spirit of our forefathers deserted their beloved country, when it is denounced intolerant and unchristian any longer to contend for that uncorrupted, unmutilated truth for which alone they thought it worthy to live!—when their degenerate descendants, slighting the objects for which they fought and died, and the blessings which their intrepidity has secured, are countenancing the base surrender of Protestant principles, and leaguings in unholy alliances to demolish the structures reared by their labours, and cemented by their blood! We may rest assured, that the Latin clergy view these attempts, and our mutual dissensions, with the utmost complacency; and that our concessions, in deference to their religious antipathies and partialities, are met with no desire to conciliate by similar sacrifices. While we are engaged with foolish questions which gender strifes, they are industriously disseminating the poison of their errors among our common people, seeking to perplex and proselyte them by those false reasonings which they are so well qualified to dress out in a specious and imposing form. One cannot reflect without a feeling of patriotic pride on the attitude which, in these circumstances, our national churches have preserved, and how true they have continued to the principles and spirit of the Reformation, which are in fact the principles and spirit of the Gospel. In a manner not unworthy of those days when, terrible as an army with banners, she led the van in the victorious march of gospel liberty, and formed the strongest bulwark of the Protestant faith, have many of the most eminent divines of the Church of England been encountering the well-trained defenders of Romish error, both foreign and domestic, and attacking them in their strongholds; nor in our own poorer and still purer Church have we witnessed less honourable or vigorous efforts to resist the surrender

of the truth of God to the demands of a priesthood, whom nothing will satisfy short of undisputed ascendancy. Need we say, that we refer to her uniform consistency in the defence of scriptural education, and the circulation of the pure, uncorrupted, and uncuttailed Bible? It is an advantage, indeed, peculiar to an establishment, founded, as ours is, on a footing that renders it independent at once of the government and the people, that, removed beyond the sphere of popular impulses, it is fitted to lead public opinion or to control it when moved by sudden and dangerous influences, instead of being obliged, for the preservation of a precarious existence, to follow it like the frail bark towed by the nobler ship, through the foam and the agitation which it leaves behind it in its track.

Another reflection is suggested, when we consider how strongly the errors of the Romish Church retain their hold on the minds of her people, notwithstanding the frequent and triumphant refutation of them. It is a striking illustration of the views presented by Scripture of our natural aversion to the light of truth; and how sadly is it calculated, at the same time, to damp our hopes of the future progress of knowledge and undefiled religion! Doubtless, the Roman system is ingeniously devised to keep its place where once it has obtained possession: for, besides that it employs ignorance as a means of spiritual bondage, and instructs its disciples that there is no alternative between implicit faith in its decrees and total irreligion, it is so fitly framed together and compacted, that if one part gives way, the whole fabric crumbles into ruins. Admit, for example, but of one error in the entire scheme, and you

destroy the claim to infallibility—and who can predict when the spirit of reform will be allayed which you will thus have evoked? The consequence is, that the first movement of the inquiring mind conducts it into a region of darkness and mystery to which it can perceive no termination; and, frightened and bewildered at the prospect, it too often takes refuge in a blind and uninquisitive devotion to all the doctrines instilled into it by its earliest teachers. Where the mind, undaunted by the fear of being made to waver in its first faith, pursues its inquiries to their legitimate consequences, the issue is not less to be deplored: the whole edifice of its religious knowledge being unsettled, a daring and hopeless scepticism is generally the result. While it thus happens that ignorance is the inseparable companion, or infidelity the fruit, of the belief in which Romanists are educated, let us be thankful that our faith neither requires the services of the one, nor conducts into the labyrinths of the other. Whatever may be said by men to whom religion is a matter of indifference, we may rest assured, that the progress of society in virtue and liberty must mainly depend on the progress of this faith, which alone can sanctify and emancipate the soul. Our first duty therefore is, to hold fast the sound doctrine that has been bequeathed us; and our second, to extend by every lawful means the knowledge and influence of it among our countrymen, who have the first claim upon us, and then among our fellow-men all over the world. Having received a more sure word of prophecy, let us diligently give heed to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE AFTERNOON OF SABBATH, 20TH JANUARY, 1833,

By the Rev. DAVID RUNCIMAN,

Minister of Hope Park Chapel, Edinburgh.

“Quench not the spirit.”—1 THESS. v. 19.

THE language of Scripture is frequently taken from objects of the material world, in accommodation to the weakness of our nature, to give us more correct and enlarged

ideas of things spiritual and divine. But for this, our conceptions of many of the most important subjects must have been much more limited than they really are;

and dark and mysterious as many of them are with this advantage, what must they have been without it? The doctrine of the Holy Spirit's influence on the human mind is one of those points which would have been altogether unintelligible, had it not been brought before us by comparisons and allusions to objects with which we are all familiarly acquainted. Many and striking are the figures employed to give us proper conceptions of this important and interesting subject, and there is no figure more frequently employed than that of fire. "Thus saith the Lord," by Jeremiah, "is not my word like fire?" that is, when made effectual by the Holy Spirit. In regard to the effect of affliction, when sanctified by the Holy Spirit, the Lord says, by the same prophet, "Behold, I will melt them, and try them;" "I will refine them," says Zechariah, "as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." John the Baptist testified of the Messiah, "He that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire;" and, on the day of Pentecost, when there was a miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, we are informed that "there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire;" and it is obvious that it is in allusion to the same metaphor, when the Apostle uses the phraseology of the text, "Quench not the Spirit." This figure is peculiarly fitted to give us an idea of the operation of the Spirit of God on the mind and heart of man—not, indeed, of the nature of his operations, but of their effects; and it will aid us very materially in illustration of this subject, to make a few remarks on the analogy which subsists between the operation of the Spirit of God and fire. The analogy is peculiarly striking. Does fire enlighten—remove the darkness with which we are surrounded, and send forth a flame, so as to render visible all the objects that come within the reach of its blaze? So does the Spirit. When he enlightens the mind, the understanding; formerly full of darkness, is affected with a flood of heavenly light; objects, formerly not seen at all, or seen through a medium of mistiness, are then seen with some measure of their glory; the person obtains a new view, not merely of the character of Jehovah, but also of his own situation as a sinner, and of the great means provided for his deliverance. Again, does fire soften—render

the rod to which it is applied capable of being moulded into every form which the hand of the ingenious mechanic may wish? So does the Spirit soften the heart of man, that was formerly hardened and obdurate. Thus, while men were formerly insensible to the evil of sin, and so petrified that this abominable thing made no impression upon them, they are now tenderly sensitive to its sinfulness, and shrink from its commission; while formerly they were so impenetrable to divine things that they could hear of a Saviour's love without interest, they are now sensible of its wondrous extent, and are constrained by its power. Does fire awaken—call into action, many of the languid principles of matter? So acts the Spirit. He communicates a principle of vitality to the soul dead in trespasses and sins. As in the valley of dry bones, when the Spirit breathed upon them, they began to feel, and at length, instead of scattered skeletons, there appeared living men: so, when the Spirit operates on the soul, there are imparted life and motion to all its knowledge, faculties, and feelings; and, where formerly there was nothing but spiritual death, there are now spiritual life, and health, and activity. Again, does fire warm—impart heat and comfort in the season of winter? So does the Spirit warm by His genial influence those cold affections, and kindles them into a flame of heavenly life. God and the Saviour, who had formerly no share in their hearts, are now objects of their love and delight. Their perfections are admired; their favour is felt to be precious; their presence to be heaven on earth. Does fire purify—cast off the dross, and refine and sublimate the metals exposed to its power? So does the Spirit purify. It is the peculiar office of the Spirit to purify the soul—to refine the dross of the human heart—to rectify the disordered principles of the understanding—to impart purity and strength to the inner man, sanctified wholly in soul, body, and spirit. Such is the strong analogy between the operation of the Spirit on the intellectual and the moral nature of man, and the effects of fire on the material world. It were easy to stretch the analogy still farther; but it is not necessary, as enough has been said to explain the figure in the text.

We are aware that the doctrine of the Spirit's influence, so strikingly brought

before us in the text, has often been explained away and denied. It is a doctrine against which, more than any other, the pride of human reason has rebelled, and every thing has been done to represent it as impossible and absurd. They whose principle it is to bring every thing down to the test of human reason, and so trying the doctrine of the Spirit's influence, and weighing it in this unjust balance of their own devising, have indeed found it wanting. Often it has been matter of wonder that the very things which, rightly considered, form the strongest arguments in support of certain points, have been made, by many, a presumption against them. We hold that the Bible being full of mystery is no small proof that it is the Word of God. The whole of the works of God are mysteries. Phenomena the most simple are, nevertheless, those which you cannot explain. The nature of fire we cannot explain; and yet who denies its reality? The nature of wind cannot be explained; no one can tell why it blows at one time and not always; but no one who hears its howling in the storm denies its existence. Vegetation cannot be explained; no one can tell how the grain of wheat dies and afterwards springs up again. None can deny the fact; for they witness it put into the earth, where it seems dead matter, and they afterwards behold the fields waving in the luxuriance of harvest. And as the works of God contain things far above the intelligence of man, so are his ways enveloped often in mystery and darkness. What is more mysterious, for example, than that, under the administration of an all-wise and merciful God, the aged individual is so often spared till his existence has become a weariness to himself and all about him, while the youth, perhaps in the midst of activity and usefulness, is hurried away as with an overwhelming flood? If it is so in the works of God, is it not to be expected that his word should abound with things hard to be understood? Is it reasonable that words so far exalted above the comprehension of men should be all plain, clear, and intelligible? We hesitate not to assert, that had the doctrines of revelation been all level to the human understanding, and all admitting of an easy explanation, it would have formed a very strong presumption that they did not

proceed from Him who, though righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, nevertheless is often surrounded with clouds and darkness. This being the case, the circumstance that the influence of the Spirit cannot be explained is no argument against its truth. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

The truth of this doctrine is proved from the express declarations of Scripture. These abound in the Old and in the New Testaments. There is not a page of Revelation where we may not see proof of the enlightening, the sanctifying, the strengthening, and the consoling influences of the Spirit of God; and we are there taught to ascribe all that is lovely in the moral world to his agency. And as the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters, and from the formless elements of chaos formed an abode fitted for the existence and enjoyment of living creatures, so does the influence of the Spirit in the moral world sanctify the hearts and reform the lives of the children of men. Have not you yourselves often felt his working in your minds? There is not, I believe, a human being in this assembly who has not been the subject of this operation. I appeal to every one here if you have not sometimes felt misgivings of heart, and been convinced that all was not right? Have you not had some anxiety about the saving of your souls when hearing an awakening discourse, when on a bed of sickness, or when deprived of the friend whom you loved? Have you not surveyed the past with sorrow and shame, and looked forward to the future with fear and trembling? I feel assured you have, and every compunctious visiting, every anxiety about the safety of your souls, every fear of future torment, every desire of future happiness, which you have experienced, is to be traced to the Spirit of God. But it is very evident that the feelings do not always terminate in conversion. God strove long with the antediluvian world, but in vain; they resisted every effort to reclaim them, till, at length, he withdrew his gracious influence, and swept them away with the waters of the deluge. In the same way, God strove with the Jews, and they also resisted every effort to bring them to

himself, and were, at length, given up to impenitence and unbelief. And can it be doubted, that many still are guilty of quenching the Holy Spirit? for, notwithstanding the many warnings and threatenings in the Word of God, how many remain careless and unconcerned about the things belonging to their peace! It is, therefore, a matter of great moment to consider the ways in which the fire of the Spirit may be quenched, and the person be thus in danger of doing despite to the Spirit of Grace, and of grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

In the first place, the Spirit may be quenched by deliberately resisting its operations. We shall suppose, that this heavenly fire has been kindled in the bosom—that, by its holy light, the persons have been led to see their guilt and danger, and to feel the importance of applying for safety. Were these to fan the flame that has been created, to encourage the impressions made upon them, and seek after more enlarged views of divine truth, no doubt they would follow on to God the Lord; but, instead of this, they do the very reverse—they try to extinguish the fire that has been kindled; they banish every serious thought from their minds; they consider seriousness, indeed, rather as an enemy to their peace, than as a friend to guide them to the way of happiness, and even systematically oppose every conviction that arises, and, with most anxious care, stifle every doubt about their safety. They say to themselves, Peace, peace, notwithstanding every appearance of danger. Like the men who can sleep when the cry of danger is proclaimed, instead of hastening to escape and flee to the mountains lest they be consumed, they delay in the place of peril, and seem reckless of the threatened wo. Like the infatuated mariners, when the vessel is tossed by the ruthless surge, and it is evident that they are all to be consigned to a watery grave, instead of preparing for the terrible change, they brave every appearance of danger, and shut out anxiety, till they are at length engulfed in the bosom of the ocean. Or, like the men whose temporal affairs are deranged, instead of doing what they can to remedy their condition, they prefer to shut their eyes from the truth, and drive from their minds the subjects fitted to appal them. In this way, no doubt, the Spirit's influ-

ence is quenched by many. They succeed in checking the progress of its fire, and even in so extinguishing its existence, that it is difficult to know if it ever was there. It is scarcely to be supposed, that the Spirit will operate on the minds of those who resist its operations: and it is not to be wondered at if they should be entirely left by God, and that their eyes should be closed lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and be converted and healed.

Another way in which the Spirit of God is quenched by many, is indulgence in habitual sin. These persons are visited by the Spirit of God through the medium of his providence or word: the power of divine grace finds its way to their hearts, and they are led so far to see and acknowledge their transgressions. Did they follow the Spirit, they might be led to cast away their transgression; but instead of this, they continue in the commission of their sin, or perhaps plunge deeper into crime. Whatever be the sin of which they are guilty, they go on in its indulgence in spite of every remonstrance. The drunkard perseveres in his intoxication, though told by the Spirit of God that the end of it is death. The swearer, though told that the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain, nevertheless continues to insult the Eternal to his face. The man guilty of dishonesty and fraud, though told that he has started on the road to ruin unless he abandon his iniquity, goes on receiving the wages of unrighteousness, deceiving his neighbour, and, for the sake of mere paltry gain, ruining his eternal interests. It may be, that the sins indulged in are of a less flagrant nature, and which are, therefore, more frequently the spots of God's children. It may be that they are sins of the heart, such as pride, malice, worldly-mindedness, discontent or impatience. Or, it may be, that they are sins of the tongue, such as evil speaking, frivolous and evil communication; or they may be any of the multitudinous sins every day committed by the great majority of mankind, such as idleness, conformity to the world, general indifference to spiritual objects: whatever the kind or degree of sin, it continues to be indulged in, notwithstanding the striving of God's Spirit. Now, that this conduct must quench the Spirit, there can be no wonder and no doubt. How is it possible

that the Spirit of God, whose nature and offices are spiritually holy, should dwell in the hearts of those who indulge in things contrary to his nature? The heart of man is far from the Spirit of God. There is nothing there but darkness and vice; and when the Spirit does in mercy visit the soul that is dead in sin, and sheds its illuminating rays over the benighted mind, it is only when encouraged by careful attention to his dictates, that he can be expected to remain within him, and strengthen him, and comfort his heart. He that hath—that is, he that improveth what he hath—to him more shall be given; but he that hath not—that is, he that improveth not what he hath—from him shall be taken away even that he seemeth to have. The indulgence of sin has many times quenched the Holy Spirit. He cannot dwell where sin is: not more at war is water with fire, than is this Spirit of God with the abominable thing he hateth. Where that Spirit dwells, sin must vanish; where sin of any kind is felt and practised, the Holy Spirit cannot remain. He may be a transient visitor to that heart, but in that heart he shall not tarry. The fire may be kindled, but there that fire shall not burn—it must soon expire, for every thing is done to extinguish its very existence. It must not be forgotten, that if we have been led by the Spirit, we must live also by the Spirit—we must avoid as pestilence and death the thing he abhors. If we would expect the heavenly visitor to take up his abode with us, to make our bodies his temple, we must treat him with kindness, and avoid all that is fitted to grieve him. And surely it cannot be matter of wonder if men shall, in spite of his warnings, go on in their trespasses, and yield themselves to whatever sins most easily beset them, that the Spirit should cease from striving, and say, as he said of old to Ephraim, “He is joined to his idols, let him alone,”

A third way in which the Spirit is quenched, is by neglecting the means of grace. There are many who do not seem to consider what is meant by means of grace. They do not seem to consider that these are the designed ways of conveying fuel to the sacred fire which has been kindled in the soul. They act as if these were a set of forms that have no immediate connexion with their spiritual and eternal welfare, and which they may observe or neglect, as they choose. When the Spirit has awak-

ened in them any anxious fear about their condition, instead of wishing more knowledge, and more strength, they altogether neglect these means, or exclude them from conveying any salutary impression to the soul. When a person has made what was in peril his serious thought, instead of repairing to the house of God, where, peradventure, he might hear something to enlighten his heart, he prefers often spending the Sabbath in the fields, that he may be quit of his troublesome reflections. Another, laden with the burden of guilt and sorrow, instead of betaking himself to the Bible, through which God the Lord speaks to his soul, has recourse to novels or romances, those opiates which the world has prepared in such variety for soothing the conscience in its career of folly, and securing the spirit to eternal death. A third, overwhelmed with anxiety about his soul, when the Spirit is striving with him, instead of falling prostrate before God, and imploring grace to help in time of need, takes the comfort the world bestows, and plunges deeper into guilt. Such is the conduct of multitudes: and it is deeply to be deplored that many who are Christians have most defective ideas of the importance and obligation of the means of grace. They treat them with far less respect than the most ordinary engagements of the world. What a trifle is often allowed to interfere with those things that are holy of the Lord and honourable! Is not an excuse often given for absence from the house of God which many would blush to give to a fellow-creature for violating any appointment with him? Is not prayer neglected from the worst pretences? and is not the Word of God allowed to lie unheeded and unread? Now, surely it is not wonderful if God should allow the fire of divine grace to expire, if the means by which it is kept up be deliberately neglected, or carelessly employed! If God has promised especially to be in his own house—if the Spirit be given to all who ask it through the medium of the Word, can it be doubted that the neglecting of such means shall be followed by withdrawal of his Spirit? No. Where are we taught that the Spirit will go on enlightening and purifying the heart, unless there be a concurrence on the part of those on whom he is operating? On the contrary, we are told that means must be used, and that the fire of grace will

flourish or decay as this is done. Habitual sin affects the work of the Spirit as water thrown on a fire, extinguishing it. Neglecting the means of grace is, as it were, allowing the Spirit to die away, or withholding what would fan the flame, till it became a burning and a shining light.

These are some of the ways by which the Spirit of God is most likely to be quenched. As addressed to sinners, this subject is fitted to teach a very awful message. God is now operating on your minds by his Spirit. He is, by his providence and word, sending the light of his Spirit into your minds; he is striving with you to bring you out of the paths of perdition, and if you would but obey his dictates, he would guide you to holiness and peace. But remember that he has said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." If you persevere in opposing his suggestions and admonitions—if, by habitual sin, or neglect of ordinances, you continue to oppose, you may succeed in tempting him to withdraw his warning voice, and your heart may be allowed to remain cold, cheerless, and dark. In this state you may be allowed to live, and in this state you may be allowed to die; but

oh! what will take place when the Spirit follows you into the invisible world—when the day of grace is finished, and you cannot flee from that Spirit whom you have insulted and grieved? As addressed to God's people, this subject is fitted to teach them a most solemn lesson. From you, indeed, God will never completely withdraw his Spirit. You shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you out of your Father's hand. He who began the good work will carry it on till the day of Christ; but still you may, to a certain extent, quench the Spirit, and grieve him, and cause him for a season to leave you. You may be allowed to fall into sin, and thus have cause for the bitter lamentation of David, and, like him, to implore, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me; make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." And never forget, that every time you quench the Spirit, you are rendering yourselves less fitted for the enjoyment of that country where holiness to the Lord is inscribed on the hearts and the lives of all the inhabitants, and into which nothing that is unclean is permitted to enter. Amen.

THE TRIAL AND CONDEMNATION OF CHRIST;

A LECTURE DELIVERED FROM MATTH. xxvi. 62—68, AND LUKE xxii. 66—71, ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, JANUARY 20, 1833.

By the Rev. JOHN JOHNSTON,

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Few scenes in the melancholy history of humanity can be more humbling, more painful and affecting, than that of a human being in a court of justice put upon trial for his life. Considering the deep depravity that characterizes society, and the many varied forms in which vice degrades this afflicted world, this is perhaps an occurrence that does not take place so frequently as we might be led to conclude. When it does take place, however, even in the case of the most abandoned profligate, no reflecting mind can look to his condition without being roused to many sad and melancholy reflections; for how depraved soever the criminal's present condition may be, a benevolent mind will still remember, that there was once a time when his heart was alive to the gaiety of innocence, and when he was looked on by relations, and friends,

and companions, with a friendly and a brotherly eye. But when innocence itself is brought to trial—when a heart conscious of integrity before God and man, but, above all, conscious of perfect innocence in reference to the crime alleged against him, stands at the bar of human justice, a scene is presented of the most fearful and sublime interest, and the heart even wonders how humanity can stand this test, how innocence can thus submit to be degraded; and we think that there is something more than human energy that sustains the accused against the accusations and reproaches of his foes.

We are this morning to contemplate a scene still more striking than even this; for when a human being is brought to trial for crimes of which his heart tells him he is innocent, and his innocence of which

will one day be explained and proved, still that being is conscious of many imperfections, and although his heart tells him that he is innocent on this point, it testifies also that he has much to humble and depress him. But here is the spotless Son of God brought to trial, not only for a crime of which he was entirely innocent, but with a heart that had ever been a stranger to the poignancy of conscious guilt. Let us approach this scene with feelings of solemnity appropriate to its interest and awfulness.

Last Sabbath we followed the footsteps of the Saviour from the room where he celebrated the Passover with his disciples, and instituted the ordinance of the Supper. We attended him as he passed over the brook Kedron, and saw him ascend the hill called Olive, and enter into the garden which had been his favourite, his wonted retreat. We saw the anguish to which he gave such formidable expression, and beheld him amid the darkness and damp of night stretched along the ground, while the sweat as drops of blood started from every pore. This morning we are to see the Saviour, thus exhausted by the agony and suffering of the preceding night, led back again to Jerusalem. Last Sabbath we went with him out of the holy city to the garden on the side of Mount Olive; let us now follow him as he comes back to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and as he is carried along through the streets of Jerusalem, surrounded by an armed band with the traitor at their head, till he comes up to the holy Mount, the city of David, in which stood the palace of the high priest. Let us enter and see the scene that was presented there. The denial of St. Peter, which was one of the circumstances that threw a melancholy interest around the scene in the palace of the high priest, we for the present pass over, as it is not long since that was the subject of two separate discourses. It is to the trial and condemnation of Christ that your attention is now to be turned; and the first thing that strikes us here is the examination of our Lord. According to the righteous forms of justice, if they had any thing to say concerning him, and especially any thing they thought worthy of death, the witnesses ought to be confronted with him, that he might have had an opportunity of examining them himself in return—and witnesses were procured, but there

was a conflicting character in their testimony that could not warrant a sentence of condemnation. They alleged, indeed, that he had threatened to destroy the temple, but then this was not corroborated by other evidence, and there was such inconsistency in the testimony, as rendered it impossible for the judges, determined as they were for his destruction, to pass sentence upon him. They had then recourse to a practice, which their law justified, of putting the question to the prisoner himself. However inconsistent this may seem with our forms of procedure, it was warranted, as you see, from the 5th chapter of the book of Numbers, by the law under which the Jewish council at this time acted. To us, in this land of liberty and light, after the court, or the public prosecutor, or by whatever other name you choose to denominate him, had failed to institute any thing worthy of death against him, it seems rather extraordinary that they should think it proper to interrogate him, and Christ might at once have refused to submit to such examination. But then you are to recollect that our Lord, as in every instance of his life he had complied with the divine law, and honoured it by acknowledging its authority, did not in this instance choose to refuse submitting to examination. The law had appointed that the accused might be interrogated by the high priest, and Christ submitted to it. "I adjure thee," said the high priest, "by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." There is one thing in this adjuration that must not be omitted. You will observe the disingenuousness that appears in the mode in which it was proposed. When he was tried before the Jewish council, their object was to find him guilty of blasphemy, to give a colour to their proceeding of pronouncing sentence of death upon him. When they go to Pilate, they accuse him of sedition. Remark here the caution of the high priest's conduct. When he had Christ before the Jewish council, he knew well that to have charged him there with sedition, or any act of disobedience or disregard to the Roman authority, would have produced very little effect. The Jews themselves were writhing under the Roman yoke, and were not likely, sitting in their judicial capacity, to take any great offence at this allegation; and, on the

other hand, when they go to Pilate, they knew that to accuse him there of blasphemy to the God of Israel, would be of no estimation in the eye of a judge who knew nothing of the God of Israel, and cared not for him. Therefore, when they had him before the council, the grand object was to bring a charge of blasphemy against him, in order to give colour to their proceedings on this occasion. But mark the insidiousness of the manner in which the question is put. He said, I adjure thee by the living God, art thou the Christ? art thou the Messiah? Had he stopped there, the charge of blasphemy would not have been made out. Had Jesus said, I am the Messiah, there would have been no charge of blasphemy established, because, even at this time, the Jews had departed from the old faith of their church, in believing that the Messiah was to be a divine person. They believed, at first, that the Messiah was not only to be clothed with humanity, but to be a divine person; but at this time it is not likely that there was one in the whole council who did not hold the doctrine of a carnal temporal Messiah, who was to be a mere man, though a conquering prince. If, therefore, he had pled guilty to the charge of claiming to be the Messiah in this character, this being the recognised faith of the country, would not in the estimation of the council, have been an act of blasphemy. To bring in the charge of blasphemy, however, he adds, "The Son of God." Dost thou claim, at the same time that thou pretendest to be the Messiah of the country, to be the Son of God? Such was the examination to which our Lord was subjected. Let us now mark his confession. Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast said"—a Hebrew form of expression, that intimates a strong affirmation. Here, then, Christ declares himself to be the Messiah, and the Son of God. When the other witnesses, marking the dignity of his deportment, and the solemnity of his manner, stood up, and, one after another, put their questions, and gave out their contradictory testimony, Jesus maintained a dignified and solemn silence; but when the High Priest adjured him, in the name of the living God, to tell what he had to say, Christ, revering the authority of his Father in heaven, although that authority was announced to him by polluted lips, broke the silence he had been maintaining,

and acknowledged himself, before the constituted authorities of his country, to be what the Prophets had announced him, and his own miracles attested him to be—the Messiah of Israel, and the Son of the living God; and intimates to him that a greater evidence than his feeble voice gave, would one day be announced to them, for, said he, "hereafter"—as if he had said, hereafter shall ye have other evidence of my Messiahship, when I come in the clouds of heaven, and sitting on the right hand of power. Then, indeed, will the Jewish Sanhedrim acknowledge him to be the Messiah, and in the midst of the terror of the scene, they shall acknowledge him to be the Son of God. Yes, my brethren, this is the grand hope we all cherish, that we shall one day behold our Master coming in the clouds of heaven, clothed with the ensignia of universal empire, to rule in the midst of his enemies, and to make his people willing in the day of his power. But, O the hardness of guilty and impenitent hearts. When the human mind is bent on any scheme of mischief, or of guilt, it is astonishing what evidence it will resist, what intimation of truth it will set at defiance, and how, without remorse, it will push on to the conclusion at which it seeks to arrive.

This brings us to what the sentence produced. One would have thought that the dignified composure with which our Lord bore the insults he met with—that the solemn silence he maintained when his enemies testified against him—but, above all, that the explicit testimony he bore to the character he assumed, in circumstances of peril and alarm, would have made these men pause in their wicked career. But no, the High Priest rent his garments. It was indeed a common expression of grief and indignation to which he now had recourse; but even if his grief and indignation had been real, the dignity of his character should have lifted him above such a vulgar expression of his feelings. His object, however, was to precipitate his fellow-councillors to the deed of wrath; and they concur all in the sentence of condemnation, that he was worthy of death. Surely if the ministering spirits above were spectators of this striking scene, how must they have wondered at the depth of the mystery of God! Surely if the seraphim and the cherubim on high

did witness this awful scene, they must indeed have been struck with wonder, and a pause must have occurred in the hymnings of eternity. Surely the lyres and the harps of the glorified spirits on high, must have lain for a moment unstrung, when they saw the Son of the living God condemned to death. But while they wondered, we surely should not be unaffected, for we must all remember that the same passions that hurried the Jewish Sanhedrim to this deed of blood, belong to us all, and it is by the grace of God that men proceed not to acts of deeper violence than have ever yet been known.

Such, brethren, then, is the aspect which this morning the condemnation of our Lord presents. It suggests to us some important practical considerations, which, however, I can do little more than simply state, leaving them to your own private reflections to be more fully extended and applied. In the first place, when we look at the trial and condemnation of our Lord we are encouraged to put our trust in Him. We know that all this took place by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and that this was one of the acts in that great sacrifice which he offered for us. And what was it that gave efficacy to the sacrifice of Christ? It was the innocence of his holy life; and here that innocence is put to the proof, and awfully and triumphantly exhibited. Here is Jesus in the council standing before the Sanhedrim of his nation, where every judge to the number of seventy, was determined on his destruction, and bent to prove him guilty, and yet you see him stand before them and all his accusers, clear from every charge of guilt, the spotless holy Lamb of God. He knew no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. He was holy, harmless, separate from sinners, and it was this that gave efficacy to his sufferings and his death. In him, then let us daily trust. When we go to the throne of mercy for pardon and acceptance, it is for the sake of the holy Lamb of God that we plead for pardon and trust for acceptance. Though he knew no sin, yet God made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

In the second place, while the examination Christ submitted to proved his innocence, and thus furnishes to us a sure ground of trust in his merits and mediation, the open confession he made teaches us a

lesson in our profession of Christ. Did Christ acknowledge and proclaim his character, and shall we shrink from an open and decided confession of the Master we profess to serve? You hear him, who had death in one of its most degrading and cruel forms before him, proclaim himself the Messiah, the Son of God. Let us follow his example; "let us go forth unto him without the camp bearing his reproach;" and whatever the confession may cost us—pain, sorrow, or even life itself—let it be our determination, that although all men should deny him, yet will not we. And let us glory this day in the near prospect we have of sitting down at these tables to tell the world that shall behold us, that we glory in nothing save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world. And did Christ proclaim to the Jewish Sanhedrim his coming grandeur, and his future glory—how often is this proclaimed to us? My brethren, soon are we to close our eyes on this scene of time; soon shall these nerves be unstrung, and these eyes be dim, and our tongues cease to be heard in the society of living men. But we are not to be for ever in the tomb; the day is coming when these bodies shall again start into activity and life. The day is coming when the countless generations of the dead shall rise to life again; and although our eyes shall close on all created beauty here, the next object they shall behold will be the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. The last object on which our eyes shall linger will be the friends and kindred whom our hearts bleed to leave; but the next object on which they shall open will be the Son of man seated on a throne of glory. The last sound that shall fall on our closing ears will be the sighs of friendship or the sobs of love; but the next sound that shall fall on them will be the voice of the archangel, proclaiming that time shall be no more. How then should we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure! See, then, that ye cleave, while to cleave is in your power, to that Saviour who has come to spoil death of his terrors, to hallow the grave for the slumber of all his followers, and to fill their spirits with the hope that is full of glory. Let us then, my brethren, seek God while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. Amen.

COMFORT UNDER BEREAVEMENT;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, COLLEGE STREET, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3d, 1833, ON DECLARING IT VACANT IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE DEATH OF THE REV. WILLIAM LIMONT,

By the Rev. JAMES TURNBULL,

Minister of the Relief Church, Brighton Street.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope: for, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."—1 THESS. iv. 13, 14.

THE task assigned to me this afternoon is a painful one. Were I to consult my own feelings, I would shrink from it, and choose the very humblest seat in this assembly rather than the place which I now occupy; but I must obey the calls of duty, and endeavour to repress the feelings which would hinder its discharge. The duty assigned to me is a painful one; it is, by the appointment of the Presbytery, to declare, what you all too well know, that this church is vacant—to declare, what you all deeply feel, that you are sheep without a shepherd.

Were this a temple of idolatry, and were these emblems of mourning which are around me, and these weeds of sorrow which you wear, caused by the death of the high priest of its unholy mysteries, of him who had cheered on the licentious and applauded the profane, who had been unmoved even when his altar was stained with the blood of innocence—with what words would I address you, or from what source would I obtain one shred of consolation from your hearts? If I understood your character and my duty, would not the agony of dying, and the loneliness and the loathsomeness of the grave, be among the least appalling of the objects I would present unto your minds? But this is not a temple of idolatry, and he for whom these things are, and for whom you mourn, was not a high priest of unholy mysteries. This is a church of the living God, he was a minister of the Gospel, and himself a Christian; and hence I have to present unto your minds images of bliss and glory and exalted triumph, to blend with, and to remove the effect of, those of sorrow which now crowd around them, obscuring their perceptions.

It becomes us, in this the season of our bereavement, to give exemplification of the influence of the Gospel, to prove that it is balm to the bleeding heart. Its ecclesiastical beauty, and tenderness, and power, are

never so clearly seen, or so fully felt, as when, in the house of mourning; and to the bereaved, it speaks of heaven, and points out the path of light by which they who are wept for ascended to their God—as when, by its revelations of their felicity and glory, it teaches the mourner, instead of bending by their tomb in broken-heartedness, to raise the voice of gratitude to Him by whom they have been exalted.

Though death has brought us together this day, and we cannot, and wish not, to forget that it has, yet let us, as Christians, while we mourn, rejoice in Him who conquered death, and in the consequences blessed and everlasting, which flow to us from his victory. While we are humbled by views of the grave, let us, by views of heaven, not only be soothed, but stimulated to seek "an inheritance among the saints in light."

I have selected the passage of Scripture, which I have read as the subject of discourse, under the idea of its adaptation to your state; and I shall, in humble dependence on divine aid, endeavour, in the first place, briefly to illustrate it; and, in the second, to apply it.

I will not attempt to prove, what must be obvious to you all, that they, of whom the persons thus addressed were bereaved, had been Christians, but direct you to what the Apostle desired them to guard against. He desired them to guard against sorrowing like them who had no hope. We must understand this in a limited sense, because the absence of hope would not be spoken of as characterizing sorrow, itself being the essence of despair, and because that, beyond the boundaries of hell, there is not a being without hope, however great may be the amount of his wretchedness and agony. We must understand it as referring to absence of hope in respect of a particular object, and that, the well-being of the persons who had been removed from them by death, resulting either from their own

ignorance of the Gospel, or, if knowing it, from a persuasion that they of whom they were bereaved had no interest in its salvation, producing a sorrow which, in either case, must be conceived of as deep and lasting, and filling the whole mind. In the case of the bereaved being ignorant, it would be sorrow, because of imagined eternal separation from the objects of affection, and their dishonour in the grave, which there was no principle to resist, nor any faith to overcome: their minds being destitute of what is essential to being comforted for the dead—hope of reunion to them, and belief of their existence in felicity. In the other case, it would be a sorrow which can be conceived of only by them who have believed that a father or a child, a brother or a friend, around whom they had entwined their affections, was rendered by the curse of God completely and for ever miserable, a sorrow which would be almost perfect, but which, in no case, can be esteemed too great. We have illustrations of the effects of this sorrow in Scripture—in the history of David, when he lamented his beautiful and beloved, but wicked, Absalom; it being impossible for us to imagine how he should have so bewailed him, and not have mourned for his other son, had there not been in his mind different views of their everlasting state. This alone—the idea he would not go to Absalom, because he had not gone to God—must have caused his words, which embody all in grief that is powerful and tender and pathetic. In the history of the hour when Jesus gazed on Jerusalem, anticipating not only its ruin, but that of the souls of many of its guilty inhabitants, we have, in his affecting words, and in his tears, a still more striking example of the sorrow which the loss of souls must produce in minds capable of appreciating their value.

Against like sorrow the Apostle desired to guard the Thessalonians: he forbade them not to sorrow, but to sorrow like them who had no hope. Christianity may wipe away the tears shed over the tomb, may, to soothe, lay its hand of tenderness on the heart throbbing in anguish because of buried love, but it forbids not to sorrow. Could Jesus, who wept at the grave of Lazarus, forbid sorrow for the departed? It was not the design, nor is it the tendency of Christianity to make us callous to those things over which nature teaches us to mourn: instead of doing so, its dis-

cipline, by making the affections more keen while strong, rather prepares us for feeling more acutely than others do, the disruption of the social ties of life. And, by what means did he seek to guard them against like sorrow? He taught them, that they for whom they mourned were asleep; that they were asleep in Jesus, and, that he would bring them with him at the resurrection.

He affirmed they were asleep. In this selection of a word to designate death, we are not only to believe that, by the gentlest possible term, he sought to speak of that, the very slightest allusion to which he knew would be to them an increase of pain, thus leaving us an example of the caution and tenderness with which we should speak to the bereaved; but that it contained a just representation thereof—setting forth the idea of repose from and after toil, of insensibility to external objects and events; but chiefly that the state of the dead in the grave is not eternal, but preparatory for new exertion, that as the sleeper is awakened at the hour of labour or enjoyment, so they shall be awakened not again during eternity to slumber.

He affirmed that they slept in Jesus; which includes, not only that their bodies were under his protection, though reduced to their elementary principles in the tomb, and in union to Him who arose the first-fruits of them that slept, and that, consequently, they also would arise; but also the repose of the soul with Jesus after death, from the labours and agitations and cares of this world, the scene of its trial and purification, with its felicity and glory in the heavens. This, we believe, it implies, and doing so, opened up a prospect of blessedness and dignity which should have made them weep rather for themselves that they lived, than for them they loved, because they slept in Jesus.

To these the Apostle added another thought, thereby completing the picture of consolation which he presented to their minds, that God—Jesus, so called because of his divinity—would bring them with him. We complete the meaning when we add, He will bring them with him when he comes to judgment; for, of his coming again, we read only in connexion with his having the dignity and splendour of universal Judge added to his majesty as universal Lord. To describe this coming, the inspired writers employ the most expressive

words, and the most splendid imagery, and in doing so they are fully justified, for He shall come, not only for the most solemn and important of all purposes, but with his celestial hosts, and in his own and his Father's glory. He shall come, and amid his splendour he shall bring from their dwelling-place of light the glorified spirits of his saints, not only to reanimate their bodies, purified and ennobled and fitted for their reception, but to be honoured in the presence of the intelligent creation; and, in their new form, a form like his own, to be reconveyed to the heavens, his Father's house, in which no change shall pass over them, except increase in knowledge, felicity, and glory. Of the truth of all which, he represented the resurrection of Jesus as the proof, than which none could be more clear or forcible—his resurrection, in which he was the first-fruits of them that slept, not only the pattern but the pledge of their resurrection, he having by it demonstrated the truth of the Gospel by which "life and immortality are brought to light."

These things—the character of the departed, the repose of their bodies, and its purpose, the rest and blessedness of their souls—their future coming to participate with Jesus in his happiness and triumph—their bodies, raised from the corruption of the grave, incorruptible, powerful, glorious, spiritual, immortal as his own, preparatory to their possessing an endless joy, exceeding the utmost limits of their comprehension, forming altogether a scene beautiful and sublime—he presented to the bereaved; and believing as they did, and longing as they must have done for heaven, and love leading to delight in the happiness and the dignity of its object, can we imagine that they would not almost forget their sorrow amid the joyful, grateful, and triumphant feelings they would produce? Would they not take their harps from the willows, and pour forth enraptured notes of praise? If they could not forget them by whom they were not forgotten in the sky, surely these things would chasten and soften down their painful feelings—make them act with higher purpose and more blessed hope, until, amidst the songs of angels, they too ascended to their God, and found the beloved ones who had been hidden from their fellowship, but not from their affections, in the tomb, enjoying heaven's

unutterable felicities—found them to add, by their affection, to the tenderness and the power over them of the blessings bestowed by the beneficence of their God and the love of their Redeemer.

These things may be presented as consolations unto all Christians, when they sorrow for those who sleep in Jesus. To you they belong—and for them I would seek that in you they may be suffered to exert their proper influence. You have been bereaved of one to whom you were bound by ties sacred as they were strong, and for whom neither reason nor Christianity forbids you to mourn. You have sustained a loss not only as a church but as individuals, of the full amount of which you are as yet ignorant, however you may have imagined that you know all upon which the grave has so lately closed. I feel it to be my duty to speak of the loss which you have sustained, though I know not well how to do so. It has come so near home, it has touched so much of my own felicity, it has so disturbed and agitated my mind, that my words must be feeble as well as few.

You have lost a pastor who had high ideas of his duties, and who aimed at their full discharge, not satisfied with himself, though for you he laboured in season and out of season, but thought all too little for your souls, and for his Master: so that, when his ministry with his life was closing, he supposed there would be of it only a little fruit—that though he might have some, there would be only a very few, for his crown in the day of Jesus—that he had been a most unprofitable servant. So humble when dying were his ideas of his labours, that he entreated me, in this public form, when his home would be the grave to ask you to forgive him for his many failures in the performance of every duty.

You have lost a pastor who loved you. All his actions proved the strength of that affection to you which he has borne with him into eternity. Even in death he loved you. When dying, he requested me to tell you, that, next unto the interests of his own soul, the interests of yours were nearest to his heart; and when in prayer then, as oft he was, you and your salvation were blended with the other objects of his affections and desire, for whom he supplicated his Father. He spake of you and prayed for you, and while he did, there was all that thrilled the soul—

there was no expression seen in those eyes which so often among you and over you sparkled with delight, they were closed for ever upon the world before the destroyer laid his hand upon his heart and staid its throbbings—nor was his countenance capable of bearing the impression of any emotion, however great; but there was a power and pathos in his words, the pathos and the power of sincere affection, which reached the heart, justifying to him an accommodation of the Psalmist's expression of unalterable love, his right hand forgot her cunning, and his tongue cleaved unto the roof of his mouth, before you were forgotten.

The young among you have lost a teacher, who had no greater joy than to see his children walking in the truth—who, under the influence of love, laboured with unwearied arm for their salvation. The young were not, when he was dying, removed from his heart or from his lips; he spake of them with affection, and, while consciousness remained, prayed that Christ would be their teacher; that he would put his arms around them, especially around the little ones, and bring them safely to his glory.

Those of you who are amid the anxieties, cares, and disappointments of life, have lost one well skilled and willing to direct—ever ready to sympathize with and to soothe—and take advantage of the peculiarities of your circumstances to say something for the Saviour. In him the afflicted have lost a son of consolation, and the aged one who cheered them on amid the wreck of their earthly happiness, by views of the bright heavens and their holy rest.

You have lost your pastor. He died in youth, in usefulness, and he was suddenly removed. On these things I doubt not you have been meditating, inquiring while you did, why the young tree in all its beauty and its fruitfulness was cut down, and fruitless, leafless, aged ones suffered to remain? and why there was no warning voice, no space given during which you might have become prepared to resign him willingly unto the Lord? These are questions which your sorrow will suggest, but to which I can give no answer. I can only point you to the sovereignty of God, and remind you that we are in his hands as the clay is in the hands of the potter, and that, in consistency with his character, he can do with us according to his will.

The removal of your pastor is one of the strange works of a kind and loving Father—one of those ways of his which are in the sea—one of those paths which are in the mighty waters—but believe, that what you know not now you shall know hereafter.

He died in youth, while the sky of life was shining over him with deceitful promise of many years; while he loved with its ardour, and acted with its energy, in the various relations in which he was placed, and spheres in which he moved; and while surrounded with all those things which put sweetness into the cup of life, rendering it desirable. He died in usefulness, of which the spiritual state of many of you and your collective condition are proofs—in usefulness not only among you, his christian zeal having carried him into all those enterprises which have for their object the purity, stability, and glory of the church, and the salvation of the perishing. And while for his works you loved him, cheered him on in every pursuit, and upheld his hands in every conflict; and while all who beheld his prudence, his perseverance, and his zeal, admired and formed anticipations of future successful exertions—anticipations upon all which the darkness and the gloom of death now rest—he was suddenly removed from you. When last in this place, he was in all the strength of youth and energy of zeal. You saw him no more until you beheld him, surrounded with the trappings of the grave borne forth from his home of love to his long last resting-place; a rumour of only slight disease had reached you, until you heard that the pain and the bliss of dying with him were ended, "that the silver cord was loosed," and that his spirit had returned unto its God.

By the remembrance of these things you may aggravate your sorrow; but beware lest you discover that selfishness is the fountain of your grief. Was there no love to him in being removed at this time, and in these circumstances? Would you desire to have seen him among you with the feeble step and the calamities of age, feeling even "the grasshopper a burden," until, though your state called for exertion, he was incapable of effort—until, though all around him was white unto the harvest, he was unable to put forth the sickle? If you loved him, would you not rejoice that so soon he gained his crown? Did you not

in other circumstances rejoice at his success, and now will you be inconsolable when he has obtained the object of all his labours and desires? May we not say, blessed are they whose course is illustrious, though short in the cause of Jesus, whose sun goes down at noon? They are sheltered from the storms of life, they are free from that most painful and oppressive of all thoughts which must often be connected with weakness and with years—that of cumbering the ground. They are more blessed who are like the rose rudely plucked in all its fragrance and beauty, than they who are like it, when it withers and dies upon its stem, causing sorrow by its faded beauty and decay. Is there really cause to mourn on his account? Think you that he repents the change, but rather, if conscious of your sorrow, feels that you should rejoice because he has gone to his Father—that, instead of weeping for him, you should weep for yourselves and for your children who remain amidst the littleness, the sin, and the calamities of time? And to you only his departure was sudden. Every Christian is every hour looking for his Lord, and his loins were girt and his lamp was burning—his mind was familiar with the thought of death, nay, he was longing to be with Jesus, having the feelings which dictate the words, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

I feel myself called on to affirm, what these observations have implied, that your pastor was a Christian, and that, therefore while you sorrow, you should not do so as others who have no hope. Need I prove to you the truth of this affirmation? Were I to do so, I would not depend simply on what I heard from him while on his death-bed, though I was with him during the period of his affliction to minister to his wants, to smooth his pillow, and sympathize with his feelings, and heard enough to convince me that Christ was in his heart, “the hope of glory.” When confidence and hope in Jesus, at the approach of death, follow a life of holiness, we are warranted not only to cherish hope, but persuasion of the union of the soul to blessedness; to believe that these are the cornerstone of the temple of piety in the soul, brought forth by the same agent by whom the foundations were laid and the superstructure reared. I have more to convince me of the salvation of your pastor than the workings of his mind in affliction.

“You know what manner of conversation he had among you from the beginning;” in every form you have beheld in him the effects of faith, and hope, and love. His life was a great proof of his not having received the “grace of God in vain”—of his having trusted in that Saviour in whom he taught you to believe—of his having his conversation in the heavens to which he directed your steps, and his dying experience was a fit conclusion to a life of godliness. The nature of his disease gave him opportunity of expressing fully his views and feelings, no pain disturbing his contemplations on his Saviour, his God, and heavenly rest; while his eyes being closed upon external objects, the world shut out, enabled him more steadily to fix the eye of his mind, which the Holy Spirit had unscaled, upon the Cross, and the sublimity of eternity; and clear were his views, ample were his joys, and unwavering his assurance. While he spoke of Jesus, there was rapture in his words—of heaven, there was a foretaste of its bliss—and of death, there was triumph in his tones. I shall not soon forget the emphasis with which he would say, “None but Christ;” or the exultation with which he would exclaim, “O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?” or the confidence, mingled with delight, with which he would testify, “I am ready.” There were, indeed, hours when reason left her throne—when, under another power, imagination grouped fantastically his thoughts, mingled broken images of beauty and of grandeur in wild disorder; yet, even at such times, painful even to remember, religion was supreme: it was a disordered fancy wandering among the loveliness and the greatness of gospel truths, which, by then directing her footsteps there, gave evidence that among them, when led by reason, she had been wont to stray. There was also a cloud upon his mind when he passed into eternity; so that its perceptions and sensations were staid, perhaps in love, that he might be more enraptured in feeling and in vision when welcomed by angels from his warfare to his repose. A cloud, dark and dense, was on his mind, but perhaps that beyond it his ransomed spirit might burst forth in greater glory, as the sun seems to be more powerful and splendid when it comes forth from under the gathered cloud which has obscured or hindered its beams.

We combine these things, and feel they prove that he sleeps in Jesus; and that for him you should not mourn as they who have no hope. True, that his body is returned into the dust, that corruption reigns in undisturbed dominion over all of him that was mortal; but it was not his body that you loved, but his soul, which directed its movements, and employed its capabilities, and was the seat of those affections because of which he was enshrined in your esteem; and his soul has not ceased to be—it has only changed the place and mode of its existence, and the nature of its joys. It is in heaven by the throne of Jesus, and shall be with him until it descend to reanimate that body over whose lowly dwelling you have wept, that both may be for ever with him blessed and glorious. While he lived, his Master honoured him, and now has placed him among them, who having turned many to righteousness, shall shine for ever as the stars that spangle the vault of heaven. Can I only say “comfort yourselves with these words,”—may I not also exhort you while you feel your bereavement, to glorify God on his behalf?

In conclusion, I would call upon you to improve the dispensation of Providence with which you have been visited. I feel myself especially called on to exhort them who have not improved the ministry of their pastor to improve his death. This was his frequent, fervent prayer in the prospect of death, that God would sanctify it unto the unregenerate and the careless among you. “Tell my people,” said he, in a tone which showed how deeply he was interested, “that there are those among them over whom I am jealous, and that I fear there may be more than I am jealous of who have only a name to live, that I charge them with the earnestness of a dying man, and all the affectionate earnestness of a dying minister, to prepare to meet their God.” “It will be,” said he, “when you tell them, a voice from the grave, and perhaps the Lord may bless it to their souls. Remind them that I set before them life and death, and that if they choose death, I will, when we meet again, be a witness against them, though rather, far rather, would I meet them bright and blessed by the throne of Jesus.” I will not attempt to add to the force of these things—I leave them with the consciences of those to whom they apply, praying that

the death of their pastor may be the life of their souls.

Improve the dispensation. it has taught you plain and painful lessons of the vanity of the world, of the evil of sin, of the blessedness of having an interest in Christ; and it is for you to manifest in your future lives whether ye have been taught these things in vain. Oh, that you thereby may become “living epistles, known and read of all men”—that you may be found following your pastor as he followed Christ, until you meet again, and be eternally united to him in perfect love! Improve the dispensation by drawing nearer to, and depending more upon, the Chief Shepherd. It is a consolation, that though the eye of the affectionate become closed, and the tongue of the eloquent silent in the grave—though earthly shepherds fail, he still remains to shelter and to guide. “Lo! I am with you always even unto the end,” this blessed promise of the Saviour, is our joy, and shall be the subject of our children’s song “when we are cold in dust.” Cleave, then, more unto him. Lift up your eyes more frequently unto his throne, and to the light, and happiness, and praise, by which it is surrounded, to which, as a christian society, you are bound by another tie, whose strength no time should weaken. Have your conversation in heaven; thus you will fulfil the purpose of the Redeemer, be found walking in peace and promoting the things which tend to edify; and thus also you will be found as a church, an image of the church above. Now when your head is removed, endeavour to feel the necessity of union, of affection, and of prayer, that “peace may be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces.”

I cannot close without calling upon you to improve the dispensation, by permitting it to impress deeply on your hearts the uncertainty of your life, and the necessity of being also ready. Is it to me, and to other ministers only, that it speaks of these things? No! while it tells us to watch as they who must give account, and be ready to reckon with our Master, it tells to you, since the same uncertainty is pendent over your being, to hear as they who must give account. Was he suddenly removed, and will not some of us be so also, and which of us? Is it for me or for you to trifle? Let us give our hearts to

Jesus, who even now is calling us. Let us not, when so much is involved, refuse—refuse that we may gratify a lust, pursue a phantom, or sow corruption. Though feeling no desire to honour him, have mercy on your own souls. Will you disregard their happiness, will you court their misery? Look onward, I entreat you—heaven and hell are before you; make your choice; but see that you do it wisely, for to-morrow you may not have opportunity or capability to change. There is one marking carefully your decision—one who can dash you in pieces as the potter's vessel—one who has provided an ark for your safety, but who, if you enter not into it, will leave

you to perish amid the deluge of his wrath. Dare not to despise him, dare not to venture against him in conflict—his love, his mercy, his Son despised, shall be visited with a retribution which it will require eternity to unfold. Would you dwell amid the shining ones who are around the throne—would you ascend eternally in the scale of being and of moral splendour—look to Christ in faith, open your hearts for his reception, bid him dwell in them and reign in them without a rival and without end. Then shall your light break forth as the sun when it gilds the morning sky, giving promise of a day rich and resplendent with glory, and majesty, and blessedness.

CONCLUDING ADDRESS, AFTER THE DISPENSATION OF THE SACRAMENT,
ON 24TH JUNE, 1832,*

By the late Rev. JOHN DICK, D.D.

Professor of Divinity to the United Associate Synod.

GOD loved the world before his Son died upon the Cross. The mission of the Son originated in the love of God. The Son magnified the law of God, satisfied and answered the demand of divine justice, and thus obtained the completion of eternal redemption for us. The death of Christ has made peace between Jews and Gentiles: they were formerly in a state of separation and of war. The Jews despised the Gentiles, not only because they were idolaters, but because they were excluded from the privileges which were appropriated to them by the Father: they looked upon the other nations as rejected and accursed. The Gentiles, on the other hand, beheld them with an evil eye, on account of this feeling of enmity towards them, and on account of the difference of their worship. The Jews adored one God the Creator of heaven and earth, while, with the Gentiles, there were gods many, and lords many; and the rites of the Jewish worship seem, in many instances, to have been established in direct opposition to the superstitious practices alluded to: besides the circumcised, for fear of pollution, avoided all intercourse with the uncircumcised. A new revelation was necessary, to convince them that the cove-

nant of exclusion promised to them had come to an end, and that the way into the sanctuary was open to all the nations of the world. This new revelation was granted to Peter, and authorized and encouraged by him. He went and preached the Gospel to Cornelius. From that time Jews and Gentiles embraced the religion of Christ, and were embodied in one church; and nothing hinders the Jews at present from having fellowship with us, the Gentiles, in the privileges of the Gospel, but their own perverseness. We would rejoice to see them placing themselves under the authority and protection of our Lord Jesus Christ; and we look forward to a time when Jews and Gentiles will constitute one people to the Lord. "He is our peace," says the apostle Paul, "who hath made both one, (*i. e.* Jews and Gentiles,) and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandment contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

Once more, the death of Christ has established peace among men. It has laid the foundation of that intercourse of friendship and love which takes place among us.

* For the Sermon that preceded this address, see *Scottish Pulpit*, Vol. I. No. 18, p. 207.—See also No. 45, p. 59, for the address at fencing the tables.

He has, indeed, commanded us to love all men, without distinction, because they are partakers of the same nature, and have the same wants and desires, and are expectants of the same immortality. He has commanded his disciples to follow peace with all men, so far as it is possible—to be courteous and kind in their intercourse with the world—and to make sacrifices to maintain good neighbourhood and fellowship. But, in particular, he has laid an injunction upon them to love one another; and they ought to love one another, not as men, but as Christians—as persons redeemed with the same blood—as heirs of the same heavenly inheritance, and possessed of the same spirit. And this love is to be shown in a great variety of ways. Christians ought to bear with one another's infirmities: nothing can be more unreasonable or absurd than to expect perfect conduct from our brethren of mankind. We are not to overlook the forlorn of our fellow-men—we are even called upon to take notice of them, and, in the spirit of meekness, to address them, in the hope of promoting their spiritual improvement. We ought to bear with them; and we are not to separate from them, to treat them with harshness, to dismiss them from our affections and cares: we should remember that we too are imperfect, and that the allowances we grant to them, it is necessary that they should grant in return to us. We are commanded to bear one another's burdens; and Christians ought to help one another in spiritual and in temporal things, according to their ability and circumstances. They ought to help one another in spiritual things, by meeting together, as they have opportunity, speaking of the things of God, and joining together in the exercises of devotion. They ought to lend their useful counsel to each other, for the direction of their conduct and the correction of their faults. In temporal things the rich should help the poor: out of their abundance they should supply the wants of the indigent. There is no duty more expressly

laid down in the Scriptures, or one that is oftener repeated and enforced, and by a great variety of motives. "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices the Lord is well pleased." The strong should help the weak: those who have power and influence should be ready to protect those who want it, and are exposed to injuries and insults, and should come forward to defend them against their oppressors. And the wise should help the simple: they who have more knowledge and experience should be ready to come forward, and to direct them in their conduct. Christians should pray for one another. You will observe that, when our Lord taught his disciples to pray, he did not direct each man to say, *My* Father who art in heaven, give *me my* daily bread, but to say, *Our* Father who art in heaven, give *us our* daily bread: teaching us that while we pray for ourselves, we should pray also for our brethren, and in common to *our* God and *our* Father; and our prayers for one another should ascend before his throne night and morning, in morning and evening sacrifice. It was foretold that "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." This is a prediction of the happy change which the Gospel would produce on the tempers of men; and, in as far as they are partakers of the grace of God, this change is produced; but men are still imperfect creatures, and give too many instances of unsanctified dispositions. Let us, then, cultivate brotherly love, and let us lay aside all wrath and malice, and let us labour usefully, and be kind to one another, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us.

The reverend Doctor then concluded his address, by reading that beautiful description of charity, or love, which is contained in 1 Corinthians, chapter xiii.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. E. CRAIG, A.M., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BRODIE, A.M., Glasgow.

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. E. CRAIG, A.M.,

Minister of St. James' Episcopal Chapel, Broughton Place, Edinburgh.

"The man of God who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord."—1 KINGS xiii. 26.

THE true history of man presents us with sad and humiliating proofs of his weakness. The glowing but deceitful pages of a laudatory biography may represent the matter differently; but when we come to look at facts around us, or when we have the advantage of considering facts and motives as they stand recorded in the sure pages of inspiration, then the truth appears with all its humiliating force. We read in the true history of others the proof and the condemnation of our own weakness, vacillation, and inconsistency.

Among the many interesting narratives which the sacred Scriptures present to us, few read us a more solemn lesson than that from which the text is taken, and which sets before us the conduct of him whom we know by no other name than the disobedient prophet. His melancholy fate, recorded in the Word of truth, like a beacon-light upon a dangerous coast, warns us of the evils of inconsistency. It is my purpose, therefore, at the present time, to direct your attention to it, with a view to our practical benefit.

We will consider, 1st, The facts of the case; 2dly, An important question arising out of them; and 3dly, The practical reflections suggested by the whole subject.

1. The facts of the case. At the time when this event occurred, a schism had taken place in the kingdom of Israel. After Solomon's death, the conduct of his son Rehoboam had irritated the people, and ten tribes out of the twelve had revolted from him. Some symptoms of this separation had appeared in the days of David; and though the wisdom of Solomon and his prosperous reign had prevented it for

a time, yet, on the first cause for discontent, the smothered flame burst forth, and the ten tribes established themselves as a separate kingdom, under the government of the leader of the revolt, Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

This, however, was not the only evil. That which is begun ill generally ends worse. It is dangerous to act in any degree, however small, against the will of God; for, too frequently the man who has been guilty of an act of disobedience is tempted to commit another to maintain his position. After Jeroboam had established his kingdom and built his capital city, he saw that the true worship of God, which had its appointed centre in Jerusalem, was likely to have a healing influence on this unseemly and unnatural schism; and the ready evil of his ambitious heart suggested to him the plan of inventing and adopting a different mode of worship. He took counsel on the occasion—of whom we are not told—but it was wicked, accursed counsel; and having made two golden calves, he set these idols in two places of his dominion, in Dan and in Bethel, and said, "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." This was the great sin of Israel, and of her king. It was the sin of national apostasy. The writer of the sacred book says, "And this thing became a sin," and the evil clung especially to the name and memory of the ruler of it, for he is always called on account of it, with melancholy propriety of distinction, "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Now, it was in the awful crisis, when Jeroboam, as the usurping sovereign of the revolted people of God, was leading their

impious worship, when he was offering sacrifice to the calves that he had made, and stood by the altar to burn incense, that the subject of this narrative appears first upon the scene.

Observe the solemnity of his office. He came as a sacred messenger of the true and the living God, the insulted Jehovah, to testify against this grievous and abominable profanation. "Behold," it is said, "there came a man of God out of Judah, by the word of the Lord, and cried against the altar in the word of the Lord." There is something exceedingly solemn in this duty. Ere the act of apostasy can be completed, the word of the Lord summons a man of God from that only remaining portion of the people that adhered to the true faith, and brought him forth from Judah, to stand before the idolatrous altar, and to protest against their unwarranted, unmeaning, and impious sacrifices. In the midst of all their pomp and show, he stood forth boldly in the cause of truth, in the name of Jehovah, and delivered his message, which foretold the destruction of that worship, and the fulfilment of that very event which Jeroboam had hoped by this idolatry to prevent. "A child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name: and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee."

And the power of the Almighty was with this man, constituting him a true prophet by revelation from himself, and confirming his word by signs following; for, according to his word, the altar was rent in the midst, and the ashes poured out; and when Jeroboam, irritated at this testimony from heaven against him, put forth his hand to do him mischief, it dried up so that he could not pull it in again; and we are told, that it was only when this man of God besought the Lord, that the king's hand was restored to him again, and became as it was before. Here, then, was a man employed in a most sacred and important duty: delegated by divine command, and sanctioned by divine power, he was singled out to testify against the national apostasy of Israel, and to pronounce the fall of that false worship which Jeroboam had set up. It is a most responsible situation to testify thus against the sins of other men, to stand with intelligence, and with sincerity, on the Lord's side, and to declare his will to the children

of men. But such being the commission of this prophet, observe, in the next place,

The restrictions by which it was accompanied. It appears by verse 9, that it was charged upon him by the same divine authority which sent him to prophesy by the Word of the Lord: "Eat no bread nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest." This restriction was most probably twofold in its object: it regarded the honour of God, and the safety of his messenger.

It regarded the honour of God. He came to bear an unexpected and unqualified testimony against the new idolatry, against an impiety which had defiled all Israel, and which had especially dishonoured and polluted the city in which it was established; for as Jerusalem was especially holy, where the true God was worshipped according to his will, so was Bethel peculiarly desecrated when that worship was mimicked and profaned. It became necessary, therefore, that the messenger of God, who should go to Bethel on a divine errand, should go there in the strength of Him who sent him, and not defile himself by partaking, in the smallest degree, of the hospitality of that polluted city. This total separation from the people, and his refusal of the ordinary sustenance of life from their hands, was a part of his testimony. This was an extraordinary and extreme case; but it points out the duty, in a subordinate degree, of all those who are called even now to testify, by the light of sacred Scripture, against the sin, unrighteousness, and profanity of their own generation. If a man that is called a brother walk disorderly, we are to withdraw from him, we are not to keep company with him—no, not so much as to eat; and certainly, therefore, if the great body of the people, forgetful of God and of the holy practices required by the divine Word, devote themselves to this world exclusively, and its vanities, even though a specious argument may make out respecting many of them that they have in them no more sin abstractedly than eating bread and drinking water; yet, it behooves the Christian to withdraw from them, as badges of a worldly mind and of a dangerous state; and by a steady and constant abstinence to testify against them.

But this injunction had in view also the prophet's safety. Sin, even the sin of idolatry, foolish as it is, is catching.

Witness the poisonous influence of Rome, and its wretched buffooneries, upon the idle English mind. The prophet must not share in the hospitality of Bethel, lest he be seduced by the example of the many to share with them in their sin; nor must he return by the same that he came, lest a snare should be laid for him in the way by the idolaters whom he had offended. He came unexpectedly and unknown, and therefore he travelled safely; but the openness and the awfulness of his message had made him a public character; and there is no character the object of a more bitter hatred than he who publicly impugns the moral and religious habits of a people, and protests against them, even in their holy things. It was probable therefore that the vengeance of the king or of the people might overtake him in his return. He must go back another way.

Notice, in the next place, his disobedience. From whatever cause, a strict and intelligible prohibitory command had been given to him. This was likewise distinctly admitted by him—"It was said to me by the word of the Lord, Eat no bread nor drink water there." This was sufficiently plain to have exacted an unhesitating obedience; the dignity and awfulness of the message should have given resistless weight to all the accompanying injunctions; and the man should not have felt himself at liberty to depart from his instructions, till the restriction under which he came was openly taken off by the same authority by which it was imposed. Seeing that the command of God has said, "Thou shalt not covet," we can never regard that or any other distinct command, such as the keeping of the Sabbath, to be abrogated, till we are told by the same divine authority, in some equally plain and conclusive way, that the command ceases, and that covetousness, or Sabbath-breaking is allowable and acceptable before the living God. The command of the word of the Lord, even in a subordinate matter, was in full force with him till it was rescinded by a similar communication.

It appears, however, that when this man refused to accept of the king's hospitality, a prophet who dwelt in Bethel, hoping to succeed better, followed him; and when he heard the ground of his objection, endeavoured to obtain by falsehood that compliance which, when sought more

directly, seemed impracticable. It is lamentable how far men will go in order to obtain the sanction of apparently good men to their own questionable courses. This prophet had dwelt at Bethel, and had not regarded the sin of the worship established there with sufficient detestation, or he would have left the place himself, and would neither have eaten bread nor drunk water where Jehovah was so palpably dishonoured. But dwelling there, assimilated to the habits of the people, the delicate tact of conscience injured, and the course of unconscientiousness and of vice begun, he was prepared now, with the vain purpose of obtaining the seeming sanction of a man of God, to dissemble, and to profess that he also had received a divine intimation on this point. "He said unto him, I also am a prophet as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back to thy house that he may eat bread and drink water; but he lied unto him."

Now, it might be argued, that in this statement the man from Judah had thus obtained a direct affirmation of the fact of a revelation, altering the injunction previously given to him; and that, as he could not discern between revelation and revelation, therefore he was blameless in returning. But this will not justify him. The crisis in which he was placed might be a trying and a difficult one; but then it is our duty to be diligent and accurate in ascertaining truth, just in proportion to the difficulty of the circumstances. And, unquestionably, there were, in the circumstances of this case, features which should have led him to a very different decision. On the one hand, he had a distinct revelation, made to himself by the word of the Lord. On the other, the prophet who came to him could only make a human communication; and, at the best, he only professed to have been spoken to by an angel. But, farther than this, who was this prophet? He was a man resident in Bethel, the seat of idolatry—living and associating in the very town in which it was declared by God, that he was not to eat bread or to drink a drop of water, so completely had its toleration of this iniquity laid it under the divine displeasure. If this was the case, and God had sent a messenger expressly out of Judah to testify against it, was it likely that he would send, by one of the residents of that town—one

of the tacit abettors of the mischief—one who, as a prophet, was more especially called to have protested, and to have come out from among them—was it likely that, by such a one, a directly contradictory message should have been communicated? Was not such a message just so far suspicious, as it came by such a messenger? We must never, under any circumstances, take the reasons advanced by rebellious and irreligious worldly men, as the justification of their doings. They may be very plausible and specious, but rest assured that they are unsound. A little calm deliberation would have shown this man of God, that he could not be justified for a moment in deviating from his course. He was “disobedient unto the word of the Lord.” He allowed himself to be led astray by reasons which ought not to have had weight with him. The light that was in him would have kept him; but he was unwilling to be restricted by its power, and he was guilty of disobedience—he went back.

And then, lastly, notice the consequence of this disobedience. After he had eaten and drank, he departed. And when he was gone a lion met him by the way, and slew him. The event was marked by peculiar circumstances. The lion remained by the carcass without touching it; so marking it especially as an event in which the hand of the Lord was manifest—as the prophet of Bethel said, “It is the man of God, that was disobedient unto the word of the Lord, therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him and slain him, according to the word of the Lord.” These are the leading facts of the case. In the second place,

2. There is an important question arising out of them, and that is, the question as to the religious sincerity of the individual. Was this man a truly pious and sincere servant of the living God? And this is a very difficult point to determine. Certainly he was called out and sent forth at a very critical time, and on a very difficult duty—a duty in which the honour and glory of God were immediately concerned. But this is no absolute proof of his sincerity; for Judas was called to the apostleship, and preached the Word, and sustained it by the working of miracles. Certainly he is called “the man of God,” but then it is, “the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the Lord;” and

that seems a more fearful account of him than if he had been a less marked and prominent character; for there is nothing more melancholy than “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;” for “it were better not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.” It is true that he began well—he went forth boldly to the resolute performance of a difficult duty, and he performed it at the risk of his life. But trials are of different kinds, according to the conformation of the mind—and while the terrors of the monarch might for him have no alarm, the amenities of social intercourse might have many; and he who would be on his guard against the threatening that called on him for a direct and open unfaithfulness, might be mortally wounded amidst the comforts of hospitable indulgence and the kindness and the flattery of friends. Evidently, whatever this man might think of it, Bethel was no place for him. It was well, indeed, that he was not permitted to sojourn in it, or, with all his boldness, he might have become a worshipper of the abominations of Jeroboam.

But again, it may be said, the words of the text are only the opinion of the case formed by the old prophet of Bethel. But we have more than this; for the word of the Lord came to his host in Bethel, before they separated; and, under the guidance of divine inspiration, he then charged him with having disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and with not having kept the commandment which the Lord had commanded him. And, in fact, the awful termination of the man's life appears to speak very strongly the Lord's displeasure. He went out on a message from God—he went on prosperously through the greater part of his course; but he disobeyed, and, in the midst of his journey, his life was cut short in anger, for an act of wilful disobedience. How, then, are we to decide the question as to his religious state? We cannot decide it. We can only remain in doubt. It is just possible that, in the main, the man's heart might be right with God, and that his disobedience, in this particular instance, went only so far as to bring a corporal judgment and a premature death upon him. Still it is an awful fact, that he died suddenly in disobedience—died under circumstances strongly indicative

of divine disapprobation; and this is so strong a fact, as to make it impossible to come to a decision respecting him. The utmost that can be said is in the text, which so closely unites those two contradictory features of character—"The man of God, who was disobedient to the word of the Lord"—the man of religious character, of religious professions, and of prominent religious occupation, who was himself disobedient to that paramount rule which he professed to reverence. It is a painful exemplification of that precise case mentioned by St Paul, (Hebrews iv.) that "A promise being given of entering into rest, he seemed to come short of it." The last act of his life belied the sincerity of his religion, and the last act of divine providence brought his acceptance with God into doubt; a cloud came over him, and, under that cloud, he passed away from this visible world. Whatever had been his former habits, connexions, missions, prophecies, he seemed to come short. No man could say of him at the last, that he died in a happy state, with a peaceful conscience; for he died in the path of disobedience—he died a wanderer—he died by the corrective visitation of God's displeasure. Earth affords no means of deciding this question. We must leave it undetermined, whether the man was only externally or really the man of God—whether he was a heartless professor, or an inconsistent saint. And to come to this, after all our knowledge, is to bring a fearful stain on the cause of true religion. Our ignorance, however, or our knowledge, will not in any way affect his eternal state; but the obscurity that hangs over it surely speaks volumes to us, who are living as professing members of the Christian Church. Let us notice, then, in the third place, the reflections which this narrative suggests.

And first, observe, The wisdom of rigid adherence to light given. Had this man only followed his instructions, he would have been safe and happy—the faithful servant of the Lord in a time of general defection. Our wisdom lies in distinctly ascertaining the light which we have, and then honestly coming to the light that our deeds may be reprov'd if they are evil. The Scriptures and the light of conscience make out for us a very straight and direct road. It is a road which separates us from a vain world, which puts us in a

state of direct protestation against the evils round us. If we labour prayerfully to walk according to the light that is in us, submitting all our habits of action and of thought to its control, it will surely guide us to everlasting blessedness. It is the will of God that it should do so. Our merciful Saviour watches our every step, as a benevolent but judicious parent. If we walk according to his will, he will crown us with his favour; but if we wander, "he will visit our offences with the rod, and our sin with scourges."

Secondly, Look at the miserable evil of inconsistency. To say nothing of the heartlessness of a vacillating service, which calls in question the reality of our love and devotion—of our sense of gratitude for redeeming mercy, what a tremendous evil it is in men so to act as to bring a cloud of doubt over their eternal prospects! The fate of the openly wicked is very sad. But is anything more distressing, than the conduct of those who profess to have religious principles, but who get so far beyond the limits of gracious obedience—so far within the region of darkness and rebellion, that the Church of God must stand in doubt of them, as having seemingly begun in the Spirit, and ended in the flesh? How sad it is also, for a professedly religious man, by wilful unconscientious acting, to put himself out of the line of God's providential protection! It was the case with this prophet; doubtless, had he gone straight forward to his home, he would have anticipated and prevented the hour of danger; the lion would not have been lurking in his path. But he returned upon his steps—he lost time. The shades of evening came upon him, and the lion was roaming abroad and in his way. My beloved brethren, let me entreat you to remember this. Every unconscientious act of your life goes to take you out of the line of God's protecting providence. You may disobey in a seeming trifle, you may slight the testimony of an awakened conscience, and that one act may change the whole character of your future course. Oh! be entreated to keep near to God, to watch with holy jealousy over every tendency to unfaithfulness. And, if duty calls you to go to such places as Bethel, where this world's idolatry is rife and the friends of God are few, remember that there, of all others, is the place for caution, and that they are the most to be dreaded,

who speciously advance religious reasons for their irreligious practices. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this rule, there is no light in them."

Notice, also, the readiness with which religious inconsistency is seen and condemned by the advisers and abettors of the evil. Here we have seen a prophet dwelling in the city of idolatry; and when he found another man, who had protested solemnly against the evil, and refused even to eat bread within the precincts of the city, and had given the express will of God as his reason for it, instead of immediately departing from the city, he lays a plan to betray his fellow into a still more glaring inconsistency. This is continually the case. There is a greedy, wicked joy in seeking to bring others down to our own miserable level; and then those who have done so are the first to point out the inconsistency. "This is the man of God, who was disobedient to the word of the Lord." So much for the friendship of the world—so much for the good done, the advantages gained, by undue compliances. Let it never be forgotten, that the tempter of our race is the "accuser of the brethren, who accuseth them night and day."

Once more, it is important to notice, from this history, the sovereignty of God, who maintains his purpose, and brings it to pass, notwithstanding the errors and seeming failure of his messengers. The man of God was slain by the lion, and was buried within the precincts of Bethel, a melancholy monument of inconsistency and disobedience. But every word that he uttered in prophecy came to pass in after years. And so shall it be in many an awful case in the Church of God. The inconsistencies of Christians and of ministers dishonour the holy cause with which they are associated; but still the Word of God prospers and prevails. The pride, the vanity, the passions, the prejudices of men are quoted against them by the world. The world is open-mouthed to proclaim and to multiply their errors. "This is the man of God that was disobedient." Still it is the prerogative of God to bring good out of evil. He removes, in anger, an inconsistent servant, but he perfects his own work and will.

Notice also the impression produced even upon some hostile minds, by a general consideration of the providential agency of God in the affairs of his Church. Mark

the effect of this series of facts on the mind of the old prophet in Bethel. He heard the prophecy against the altar in Bethel, he was the main cause of the inconsistency and unhappy fate of the messenger who pronounced it; but the speedy and disastrous issue of the affair came home to his heart and conscience. He saw that the hand of God was in it; and his own testimony, in the hour of his decline, went directly to confirm the denunciation which he had attempted to invalidate. "When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones; for the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the city of Samaria, shall surely come to pass."

Finally, my beloved brethren, let us look, with real humiliation of heart, at our own inconsistencies, as followers of the blessed Saviour. Some are guilty of glaring disobedience—the wilful and manifest indulgence of evil. Some are declining in heart. Evil has insinuated itself within. The heart is divided, and found faulty before the heart-searching God. Every one has cause for inward repentance. Oh! let us seek for grace to devote ourselves afresh to God. Think "what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness." What a mercy it is that we have a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness and that all which burdens the conscience may be carried to the fountain of that blood which cleanseth from all sin! But let us, at the same time, watch against every undue compliance. We are saved if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence, steadfast unto the end. The way that leadeth unto life is a strait and a narrow way, and few there be that find it. It will not tolerate disobedience. "Every man that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as God is pure." The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, "The Lord knoweth them that are his; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." May the Lord, this day, write a profitable lesson on the hearts of his faithful people, and increase in them a firm, effectual, consistent testimony against the idolatry of the world, and against the carnal mind, which is enmity against God. Amen.

DEATH, A SLEEP;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, CAMPBELL STREET, GLASGOW,
ON THE EVENING OF 3d FEBRUARY, 1833, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
DEATH OF THE REV. JOHN DICK, D.D.,

By the Rev. ROBERT BRODIE, A.M.

"And when he had said this he fell asleep."—Acts, vii. 60.

THESE words are the closing part of the account which the sacred historian gives of the martyrdom of Stephen. *Sleep*, the figure here employed, is not unfrequently used by ancient heathen writers for the same general purpose of denoting the termination of human life. The still, quiescent state into which man passes when he sinks into repose, is no unapt image of what takes place in appearance when man expires, more especially if under circumstances of gentle dissolution. It was only in such circumstances that the metaphor would have been deemed appropriate by a heathen, and would not probably have been used in a case like the present, where death was not the effect of the gradual decay of the faculties, but of the rude shock of persecuting violence. To one, however, who, like the author of this history, regarded the present life as introductory to another, and, in the case of the Christian, to a better, and who held, besides, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, death, under whatever circumstances it took place, was regarded, and is here represented, as being merely a sleep. This language suggests two ideas.

I. The state of the grave is not permanent: it is a sleep.

Sleep is not the extinction, but a suspension, of the faculties, and extends only to the body. The mind continues its activity, and when we awake the two continue as before to act together. So far it is an appropriate emblem of death. That event is not the final end of man. The stroke which consigns the body to the grave does not destroy the active functions of the soul. It still subsists in a state of consciousness, and at the resurrection it will be again united to its corporeal companion. Among the ancient heathens this reunion was strongly opposed, even by those who admitted the soul's immortality. When Paul maintained this tenet at Athens in the court of the Areopagus, the solemnity of the place could not repress the derision of his philosophic auditory; and the remark of

Festus, on hearing the same tenet from the same person, that "much learning had made him mad," has been considered as a proof that the Romans were as incredulous on this point as the Greeks. In neither nation, however, did the common people go the full length of their sages, but seem to have adopted the notion, that the soul still retained a corporeal envelope, though of a thinly attenuated form. But it was reserved for Christianity to propound and to impart the character of certainty to the resurrection of the body—to exhibit, not the *doctrine* only, but the *fact*. He whom Stephen saw standing on God's right hand had formerly suffered the pangs of dissolution. Cold, and pale, and lifeless, he had been carried to the tomb. To that tomb the stone had been rolled, and the seal fixed, and the guard stationed. And, had Jesus been the pretender which his enemies represented, the precautions would have been sufficient for the purpose; and on the third day, or the fourth day, or on any succeeding day, they might have exhibited, for their own vindication, the same body which had been deposited there, after having been taken down from the cross. But vain are those impediments which man offers to obstruct the fulfilment of the promises of Scripture, and the purposes of Heaven. Though the weapons of the guard could have easily repelled any effort to remove the body on the part of the disciples, if such removal had been contemplated, they were altogether powerless when the angel descended, and when the earth shook, and when Jesus, in the greatness of his might, walked forth from the sepulchre.

Appall'd, the leaning soldier feels the spear
Shake in his grasp; the planted standard falls
Upon the heaving ground.

On the subject of the resurrection many difficulties have been proposed, and questions started, and some have taxed their ingenuity in framing answers. But perhaps the best answer to a whole host of difficulties on this subject is a short and

simple one—the resurrection is an act of Omnipotence. If this is admitted, to speculate on the supposed obstacles to its accomplishment is useless. What though the materials which compose the body moulder into dust, and are undistinguishable from that with which they mingle? What though they may lie in the dark unfathomed caves of the ocean, or be consumed by the flames, or be dispersed by any of the ten thousand agencies to which they are exposed, so as to appear irrecoverably lost? Is any thing impossible with God? Does not his presence pervade universal Nature? Is there an atom that moves in the sunbeam that is not as much the work of his creating hand as those mighty orbs which he has spread through the immensity of space? Is there a single particle of dust whose place is unknown, or which is beyond the influence of his power?

That God can restore the dead to life, none who admit omnipotence to be an attribute of deity can deny; and there are, independently of divine revelation, presumptions that he will do so. *Inanimate* nature undergoes, as we all know, an annual *death and resurrection*. We expect, with the certainty of a common occurrence—though in itself certainly not the least wonderful of the natural appearances with which we are familiar—that trees, and plants, and herbs, which winter strips of their flowers and foliage, will in spring put forth their verdure, and that from the roots of the withered stalks there will spring up plants quite as beautiful as those that were blighted and have died.

Striking, however, as these vegetable analogies are, they afford a far less satisfactory presumption in favour of the doctrine of a future life, in so far at least as the immortality of the *soul* is concerned, than that which is derived from contemplating the circumstances of privation and suffering in which good men are often placed, and to which even their virtues in some cases contribute. Is there, it is natural to ask, a God that governs the world, and can it be that death will at once terminate the hopes of the good and the forebodings of the wicked? Can it be that the man, who, like Stephen, has lived only for the sake of others, whose “friends are angels, and whose home is heaven,” shall have no other recompense for his virtues but pain and torture;

while ease, affluence, and secular honours, shall be the lot of those who have been his tormentors—who have enjoyed influence only to abuse it, and who have prostituted their power, and the profession of religion, and the name of the God of Mercy, for the detestable purposes of cowardly oppression? It is to this point that the Christian will direct his thoughts, when, for the confirmation of his faith, he is desirous of adding, to the evidences which revelation supplies, those presumptions which are suggested by reason. Take me, he will say, to the martyr's grave. I ask not that there should be raised on it any “storied urn or animated bust;” still less do I ask, that, as in a subsequent age was done in Stephen's case, any votive chapel should be constructed on the spot; and least of all do I ask that pretended relics should be exhibited, and lying wonders recounted: these things are a profanation to his holy memory. I ask only, he will say, to be assured that I tread on the earth that covers, and see the mound that was intended to mark the spot that contains, his dust. I seem to feel the ground moving under me, and to hear, from his subterraneous resting-place, a voice that tells that it shall not be *thus* for ever; that, as certainly as the Saviour came after the lapse of ages to atone for our guilt—as certainly as that he who lay in the sepulchre of Joseph now lives and reigns, so certainly shall the archangel descend, and the trumpet sound, and the dead be raised.

II. The state of the grave will, to the Christian, be in its consequences improving. It is a sleep.

All have experienced the feeling induced after a day of severe exertion. Both body and mind are jaded. You know likewise what in health are the feelings after a night of sound repose: you rise invigorated, and are in some respects new men. In this, as in the former case, the resemblance holds between sleep and death. In advanced age, the mind and the body equally exhibit symptoms of decay; and disease, at any period of life, will soon produce in both mind and body the effects which are produced by age. When they are reunited, after the body has been raised from the grave, we shall be free from former imperfections, and those numerous sufferings which are connected with the body will be no more known. It must

be obvious, however, from this statement, that the analogy in this case is in some respects far less perfect than in the former. In awaking after the slumbers of the night, though invigorated in comparison of what we were at the time when, through the exhaustion of nature, sleep became necessary, there is no alteration in our general condition. It is otherwise after the repose of the grave. On the morning of the resurrection we will not only be different from what we were at the time when natural decay or disease brought on dissolution, but different from what we ever have been.

To render a future life an object of desire, it is necessary that it should be an improvement on the present. Take away from the enjoyments of this life the pleasure connected with the hopes of another, and a good man would have little inducement to resume it. There is not probably in the lives of the most prosperous anything that has afforded them such solid, lasting satisfaction that it should be considered desirable to go the same round. If the feelings of the worldly man were analyzed, it would perhaps be found that even in his case, at every period of life, it is the hope of something better that is his chief support. The futurity on which he lives is indeed worldly, circumscribed by time—still it is futurity; and his principle is hope. Much more is hope the principle of a Christian—a hope which is not restricted to the expectation merely of another life, but includes in that other the expectation of a better. In the Christian this hope will not be disappointed. We shall not continue what we now are, but we “shall be changed.” “Flesh and blood”—man, constituted as he now is, “cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” Placed in new and higher circumstances, there must be an alteration to fit him for enjoying them. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality.” “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual.” “It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.”

Of this highly consolatory doctrine, the martyr, to whose death the words of our text apply, had, as we are told, an ocular demonstration. In what Jesus now is, Stephen saw what His followers shall be, in as far at least as a resemblance can exist between those who are so different

in nature. That form in which he appeared in this world, in which he traversed the plains of Judea, and held converse with his favoured followers, he still retains; but from all those mortal infirmities, to which while on earth he submitted to be subject, that body is now free. There is still on it the scars of his martyrdom—the print of the nails and the gash of the spear, but it is no longer associated, in the minds of the beholders, with ignominy endured, but with conflicts that have been encountered, and victories that have been won. “He is arrayed in a vesture dipt in blood.” “On his thigh and on his vesture he has a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

With such powerful supernatural confirmations of the future glory of the redeemed, as those with which Stephen and John were furnished, in the representations given them of our glorified forerunner, we are not favoured; but in this, as in the former case, our faith may be assisted and strengthened by the analogies of Nature, or by those instances which it supplies, not only of a renewed, but of an improved existence succeeding a suspension of its exercise. If the transformations to which various insects are subject, and the rest and insensibility by which these transformations are preceded, are not so familiar as some of the natural facts above-referred to, they are at least as certain. An instance of this may be seen in the silk-worm, which, after it has reached its full size, languishes, and to appearance dies. Shrouded in its silken cone, it lies, without feet, or shape, or power to move: but from this enclosure it afterwards bursts, appearing in a new element—not on earth, but in air—and in a new and more beautiful form. Similar to this is the description of the dragon fly. The same in its general appearance in the first or vermicular stage of its existence, and the same as to its state of temporary torpor, it is the same in its subsequent condition. To a man previously ignorant of the fact, it would scarcely be credible that what is now a worm should afterwards, and by a process so remarkable, assume a form of life so very different. If on the testimony of others he would not disbelieve, he would not certainly have anticipated that from the little coffin in which it has continued for a time passive and insensible, it would come forth one of the most active and beautiful of winged

insects. Between the transformations which the system of nature thus presents among inferior creatures, and that which revelation predicts in reference to man, the resemblance is so close, that if we do not believe with some that the one was intended to excite the expectations of the other, it should at least have this effect. What you see in the book of nature should confirm your faith in what you are taught in the book of God. The insect which your eye follows, "soaring brightly, wafted lightly," should lift you above the difficulties of your Christian creed.

Yes, that was once a worm, a thing that crept
On the bare earth, then wrought a tomb and slept :
And such is man, soon from his cell of clay
To burst, a seraph, in the blaze of day.

So much for the illustration of the language of our text, and of those pleasing feelings with respect to futurity, which are cherished by the Gospel. In sleep there is nothing terrible ; we do not dread, we welcome it. In this light, revelation teaches us that death, even under the most appalling circumstances, should be viewed by the Christian ; and thus viewed, it will be stript of its terrors. It is the spirit of infidelity that pronounces, in reference to it, that no morning shall dawn upon the grave, and that no spring shall revisit the mouldering urn. "Therefore," faith will say, "therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth ; my flesh also shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to continue to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life. In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

I do not say that death is thus regarded by all that are called Christians. If we go to a place of sepulture, in vain shall we look for images and emblems that harmonize with those that have been described. It is

The void
Of hollow, unball'd sockets, staring grimly,
And lipless jaws,

that everywhere meet the eye ; it is death, as sense sees it, that stretches forth its cold and bony grasp. The same emblems, which meet you in the churchyard, form the ornaments of those painted vehicles that convey the corpse to the

grave ; and, as if this pagan, antichristian, Odin's-hall imagery were not sufficient, sombre colouring comes in aid of the gloomy impression. These, it is to be feared, must be considered as indicating a greater deficiency than in the article of taste. We do not refer to death in the manner that the first Christians did, because we have not the same feelings ; and we want their feelings on this subject, because conscience tells us that we want their character. Though no longer disciples of an intombed, but of a glorified Redeemer—though that Redeemer has become the "first-fruits of them that slept"—though, as our forerunner, he has "entered within the vail"—and though he stands ready to receive the departing spirit, we look on the grave with sentiments of unmingled terror, and feel as if it were not life, but death that was eternal. How different from this would be the feelings inspired by an appropriating faith ! and how much more appropriate to these feelings are the emblems to be found in a Moravian burying-ground, where the plant which winter blights, but which the spring revives, is the ornament of their sepulchres ; while "gone home" is the soothing and simple language in which, in their monumental inscriptions, they refer to a departed brother ! These feelings may be yours and mine. Possessed of those holy qualities which mark the character of the Christian, you would be the inheritors of his hopes ; and when that hour shall come, which comes to all, when you must close these eyes on terrestrial objects, you would close them in the full assurance of a blessed resurrection.

But while these are the privileged expectations of the Christian, let us remember that they are his alone. If you are destitute of those principles and habits to which the promises of the Gospel are addressed ; if your dependence for pardon, and acceptance, and salvation, does not exclusively rest on your Redeemer's sacrifice ; if your obedience is not the spontaneous return of faith and love, the most frightful images, which have been above-referred to, and which, as respects the believers, are so irreligiously inappropriate, will be infinitely short, in terrific character, of those which are suited to *your* prospects. Your nature will, indeed, still bear the impress of immortality ; but immortality

will constitute the chief ingredient in your punishment and perdition.

Let me request every individual who now hears me to put the question to himself, What are his views respecting futurity? what, if this night his soul were required of him—what would be his feelings, what his hopes? If these are inquiries to which you are strangers, and which you are utterly averse to entertain, this is itself an answer to the question. It shews, that, in whatever way others view death, it wears no pleasant aspect to you; and that, with the profession of Christians, you have the feelings which might be expected, and which would be natural in heathens. It would be wrong, however, to ascribe to want of religious principle the timid apprehensions which, on this subject, are sometimes felt. Much in some instances, is to be ascribed to constitutional temperament—much to looking too exclusively to one particular aspect of religion; and, in some cases, it may arise from a vivid conviction of personal demerit on the one hand, and of the divine purity on the other. But in other cases, and these, it is to be feared, not the least numerous, they must be ascribed to a consciousness of the want of the christian character. Whatever be the cause, the remedy is the same. To feel with reference to death, as the first Christians did, we must, like them, view it with the eye of faith: and to believe as they believed, you must act as they acted. It is not chiefly to any superiority in regard to the evidences of an unseen world that the strength of their convictions are to be ascribed, so much as to the circumstance of their minds being more habitually exercised about these subjects, and to their more faithfully following their convictions. Thus it was that their faith was not only more a habit of the mind, but that it operated in the way of hope and joy, and not, as ours too frequently does, in the way of terror.

If you shall suppose that I have been influenced, in the choice of a subject for this evening's meditations, by a circumstance not yet referred to, you will not have judged wrong. The subject *was* suggested by an occurrence to which a passing allusion was made last Sabbath, and which has, for some days past, occupied no small share of the thoughts and conversation of the inhabitants of this city—the

sudden removal, by death, of "an able minister of the New Testament." The case referred to, and that of Stephen, are not strictly parallel; but there are not wanting points of coincidence. I do not refer, as must be evident, to the *manner* of the removal. Disputants may still "gnash with their teeth." The spirit of infidelity is essentially intolerant; and that of vulgar *sectarianism*—an epithet not exclusively applicable to any denomination—is not different. But Christians are not now required to "resist unto blood." The principle has gone forth, and has been legislatively recognised, that man for his religion is not accountable to man. I do not refer, as a point of coincidence, to the circumstance of *age*. Some have supposed that Stephen was a young man, and this is as probable as that he was advanced in life. Nor do I chiefly refer to the suddenness of the summons. What I have particularly in view, as a resemblance between the individuals, is the department of ministry which they respectively occupied, being both "set for the *defence* of the Gospel."

It is upwards of thirty years since the subject of this reference gave to the world the first of his larger productions, under the unpretending title of "An Essay on the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures." If we advert to the circumstances of that period, and the inadequate justice which had previously been done to the topic, the subject must be pronounced to have been happily chosen, while the argument was both well arranged and well conducted. Numerous and highly valuable as have been the works which have since appeared on every branch of theology, this essay still retains its high place in public estimation, and is that, probably, on which the literary reputation of the author will chiefly rest. Though designated an Essay on the Inspiration of the Scriptures, and though its contents answer to the name, it is, at the same time, an illustration of the truth of the facts which they record. The infidel spirit which it was thus designed and calculated to repress, is not less prevalent now than formerly. And he thus in this respect, therefore, left an example, which not the ministers of religion only, but Christians in general, are called on to imitate. Since the first appearance of the work of which we are speaking, this country has undergone mighty changes, not only in its

political, but in its moral and religious condition. In the southern part of the island, the education of the people has received a strong impulse. But though education is *power*, it is not always virtue and happiness. Its influence, in this respect, must depend on the objects to which it is directed. If it relates solely to the accommodations of this transitory scene—if our relation to God and a Redeemer, and eternity, are kept out of view—there will be nothing consoling, sublimating, or purifying. As Rome and Athens advanced in intellectual culture, they became more corrupt. If in the circumstances and prospects of our country there is much to gratify, there is not a little in the above respect to excite apprehension. Societies have been instituted for the diffusion of knowledge, on the avowed principle of excluding the subject of religion. The same character belongs, with few exceptions, to the newspaper press. The habitual absence of all reference to the providence and moral government of God, in the views taken of public affairs and private occurrences, tends, insensibly, to foster a spirit of practical, if not of speculative infidelity. The evil, unhappily, is not purely negative. Never have the foundations of christian belief been assailed with a more open and rancorous hostility. The time may not be distant when the long agitated questions—whether Episcopacy, Presbytery, or Independency, is the preferable form; whether infant, or exclusively adult baptism has the greater degree of presumptive evidence in its favour; whether the system of Calvin or Arminius is most scriptural, shall with us, as in continental Europe, give place to a more important question—the question debated in “the Synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians,” whether Christianity is or is not a religion from heaven. In so far as the argumentative defence of Christianity is concerned, we have no fears. Nothing can be advanced against it which has not a thousand times been advanced before, and as often refuted. But it would betray a lamentable ignorance of the duty imposed on us, if we were indolently and without effort to rest in this conviction. Infidelity assumes an infinity of guises,

and the form of the antidote ought to correspond with the form of the poison. It is here that we have most reason to apprehend deficiency. These apprehensions are not lessened when we see the inadequate countenance given to the efforts which have been made to counteract the irreligious and infidel spirit of the weekly and daily press, by journals imbued with a Christian spirit, and that where such undertakings have succeeded, they have been chiefly indebted for their support to their sectarianism.

Let no one leave this house with the impression that these are matters in regard to which *he* can exercise no profitable influence, and that the defence of religion must be left to its professional advocates. No opinion can be more at variance with Scripture, or more injurious in its effects. He whose advocacy of Christianity this chapter describes, and whose death it records, was not an Apostle or an evangelist. He was an office-bearer, but his office was secular. He did not, on this account, say that the advocacy of the Gospel was not his proper province, and that it should be left to Peter and John and the other Apostles. It was in the circle of his acquaintance, and in the sphere of his influence, that the disputants arose; on him the duty devolved, and he did not decline it. Till his spirit descend generally on the members of the christian Church—till they are disposed individually to employ, for the advancement of the truth, the influence which God has given them, by pecuniary contributions, and personal exertions, and holy example, as parents, masters, and private Christians, we are not warranted to expect that the cause of Christ will be triumphant in the world, and bear down the corrupt influences which oppose it. Thus to feel and act is not more your duty than your interest. If the sacrifices, which these exertions might require, were far greater than they are, if you were even called on to “resist unto blood,” it would be more than counterbalanced by the ardour of your hopes, and the depth of your consolations. Even here, heaven with its felicities would be opened to your view. Faith in a Saviour, loved though unseen, would fill you “with a joy unspeakable and full of glory

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. A. MARSHALL, Kirkintilloch.
ADDRESS by the Rev. H. HEUGH, D.D., Glasgow.

TRUST IN GOD AND IN HIS SON JESUS CHRIST, THE BEST
CONSOLATION UNDER BEREAVEMENT;

A SERMON OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE REV. JOHN DICK, D.D., MINISTER OF THE
UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, GREYFRIARS, GLASGOW, AND ONE OF THE PROFESSORS
OF THEOLOGY TO THE UNITED ASSOCIATE SECESSION CHURCH,

By the Rev. ANDREW MARSHALL,
Minister of the United Secession Church, Kirkintilloch.

“Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me.”—

JOHN xiv. 1.

THE Saviour had just hinted, that the hour was approaching when he should depart out of this world, and return to the Father. “Little children,” he had said, addressing them with much tenderness, “Yet a little while and I am with you. Ye shall seek me ; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come, so now I say to you.” This intimation, my friends, although communicated with a degree of delicacy, filled their hearts with sorrow, and, doubtless, with so much the greater sorrow, that they understood it imperfectly. They were not aware how expedient it was for them that he should go away, or how much the glory to which he was ascending should contribute to their comfort. They were not acquainted, or but partially acquainted, with those arrangements of the divine wisdom and goodness which are now disclosed to us ; those stupendous arrangements by which their Lord, seated at the right hand of the Father, and furnished with all power in heaven and on earth, should watch over the concerns of his church, and of all the individuals belonging to that church, the meanest not excepted—upholding, directing, comforting, delivering them, and imparting to each, as his circumstances should require, out of the fulness of his grace. Such arrangements as they were not acquainted with, or were acquainted with but partially, did not much occupy their thoughts. Their thoughts were chiefly occupied with their immediate loss

—with the removal of him to whom their hearts were so much attached—their instructor, their friend, their guide, their Saviour ; whose company was their only joy, and in whose absence it seemed to them that they could not live. He saw their distress, and sympathized with them in it ; he regarded them with a feeling of the utmost tenderness, and well did he know by what means to soothe their afflicted spirits. He was an “interpreter ; one among a thousand.” The Lord God had given to him the tongue of the learned ; grace was poured into his lips ; he could speak a word in season to the soul that was weary ; and such a word, my brethren, we have just been reading : “Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me.” The cure for trouble of heart which is here pointed out ; the medicine that will remove it, if it is already felt—or that will prevent it, if it is only threatened—or that will strengthen the mind to bear it, if it must be borne—is faith, or belief : “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.” These words may be read in more ways than one—in not less than three, indeed ; either, first, indicatively, or second, imperatively, or third, partly in the one way, partly in the other. If we read them indicatively, we shall say, Ye believe in God, ye believe also in me ; if we read them imperatively, we shall say, Believe in God, believe also in me ; and if we read them partly both ways, we shall say, as our translators have

done, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." It is a matter of little moment, or rather of none at all, which of these readings we prefer. The question is merely one of grammatical propriety. In whatever way we use the words, the sense is substantially the same; and that sense, I apprehend, amounts simply to this. Trust in God, or continue to trust in God as you now do, the God of your fathers, the God of all grace, the God whom I have declared, God reconciled in his own Son, and reconciling sinners to himself; and trust in me also, his Son, by whom he is declared, and in whom he is reconciled—in me the Mediator between God and man—in me the Apostle and High Priest of your profession—in me whom you see before you in the flesh—in me who am clothed with your nature, who can take a fellow feeling in all your distresses, and who, being exalted to the throne, and crowned with glory, shall want no means of ministering to your comfort. It is, my brethren, no matter of sorrow to us that the Saviour has gone away. We never enjoyed his society as a man, and his departure, of course, gives us no pain. On the contrary, we rejoice that he is with the Father; we contemplate his ascension with feelings of triumph; and times without number have we joined in the song, "God is gone up with a shout; the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises." "Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men." "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may enter in." Though this be no cause of sorrow to us, there are yet sorrows sufficient, and more than sufficient to trouble our hearts—sorrows sometimes bearing a resemblance, in more respects than one, to the painful bereavement sustained by the disciples, when he whom they loved so much was parted from them, and carried up into heaven; but sorrows, we may add, which admit of the same cure, the same confidence in God, and in Jesus Christ his Son, as being sufficient to soothe them. To point out a few of these sorrows, and to show in what manner the confidence we speak of is calculated to soothe them, is what I intend in the following discourse.

I. I would say, then, in the first place, to the disciples in Jesus, let not your heart be troubled, if, in the providence of God,

you are bereaved of pious and beloved relations, the minister of death having entered your dwellings, and torn away those in whose life yours was bound up. This, indeed, as all can bear witness, is a painful occurrence—one of the most painful that can well happen. Human life, among its many trials, has few to surpass, or even to match it. The dart that strikes down those who are dear to us necessarily passes through our own souls; and the purer, the more virtuous, our souls are, so much the sorer is the wound it makes. Virtuous souls are the seat of strong affections. They are attached to those whom they love by many and powerful ties; and the disruption of such ties—the breaking of ties powerful and many—must needs be attended with no ordinary anguish. How then, it may be asked, can we hearken to the exhortation, "Let not your heart be troubled?" If that exhortation mean, that we are not to grieve, or that we are not to grieve deeply and sorely, how can we comply with it? Must we not in attempting to comply with it, do violence to nature, and not to nature only, but to nature and to reason too? Scarcely need I say, however, that this is not its meaning. Our blessed Redeemer taught no such philosophy. It was a saying of the ancient heathen, those pretended masters of wisdom—in particular, it was a saying of the sages of the Stoic school, who attempted to turn back the current of human feeling—that grieving is folly. "Why weep," they said, when death was committing its ravages, "why weep, since weeping can do no good?" "For that very reason," one replied, and in his reply there was sound and irresistible argument, "I weep the more." "O philosophy!" cried another, a distracted husband, suddenly robbed of the wife of his youth, "O philosophy! which yesterday taught me to love my wife, and this day would teach me not to lament her!" Our blessed Redeemer was a pattern of tenderness; tenderness appeared in all that he did and said; it was embodied in his actions; it dropped from his tongue—that tenderness, I mean, which sympathizes with grief when it is reasonable, and instead of rudely checking it, rather encourages it to flow. Take a survey of his whole life, from the beginning to the end, as he went about doing good—giving eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame—healing all manner of sick-

ness, and all manner of disease ; see him especially repairing to the house of Jairus, whose daughter had just died, that he might recall the departed spirit, and restore the damsel to her parents ; or see him approaching the bier at Nain, when a young man was carried out, of whom it was said, that he was the only son of his mother, and that she was a widow ; but, above all, see him standing by the grave of Lazarus, his friend, mingling his tears with those of Martha and Mary, and drawing from the spectators the half-smothered exclamation, " Behold how he loved him ! "

In the eyes of the Redeemer there is nothing wrong, nothing offensive, in moderate sorrow, nothing inconsistent with a Christian's faith. On the contrary, the indulging of such sorrow rather tends to purify and soften the heart, and to fit it for impressions of a more salutary kind. It is a troubling of the waters with which the angels of mercy are sometimes concerned, and in which, as it subsides, if due care be taken, divine healing may be obtained. Assuredly this healing will be obtained in every case, provided we give heed to our Lord's prescription ; I mean, provided we attend to the injunction in the text, " Believe in God, believe also in me. " If we believe God our Father in heaven, and if we believe his Son Jesus, in whom he is reconciled, and by whom we come to him, we shall be abundantly comforted in all our tribulations—we shall see a gracious hand wielding the rod by which we suffer, and shall have reason to say whatever may befall us, even when those dearest to us are removed, It is well, Father ; not our will, but thine be done. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : blessed be the name of the Lord. Far be it from us to question thy wisdom—far be it from us to question thy righteousness—far be it from us to question thy love. Thou dost all things well. Thou art righteous, O Lord, in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works : a God of truth, and without iniquity ; just and righteous art thou. Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also ? The cup which our Father hath given us, shall we not drink it ?

Farther, if we believe God our Father in heaven, and if we believe his Son Jesus, once crucified for us, now exalted to the throne, and crowned with glory,

we shall have no fears, we shall have no anxiety, we shall not have so much as one uneasy thought with regard to those who, like the patriarchs, have died in the faith. If they have avowed a Christian's hope—if they have confirmed the avowal by a Christian's life—if they have been steadfast and immoveable, ever abounding in the work of the Lord—if they have been like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which have yielded fruit in its season, and whose leaf has been always green—nay, what is more, if they have still continued to flourish, and still to bring forth fruit, even in old age—if this has been the case, where is there any room for grief ? where is there any room for letting our hearts be troubled a single moment on their account ? On the contrary, have we not cause to rejoice that they are with the Father—that their warfare is accomplished, and that their mourning is ended—that all their griefs and toils are past, and that every tear is wiped from their eyes—that they have fought the good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith, and that henceforth the crown is waiting them—the crown of glory, which the Lord himself, the righteous Judge, at the great day will place upon their heads ? " In my Father's house are many mansions ; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you : and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself ; that where I am there ye may be also. " If we believe him who uttered these words, shall we not believe that his departed saints have entered into rest—that their spirits made perfect, are safe with him—that they are stationed before the throne, seeing the face, and rejoicing in the countenance of the Lord God and of the Lamb—that they are occupying some of those mansions of glory which he went to prepare, and are cherishing the hope, sure and joyous, of one day being transferred to other and higher mansions, in the same house—at that triumphant day when the mystery of God, announced by the prophets, shall be finished—when their Lord, according to his promise, shall descend on the clouds of heaven, and they shall obtain the end of their faith—the redemption of their bodies.

II. In the second place, I would say to the disciples of Christ, Let not your hearts be troubled, if, in the providence of God,

you have been bereaved of believing friends, pious and worthy individuals, who, though not connected with you by the ties of kindred, have truly loved you and sought your good. This, perhaps, is a case still more analogous to that of the Apostles at the time of their Lord's departure, than that we have just considered. True, indeed, with some of the Apostles, the Lord, as a man, was connected even by blood. Three of their number, James, and Simon, and Judas, the sons of Cleophas, otherwise named Alpheus, were his cousins-german, born of Mary, the sister of the Virgin; and accordingly, in the language of the Jews, which is that of the New Testament, they are styled his brothers. Perhaps it is to this circumstance that Paul refers, in a certain place, where he says, "Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." If, however, the Saviour was a kinsman only to some of the twelve, he was to all of them a friend; all of them occupied a large place in his affections, and from day to day partook of his tenderest love. Their interest was dear to him as his own; and so long as he was with them, they were saved, in a great measure, if not altogether, from the ordinary troubles and anxieties of life. His wisdom was their guide—his prudence was their safety—his gracious care supplied their wants; and in the hour of trial, when their hearts and their flesh might have failed, they found him standing by them, more faithfully than a brother. No wonder, therefore, that at the thought of his going away, sorrow should have filled their hearts; no wonder that they should have needed the soothing counsel in the text, "Believe in God, believe also in me." But, my brethren, what we would chiefly remark is, that the sanctifying counsel which sustained their hearts when bereaved of his society as a man, is calculated to soothe us when bereaved of our earthly friends—those much loved, much honoured friends, whose kindness we may have shared, and by whose wisdom we may have profited. What can so ease our hearts in such a case—what can so effectually remove that pressure which weighs on them and troubles them, as confidence in God and in his Son Jesus Christ? Whatever our friends

might be to us, they were that which Jesus made them, and no more. Their wisdom was only a ray emanating from him, the light of the world—their kindness only a stream flowing from him, the fountain of life. If that ray be quenched, or if it no more gladden us—if it no more shine in this direction, the light from which it emanated has lost none of its brightness; if that stream be now dried up, or if it be directed into a different channel, the fountain from which it flowed is as full as ever. Means and instruments may fail—they have failed in all generations; it ever was intended they should fail; but he who appointed them—he who employs them—he who makes them what they are, fails not; he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever: there is no variableness in him, nor shadow of turning. The Lord liveth, and blessed be the rock of our salvation, and let the God of our strength be exalted.

III. In the third place, I would say to the disciples of Jesus, Let not your hearts be troubled, if, in the holy providence of God, the church be deprived of eminent, and useful, and highly respected pastors; ministers to whom the great Dispenser of sacred endowments had given a more than ordinary share, and whose places, of course, it may seem difficult to fill. Of all the cases I have mentioned, this, perhaps, comes the nearest to that of the Apostles when their Lord was going away. Their Lord was not only the author, but also the prime teacher of the Gospel. He had laid the foundation of the kingdom of heaven—he had published the tidings of it far and wide, through Galilee and Judea—he had confirmed these tidings by signs, and wonders, and mighty works, evidently performed by the finger of God—he had collected a number of disciples in the city of Jerusalem, and throughout Judea—he had given to his cause a certain form and footing in the world; and how was that footing to be maintained, or how was it to be extended, if he should go away? How was the Gospel to succeed if it came to be preached only by mere men?—how was it to succeed if the management of it fell into the hands of such individuals as the twelve Apostles, individuals so poor, so humble, so mean, so illiterate, so ill-provided, humanly speaking, in every point of view? What! were they to convert the world, the

ignorant, the depraved, the hostile world? What! were they to conciliate its favour, or to meet or endure the brunt of its fury? Were the foolish things to confound the wise—were the weak things to overpower the mighty—were the despised things, and the things which were not, to bring to nought the things which were? Such were the thoughts which naturally suggested themselves to the twelve when they understood that their Lord was going away; such were the distressing fears which troubled their hearts: and with such fears, my brethren, with fears somewhat akin to these, the hearts of Christians are apt to be smitten in latter times, when the wise, and the learned, and the good, are removed by death—when the chairs of instruction are left empty, and the lips that were wont to teach knowledge are silent in the tomb. From whose mouth, we are apt to say, looking mournfully at one another, shall we any longer be taught to seek the law?—who shall dispense to us the mysteries of godliness? Alas! that faithful and wise steward is gone who fed us with knowledge and understanding, giving to each of us his portion of meat in due season—that scribe well instructed in the kingdom of heaven, who brought forth out of his treasures things new and old—that workman, not needing to be ashamed, who rightly divided the Word of truth. Such feelings it is not easy to soothe, nor need we be very anxious about soothing them: the indulging of them can do no harm. But to those who believe in God, and in Jesus, his exalted Son, I would say, in the language of the text, “Let not your hearts be troubled.” “There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High; God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.” “Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks; consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever.” “For the Lord hath chosen Zion: he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread; I will clothe her priests with salvation: and her

saints shall shout aloud for joy. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.” He who ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, received gifts for men; and these gifts, my brethren, are not yet exhausted. He who gave “some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” will give them still. Moses, the servant of God, who marched a distinguished leader before the Hebrews in their travels, may die; and, after Moses, there may arise none like him: yet some Joshua will be found, endued with a portion of the same spirit, to go before the host to fight the battles of the Lord, and to conduct the people into the promised rest. Chariots of fire and horses of fire may be sent to translate Elijah, and the sons of the prophets may see their master taken from their head; but the mantle of the ascending saint will be caught by some Elisha, and the Lord God of Elijah, when invoked, will be present, and will still work signs and wonders, though by feeble hands. At all events, whatever the instruments be, whether they be feeble or powerful, honoured or mean, the work of God will not cease. Nay, so far from ceasing, it will not even languish. If it ever languish, it will only be in particular places or churches; and it will be owing to ourselves, to our giving way to tribulation of heart, to our neglecting to attend as we ought to the words of him who said, “Believe in God, believe also in me.”

I have said that our situation is very different from that of the Apostles. The departure of the Lord, which was a trial to them, is no trial to us. On the contrary we rejoice, and have great cause to rejoice that he is with the Father. He hath entered the holy place not made with hands as our forerunner, to prepare a place for us. He stands before the throne, as our intercessor, pleading our cause at God’s right hand; and, what is more, on the mediatorial throne he sits, as King of Zion, superintending the affairs of his chosen people, and stretching his sceptre, a mighty resistless sceptre, over the universe; as things being thrown beneath his feet, and a name given him above every name. Our hearts, therefore, are not troubled because

he has gone away, yet the exhortation in the text, which was so needful for the Apostles, is not less needful for us. There are events befalling us from time to time, in the providence of God, bearing a resemblance, perhaps in more respects than one, to what befell them, and giving rise to uneasy sensations, which we are able to overcome only in one way, and that is, by hearkening to the voice of him who says, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Following out this suggestion, I have said, in the first place, that I would say to the disciples of Jesus, "Let not your hearts be troubled," if, in the providence of God, you are bereaved of pious and beloved relations, in whose life yours was bound up; if, in the second place, you are bereaved of believing friends, pious and worthy individuals, who, though not connected with you by ties of relationship, have ever loved you and sought your good; and if, lastly, the church has been bereaved of any useful and highly respected ministers—men whose endowments were of a superior order, and whose places, of course, it must be difficult to fill.

To this subject, as you will readily understand, my thoughts have been led by that late event, which has plunged us all into such distress, and which has spread to the utmost extremities of the Secession Church—the death of your highly beloved and venerated pastor; but the subject, as you can be at no loss to perceive, is not less adapted for the special purpose for which we have this day assembled. We have to commemorate the death of him who is gone to be with the Father; and the very circumstance that he is with the Father, is calculated, if we consider it, to free our hearts from trouble—to work in us that confidence, that hope, that joy and peace in believing, with all the other sentiments which make the exercise of communicating acceptable to God, and profitable to ourselves. In the first place, our blessed Redeemer is gone to be with the Father, because the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake—because he hath finished the work that was given him to do—because he hath magnified the law, and made it honourable, fulfilling all its obligations, and satisfying all its demands. He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God

It was our sins that humbled him so low, that made him a man of sorrows, that poured him out like water, that melted his heart as wax in the midst of his bowels. It was our sins that commanded the sword of justice to awake and smite, that nailed him to the cross, that consigned him to the grave. Has he, then, my brethren, returned from the grave—has he been released from the pains of death? Has he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive—has he entered within the vail as our forerunner—does he sit and reign at the right hand of the majesty on high? Is all this so?—and what is the inference we are warranted to draw? Is it not that his work is accepted—that his offering is an offering of a sweet smelling savour? Is it not that justice is satisfied—that the law is fulfilled—that God is reconciled—that heaven is secured as our everlasting habitation—that the streams of mercy are opened, to flow freely and richly, without intermission and without end? This, my Christian brethren, is what we are to celebrate in the ordinance of the Supper. We are to testify our belief that the Saviour is dead; we are to testify our belief that, in dying, he has accomplished the object he had in view—that we can now draw near to God, as a God reconciled in him, as our Father in heaven, pacified towards us, notwithstanding all that we have done. And the proof of this—the clear, decisive, satisfactory proof—is, that he is with the Father. Why, then, should our hearts be troubled? Why should we fear to engage in this exercise? Why should we fear to draw near to God? The God to whom we draw near is the God of peace. In a word, our exalted Redeemer has gone to the Father, to be our intercessor or advocate before the throne, if at any time we sin, or if at any time we come short in the performance of our duty. What is more, he is gone to reign at the Father's right hand, as our exalted Head, and to impart to each of us, as our circumstances require, out of the fulness of his grace. Why, then, should we be discomposed—why should our hearts be troubled? What though our faith be small—what though our love and gratitude be languid—what though our hearts be cold, and hard, and unbelieving—have we not a remedy? Let us remember the

words, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Let us assure ourselves, that he will minister to us out of the riches of his grace—that he will help our unbelief—that he will soften our obdurate hearts—that he will draw out, and purify, and elevate, and warm our affections, in order that our fellowship may be with the

Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; and that we may have reason to say, Truly God is with us: this is none other than the house of God. Oh, send forth thy light and thy truth, and then shall we go to the altar of God with exceeding joy! May God accompany what has been said with his blessing! Amen.

THE CHARACTERS BY WHICH THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE DISTINGUISHED;

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED IMMEDIATELY PREVIOUS TO DISPENSING THE SACRAMENT,

By the Rev. HUGH HEUGH, D.D.,

Minister of the United Secession Church, Blackfriar's Street, Glasgow.

THE words of Scripture which appoint the ordinance that we are now going to celebrate are accompanied with this exhortation, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." A right communicant will as really have respect to this part of the institution, as to the other, "This do in remembrance of me." It has been usual, before dispensing the Lord's Supper among us, to present a few thoughts to those who are to celebrate the ordinance, for the purpose of assisting them in the important, though difficult, work of examining themselves. Self-examination consists in endeavouring to know our spiritual state and character in the sight of God. It seems that God has given us, in his own word, a description of those who are his people—that we are in some measure acquainted with what those characters are—that we can compare them with our own, and thus endeavour to ascertain whether these characters, divinely revealed as designating the children of God, in reality apply to us. I trust that before you have come here it has been your study to do homage to this part of the appointment, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat;" but I shall bring forward, in compliance with usage, some leading characters by which the people of God are distinguished from others; and let it be our concern to enter into the spirit of this prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

The first character that I mention is this: all the people of God consider reli-

gion as strictly a personal concern. I need not inform you that there may be inquiry of mind, and even feeling, about religion, while religion is all the while not reckoned a matter of personal concern. The child, for example, may commit to memory a catechism, may read and commit to memory a large portion of the Word of God, and may feel less interest in religion and in its truths, as exhibited in this formulary, and in the Word of God, than in his recreations, and in the society of his companions. How common is it for the adult man to have a far deeper personal interest in the gains of this world, and its varied pursuits, than in all that is presented to him in the commands, threatenings, promises, and doctrines of divine revelation! Now, it is altogether otherwise where the heart has been changed by grace. Every person under the guidance of the Spirit of God feels that the great matters of religion involve his present and his eternal interest, but that in reality it matters little to him what is his condition in this world compared with what is his condition towards God, and what is his state for eternity. The question which the awakened jailor proposed in the prison, under the ministry of Paul and Silas, is one into which all those who are renewed in the spirit of their minds have cordially inquired, "What must I do to be saved?" Is this, then, your experience? Can you say that the interests which your religion involve have awakened your attention, have engaged your feelings; and that you feel more interested in these great matters than you do in any thing of a secular nature?

In the second place, all those who are

renewed in the spirit of their minds perceive, and in some measure feel, the admirable suitableness of the blessings of the Gospel to their peculiar case. That these blessings are in reality suited to the condition of those to whom they are presented, and for whom they are intended, requires no illustration. It belongs to the wisdom and kindness of God, that the Gospel which is intended for man, that the salvation which is provided for man should be perfectly suited to man—and so it is; but men in a natural state do not, in general, perceive this suitableness. Whatever they admit, they are not affected by it. The perception of this suitableness supposes such a knowledge of the evils of our natural condition as is not common to men, or is attained to by men in their natural state. The Gospel is essentially a remedial system, and unless we are rightly aware of the evils for which it is a remedy, we never can see the suitableness of the remedy which it provides. For instance, the Gospel reveals the opening of the eyes to those that are blind and in darkness; but if men do not think that they are blind and in darkness, how can they see the fitness of such a proposal to their circumstances? The Gospel reveals a Saviour, who had come to seek and to save that which was lost; but if men are not sensible that the character lost applies to them, how can they perceive the fitness, the suitableness, of the character and the work of the Saviour, since these are intended alone for those that are lost? The Gospel proposes to give men liberty; but if men are not persuaded that they are in bondage, what suitableness will they perceive in a proposal of liberty to their case? In a word, the Gospel is a plan of reconciliation; it is a plan for reconciling to God men who, prior to that reconciliation, are, and do remain, his enemies; but if men are not persuaded that they are God's enemies, what else can they do, whatever in their mouths they profess, than, in their minds, spurn that Gospel which announces a scheme for reconciling enemies? It is otherwise with all those who have experienced the grace of God. They have felt that they are under the very evils which the Gospel professes to remedy, and they do not see any spiritual evil in their circumstances for which the Scripture does not provide an adequate remedy.

All those who have been taught of God know that they are naturally in blindness. David, after all the instructions he had derived from God's word and spirit, says as a man still comparatively blind, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." It is one of the promises of God, "All my children shall know me; they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest." They believe that there is a wonderful suitableness in the plan of salvation, inasmuch as they see in it a teaching which will make all wise unto salvation, which is able to dissipate their prejudices, to dispel their ignorance, and give them saving knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Another character of the people of God, is, that they have all been taught that they are guilty, exceedingly guilty—so guilty, that if God were to mark iniquity against them, they could not stand—so guilty, as really to be exposed to that punishment which God has revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men—so guilty, that, unless their guilt be removed, they must perish with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. There is, therefore, an admirable suitableness to the guilty in the provision of the Gospel; in the provision of its free pardon, proceeding from the infinite grace of God, through the redemption that is in his Son, in the provision of a propitiation made by the Son of God in our favour, and therefore an all-sufficient propitiation. They see that character of Christ, as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, as a propitiation for our sins, through faith in God—and this promise, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more"—as the very redemption they need, and they have found consolation from it. "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope." Take only one other example—the example of holiness, or of the grace necessary to make men holy, provided for those who are impure. Next to the pressure of guilt, and the consciousness of it, I do not know of any thing standing more in need of spiritual provision than the

power of indwelling corruption, the difficulty of doing any thing good, the difficulty of loving God, the difficulty of serving him in holiness and righteousness, the difficulty of attaining right motives and ends in holy living. Now, how perfectly suitable to such feelings are the promises of holiness given in the Scriptures! "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh;" and "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And then think of that Spirit which is, by way of eminence, the Spirit of Holiness, and sent into the heart of believers for the very purpose of conforming them to the divine image. Do you now say that the remedial character of the Gospel renders it perfectly suitable to you—that you consider it worthy of all acceptance, because it exactly meets your peculiar case—that for subduing corruption and making you holy in heart and life, in all manner of life and conversation, it is exactly the Gospel you need, and therefore has become, in your choice, the Gospel of your salvation? I believe that there are moments, and these frequently occurring in the experience of Christians, when this suitableness of the Gospel appears to them so strong as to fill them with perfect amazement, and to stimulate them peculiarly to gratitude and praise. Oh, when they think what they are, and what they do, and what they deserve, and what God might have done to them—and think, at the same time, of the freeness and infinite richness of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and of Christ Jesus himself providing for their salvation; when they think of free pardon, and of the Spirit given them for their holiness in life eternal, are they not constrained to say, "O what is man that thou art mindful of him!" "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who covereth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."

In the third place, they who are renewed in the spirit of their minds are in many respects the reverse of what they naturally were. This follows from the

preceding statement. If this system of remedy has taken effect upon men, it has purged them from their spiritual maladies, and given them health and soundness of mind. Believers are not only changed, but in some degree reversed, in point of character. What else do the following figures mean? "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" and to this extent, that "old things are passed away," and "all things are become new." What means the figure of turning darkness to light, light being the opposite of darkness? What means this, "I will take away the stony," hard, impenetrable, "heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh," soft, tender, and sensible. The case of the first Christians manifested this reverse of character very particularly. Some of them were Jews, strongly prejudiced against the Gospel, hating the very name of Jesus of Nazareth, and breathing out, with the Apostle of the Gentiles, burnings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. But when they became converts, what things were gain to them they counted loss for Christ; and gloried in that cross which they had formerly derided; and associated as brethren with those towards whom they were formerly as wolves in regard to sheep. In like manner the character of the heathen was not merely changed, but reversed. They forsook their favourite idols; and, whereas formerly they were corrupt and abominable in their principles and conduct, they afterwards became pure and exemplary in character. In like manner with all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, their characters are not only improved, but reversed. Did your time permit, I might show you this at great length. I might select those parts of character that seem most unmanageable, and take the strongest hold of men, and show you that the Gospel, accompanied by the grace of God, when it takes effect on the human character, accomplishes in it this reverse. I might refer you to the love of money, so tenacious of its hold of the breast—to the love of distinction and of fame, which gives laws so imperiously to proud spirits. I might show you how bad tempers, revenge, jealousy, suspicion, and such like, in as far as the Gospel operates, are not merely ameliorated, but reversed, so that proud men become meek

and humble, revengeful men compassionate and forgiving, and the avaricious kind and bountiful. And oh! while you consider this as a test of character, and a test by which to try yourselves, we beseech you to consider that it is a test of the Gospel after which you must aspire; seek that the body of sin be destroyed, that henceforth you may not serve sin and Satan.

I find I can only number the two following characters, in addition to the three I have now stated. All the people of God are devoted to him, and cordially subject themselves to him. They are devoted to him; that is, they regard themselves as not their own, but his, partly by right of creation, partly by right of redemption; and their language is, We are not our own—we are bought with a price; and using this language, they present themselves to God, living sacrifices. What is the meaning of a sacrifice? It is something in regard to which the owner renounces his own right, which he gives to God—which becomes, as it were, the Lord's property, and which it would be sacrilege in the donor to retract. So it is with all the people of God. They renounce all their substance, soul and body, with all their powers and faculties, as not their own, and devote themselves to God as living sacrifices. Have you done so, and do you mean to do so? And then they are subject to God; that is, they make God's will their law, not their own will, not the will of the world; and they desire to have respect to the ordinances of worship, not because it is customary, decent, or proper, but because God has enjoined them; and they cannot think of neglecting them, as they would then be guilty of disregarding his will and authority. And they consent to the order of the decalogue, that the first and great commandment should be, to love God with all our hearts; and they consent to the order of worship, believing that God has a stronger claim upon them than man can possibly have. They have respect to law as well as worship. Their language is, we will have respect to all his commandments.

Lastly, all true believers are engaged in a spiritual conflict, and find the necessity of being so engaged. Renewed, as they are, in the spirit of their minds, they are not renewed perfectly. The old man remains in great power even after the new man is formed within them. There

is a law in their members, warring against the law of their minds. There is no grace in the Christian which has not also its antagonist corruption, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that they can do nothing whatever in the manner they would wish to do: to will is present with them, but how to perform, that is, in a perfect manner, that which is good, they find not. They cannot love God with that ardour they would; they cannot attain to that overflowing gratitude they would; they cannot be so kind to their neighbours as they would; they cannot be so pure and so like the Saviour as they would; but they do not, on that account, decline the attempt. They know that they are placed here as soldiers of Christ, in a field of warfare—that the fight is a good fight, and will be crowned with victory. They cannot be as subject to God and his dispensations as they would be; but they say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven," and forgetting that which is behind, they reach forward to that which is before.

To sum up all, I think I am permitted, by the Word of God, to say, that where a person has been brought to regard the interests of religion as interests personal to himself, and the highest of his interests, to regard his salvation as the one thing needful; where he has been brought to discern and feel the absolute suitableness to his peculiar case of the remedial scheme of the Gospel, for making the foolish wise, for pardoning the guilty, and sanctifying the impure, and to receive it as worthy of all acceptance; where the character has been in some degree reversed, nature resisted, and holiness in some measure attained; where the person has been, in some measure, enabled to offer himself to God as a living sacrifice, to be his property, and in all circumstances; and, finally, where he has been engaged in fighting the good fight of faith, although amid many fears, perplexities, and anxieties—where these in any measure exist, the good work is begun, and we are new creatures indeed. But let me remind you, that it is not from any confidence in yourselves, or from what you have attained to, that you are to engage in any service, or in that of this day in particular. This must be our meditation this day; I will go to the performance of duty, but it shall be in the strength of the Lord

God. I will make mention of his righteousness, even of his only. And let us remember what is said, Thy grace shall be sufficient for me; thy strength shall be perfected in my weakness.

Dr. Heugh concluded by reading Matt. chap. v. 3—12. "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Eph. iv. 29—32. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace

unto the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." And, as peculiarly adapted to suggest directions for communicants, Eph. iii. 14—21. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

FIRST TABLE SERVICE BY THE REV. MR. MARSHALL.

LET me direct your thoughts to the glory of which the apostle speaks in these words: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." This is language which the sacred writer applies to the new dispensation compared with the old; and it may, with equal propriety, be applied to the heavenly state, compared with the state which now is. Such glory is too bright for our vision—the influence of it would overpower us; and accordingly, in condescension to our weakness, it is but partially disclosed—we see it as through a glass darkly—and it is described in the holy Scriptures in figures and similitudes. We know, however, it is the glory of that place where God's honour dwells—it is the glory he has laid up for them that love him; and we know another circumstance still more interesting, it is the glory which Christ our Lord has provided—the glory which Christ bestows—the glory which consists in being with the Son, and seeing

his face. This glory, the Apostle says, shall be in our persons, in our bodies, and in our souls—in our bodies, mean as they now are, and meaner as they shall ere long be, when they have returned to the dust. These, our bodies, are destined to undergo a mighty change. The day approacheth when they shall shine with a radiance surpassing that of the stars: when our Lord appears in the majesty of his Father, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. "He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." In the Saviour, "Death is swallowed up in victory." But the glory which awaits us shall by no means be merely a visible or corporeal glory. Who shall tell what that glory is which shall constitute the capacities and the engagements of the soul—when all its feelings are rightly attuned—

when all its powers are elevated to the highest pitch—when the perfection of the understanding is combined with the perfection of the moral principle—when every desire is fixed on its proper object—when every thought flows in its proper channel—when that which is perfect is come, and that which is in part is done away—when we see no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face—when we no longer know in part, but even as we are known—when faith and hope, the pilots of the soul, having conducted her safely into the haven, shall resign their office, and withdraw, the one giving place to vision, the other to enjoyment—and when love alone takes possession of it, that love which is the lustre of moral excellence, the most perfect image of the all-perfect God—oh, who can tell the glory that shall surround us then! What, therefore, ought to be uppermost in our minds—what ought we to feel for him who has provided us this glory, who makes us meet for this glory, who conducts us to the possession of this glory—what do we owe to him? Let us now testify our sense of what we owe to him, our gratitude, our adoration, by eating and drinking in remembrance of him. The Lord Jesus on that night, &c.—“Fear not ye,” said the angel to the women who came to see the sepulchre of our Lord, “I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen as he said—Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” The place where the Lord lay suggests to us many lessons—most instructive and conciliatory lessons—and, in particular it reminds us that he has conquered death. The victim of death he had become; with the cords of death he was fast bound; but he burst these cords asunder, and vindicated his freedom from that terrible foe. The power of death to harm him was derived solely from the curse, that curse to which he had become subject, for the purpose of redeeming us; that curse he endured, and by enduring it, took it away. The consequence was, that death was discomfited—the sceptre of power was wrested from his grasp—and at the very moment when he seemed to have obtained a victory, he lost it for ever. The place where the Lord lay, affords us matter of meditation of the most cheering kind. Approaching the sepulchre, and finding it empty, we are taught to say, “O death, where is thy

sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!” By the hand of death, indeed, we must, all of us, one day be seized. A very little while, perhaps, and the hand shall be upon us which has swept away so many loved and honoured friends and acquaintances into the unseen state. But why should we be disconcerted—why should we be cast down and perplexed, as if all our glory were laid in the dust, along with our breathless clay? Our Redeemer died, and shall not we die too? Because he lives, shall not we live also? He is the head, we are the members. He is the first-fruits—we are destined to follow him as the full harvest. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them that sleep in Jesus, God shall bring with him. And farther, the place where the Lord lay reminds us, that he went down into the grave—that he travelled before us through that dreary vale which we are so much afraid to enter—that he explored a way through its dark recesses, a way by which we shall be conducted safely and pleasantly—at least safely, whether pleasantly or not—and pursuing which, we shall come in due time to the region where he dwells, the region of glory and immortality. The grave is indeed a dismal place; but how consolatory is it to think, that the Saviour has been there! How consolatory is it to think, as we are entering its gloomy portals, that we are treading in his steps—that we are going to sleep where he once slept—that we are going to lay our flesh where his once lay—that we are going to take possession of a spot—a most forbidding spot to all appearance, and which we shrink to approach—which he once occupied, and which he converted into a field of triumph, for there the mighty victory was gained! Hence he came forth a conqueror, and more than a conqueror—then the promise was fulfilled, or the threatening, if you choose to call it a threatening, for in one sense it is a promise, and in another a threatening, “O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.” Fear not to follow your conquering Redeemer the captain of your salvation—fear not to go down with him into the gloomy grave: he will be with you—his rod and his staff will comfort you—he will point out before you the path of life. May the grace of his Spirit be always with you.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Very Rev. G. H. BAIRD, D.D., Edinburgh.

SERMON by the Rev. J. JEFFREY, Musselburgh.

ADDRESS by the late Rev. J. DICK, D.D., Glasgow.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 1833,

By the Very Rev. GEORGE HUSBAND BAIRD, D.D.,

Minister of the First Charge, High Church, and Principal of the University of Edinburgh.

"Go, and do thou likewise."—LUKE x. 37.

You are aware, my friends, that these words are the application of a parable which Christ delivered, for the purpose of correcting the impression of the Jews concerning who was their neighbour. The parable is contained from the 30th verse of the chapter to that which we have now read. "And Jesus answering, said, a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out twopence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." Now, according to the interpretation which the Jews put on the term "neighbour," it comprehended only those who belonged to their own particular community, and worshipped

God with the same form of rites and ceremonies as they themselves did. It was to men of this description that all the personal and national affections of the Jews were confined. The rest of mankind they considered strangers and aliens; and from them they turned away, exchanging with them no offices of mutual forbearance or kindness. The following are the revolting statements of the Jewish people, as stated by a Rabbi:—"If a Jew see a Gentile in hazard of death, he is under no obligation to save his life, though it be in his power to do it; and even though he kill him, he shall not be put to death." And why? Their language is, because he is not his neighbour. This is revolting doctrine, unquestionably, and revolting language; but it is matter of regret, I fear, that contracted and shocking as such doctrine may be, it is by no means, at least to a certain extent, exclusively peculiar to the Jews. This doctrine, my friends, is the doctrine of almost all men in a certain state of their progress, when their views are not enlarged by liberal and extensive intercourse with their fellow-men. The savage tribes almost universally live in a state of hostility, or at least dislike, to every other tribe; and, even among a civilized people, it is only those of improved and cultivated understandings who can divest themselves of the partialities of national prejudice, and receive a stranger from another land with all the cordiality and affection to which, as a brother of his kind, he is entitled. The difference of the stranger's appearance, and manners, and

religious principles, is too often permitted to conceal his virtues from the sight, and to infuse a tincture of suspicion and estrangement into the conduct of others towards him. How often, I would ask, have the polished inhabitants of Christendom treated the descendants of Abraham with a brutality and treachery that would have disgraced the character even of a Jew? What a distrust is there in their intercourse with each other! Even in the bosom of the same community, have we not seen little jealousies arising from difference of religion, destroying the best affections of the heart of man, and teaching him to make light of the misery of his brethren?

Such malevolent affections are very inimical to the spirit of the Gospel. When our Saviour appeared among men, his object was, not merely to recall them to God, and purchase for them an immortal inheritance in the heavens—he came also with this object, to proclaim peace on earth, to soften the angry passions which vice often fosters in our bosoms, and to reconcile us to one another. To remove the distinctions that keep men at a distance from each other, he has united them into one great family, and taught them to consider every individual of the human race as a brother, whose offences we are bound to forgive, whose sorrows it is our duty to commiserate, and whose happiness we are called to promote, with all the tenderness of affection. He commands us to imitate the conduct of the charitable Samaritan, to pity the distresses even of an enemy, and exert our best endeavours for his relief. In the following discourse it is proposed, first, To explain the nature and limits of this duty, to which I have now been alluding, and to which our text points the attention; and, secondly, To suggest some motives to the practice of it. And I may just, in passing, mention, that these are subjects which I have this day selected for illustration, in the humble hope, and with an earnest prayer, that the divine blessing following the illustration, may awaken and impress on you a general feeling of pious benevolence, which will prepare you for manifesting, by a kindly commiseration, and liberal countenance, your christian patronage to an appeal about to be made on your good-will and charity, in behalf of a vast, and deplorably suffering, portion of our fellow-country-

men.* I am, in the first place, then, to explain the nature and limits of the duty; and I begin by remarking, that when our blessed Saviour commanded his disciples to cultivate the principle of universal benevolence, and to open their hearts to their brethren of every description, it was by no means his intention to discourage the exercise of private affection, or to break the bond which knit friends and relations together. These bonds have been formed by the Author of our being. They are imposed upon man by the necessity of his situation. Yes, our first connexions are with individuals to whom we are attached by the ties of blood, and many nameless endearments, that give them a peculiar title to our sympathy and regard. The parent who gave us birth, and whose tender care supported us amid the weakness and wants of childhood—the brothers who partook of the same care, and mingled with us in the amusements of youthful innocence—the friends whom we met with in more mature age—the benefactors whose bounty has rendered life a blessing to us—and the country which has protected and matured our attainments—these, all these are objects to which our social affections have been early and habitually directed, and which have obtained a hold on our hearts, before we are able to form a conception of the relation we bear to the general community of mankind. Our attachments to them are founded on the principles of our constitution, and the Gospel of Christ confirms their power. On every occasion, Jesus, whom we are commanded to follow, discovers the warmest affection for Jerusalem, the city of his Father; and when, amid the fainting of his last agony, he viewed his mother in the crowd, and committed her to the friend he loved, he consecrated for ever the sentiments and endearments of natural and of private affection. The Gospel does not, as some of its enemies have insinuated, condemn the exercise of private affection; yet its object and its tendency are to correct the irregularity of these affections, and to restrain their excesses. It teaches us, that our great obligation is to the love of our kind, that the private affections are only branches of this great duty, and that they cannot be innocently allowed to grow to such profusion as to endanger the root from

* The Schools established by the General Assembly in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

which they spring. Our natural affections, our gratitude, our friendship, our patriotism, we are permitted to indulge within the bounds of innocence and moderation; but we are not permitted, with innocence, to follow them into the practice of iniquity, nor to employ them as motives for injustice to the stranger, or hard-hearted cruelty to our neighbour. You are commanded to do good to the household of faith, but not, on that account, to neglect the sufferings and sorrows of any unfortunate brother, far less to treat him with cold-hearted cruelty, to injure his fortune, or mar his peace. No: you are to imitate the conduct of your heavenly Father, who views his saints, indeed, with peculiar complacency; but who makes his sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good, and his rain to descend on the just and on the unjust.

My friends, this reasoning may serve to convince you, that there are duties which we owe to our neighbour, merely as men, independent of any other bond of connexion with them, and which no accidental circumstances or situation can possibly disannul. Even the Jews themselves allowed thus far with regard to the duty of justice. But Christ raised his followers to a much higher standard. He has taught them to place in the same scale the mildness of condescension, the mercy of forgiveness, and the tenderness of sympathy and charity. The text is, therefore, to be held enjoining, that our benevolence and compassion be as extensive as are the existence and the varied condition of the human race, unconfined by any circumstance of external condition, and unpromoted by the influence of any private motive. Yes, wherever human wants and miseries appear, it is our duty to feel for the objects of them; it is our duty to exert ourselves, as far as our influence through any channel can extend, in affording relief; though the miserable should be strangers to our name, the enemies of our nation, and even the blasphemers of our faith, they are nevertheless entitled to our sympathy when their condition demands it. Their faults and errors may be objects of our detestation or pity; but let us never forget that their persons are the workmanship of our Father, which we are bound to respect. Did not He that made us make them? It is, therefore, a christian duty to sympathize with them—to pour, like the Samaritan of old, wine and oil into their wounds, and to perform

every office which a generous humanity requires, delivering the poor and the needy, and them that have none to help them. Doing this, we shall fulfil the law of Christ, and put on that universal charity which is the bond of peace, which thinketh no evil, and which shall endure for ever. Such is the duty which our Saviour has commanded us to perform, and which our text enjoins.

In the second place, let us proceed to suggest some motives which, by the divine blessing, may recommend to you efficaciously the practice of this duty. My brethren, the motives which recommend the practice of universal benevolence and charity are numerous, and they are powerful. At present, however, I shall confine your attention to three things: first, to the conformity of this benevolent spirit with the best principles of that nature which God has given you: in the second place, to the tendency of the spirit of benevolence to promote even the personal happiness and comfort of the benevolent individual; and, third, I would recommend it as in conformity with the spirit of the Gospel, and with the practice of Christ Jesus. With regard to the first of these, I observe, that God, as the Scriptures tell us, hath made of one blood all the nations of men that dwell on the face of the earth, and he has implanted within them principles that, when duly analyzed in their tendency and object, recognise this common origin. Every heart which has not been corrupted by selfish motives, or which has not been perverted by the maxims of a false religion, delights in the society and shares in the happiness of his fellow-mortals. Unmixed malevolence is no part of the nature of man. Whenever the good of others does not interfere with our own; wherever it is not considered as an obstacle to our own advancement or desires, it is an object of our approbation and desire. Yes, we are formed to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep. Such are the reflections which every enlightened and good man delights to cherish. They are reflections on which we dwell with pleasing satisfaction, if we are conscious of indulging them; and they do contribute the purest and most lasting enjoyments of our life. We dislike the heart that is insensible to the fortunes of his brethren around him—that swells not at another's joy—that beholds without emotion their griefs; while dear to us

are the heavings of an affectionate bosom, which seems to reflect the feelings of every neighbour, and glows with the love of human kind. These observations tend to show, that good-will to men is sown in our constitution by the hands of our Creator, and that it will spring up wherever it is not overborne by the powerful influence of prejudice and passion. This is the voice of God proclaiming to us, by the very principles of our frame, that we are, one and all, intended to be partakers of each other's fortune, and that it is the will of our Father that we should be mutual supports to each other in the pilgrimage of life. We may differ in some accidental circumstances—in the place that gave us birth—in the ceremonies of worship—in the principles of the creed we adopt; but we agree in many more important circumstances. We are all children of the same heavenly Father; we need the same elements for the support of our bodies, and we are all born after the same image; we are all members of the same great community; we are all fellow-travellers in the same weary pilgrimage on earth; and we are all expectants of the same immortality. What, then, follows but that we be willing to assist each other, overlooking the trifling differences by which we may be now distinguished, and be anxious for each other's happiness and comfort? The tender mercies of our heavenly Father extend to all his creatures, and why should our affections be confined within a narrow circle? Filled with a portion of His spirit, it becomes us to cherish the kind propensities of our constitution, and to be perfect, even as he is perfect. In addition to those motives for the cultivation of the benevolent spirit I am recommending, I mention that we may consider the exercises of the benevolent affections as productive, in fact, of the purest enjoyment of man. Self-love and the love of our neighbour seem directly to differ in their object: we conceive them to be like streams which separate for a while, and meet again, after collecting the waters of the countries through which they flow. These two principles conspire harmoniously to swell the general current of human enjoyment.

Yes, with respect to the feelings of love, and compassion, and kindness, Providence, as a motive to cherish these, has mercifully constituted us, so that their exercise yields satisfaction to ourselves,

independently of the advantages which result from their indulgence to others. The sensibilities of virtuous affection have a charm which the being who experiences them would not exchange for all the wealth which the world can bestow. The feeling heart rejoices ever in the cultivation and exercise of these. They enable him to participate in the joys of every happy man; and when his tears fall at the sight of human sorrow, they are precious drops which abundantly repay his grief. And as the tender affections are delightful, even in themselves, so are they the source of many solid advantages in the intercourse of life. They promote our reputation; they ensure the reciprocal affection of our brethren. Where, Christians—look around you, and tell me where—is the man who enjoys the good-will of every neighbour, and is followed to his grave by the lamentations of the village or city in which he lived? It is he who had a heart to feel the distress of the unfortunate, and had a hand open to relieve them. “I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame; I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out. Therefore, when the young men saw me they hid themselves; the aged arose and stood up; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and the widow's heart sang for joy.” Such were the consolations that cheered the heart of Job amid the heaviest load of his afflictions—consolations which were not to perish with his body, but to follow him into the land of spirits. Benevolence is the temper of the blessed in heaven; and the more we cultivate it here—the nearer we here approach to the perfections of the blessed above, the better qualified shall we be for their society in heaven. Many of our other accomplishments and attainments shall leave us on this side of the grave: “Whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues they shall cease; whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away; but charity never faileth.” It will be our song of rejoicing in the house of our earthly pilgrimage; it will visit us like an angel of mercy on a bed of sickness; it will support our heart amid the waters of the Jordan of death, and prepare us for that happy country where love, harmony, and peace, shall reign for ever.

I come now to mention, as a motive, in the last place, that the duty is recommended by the spirit of the Gospel of Christ.

The Gospel of Christ displays a pure system of the most generous and disinterested benevolence; for it exhibits to our view the whole of the human race in a state of the deepest humiliation and distress, stricken and wounded, and half dead, without an eye to pity, or a hand to save. But it was in consequence of this deplorable situation that the Son of the Most High, though neither bone of our bone, nor flesh of our flesh, had compassion on our misery, and descended from the mansion of his glory to afford us relief. It was with these benevolent motives in view that he travelled through the wilderness of human life; it was with these benevolent motives in view that he was despised, bound down, and oppressed by every hardship that could render the wilderness of life comfortless—persecuted even by those he came to save, and expiring on the cross to accomplish his work of mercy. And what is the return that he would have from us? This is the return, that men would lay aside their mutual jealousy and enmity—that men would forget the petty differences that agitate them—that they would act as brethren one to another: “A new commandment,” said he, “give I unto you, that ye love one another, and by this I know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.” Yes, the Redeemer has broken down the middle wall of partition that hitherto separated the nations, and taught that the mercy of God is not confined to any particular tribe or party of mankind, but that in every nation, in every situation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. And I put it to the heart of every man that hears me, Can we call ourselves with justice followers of Christ if we do not imitate the most distinguished feature of his character? Can we be followers of Christ, and yet have hatred, revenge, or uncharitableness? You may deceive yourselves; but if you are deficient in this disposition, it is my

duty to state distinctly, whatever qualifications as a professing Christian you may possess; however sound you may be in principle; however fervent in your devotions, you are not Christians. For God has said, “If any man love not his brother, the love of the Father is not in him.” “If, therefore, there be any consolation in Christ; if there be any comfort of love; if any fellowship of the Spirit, put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.”

Such are some of the motives which recommend the duty enjoined by the text—which urge us to neglect petty distinctions, and to be kindly affectioned one toward another. Did such dispositions uniformly prevail in the hearts of men; did the lives of Christians correspond with the spirit of their religion, and the obligations under which they lie to charity, they would yet assume a different and more delightful aspect than they have ever done. Happiness might yet descend from heaven to visit our abode and dwell with men on earth. For how inconsiderable are all the unavoidable ills and miseries which we suffer from the curse which for man’s sake was pronounced upon the ground; what is even the mortality of our frame itself, when compared with those evils and miseries which we suffer from one another—which spring from the selfish passions of individuals, from their injustice, their uncharitableness, and their cruelty?

Let me, then, earnestly beseech you to imitate the goodness of your Father in heaven, and to cultivate affection to all the children of his family. Let us do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God, that his Spirit may delight in us, that we may be prepared to live together in harmony and peace in the world to come. Amen.

REVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, MUSSELBURGHI, ON SABBATH, DEC. 30, 1832,

By the Rev. JAMES JEFFREY.

“*Ash now of the days that are past.*”—DEUT. iv. 32.

It is a fact, the importance of which is not sufficiently estimated, that the circumstances in which we have hitherto been placed, have exerted upon our minds an influence either of a beneficial, or of

an injurious tendency. As objects in external nature produce impressions of a pleasant or a disagreeable kind upon the senses, so the particular events which have occurred in our individual history, and the

scenes with which we have more especially been conversant, have operated strongly in the formation of the character which we now respectively maintain. To each of us, and almost from our birth, the world has proved a school, in which our moral faculties have been trained and educated. The varied aspects, which, in our limited sphere, it has presented—the manifold and singular vicissitudes of which, to us, it has been the theatre—and the innumerable incidents which it has beheld crowded into our lot, have all contributed to give a colour and direction to our feelings and desires, and to help on, or retard, the improvement of our spirits. Meanwhile, time itself has never for an instant been stationary upon us. Year after year has glided over our heads, each one leaving us, in a moral and religious point of view, either better or worse than the one which immediately preceded it; and if we, at the period of life to which we have now severally attained, could bring ourselves calmly and steadily to survey the whole length and breadth of the buried past—enumerating the diversified operations of Providence regarding us, and marking, with a searching and impartial eye, the effects, sometimes favourable, and not unfrequently the reverse, which they have had upon our souls—such a retrospect, while it might cover us with the blush of shame, would exhibit both the kind and the degree of influence which by-gone days has exercised over us. Upon such a survey, however, we are exceedingly averse to enter. Into any well-balanced comparison of the means which we have enjoyed, with the ends which they have effected, we can with difficulty persuade ourselves to go; and although, in our solitary moments, we frequently take an excursion into the world of memory—traveling in fancy over the variegated scenes through which, in reality, we have already passed, and recalling, with a chastened joy, the thousand pleasures which, during youth and manhood, we have tasted—yet, when the *religious* improvement of the past invites our consideration, we seem as if we had conjured up some wizard power which forbade and repelled us from prosecuting the inquiry. Notwithstanding of this reluctance, it is peculiarly befitting in the Christian to review, with impartiality and candour, the way along which the Almighty has conducted him, and to set in array before himself the effects, whether

beneficial or otherwise, which the enjoyment of the means of grace has produced. At all times this is a high, as, if rightly engaged in, it would prove a most salutary duty; but it is especially so when another of the great divisions of our time is within a few hours of its completion—when we are on the eve of terminating a year which the very oldest will admit to have been unparalleled in their experience, and which has been marked by events and appearances which, while singularly solemn and striking in themselves, will give it a prominence in our recollections that belongs not to any other of the years which we have lived. Before, then, it passes finally away from us, and is numbered among the things that were, let us now, with all seriousness and honesty, enter upon a brief examination of the manner in which it has been spent; and while thus asking of the days that are past, may we be taught henceforth to consider our latter end, and to apply our hearts unto wisdom.

I. Let us ask of the days that are past, in reference to the improvement made of those privileges by which they have been distinguished. These, indeed, in the strange infatuation of our natures, may be undervalued or overlooked; and, forgetting the relationship in which we stand to the Almighty, and the eternity to which every passing year is hurrying us, we may fix our thoughts only upon those objects of sense, which present convenience or advantage prompt us to secure. But as sinners and as immortals—as individuals meriting their Creator's wrath, and quickly moving forward to an untried state of existence, it behooves us to be most deeply solicitous about that which teaches us how deliverance may be obtained from the one, and how we may enter upon the other with confidence and joy. In the oracles of truth, we have the evidence and the assurance that what many kings, and priests, and righteous men of old saw only through the dim and shadowy medium of prophecy and type, has been clearly and satisfactorily developed; and there, too, we have a revelation of that wondrous plan, up to the full sublimities of which no created intellect can rise, which the Godhead has devised and matured, and executed, for our freedom from the punishment, and our recovery from the degradation of the Fall. These oracles we all possess, and are able to peruse. The means and the ordinances of grace which have been

established to give efficiency to the designs of mercy, we have from our earliest years been privileged to enjoy. Not only has our lot been cast in a land of light, from which by the general diffusion of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, the darkness of ignorance and the mists of superstition have been dispelled, but each one of us for himself can read in his own tongue the wonderful works of God, and can become acquainted at once with the footsteps of Providence in the ages that are gone, and with the scenes which are to be transacted in those which are yet to come. Opportunities of avoiding the coming wrath, and of being elevated to future glory, we have had in inconceivable abundance: nor can we think of the Sabbath days which we have enjoyed, with all the warnings and admonitions which they have brought; nor of the Sanctuary with its weekly convocations, and its holy ordinances; nor of the innumerable aids and encouragements, and incentives to piety, which have been vouchsafed us, without acknowledging that the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and that ours, indeed, has been a goodly heritage. For once, let us deal honestly with ourselves; and, casting away from us every lofty imagination, and stretching our mental eyes away back over the weeks, and months, and years, that are gone, let us associate the survey with the means of spiritual improvement which have been afforded us—means which have never for a single moment been withdrawn, and which, while valuable beyond all computation, have been as numerous as the hours of our existence; let us set ourselves in solemn earnestness to the work of such a survey, omitting from our remembrance no blessing or privilege which from our youth upwards we have enjoyed: and what is the experience which each of us has of their effects? what voice arises from the grave of years to praise or to condemn us?

To upwards of fifty Sabbaths, and not fewer weeks of privileges, our retrospection is this day limited. And while we thus move backwards upon the spiritual privileges which, during the continuance of this present and single year, have invited our attention, O what record concerning us have they carried to the sanctuary of God? how far have they advanced our progress in the divine life? to what degree have they prepared us for the glories, or assimilated

us to the inhabitants of heaven? These my friends, are questions which, at this particular season, irresistibly press themselves on our minds, and compel us to the work of a searching self-examination. We cannot—unless we would make toys of our souls, and a wilful mockery of eternity—we cannot fail to inquire how twelve months' occupation of the talents which were intrusted to us have been improved; and although the result of the inquiry may present many of us with the counterpart of him who hid his lord's money instead of putting it to usury, it will serve to stimulate others to more vigorous and persevering exertions; and will be to us all as a monitor either of correction, or of reproof, or of encouragement. Of this one thing we may be assured, that unless we are more crucified to the world than when the year commenced, more resolved and persevering in taking up our cross and following after Jesus, and more elevated, and spiritual, and holy in our desires, and pursuits, and hopes, than we could say we ever were before, we have reason to be apprehensive of the safety of our condition, and to fear that we are verging to that state of most awful and extreme peril, in which our hearts will become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and when the Spirit will cease to strive against our growing impenitence and guilt. The Saviour, notwithstanding the unwearied vigilance with which he watched over his disciples, and the zeal and anxiety wherewith he sought to teach them of the things pertaining to the gospel dispensation, addressed them as persons being without understanding; the Apostle, after all his attention to the wants of the members of the Hebrew Church, characterized them as those who stood in need of being again taught the first principles of the oracles of God; and of very many of those who now compose this assemblage of professing Christians, might we not truly affirm that they have, during the present year, made no perceptible progress in the work of an undying sanctification; and that, notwithstanding of all the means of grace which they have enjoyed during its continuance, they are this day as much under the dominion of sin, and as practically ignorant of the peace-giving power of godliness, as they were on the very day of its commencement. O my friends, the spectacle of immortal man thus trifling away his years, and despising his oppor-

tunities, and misimproving his privileges, is one on which angels may well look down with anguish and in tears; and which might righteously provoke the curse pronounced upon the unfruitful fig-tree: "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" See ye to it, that if your privileges have been great so also has been your improvement. Consider the high purposes for which these privileges were bestowed, and inquire diligently whether these purposes have been realized in you; and while you thus ask of the days that are past, and examine into the use you have made of the unbounded goodness of your God, may you be able, as year succeeds year, adding another wrinkle to your brows and bringing you nearer to your graves, to tell of new conquests over your spiritual enemies, and of new achievements in the path of holiness!

II. Ask of the days that are past in reference to the mercies by which they have been distinguished. From our earliest years, the history of each of us has been one continued testimony to the constancy and richness of our Creator's goodness; and if, at the point in the journey of life to which we have now arrived, we allow ourselves calmly to look behind on the past, and to call up the remembrance of all the blessings by which it has been marked, we cannot fail gratefully to acknowledge the beneficence of God. A survey of this kind, if properly conducted, will carry us along a wide region, every spot of which is covered with the memorials of the divine regard; for to what single place in it can our recollections carry us which is not pregnant with the evidence that he has never closed against us the sources of enjoyment. We cannot review the days of childhood and of youth, when pleasure was the constant attendant on our footsteps, and when, in all the exuberance and freshness of early feeling, we made the present all joy and the future sunshine, without acknowledging that the instances of the Almighty's kindness, of which we have been the objects, are great beyond every calculation. From the many dangers and difficulties to which in our pilgrim state we are exposed, he has prepared a defence and a protection; and along all the windings of our path, and throughout the every vicissitude of our lot, he has followed us with a parent's care, and lavished upon us a parent's love. Day after day and year after year have

given new proofs of his continued affection; and if we could but reflect how regularly he has opened his hand for the supply of our returning necessities; how invariably, when we were brought low, he has helped us; how he has prospered us in our worldly circumstances, and increased the sum and extended the source of our comforts; and how, when, one after another, of our early companions have gone down to the forgetfulness of the sepulchre, he has still preserved us in the land of the living—if we would but reflect upon all these favours as coming directly from his hands, and as bestowed for the promotion of our happiness, surely our hearts would swell with the intensity of their own emotions, and our mouths bless the Lord at the recollection of his benefits. The majority of mankind, however, instead of entering upon such a survey, or feeling it to be a duty thus to meditate on their past experience of the divine goodness, live on in entire forgetfulness of the author of their mercies, and as if he had established no claim upon their gratitude and obedience. For do we not oftentimes see the man whom providence has blessed above his fellows, shutting his heart against every pious feeling, and devoting the life, which God has abundantly gladdened, to purposes of which God never can approve. And if we contrast our own mercies, with the returns which we have made; if we consider the measure of gratitude with which we have requited the Almighty for his kindness; if we select any period in our history, the period let it be which marks the present as the last of its Sabbaths, and compare the blessings by which it has been distinguished, with the holy feelings which it has awakened, or the holy practices to which it has brought us, how awful is the preponderance against us, and with what an accumulated weight of guilt are our characters disfigured! Can we point to one hour of the many that have revolved during its continuance, which has not brought with it the proofs of God's affectionate remembrance? Can we fix upon one, among all the moments of which these hours have been made up, in which we could say, that goodness and mercy have ceased to follow us? and if we cannot, then ought we not to consider the obligations under which we have been laid, and, like Samuel, to acknowledge, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us?" In this, however, as in other matters, our

sense of duty does not lead to its performance. Like the unfaithful servant, we know our Master's will, and yet refuse to fulfil it; and so habitually, to some extent, has this been the character of us all, that an inquiry into the days that are past establishes against us the charge of lukewarmness and ingratitude: and if among men between whom there passes the interchange of kindness, no crime is held in greater detestation, is it not to be stamped with a still darker colouring, when it is chargeable upon men in reference to their Creator? Is it merely to perpetuate and render more confirmed our hostility against him, that during another year he has daily loaded us with his benefits? and now, when but a single day intervenes before it closes upon us for ever, can we tell of the melting and sanctified influences which the mercies that it brought have exercised over us? are we able to speak of them as having warmed the naturally cold sensibilities of our hearts; and, remembering that God requireth that which is past, is our great anxiety about what we shall render unto him for all his benefits towards us?

III. Ask of the days that are past, in respect of the sins which we may have committed. On this, perhaps, more than upon any other point of examination, we are apt to delude ourselves; and upon any other we will enter more readily and cordially than upon this. In general our inquiry into our sinfulness is limited to the offences which we have committed against our fellows, or to the violations with which we may have been chargeable of the established and revered usages of society, as if the commandment to love our neighbour as ourselves, and to live, as much as in us lieth, at peace with all men, had no reference to the sanction or authority of God. We act as if our freedom from a trespass of these precepts made us clear in the sight of our Creator, and implied all that is necessary to the obtainment of his favour. But painful and humiliating as the task may be, it is by a higher and more severe standard than this, that a scrutiny into our own state and character must be regulated. The law under which we are placed, and whose authority and requirements upon every subject we are bound implicitly to obey, is issued by the Almighty, and it is of the very first importance that we diligently search into the

obedience which we heretofore have rendered it, and seriously inquire how frequently and in what respects we have failed of the homage it demands. In every thing we, doubtless, offend and come short of the glory of God. A complete freedom from sin is an attainment at which none of us can arrive on this side the grave; but we are commanded to be constantly struggling against, and resisting its dominion—to be ever vigilant and alert in repelling every temptation to its committal, and be always wielding those weapons by which it must ultimately be subdued. In this respect, how has it been with us in the days that are past? Have we become more mindful of our God and more solicitous about our souls than we once were? Or, is it not the case, that since the present year was ushered in, the sins which in secret and in public we have committed, are as numerous and aggravated as they formerly were; and that, if they were all gathered and collected into one heap, and presented to our eyes, we would sicken at the sight of our own deformities, and turn away humbled and in despair from the spectacle before us? Is there one of us who dare say that we have not, oftener than we wish to name, done evil in the sight of the Lord, and hearkened not to the voice of his law? What one of us is there who can honestly affirm, that, during the whole year, we have been guilty of violating no one precept of the Law or of the Gospel—of the neglect of no one single ordinance or institution of grace—of misusing none of the opportunities of improvement with which we have been blessed? Were we able to search into this brief period of the history of you all; could we tell you of your doings during the course of a whole year, would we not be forced to speak of some of you, who so far forgot your christian profession, as occasionally to indulge in drunkenness and swearing, in lying and in covetousness, in Sabbath-breaking and church-neglecting? Could we not point to this and to that parent who has oftentimes forgotten to make a temple in his household, and to be himself the officiating high-priest—and to this and to the other individual who has worshipped the creature more than the Creator? These, and a thousand other sins, though wiped away from our remembrance, or talked of merely to excite the worldling's laugh, are every one of

them written in those books from which we shall be judged. They have outlived, and they will long outlive, the period of their committal; they will, like so many phantoms from the land of shadows, yet rise up to rob us of our peace; by their recollection will our last hours on earth be embittered; like millstones they will hold us in a sea of troubles, as we pass over the dark and stormy waters of death; and, unless timely repented of and for ever forsaken, they will hurry us from the condemnation of the judgment-seat, to the endurance of that load of woe with which, throughout eternity, the finally impenitent will be borne down. How wise, therefore, is it, at a season so peculiarly fitted for reflection, instead of sending away the last hours of the year with the tidings of our levity, our thoughtlessness, and our crime, to spend them in solemnly reviewing our sins—to devote them to the work of examination into the offences against the purity and majesty of the divine law with which we are chargeable, and to remember that God will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil!

In concluding these, we trust, not unimportant observations, we cannot omit noticing the peculiar reasons which should induce us as a community, as a congregation, and as individuals, to enter earnestly and seriously upon such a survey. The year which is just numbering its latest sands, is one which will long live in the remembrance of us all; and the events of which will circulate in the conversations of those who, when our heads are pillowed in the grave, will fill the stations which we now occupy. At its commencement, we heard the distant voice, and were told of the sanguinary footsteps of the destroyer. Amidst revelry and mirth, its approach was heralded, and its earliest days proclaimed; and although we trembled under the apprehension of a visit from that minister of wrath who, bedewed with the blood and tears of nations, was still indulging itself in slaughter, and gradually drawing nearer and nearer to our doors, yet was the drunkard seen staggering in our streets, and the sound of joy heard arising from many of our dwellings. The spoiler came, terrible in his mien, and resistless in his power, and fatal in his touch; and, week after week, did the cry of desolation, and of bereavement, ascend from the broken circle of many a family;

and, week after week, unsatisfied with his conquests, and insatiable in his thirst for blood, did he continue to distress and to destroy our little population. Fear paralyzed every heart, and was depicted in every countenance; the strong man and the youth laid themselves down healthy and vigorous at night, and morning dawned upon them slumbering in a common sepulchre; many went out from their families who returned to linger for an hour or two upon a sick-bed, where few, if any, friendly hands, would minister to them in their agony; and hundreds were hurried from their beds to those graves into which no friendly tears were dropped, and which will very long proclaim, with an eloquence that will reach the heart of the men of aftertimes, the ruthlessness and severity of this appalling visitation. At the time we ventured to predict that, with many it would speedily be forgotten—that it would pass away, leaving crowds of survivors as impenitent and sinful as before—and that very many in our town would exhibit the counterpart of Pharaoh's infatuation, sinning yet more and more, and hardening their hearts. How truly this prediction has been verified, and to what an extent ungodliness and immorality prevail in the midst of us, you all can testify. It would seem as if little or no impression of the calamity now remained, and as if the religious excitement which it occasioned, had proved, like the goodness of Israel, evanescent as the early dew, or as the morning clouds. The profane and the blasphemous, the careless and the formalist, seem as numerous among us as before; and in vain do we look for the fruits of which there was such abundant promise. So may it be with some in the present assembly; and, therefore, would we urge you to inquire how it this day fares with your souls, and how it is with you for eternity; to examine into the effects which the heavy judgments of the Lord have produced upon you, and to mark well the influence which they may have had in drawing you nearer to your God. The year will speedily die away, and be numbered with the past; but your character, throughout its progress, is chronicled in the books of heaven. It will leave behind it an influence upon you, either for better or for worse. It will, at no distant time, arise from the grave into which it is about to be consigned, either to commend or to condemn us; and

therefore would we entreat all, under the impression that on a similar occasion many of you will never meet again—that ere the last Sabbath of another year revolves, your bodies will be in their graves and your spirits in eternity—to ponder your ways, to consider your doings, to ask, now and in earnest, of the days that are past.

ADDRESS AT THE FENCING OF THE TABLES ON 24TH JUNE, 1832,

By the late Rev. JOHN DICK, D.D.,

Professor of Divinity to the United Associate Synod.*

IN approaching the table of the Lord, we profess to hear his Word, to call on his name, and to meditate upon his death; we solemnly announce ourselves to be his people and acknowledge him as our teacher, our Saviour, and our Lord. But it may be well to consider whether our hearts correspond with the feelings we should have in sitting down at the Lord's Supper. We are in the presence of Jesus Christ himself. It concerns us, therefore, to inquire whether we have the affections by which his genuine disciples are characterized. The same grace works in all who have come to the knowledge of the truth. The apostle Paul says of himself, in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, at the fourth verse, "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." You see that the knowledge of Christ appeared to him transcendent, and for the sake of enjoying an interest in him, he willingly renounced all those things to which he was formerly attached, and in which he placed his hope of salvation. Now the grace of God works in the same manner in all who are converted and believe, and leads them to part with every thing that is inconsistent with a sincere, devoted attachment to the Saviour. For

example, if we know Christ, we will renounce the wisdom of the world, between which and the wisdom of the Gospel there is an open competition. The wisdom of the world, indeed, comprehends many things that are truly useful in themselves, but it also comprehends many false principles, maxims, and practices. It is false when it leads us to exalt our own reason as the standard of truth, and to refuse implicitly to submit to the wisdom and authority of God: it is false in the judgments which it forms of the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, when it openly stigmatizes the character of the followers of Christ; and it is false when it persuades men to bestow more care upon the pursuits and enjoyments of the present life, than upon the interests of their immortal souls. If any man has come to the knowledge of Christ, he will hold these maxims of worldly wisdom in abhorrence, and will show that he condemns them, by pursuing a course of conduct directly opposite to that which they prescribe. Then, with regard to those things which, in the wisdom of the world, are truly useful—such as the knowledge of the arts and sciences, the man who has come to the knowledge of Christ has found a much nobler object of contemplation. He would rather be wise in the estimation of God than in the opinion of men; he would rather know, and understand, and feel what the Spirit testifies concerning Christ, than treasure up all the discoveries of learning and philosophy. This knowledge will lead us to renounce the honours of the world. The world reserves its honours for its favourites, and these are persons who speak as it speaks. On whom does it bestow the honourable title of wise? On the man who minds what it calls the main things—who pursues the things of the present life, and leaves those of eternity to shift for themselves. As the world sees no excellence in the knowledge of Christ, it accounts the man a fool who is a Christian in sincerity. As the men of the world are

* For the action sermon that preceded this address, see *Scottish Pulpit*, Vol. I. No. 19. p. 207.

influenced only by what they see, or by what may contribute to their present convenience or advantage, they regard as visionary the man who looks at things not seen and eternal. If a man begins to prize the wisdom of the Gospel; if he is seeking it with unwearied application and diligence, he is set down in their vocabulary as a madman or an enthusiast. Reproach is not easy to be borne; but there is no true Christian who would not rather be laughed at by men of the world, than part with that knowledge which is the solace of his soul in all his troubles and perplexities. Amid the scorn of the world, he will be upheld by the thought—"I have found the pearl of great price." And I might go on to show, that if men have a knowledge of Christ, they will cease to set the same value, which they were accustomed to set, on worldly riches. How many have, for the love of the present world, forsaken Christ! how many have spent so much time in the pursuit of worldly wealth, that they have left themselves neither leisure nor disposition to lay up treasure in heaven! But there is one thing—and it is the only thing farther I shall mention—which, if we have attained the excellent knowledge of Christ, we will find it more painful to renounce than any other, and that is, our own righteousness. Here pride and fancied dignity are at stake: humiliation is required of us, which shocks our natural feelings; yet this is a sacrifice indispensable, and which must be made by every man for the sake of Christ. The Apostle tells us, that in his unconverted state, "touching the righteousness which is in the law," he was "blameless." He had gone far beyond the greater part of mere professors of religion. Many trust in their good works who have no good works; but Paul had good works, and obedience. No man could find fault with him. He had neglected no duty, he had openly committed no sin which was forbidden by the law, yet this plea he renounced for Christ's sake, and his design in renouncing it he has stated, when he says, "I count all things but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The knowledge of Christ as the Saviour of a perishing world; the knowledge of him as the Lord our

righteousness, in whom the seed of Israel are justified, and shall be glorified; the knowledge of him as the surety who shed his precious blood for us that he might bring us to God, is not a speculative, but a practical knowledge: and that man does not know Jesus Christ, who continues to rest his hope of salvation upon his own works: he discovers at once ignorance of the Saviour and of himself. As soon as the eyes of the sinner are opened, he sees that he is guilty and polluted and without strength, and consequently, that it is utterly impossible, according to the divine constitution, that he should be restored to the favour of God, but through the obedience of the blood of him who suffered and died in our room. What, then, would not such a man give, that he may enjoy an interest in the Saviour? What will he refuse to part with that he may be put in possession of this righteousness, which is the sure hope of a blessed immortality? Will he refuse to exchange his filthy rags for this glorious and beautiful garment? The more perfect any Christian is, the more he will be sensible of the manifold sins which cleave to him; and, therefore, instead of glorying in himself, or reckoning with God on the ground of his good deeds, he will pray with the Psalmist, that God would not enter into judgment with him. He will glory in nothing save in Christ. Christ is made to him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. It is not the contemplation of his own works, but the contemplation of the cross, which will bring peace and joy to his soul. All those, therefore, whose example corresponds with the language of the Apostle, who have forsaken all, and prefer Christ to every thing which can solicit their attachment—all such are invited to come to his table, that they may enjoy fellowship with him; for, if a man love Christ, Christ will manifest himself to him not as to the world. But from this table are excluded all who are ambitious of the honours of men, and not the honour of God—all who lay up treasures on earth but will not lay up treasures in heaven—all who go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting to the righteousness of God. What communion can they have with the Saviour? There is no common ground on which they can meet in amicable intercourse.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

LECTURE by the Rev. W. THOMSON, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. JAMES TURNBULL, Edinburgh.
ADDRESS by the late Rev. J. DICK, D.D., Glasgow.

LECTURE ON PSALM XLIX.

"Hear this, all ye people," &c.

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE LATE REV. WILLIAM LIMONT, AND PREACHED IN
THE RELIEF CHURCH, COLLEGE STREET, EDINBURGH, ON THE FORENOON OF
SABBATH, 13TH JANUARY, 1833.

By the Rev. WILLIAM THOMSON,
Of the Relief Church, Hutchesontown, Glasgow.

THE Holy Scriptures are the revealed oracles of God. They have the stamp of inspiration, and are profitable for religious instruction, for correction, and for direction, that the man of God may be furnished unto every good work. They are "the sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts," and Christ be revealed the second time without a sin-offering unto salvation to them who believe. God speaks sometimes by a different voice—by the voice of the rod, by the afflictive dispensations of his providence. Hence the prophet said, "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." Many salutary instructions God communicates to men by the rod, and these legitimately interpreted by the word have a bearing upon the best interests of man for time and for eternity. These voices united speak to us this day; the voice of God, the oracles of truth, and the afflictive dispensations of Providence, harmonize to instruct us in the things that pertain to our eternal salvation; for now, with an awful emphasis, it may be said, "*Now* is the day of salvation." Christians! I have selected this psalm as the groundwork of a few reflections in connexion with the dispensation of Providence that has befallen this congregation. It is not my object at this time to enter into a minute analysis of it, nor to anticipate the

exercise I have in view in the after part of the day, in preaching what is technically called a funeral sermon. I shall confine your attention and my own to a few important practical lessons, suggested by this portion of the sacred oracles, and connected with the dispensation that has occurred.

I would first call your attention to the universal invitation that God gives to man when he says, "Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world: both low and high, rich and poor, together." There are few sermons a minister can preach, and none that a Christian audience can hear, that are adapted to every character and condition in life; but, Christians, this psalm is not of that stamp—there is not a human being in the four quarters of the globe that is not comprehended in this invitation. Every nation, of whatever clime, or of whatever colour, be they Jew or Gentile, be they civilized or savage—the inhabitants, in a word, of every part of the world, are here addressed. "Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world." Not a man, not a woman, is exempted: to low and high, to rich and poor, to men of mean descent and titled nobility, to men possessed of affluence, houses, and lands, and an overflowing cup of prosperity—God says to every one of these, "Hearken, all ye people, and give ear;" and while God speaks, it is your duty and mine to take heed that we do not harden the heart, that we do not stop the ear

that we do not stifle impressions, but give a candid and fair hearing to Jehovah. While God speaks, let every one of us hear. In the emphatic language of the parable, He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says. Let none, therefore, retire from this assembly and say, there was nothing in this portion of the word of God that suited me.

A second practical remark that I make upon this psalm, is the universal empire of death. We have here a call for attention to the whole human race; and what is the first lesson of instruction that this call for attention, gives to you, and to me, and to all the inhabitants of the world? It is the universal empire of death. The psalmist says here, "That wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish and leave their wealth to others. Man being in honour abideth not; like sheep they are laid in the grave." Here you see the universal empire of death is the first religious instruction we are called in this invitation to learn from God. This, Christians, is a law more irreversible than that of the Medes and Persians. It altereth not. All they who go down to the grave shall bow before the King of Terrors. In the day of death no man can deliver his own soul. Death can no more be bribed than he can be resisted. Into his dark domains the whole human race in their successive generations are brought. O what a mighty king, what a universal empire! Let Christians learn this important truth, that the garments of this tyrant are stained with the blood of countless millions of the human race; that they will soon be stained with our blood; and that we will have the personal conviction in our own diseases and dissolution, that the empire of death is universal. It is appointed unto all men once to die. Dust we are, and unto the dust we shall return. The seeds of disease are sown in our constitution—diseases ripen with our years, and strengthen with our strength, till they bring the hoary head and the infant suckling to the grave. The cup of death goes round. Strength and vigour of constitution, extraordinary mental talents and activities, can no more resist the attacks of death than the constitution that is half rotten here, before it be laid in the grave. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and death ever since has passed, and will pass, upon all men, because that all have sinned. Men talk of death

as an ordinary occurrence, as a natural event in their condition, but it is the wages of sin; and it is impossible to reconcile the suffering, and disease, and death of human beings, with the rectitude and government of God, but upon this principle that it is due in consequence of our sin.

A third lesson suggested by this psalm is the insufficiency of all human means and all human acquirements to preserve men from death or to redeem them from the grave. This seems to me to be the spirit of the psalm. Wisdom will not deliver from it—wealth will not deliver from it—no, Christians, strength will not deliver from it—friends and relatives will not deliver from it—medical skill will not deliver from it. Oh! let us see, then, this important truth written in this psalm, as with a sunbeam, that no human agency can deliver a sinful human being from the empire of death, and the power of the grave. There have been many means tried to resuscitate men; but, if the vital spark is once gone, no means that a human being can try will recall the departed spirit. Its immortal state is fixed by God. Let us, Christians, then, not only believe and assent to this truth, but live under its practical influence; and let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in God.

In the fourth place, your attention and mine is called in this psalm to the doctrine of redemption. The redemption that is here spoken of is the redemption of the body from the power of the grave. Now, Christians, could a human being say, when the immortal spirit is departing, when the union between soul and body is dissolved, that the body is never more to rise. Some men talk of the evidence from natural light for the doctrine of a resurrection; but the doctrine of a resurrection never can come under the possibility of the light of nature? And why? Because there is no evidence, from any thing we see in the analogy of nature, to warrant the belief of a resurrection. When men become the prey of death, and the conquest of the grave, it is beyond the power of an unconstructed human being to say whether they shall rise again or not. Life and immortality are, however, brought to light by the Gospel; and, Christians, let me remind you, that the Jews, not only in the sacred oracles, but in their traditionary revelation

of the patriarchs, had the belief of this doctrine. Pious Job could say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." What, then, are we to rest the doctrine of the resurrection upon? Not upon mere conjecture—not upon bare possibility. In this psalm, the doctrine of the resurrection is made to rest on the power of Almighty God. It is said, "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me." Contrary to divine revelation, the infidel can think of death as not only a sleep, but an eternal sleep, and maintain the doctrine of the Sadducees on this point. To such our Lord's answer is applicable, "Ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God." The arm of Jehovah can as easily gather the scattered fragments of man, as he could create them out of the dust of the earth at the beginning. There is nothing impossible with God, for God has almighty power. Oh, then, as the Saviour said to the sisters of Lazarus of old, Martha and Mary, "Believest thou this?" Oh, Christians! let us rest our faith and belief of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body from the grave on the power and agency of Almighty God. He has promised, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Why need we puzzle and distract ourselves with a how and a why? If God has revealed the doctrine, he will exemplify it. Let us believe the holy Scriptures. I do not here insist upon the security of this event from the resurrection of Christ, although I might do so. As certainly as Jesus burst the bands of death and triumphed over the grave, so certainly are the first fruits of Christ ensured.

In the fifth place, in this psalm we have an awful exhibition of the incompetency of the corrections and the judgments of Almighty God to reform, regenerate, and purify man. Death has reigned over all human beings, and in all ages, for more than five thousand years. Has this universal empire of death had its proper effect on the character and conduct of men? This psalm teaches us to say that it has not. Therefore, it is here written, "Nevertheless, man being in honour abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish. Thus their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings." Mankind, at this

day, are living as insensible and inattentive to the great agency of God in the death of human beings, as if it were a trifling event. It seems to me strange that mankind, possessing good reasoning powers, should, in our day of light, adopt the principle of universal restoration to future happiness. The universalists do conceive of hell just as a house of correction, and that the sufferings of devils and wicked men will have a reforming and purifying influence upon them, after which shall punishments terminate, and all human beings be restored to the favour and friendship of God. This is a doctrine so absurd in its nature, and so contrary to all human experience, that fact and experience are against it. Did the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah put an end to the wickedness of the Canaanites? Did not God put an end to their wickedness, by expelling these idolaters, to make way for the Jews? Did the severe afflictions of the Jews produce moral reformation upon them, during the existence of their commonwealth? No! I think that with the single exception of the captivity in Babylon, which reclaimed them from idolatry, they were more wicked than the Gentiles around them. Do their sufferings at this day, tend to reform them? So far from that, they have laboured under the visitations of God for more than eighteen centuries, and, at this day, are as hardened in their enmity and opposition to Christ, as in the day when they were scattered abroad. Nothing will prevail with them to quit their sin, and return to God by the Saviour. Does the overthrow of nations, even in modern times, when many of them are plucked up by the root, produce moral reformation in them? I do think that the nations of Europe, during the horrible ferment of the French revolution, never learned one lesson from Almighty God. Do the judgments of God, and the awful visitations of wicked men, improve them, when they are taken red hand with iniquity? No! the drunkard, the debauchee, the habitual thief, go on from ill to worse, till God, in his providence, lays his hand upon them, and removes them. Judgments, Christians, have no effect in producing real moral and spiritual reformation. A temporary pause they may produce in the progress of crime and vice, but no reformation. Men see their connexions dropping around them on all hands, like the leaves of trees in autumn, but they do not improve the

visitations of God aright; and hence the pathetic lamentation, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Hence the observation, "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat, with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." Judgments have no effect in producing reformation.

In the sixth place, I make another important remark upon this psalm, that death will produce an astonishing change upon the human system, and dissolve all earthly connexions. Hence, it is written in this psalm, "Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling; and man, when he dieth, shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him." This is the reigning idea throughout the whole psalm. Christians, we are fearfully and wonderfully made! The very external constitution of the body, indicates the work of a heavenly hand. Man stands at the head of this visible creation, in corporeal beauty and prowess, as well as in intellectual and moral beauty. But at death, we are cut down, and the glory and the honour of man are laid in the grave. Why then be proud of health and strength? The strong arm will relax. The eye that outshone the diamond in lustre and brilliance, will be closed in darkness. Our friends and companions, in whom we delighted, after death will gladly remove us out of their sight. Like Job, we may say to corruption, "Thou art my father; to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister." Not only will death produce this effect on the human system, but it will dissolve all earthly connexions. Many pride themselves on their wealth, on their influence, on their power, on their titles; but what avail all these under ground? Titles, as the poet says, are then but nicknames. Who can discern the bones of the skull of a king from those of a peasant, when they are tossed up by the grave-digger? Now, if this is so, what a lesson of instruction does it afford us? Does it not say, Hold all things with a loose hand; naked we came into the world, and naked we must go out of it—we can carry nothing with us. Mankind set a value on the world and worldly objects, that reason and revelation forbid. I am sure, when we

come to drink the cup of death, we will look on the world in a different light than we did when in health. If these things are so, let us be wise in time—let us make conscience of holding all things with a loose hand, and never lie down, without thinking of the time when God shall call us to an account.

Once more, I make another practical remark upon this psalm. Death severs the most close and intimate relations which subsist among mortals. It is said here concerning this point, that men shall not only die, but go to the generation of their fathers. They shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish, thoughtless and insensible. Here, then, my general observation rests, that death will sever all human connexions. It will tear asunder the tie between the king and the subject; it will dissolve the connexion between husband and wife; it will rend asunder the endearing relation between parent and children; and it will separate the pastor from his flock, nothing remaining beyond death and the grave but a grateful remembrance. To what does all this tend? If these things are so, we are called upon to see the vanity of all earthly things. I do not know that ever a man had it in his power to make the experiment like Solomon, of having every thing his heart desired; and the question may be put, who will come after him in any generation that will test the matter like him. And what was the result? "Vanity of vanities," said he in his latter days, "all is vanity." Let us, in the midst of this separation, beware of excessive grief. It remaineth, the Apostle says, "that they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep be as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not." Why? for the fashion of this world passeth away. Death will dissolve the most close and intimate relations. It has dissolved the connexion between you and your pastor for ever; but of this in the afternoon. Just read this psalm in private, make these practical reflections, convert the psalm into prayer, exemplify the operation of those pious and religious principles in your lives and conversations, and when you come to die great will be your consolation. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. R. GORDON, D.D., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. W. DUNCAN, Glasgow.

MERCY MIXED WITH JUDGMENT;

A THANKSGIVING SERMON, OCCASIONED BY THE EVENTS OF THE PRECEDING YEAR
PREACHED ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 1833,

By the Rev. ROBERT GORDON, D.D.,
One of the Ministers of the High Church, Edinburgh.

"But he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not. yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath."—
PSALM lxxviii. 38.

THESE words refer, as we learn from the context, to God's manner of dealing with the Jews, especially during their journey from Egypt, and through the wilderness; and every man who is conversant with the history of that singular people, will readily recollect many striking illustrations of the truths here stated concerning them. It was said of them by Moses, after forty years' experience of them as their leader, and when he was about to resign his office into the hands of Joshua his successor—"Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people. Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord." Unquestionably their character was delineated in these statements of Moses, as appears from the numerous facts he has recorded concerning them, every one of which bears witness to the truth of the text. Notwithstanding the wonders which he wrought for them in the land of Egypt, and notwithstanding their deliverance from the Red Sea, we find them within three days after the latter event, murmuring against Moses, because they had nothing but bitter waters to drink; and though water was instantly supplied, by a miraculous interposition, yet these

manifestations of ingratitude and disobedience proved only the commencement of a course of rebellion, which, for forty long years, exhibited in striking contrast, the pride and perverseness of men's hearts, with the forbearance and long-suffering patience of God. Even on the solemn occasion of the giving of the law on Sinai, while the cloud still rested on the mount—while the voice of the thunder was yet in their ears, and ere Moses returned with the instructions he went to receive for them, because they themselves could not bear to hear the voice of the Lord God—even in 'that moment they said to Aaron, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him;—and they made a molten calf, and danced, and made merry, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And as this was one of the most aggravated of the offences of Israel, so it furnished one of the most striking proofs of the divine compassion and forbearance; for, though the Lord did say to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people. Now, therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them;" yet, after all, he spared them; for when Moses entreated that his wrath would not wax hot against the people which he had brought forth out of the

land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand; when Moses prayed that God would not give the Egyptians reason to say, that for mischief he brought them out of Egypt, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth, and that he would remember Abraham, and Isaac, and Israel, to whom he had sworn he would multiply their seed, and give them the land of Canaan—in answer to this prayer, the Lord, we are told, “repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.” And, on another occasion, when on the very confines of Canaan, they formed an insatuated resolution to return to Egypt, the Lord said, “I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation, and a mightier, than they.” Moses again interceded in their behalf; and, with a holy boldness, unexampled in the history of the Church, pleaded that God, for his name’s sake, would pardon the iniquity of the people, according to the greatness of his mercy, and as he had forgiven them from Egypt until now. And the Lord heard him, and said, “I have pardoned according to thy word.” At the same time, however, that he pardoned them once more, he declared, that, because they had scorned his glory, and his miracles, which he did in Egypt, and had not hearkened to his voice, they should not see the land which he swore unto their fathers, neither should any of them that provoked him see it. And thus, indeed, on innumerable other occasions, when the Lord turned his anger away, he did not leave them without sufficient and plain intimations of his displeasure—he did not permit them to pass without some of the bitter fruits of their disobedience; yet “for all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wonderful works.” And even when, for a season, they were humbled, and confessed that they had sinned, and supplicated his pardon, these supplications were rather extorted by fear, than dictated by godly contrition; for the Psalmist says, in the preceding context, “When he slew them, then they sought him,” then “they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant. But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity,

and destroyed them not. Yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.”

The application of the text, then, to the divine procedure with regard to Israel, during their sojourning through the wilderness, is evident on the simple perusal of their wonderful history; and it will be found, that their conduct afterwards, while actually established in the land of Canaan, furnished but too many occasions for a similar exercise of divine compassion. But Israel is not the only people of whom it may be said, with reference to temporal condition, that “many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.” Manifold and severe as are the calamities to which communities and kingdoms are constantly exposed, and which are all expressions of God’s righteous displeasure with sin, the most superficial view of the state of the world, and especially of that portion of it which proudly calls itself Christendom, may convince every one who believes the Bible, that these temporal judgments have been few and very light, compared with what the iniquity of nations has deserved; for, while we think of the irreligion and immorality so fearfully abundant in the world—of men’s utter forgetfulness of God—of their unwillingness to recognize his hand, either in mercy or in judgment—and of the extent to which they are obviously actuated, by principles of mere selfishness and worldly interest, without any regard to the glory of God, or the best interests of their fellow-men; we cannot fail to see that there is no attribute of the divine nature more strikingly manifested, in the moral government of God, than his compassion and long-suffering patience. Reflect but for a moment on the nature and design of the Gospel. Think of it as a scheme of mercy, carried into effect by the incarnation, the obedience, and death of the eternal Son of God, proclaiming pardon to the guilty, through the blood he shed, and proposing to unite men to God, and to one another, in the bonds of everlasting love and affection—think of the Gospel simply as it is, and then contemplate the reception it has met with even in those countries where its gracious proposals have been published; the open contempt wherewith many regard its doctrines and precepts; the indifference and neglect with which they are treated by many more; the scanty

measure of holy living even among professors; and we shall cease to regard the provocation of Israel, and the forbearance of God towards them, as unexampled in the history of any other nation. Can any thing be more utterly abhorrent to the character of God, and more vile in his sight, than neglect and contempt of his only begotten and well-beloved Son? Even on the most favourable estimate of our own country, I fear we shall be constrained to admit, that there is no such wide difference between our national guilt and that of Israel, as, from a hasty perusal of their history, we might be apt to suppose. Their disobedience, ingratitude, and forgetfulness of God, have been recorded by the pen of inspiration, and are remembered by us. Their vices appear to us peculiarly aggravated, because they lived under a miraculous system; and in their case we discover the violation of some command received by immediate revelation from heaven, or the contempt of some deliverance wrought for them by the miraculous interposition of God. But our delinquencies may, in the sight of God, be as aggravated as those of Israel. We have the benefit now of their history, wherein is exemplified the great principles of divine government; and if we profit by it as we ought, we shall see the hand of God in national blessings and national calamities, though brought about by natural means in the ordinary course of Providence, just as readily and clearly as Israel could see it in immediate interposition. In so far, then, as we are chargeable with forgetting God, and shutting our eyes to the salutary lesson which these events are plainly intended to teach us, and betaking ourselves to every resource rather than to God, for giving relief from troubles, or permanency to our enjoyments, our guilt is the same with that of Israel of old; when, in our case, that guilt is incalculably aggravated by the new light which the full revelation of the Gospel scheme has shed on all the ways and works of God. When we reflect, then, on the privileges, both temporal and spiritual, by which we have been so long and so eminently distinguished, and think how little these have been impaired; how seldom our national prosperity has suffered great or permanent injury; how few have been our public calamities, and how few the judgments of God; and contrast with all this, the iniquity that abounds in the midst of us, the

contempt of God's ordinances, the profanation of his holy day, and the immoralities so prevalent as to be fitly denominated national sins—we shall say with David, "the Lord being full of compassion, forgave our iniquity, and destroyed us not; yea, many a time he has turned his anger away, and stirred not up all his wrath."

The subject of these remarks can never be unseasonably brought forward; and, if seriously considered, can never fail to be profitable: but now, in our present circumstances, it is a subject we are specially called on devoutly to consider. In the course of the past year, the judgment of God has been abroad in the midst of us: even the pestilence has been in our land. The angel of the Lord has been destroying throughout all the coasts: and yet, in the commencement of a new year, we have not only to acknowledge that the plague is almost altogether stayed, but that we can look back on many mercies that were mingled with it, during its continuance among us. Whether we compare our own immediate neighbourhood with other districts of the kingdom, or whether we compare our country at large with other countries, we must confess that the Lord has dealt with us very graciously. While we had instances enough of God's sovereignty to rebuke the presumptuous idea, which all were too ready to entertain, that there were certain privileged classes whose dwellings this evil was not to approach, and while the calamity was sufficiently extended to proclaim, in most plain and intelligible language, God's holy indignation against prevailing sin, still the hand of God was as visibly displayed in the restraint laid on the pestilence here, as in the violence with which, in other places, it was commanded to lay waste and destroy. Nor is it the least of the various mercies we have this day to acknowledge, that the Lord did abundantly bless the springing out of the ground, and crowned the year with his goodness. Had pestilence been accompanied with blasting and mildew, the forerunners of scarcity and famine—had there been any great deficiency in the supply of food—how inconceivably aggravated would our other sufferings have been! Who can estimate the alleviation of these sufferings, which has been the consequence of a fruitful harvest, and the facility thereby given for the renewal of those precautionary measures, which it is our duty to adopt, in the

event of a return of the disease, and which, we have reason to believe, God did so abundantly bless to us on the former occasion! For these, and all the mercies of God, during the late season of affliction, we are this day called to tender our hearty thanksgivings. And are we prepared to obey the call? That the calamity which overtook us was a divine judgment, is a proposition, of the truth of which we cannot now require any argument to convince us. We solemnly acknowledged it to be so, in the presence of God himself, when, once and again, we assembled in the sanctuary, professedly to humble ourselves, under much iniquity, to confess our sins, and supplicate his mercy. Now, then, that the hand that was strong to smite, has also proved strong to save us—now that God has granted our request, by staying the plague—are we as sincere this day in offering him the tribute of thanksgiving, as we were formerly earnest in supplicating his interposition? Or does conscience whisper in our ears that, as the danger has ceased to threaten us, we have ceased to think of God and his right hand? Do we remember the prayers which our mouths offered when trouble lay upon us? Are we now disposed to regard the calamity that called them forth, as one of the many bygone things, which may safely be forgotten, amid the pressure of other worldly objects that urge themselves on our notice? No thinking man, who knows the deceitfulness of his own heart, and has ever read the verses immediately preceding the text, can think it necessary to ask himself such questions. There is every reason to believe that, in the case of multitudes among us, acknowledgments of God's sovereignty, and strong supplications of God's mercy, were extorted merely by fear; and it may be said of them, in the language of the Psalmist, "when he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned, and inquired early after God."

It was, indeed, my friends, a goodly sight to see a great nation, at the call of the supreme authority, professedly assuming the attitude of humiliation, confessing national sins, acknowledging the judgments of God in national calamities, and supplicating deliverance from him who could alone deliver: and, notwithstanding the many melancholy instances of the want of genuine piety, which I fear there were in the very appearance of humiliation and prayer, had we not still

reason to say, "Happy are the people who are in such a case; yea, happy are the people whose God is the Lord!" But if such public professions of national humiliation are not followed by national amendment; if our late solemn acknowledgment of the hand of God, while under the pressure of a heavy visitation, does not generate a more habitual sense of our dependence upon him; if we are found too often hereafter cherishing a spirit of atheistical self-confidence, trusting to the skill with which we plan, and boasting of the boldness with which we execute; if the profanation of the Sabbath is to be as prevalent as ever, and as much as ever countenanced and encouraged, even in our high places; if there is to be no moderation of that greediness of gain, of that making haste to be rich, which has given rise to so much fraud in the dealings of man with man; and if there is not a new and prompt impulse and activity, and diligence, in advancing the glory of God, and of our fellow-men—then, what was our fasting but solemn hypocrisy, and what other was our profession of humiliation and prayer, than a drawing near to God with our lips, while our hearts were going after their covetousness? And even although it has been so to a certain extent, and he has seen it; nevertheless, being full of compassion, he has forgiven our iniquity, and destroyed us not? yea, many a time has he turned his anger away, and has not stirred up all his wrath. So he did with Israel, even when they hypocritically sought him and he knew it; "for he remembered that they were but flesh: a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again."

But there is something very solemn even in this forbearance. Though it be still forbearance, a gracious waiting for our return to God by diligence and faith, yet our very exemption from present public calamity may be an intimation of the hopelessness of our condition; and, when this forbearance comes to an end, it may be found, that misimproved judgments have served only to aggravate our guilt: and, because we have set at nought all his counsel, and would none of his reproof, therefore he also may laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh.

Reflections like these cannot fail to have occurred to every one, on considering God's late dealings with us as a community. When divine judgments arrest general attention, and call forth public

expressions of humiliation, no Christian can help looking forward to the obvious practical results of such dispensations, hoping and praying that they may be abundantly productive of fruits meet for repentance, even the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Let us never forget, that the first place where we ought to look for, and discover such fruits, is in our own hearts. National guilt and gratitude must be resolved into the guilt and gratitude of individuals; and as we have all in our own way contributed to the former, it ought to be our first concern to add to the amount of the latter. Our influence in amending public manners, when corrupt, may be little; but, be it ever so little, we are under the same obligation to improve aright the dispensations of God's providence over the community at large, as if our example had all possible public weight and influence. Our first care, then, is to inquire to what account we have turned God's late dealings, in the way of advancing our own spiritual advantage, and of promoting the well-being of others. There are few, perhaps, among us who have not participated, more immediately or remotely, in some of the afflictions we have been called to witness, in the course of the year that is past; and, however light our share of these, it is not possible that we can deny that numbers of our fellow-creatures have been suddenly swept away—some in circumstances of the deepest moral debasement, and others in the full possession of all those virtues which adorn the christian character. It is impossible that we should, for months together, have received such mournful intelligence as we have been obliged to receive, without feeling the insecurity of life, and the instability and uncertainty of all earthly things. The dread of awaking in the morning, to hear of some friend being numbered with the dead, who was yesterday in good health, is a feeling which may have passed away, and it is, perhaps, as well that it should; but do we remember the prayers we offered up in that season, the good purposes we entertained, the holy resolutions we formed? Do we remember that our sins then appeared before our eyes, with greater aggravations than they had ever done before, and do we remember with what earnestness we supplicated, that we might have an opportunity of manifesting more devotedness to God? Have we, in right earnest, done so? Have

we, since then, given greater diligence to make our calling and election sure—that which can alone preserve us from distracting fears or overwhelming sorrows, amid the trials of life? Have we sought to have our affections more and more weaned from the present world, and more and more engrossed with the great realities of the world to come? In so far as we have been afflicted, and bereaved of families and friends, have we, in the midst of retirement, sought out God, and been ready to say, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities?" And while we are thus labouring to make ourselves more familiar with death, and to look forward to the world beyond it, are we more anxious to lead a life of usefulness, and to exhibit practical godliness, and to encourage it in all?—and among the various employments and pursuits in which we must be occupied, are we giving greater diligence to those which go directly to promote the temporal comfort or spiritual improvement of man? If this be the practical effect that the judgment of God has produced upon us, then, in our case, the end of this judgment is accomplished.

There is one opportunity, among many others, about to be afforded us, of manifesting gratitude to God, for protecting our lives so long, in the very midst of death. Next Lord's day, an appeal is to be made to your benevolence, in behalf of a very large portion of our countrymen, who, but for your aid, must remain in a great measure destitute of the greatest of all blessings—free access to the Scripture of truth, the only source of saving knowledge. Much has lately been done by the General Assembly's Schools, to instruct those who must otherwise have remained uninstructed; but all they have done is but a mere fraction of what is still required, to put it in the power of many thousands of our fellow-countrymen in the Highlands to read the word of God for themselves. This fact needs no inference of mine. It is enough to awaken sympathy, and secure assistance from those who have practically learned the value of the Bible, from those who, amid the storms and agitations of this evil world, and the trials and tribulations through which they lately passed, have found it their guide and counsel in every perplexity—their never-failing friend—their everlasting consolation, in every season of trouble.

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, DUKE STREET, GLASGOW,
By the Rev. WALTER DUNCAN.

"Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour."—EPHESIANS v. 2.

IT has often been asserted, that it is of no consequence what doctrines we believe, or what creed we embrace, provided our dispositions are holy, and our lives sober and righteous. There would be some meaning in this assertion, were it possible for the latter to exist apart from the former: but they cannot. There is no cause adequate to the production of these effects, but a right knowledge of God, and of ourselves; an unfeigned and cordial reception of the truths of revelation. Right dispositions and right conduct, can proceed only from right principles. These are the springs of action, and so long as we are destitute of these, neither our tempers nor our conduct will bear to be tried by the standard of God's law. Accordingly, to present the great truths of religion clearly to the minds of men, and then to display and enforce their sanctifying influences, is the main characteristic of all faithful preaching. These are the objects constantly kept in view throughout the sacred oracles, and most clearly proposed in the apostolical writings. Of this we have a beautiful example in the passage before us. The Apostle, having given an exhibition of the privileges of believers, now takes up the department of duty; and mark how he enforces the one by the other: "Be ye followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us," &c.

Here are two patterns proposed for our imitation; the one the most glorious, the other the most affecting, that can be conceived. The first is that of God himself, the father of the family of grace; the second is that of the Lord Jesus, the mediator between God and man, the first-born among the many brethren. In each of the verses a duty is enjoined, and a consideration proposed, intended to enforce it. In verse 1st, the duty enjoined is, "Be ye followers of God," that is, obedient to his will, studious imitators of his moral perfections, especially of his merey and benignity, as these are shown in the dispensation of grace; and the consideration by which it is enforced, is taken from your privilege,

"as dear children," as if it had been said, "Ye have not been taken into God's family that you may live as you please. No, your privilege and your duty are inseparably connected. Are you dear children? Not only sons by creation, but peculiarly beloved? Then, upon this ground it is expected that you will be followers of your heavenly Father." The peculiar force and tenderness of this motive might easily be illustrated; but that which is urged in the text is, if possible still more affecting. The form in which your duty is there enjoined is, "*walk in love*," a most comprehensive precept, for love is the fulfilling of the whole law; love to God, to our fellow-men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith; and to *walk in love*, is to be habitually observant of its dictates, studiously persevering in the performance of its kind and dutiful offices. And what is the motive by which this precept is enforced? It is the sweetest and the most powerful that can be imagined: "*Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us.*"

In discoursing on these words, I shall direct your attention to the three following subjects:—

I. The interposition of Christ in behalf of his people: "He hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God."

II. The satisfaction and delight with which this interposition of Christ is regarded by God: His sacrifice is to him "for a sweet smelling savour."

III. The principle from which this interposition proceeded, and which it gloriously demonstrated: "He hath loved us."

Let us consider,

I. The interposition of Christ on behalf of his people: "He hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God."

In these words, you observe Christ is represented both as the priest and the sacrifice of his people. He gave an offering to God for us, and the offering which he gave was *himself*.

1. He is represented as our *priest*. He gave an offering and a sacrifice for us. The offering of sacrifices, unquestionably

had its origin in the earliest ages of the world. This mode of worship may be traced back, not only to the era of giving the law from Sinai, but to the days of the ancient patriarchs. We read of sacrifices offered by Abraham, Melchisedek, Job, Noah; nay, it is testified of Abel, that he offered the firstlings of his flock to the Lord; and it may be more than conjectured, from the coats of skins which God made for our first parents, or commanded them to make, that the blood of animal victims began to be shed immediately after the fall—that this mode of worship was as ancient as the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. Its divine origin is not less evident than its antiquity. We read, indeed, of the practice, before we read of the precept enjoining it; but from the former, we may fairly infer the latter. For assuredly such eminent saints, as those I have mentioned, would not have presumed to express their devotion in so strange a manner, unless they had been expressly required to do so. And can it be supposed, that had they been so presumptuous as to invent and practise these bloody rites without the sanction of heaven, God would have smiled upon them, as he did when he accepted the offering of Abel? Since, then, the offering of sacrifices was enjoined by the Supreme Lawgiver, and was practised in the Church from the beginning, for what end was it appointed? What could move the eternal Majesty to require that sacrificial oblation, should, for so many ages, form an essential part of his worship? That these offerings possessed any real intrinsic excellence—that they did really atone for the guilt of the worshipper—or were in themselves pleasing to the Divine Majesty—is an idea rejected alike by Scripture and by reason. Micah assures us, that thousands of rams, and rivers of oil, would be an utterly inadequate propitiation; yea, that a man's first-born would not be accepted for his transgression. Since, then, it was impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin, for what end was the institution of sacrifice, and of the whole magnificent apparatus of the legal priesthood? My brethren, ye know the sublime explanation! Ye know that it was to prefigure the offering up, in the fulness of time, by Jesus Christ, the great, the only true priest of the Church, of that one infinitely great and valuable sacrifice, which was to take away the sin

of the world. All the thousands, and tens of thousands of victims that were offered in the Church for four thousand years, whether on the rude altars of the patriarchs, or in the tabernacle in the wilderness, or amidst the pomp and splendour of Solomon's temple—all were but, as it were, this one great atonement casting its shadow before. Accordingly, when Christ came into the world to perform the work to which he verily was foreordained from eternity, he is represented as saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me." "Well pleased no more with the burnt-offerings of thine offending creatures—taking no longer any bullock out of their house, or he-goat out of their fold; thou hast turned their eyes to a nobler priest, and a more glorious victim. Thou hast appointed me to come, and by one offering, of infinite efficacy, effect that propitiation which all the sacrifices under the law, numerous, and varied, and endlessly repeated as they were, never could accomplish." Hence, when Christ had finished his sacrifice, the vail of the temple was rent, and its figurative worship ended for ever.

That Christ, as the Mediator between God and man, should give an offering and a sacrifice for us, was indispensably necessary. In no other way could reconciliation be effected. The requisition, by the great Lawgiver, of satisfaction to his insulted law, as the only ground on which he will restore his offending creatures to favour, is most just—a requisition from which he cannot depart, without annulling his authority, and rendering his law a dead letter. Christ, therefore, who from eternity had undertaken the office of our Mediator, could establish peace between the Supreme Judge and the sinners on whose behalf he interposed, only by making a full atonement for their sin. "He could be the friend of man, only by being the friend of truth, justice, and order. He could be on the side of the sinner, only by proving himself to be truly and wholly on the side of God."

2. Christ is also represented as the *sacrifice* of his people. He not only gave an offering for us, but the offering which he gave was *himself*. Let us, then, contemplate this stupendous sacrifice. In it we behold a sacrifice at once *perfectly suitable, and infinitely valuable*.

Christ, I say, in giving himself, gave a sacrifice that was perfectly suitable. Being

independent, his life was entirely at his own disposal; being a partaker of flesh and blood, he was allied to his people, and was thus qualified to make satisfaction in the same nature that had offended; and, being at the same time supernaturally conceived and born of the Virgin, he was exempt from the penalty which Divine justice had attached to the violation of the first covenant, and immaculately pure—and was thus altogether fitted for being a true and proper sacrifice in the room of his people.

But the sacrifice which Christ gave was not only perfectly suitable, it was also infinitely valuable; for, mark the force of that wonderful expression, "*He gave himself.*" It was not simply his blood, or his life, or abstractly his human nature, but *HIMSELF* that he gave an offering and a sacrifice for us. That the sufferings which constituted the atonement were endured by our Redeemer solely in the human nature which he was pleased to assume, does not render it the less entitled to the high character of the atonement of a divine person; because that human nature so subsisted in him, as to be as truly *himself* as divine nature was. It possessed no distinct personality, and therefore neither actions nor sufferings, can be affirmed of it alone. Of the *same* person who is declared to be over all, God blessed for ever, it is affirmed that he died. We are therefore, to regard the blood which was shed for our sins, not as the blood of man alone, but as the blood of one who was God and man in one person—as the blood of one in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily—as the blood of one who, at the very moment when he presented the spectacle of a man bleeding and agonizing on the accursed tree, was also the high and mighty God, who filleth immensity and eternity. This sublime intimacy of the union between the human nature, and the divine person of our blessed Lord, is indeed above our comprehension—it is a great mystery; but that such a union does exist, is a truth of which the Scriptures present us with the clearest and most abundant evidence.

In considering the representation in the text, of Christ's interposition in behalf of his people, it is only necessary, farther, to take into view the *manner* in which he gave himself. How did he give himself to the justice of the great Lawgiver, as an offering and sacrifice for us? My brethren,

he gave himself voluntarily. He undertook and prosecuted our cause, not by constraint, but of a willing mind. He who, by a single word, controlled the proudest swelling of the Galilean lake, could easily have stilled the tumults of the people. Against him, the glance of whose eye made the murderous band sent to apprehend him fall prostrate to the earth, his enemies could have had no power at all, except by his own consent. And while he thus gave himself voluntarily, he also gave himself in all the forms, and to all the extent, that Divine justice required, in order to his making a complete atonement for sin. His whole life was an oblation of himself, in those duties and sufferings with which it was filled up; and that oblation was consummated by the shedding of his blood unto death. Of the terrible import of the Redeemer's sufferings, and especially of that death which formed the principal part of the atonement, and rendered it perfect, it is impossible for us to form any adequate conception; for "who knoweth the power of Jehovah's anger?" "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Let us read the brief but emphatic language of inspiration respecting those sufferings wherewith the atonement was made, "He began to be sorrowful, and sore amazed, and very heavy. He fell on his face, and offered up supplications, with strong crying and tears, to him that was able to save him from death. And being in an agony, he prayed yet more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Let us hear this wonderful sufferer himself unfolding the bitterness of his sufferings: "O my Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me to the dust of death." To these unexampled sufferings, and to all the forms in which justice required that atonement should be made, Christ gave himself, that he might be an offering and a sacrifice for his people.

We now proceed to consider,

II. The satisfaction and delight with which this interposition of Christ on behalf of his people is regarded by God.

His sacrifice is to him "*for a sweet-smelling savour.*"

In this expression the allusion is clearly to the wine and oil, or rather, to the precious perfumes that were wont to be sprinkled on the sacrifices under the law, in order to counteract the offensive savour of that bloody service. The Apostle represents the fragrance of such sweet perfumes as arising to God from the propitiatory sacrifice of his beloved Son, to intimate the supreme satisfaction and pleasure which he has in that sacrifice. When the magnificent work of creation was finished, Jehovah is represented as resting from all his work which he had made, and surveying it with delight. But from no part of creation, even although retaining its original purity and loveliness, does there arise so sweet and grateful a fragrance to him as from the altar of the Saviour's sacrifice. If you inquire on what grounds that sacrifice is so peculiarly and supremely delightful to God, the following considerations may serve to illustrate the subject: It is a sacrifice of God's own appointment; it is in itself a sacrifice of transcendent worth and efficacy; and it is in consequence of these things, the means of eternal salvation and happiness to countless thousands of his immortal creatures, and the source of glory to himself in the highest. Let us meditate for a little on these things and we shall understand, in some measure, why this oblation of the Redcemer is so peculiarly of a sweet smelling savour to God, why he rests in it with such delight, such boundless complacency.

It is, we have said, a sacrifice of his own appointment. The apostle Peter designates Christ "a Lamb, who verily was foreordained from the foundation of the world." And accordingly, when Christ came into the world, he is represented as saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." This sanction of the Supreme Governor to the Redcemer's sacrifice was indispensably necessary, in order to its acceptance, and to its being regarded by him with satisfaction and pleasure. Had not God, for example, enjoined the rites of the Jewish economy, they would, undoubtedly, have offended, rather than appeased him. Aaron might have brought the blood of ten thousand victims into his sanctuary; but, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" would have been the language of the Lord: "Who hath required this at your

hands?" It is the same, in a limited sense, with the sacrifice of Christ. There is, indeed, as we shall immediately see, an infinite worth in that stupendous sacrifice itself; a magnificence and glory which cast into the shade every other display of Jehovah's greatness; yet, in considering the grounds of God's satisfaction and delight in it, we must take this idea first of all into view, that in it he beholds the accomplishment of his own eternal purpose of grace, the fruit of his own unsearchable wisdom and unbounded love.

Let us contemplate, however, *the intrinsic worth of the sacrifice itself*, and we shall more fully understand why it is to God for a sweet smelling savour. Christ, we have already seen, by his personal independence, and exemption from the curse of the law, and by his immaculate purity, was altogether *fitted* for being a true and proper sacrifice in the room of his people. We have also seen that he surrendered himself to the justice of the Great Lawgiver, in all the forms, and to all the extent, that were required. And we have seen how intimately, though mysteriously Divinity was connected with his sacrifice. On these grounds, it was perfectly and gloriously efficacious as an atonement for sin, and was therefore acceptable and pleasing to God.

The supreme and infinite delight of Jehovah, however, in the atoning sacrifice of his beloved Son, does not arise so much, either from the fact of its appointment by himself, or of its essential worth and grandeur, as from its being, in consequence of these things, *the means of eternal deliverance and felicity to millions of perishing sinners, and the source of glory to himself in the highest.* Would you understand, my brethren, something of the value which God attaches to the souls of men—something of the intensity of desire with which his heart is set on their salvation—only think for a moment of what he has done, for its accomplishment: "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death." And who, then, can conceive the satisfaction and delight which he must find in the contemplation of the atoning sacrifice of that dear Son, by which this great end has been effectually attained and secured? He beholds, in that precious offering, the blessed medium of pardoning grace to the chief of sinners, through which he opens his heart to men, and pours forth all the fulness of his boundless love.

But, above all, my brethren, God delights in the Redeemer's sacrifice, as the source of glory to himself in the highest. By it, his law, his eternal law, has been wondrously magnified, and a lustre inconceivably brilliant shed over all the perfections of his nature. How gloriously has *the law* of the Supreme Governor been honoured by the Saviour's offering—honoured in its penalty by his sufferings—honoured in its precepts by his obedience! In consequence of the infinite dignity of Christ's person, we behold in his sufferings a far more striking demonstration of the awfulness of that punishment which the law has denounced against sin, and of the absolute certainty of its execution, than in the everlasting sufferings of all the damned in hell. Oh! who can form any adequate conception of the awfulness with which the curse attached to the violation of God's eternal law has been invested in the sight of the whole universe, by the infliction, the unmitigated infliction of that curse, in all its horrors, on his own beloved Son—on him in whose presence the bright seraphim veil their faces, and all the principalities of heaven render lowly adoration! Who, of all the subjects of the Divine Government, will not now be filled with tenfold fear and trembling at the thought of incurring that curse? Nor have the precepts of the law been less magnified—their holiness, justice, and goodness, less gloriously demonstrated by the *obedience* of Christ. The honour which the law has in this respect received from the Redeemer's sacrifice, arises, not simply from the ineffable dignity of him who became subject to it, and fulfilled all its requirements, but also from the fact of that perfect obedience, to it being rendered in circumstances the most difficult and trying which it is possible to conceive. It has been honoured, and held up to the veneration of the universe, not only by receiving the affectionate homage and entire submission of a personage so unspeakably glorious, but by receiving that homage and submission in circumstances the most calculated to prevent it—circumstances in which it never was, and never will be obeyed, by any other being. For Christ, my brethren, obeyed the law—affectionately and entirely obeyed it—*under the endurance of its terrible curse*. He fulfilled its requirement of love, supreme love to God, even while that God was crushing him to the lowest pit, laying him

in darkness and the deeps, and afflicting him with all his waves. He fulfilled its requirement of love, unmingled love, to his fellow-men, even while they were reviling, persecuting, crucifying him. His conduct, in short, was a perfect exemplification of the purity of heaven amidst the pains of hell. How unspeakably honouring to the law to have its excellence and reasonableness thus acknowledged, and its precepts thus entirely obeyed, in circumstances of such unparalleled trial!

Thus it appears that the sacrifice of Christ, whether we look to his sufferings or his obedience, has given eternal honour and majesty to that law which it was designed to satisfy—that awful law by which the universe is governed: well, therefore, may it be to the Great Lawgiver for a sweet smelling savour. But the magnifying of his law is not the only respect in which God has been glorified by the sacrifice of Christ. In the bright lustre which it has shed over all the perfections of his nature, we see an additional reason for his regarding it with complacency. That great sacrifice has effected the most distinct and beautiful of all displays of the divine attributes. There is more of the glory of God manifested in the face of Christ crucified than in the face of heaven and earth. "Though all the light in the world," as one has expressed it, "in the sun, and stars, were collected into one stupendous mass of light, it would be but darkness, to this seemingly dark and melancholy object." Oh! I see, by the eye of faith, in that pale face, that visage so marred more than any man's, a glory that eclipses all the other glories in the universe. Compared with this, the glory of all other objects may almost be said to be only like the glory of the stars which sparkle brilliantly during the darkness of night, but immediately disappear when the sun comes forth in his strength. If then, his own glory is the grand end proposed by God in all his works, say, my brethren, is it possible to form any conception of the depth of that complacency with which he must rest in the contemplation of the Redeemer's sacrifice, which has effected the most extensive and luminous of all displays of it?

I have thus endeavoured to exhibit the grounds on which the propitiatory oblation of his Son is unto God for a sweet-smelling savour. It is, I have said, a sacrifice of his own appointment—it is in itself of

infinite worth and efficacy, and it is, in consequence of these things, the means of eternal salvation to millions of perishing sinners, and the source of glory to himself in the highest. In proof of the supreme satisfaction and delight which he has in it, he has exalted Christ to his own right hand, and lavished upon him the highest honours. He has set a crown of purest gold upon his head, and given into his hands the reins of universal government. "I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Let us now consider,

III. The principle from which this interposition of Christ on our behalf proceeded, and which it gloriously demonstrated: "*He hath loved us*, and given himself for us."

That the interference of Christ for us, manifested in the infinitely valuable sacrifice we have been contemplating, originated solely in love, free, unmerited love—appears with irresistible evidence. It could not be the prospect of augmenting his own happiness or glory, which influenced him in espousing the cause of our guilty and ruined world, for he was infinitely blessed in the enjoyment of his own excellence; nor could the perdition of the whole human race have impaired his felicity, or thrown even a momentary cloud over the sunshine of his glorious dwelling-place. By the redemption of man he has indeed shed a lustre unspeakably brilliant around his throne; but were there not other creatures in the universe for whom he could have interposed, and whose salvation would, for aught we can see, have shewn forth his praise as brightly and widely as ours? And if the Saviour was not induced to interpose in our behalf by the prospect of augmenting his own glory and felicity, assuredly his regard was not attracted by any amiable qualities possessed by the objects of his love; nor did his exertions owe their origin to any solicitations by which the tenderness of his heart was assailed. It was not by seeing us before him with clasped hands and bended knees that he was moved to pity. No! the lost beings whom he came to seek and save—

the guilty and perishing sinners for whom he shed his precious blood—so far from supplicating his aid, are, even after it has been offered to them, so unwilling to profit by it, that his own Omnipotent Spirit must constrain them to accept the deliverance he has wrought. It is to love, then—free, unmerited, unsolicited love—that we owe the amazing interposition of the Redeemer on our behalf.

And how glorious, by brethren is the demonstrations of love which we have in this, that he gave himself for us. If the exercise of mere power had been all that was requisite when Christ interposed for us—if he had had nothing more to do in the redemption—than in the creation of the world, when he spake the word and it stood fast, his love would have appeared less astonishing; but when it was necessary, that he who built the world and framed the skies, and who gave to his own bright heaven all its joys and splendours, should shroud the glories of his divinity in human flesh; that he who had existed from all eternity, enthroned in light, and had never known in that eternity a moment's humiliation, pain, or sorrow, should be subjected to toil and suffering, should be exposed to the desertion of friends and the malignity of enemies, and should at length expire on an accursed tree, as one of the vilest of malefactors; oh! do we not see here the manifestation of a love, the benignity, the generosity—the glorious magnitude of which infinitely surpass our comprehension, and must fill every mind, which truly perceives it, with unutterable wonder! Had this glorious personage only become incarnate, though born the monarch of an empire, yea, of universal empire, having all the sceptres and diadems of earth laid at his feet, even then his condescension would have been infinite. But when we see him descending from the throne of glory to the manger of Bethlehem—from reclining on the bosom of his Father to agonize in anguish and in blood on the ground in the garden of Gethsemane—from reigning in life to the sleep of death in Joseph's tomb—when we hear him exclaiming, "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness and the deeps; thy wrath lies hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves"—then are we constrained to say, "The knowledge of such love is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it."

And if, my brethren, we are, or may

well be, astonished out of measure at the height and depth of Christ's love manifested in the glory which it led him to resign, and the abasement and sufferings which it led him to undergo; how must our estimate of the wondrous nature of that love be still farther heightened by the consideration of the *worthlessness* and *wickedness* of those for whom he interposed! For whom did this great Being humble himself, and endure the inconceivable bitterness and anguish of his Father's curse? Not merely for those who were not his friends; not merely for those who were utterly destitute of beauty to attract his regard; not merely for the insignificant worms of his footstool; but for a seed of evil-doers—creatures black as midnight, and red as crimson, with guilt—creatures whose hearts were filled with hatred, and whose puny arms wielded the weapons of rebellion against him—creatures who, had it been in their power, would willingly have dethroned him, and whose desperate wickedness even aimed at the destruction of his very being. It was for *these* that the Son of God gave himself a sacrifice and an offering; it was for these that this high and lofty one descended to earth, appeared on our sinful globe, in our degraded form; for these that he was wounded and bruised, crucified and slain.

Where, my brethren, in all the records of human affection shall you find a parallel to this wonderful love? Peradventure you may find that, for a good man, for a kind and generous benefactor, some have even dared to die. Peradventure you may find that, to save from deadly peril a beloved husband, or wife, or brother, or sister, or child, there have been some who have held their own lives as nothing. Such instances of generous and heroic self-devotion are regarded with great admiration. Yet, without detracting from the magnitude of the love which has thus been exhibited, let it only be placed beside the love of Christ in giving himself for us, and how insignificant does it appear! Here we not only find all the points of inducement in these cases, if I may so speak, taken away; we not only find the utter destitution of excellence and loveliness on the part of those for whom he gave himself; but we find in their place determined rebellion, inveterate corruption, and daring profligacy; we find the loathsomeness of disease, wounds and

bruises, and putrifying sores. And is it not, then, an amazing demonstration of love—a demonstration of love to which the annals of human history can furnish no equal and no second—when we see the Son of the Eternal One voluntarily substituting himself in the room of creatures so worthless and wicked, and undergoing for them shame, and anguish, and humiliation unspeakable? You may ransack creation for imagery to represent the tenderness and disinterestedness of love, and still the exhibition of the Son of God becoming the surety of mankind, and agonizing, and bleeding, and dying for the rebel worms of his footstool, must stand alone, a prodigy of benevolence, which rises immeasurably above all comparisons and similitudes; presenting to the eye of the mind a height and a depth, a length and a breadth, which language never can express, and the imagination never can grasp.

This subject suggests the two following reflections:—

I. How worthy of commemoration by his people is the sacrifice which Christ gave! It is, we have seen, the source of glory to God in the highest, and the means of eternal salvation to multitudes of perishing sinners. Well, then, may saints on earth rejoice when they are invited to celebrate the memorial of it; well may the harps of heaven be strung to its praise for ever and ever.

II. How inexpressibly strong and endearing is the claim which Christ has to our affections and services! "The love of Christ," says Paul, "constraineth us; because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again." If the thought of Christ's love have the influence on us which it is intended to have, it will constrain us to love him with supreme affection, and to devote ourselves to him, to consider nothing too afflictive to be endured for his sake, no labour of love too arduous to be performed, no sacrifice too great to be made for him. There will be no more halting between two opinions, no more conferring with flesh and blood, no more striving to serve both God and mammon. There will be an open avowal of attachment to our crucified Lord, a glorying in his cross, a willingness to spend, and to be spent in his service.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN FORBES, Glasgow.
ADDRESS by the Rev. A. MARSHALL, Kirkintilloch.

ON VENIAL SIN AND AURICULAR CONFESSION;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE COLLEGE CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE EVENING OF
TUESDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY, 1833,

By the Rev. JOHN FORBES,
Minister of the Outer High Church, Glasgow.

"Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity?"—MICAH vii. 18

YOU are to understand these words as ascribing the power of forgiving sins to God only; as declaring that to do so is solely his prerogative, and that he is jealous of this attribute, as of all the other attributes belonging to his nature, and that he will not divide the honour, or share the glory of it, with any other being. Mercy belongs to God only, and we must apply to him and not to any one else, when we would find this blessing which is so particularly necessary to all men, and which every penitent feels to be a blessing of unspeakable value. We must ascribe to God the whole power of forgiving sin; so that, in suing for pardon, we must go to the king under whose government we live, and make humble and earnest application at the throne of grace; and there, confessing to him our guilt, we must implore, with deep penitence and contrition, that he would be pleased to have mercy upon us, and to blot out our manifold iniquities.

This doctrine is so consonant with reason, so agreeable to Scripture, and so honourable to God, that it might seem unnecessary to say any thing with a view to confirm its truth, or to illustrate its importance. But, nevertheless, there are many who deny it in substance, and there are still more who, though they admit it in words, do not act as if they believed, that mercy belongs to God only, inasmuch as they are not seen making that application to him for mercy, which, if convinced that he only could forgive their sins, it is

reasonable to expect that they should; and upon these grounds, it may be necessary to enter into a particular consideration of this subject, and to point out what is implied in the declaration here made, "Who is a God like unto thee, who pardoneth iniquity?"

Before entering upon a proof of the doctrine, that God reserves exclusively to himself the power of forgiving sins, there is one remark which we would make, of a general kind, upon this subject; and that is that the doctrine that forgiveness of sin belongs only to God, and that we must apply to him, and to none beneath him, for it, goes directly to show the infinite evil which sin involves in every case. It is the disposition of our corrupt minds to think lightly of the evil of sin—to consider it, in many of its manifestations, as no very heinous or deadly offence, and by consequence to sit easy under the burden of its aggravated and fatal guilt—and to suppose that it can be extenuated and blotted out in some very simple and trivial manner. In consequence of this habit of thinking lightly of the enormity of sin, multitudes live without feeling any lively concern about forgiveness at all, whilst others, who are not so utterly hardened, but who have some imperfect sense of guilt in their consciences, conceive that they may merit forgiveness by their good works, or by doing penance, or in some other way equally fallacious and unsatisfactory. The subject before us, then, is one of a most important nature; it is

immediately connected with right views of the nature of sin, than which nothing can be more necessary to creatures such as we are, who are so prone of ourselves, for other reasons, to think lightly of the enormity which belongs to sin, and who are so ready to lay hold of every means to palliate and excuse the guilt of our wickedness.

The Psalmist says, "There is mercy with thee, O Lord, that thou mayest be feared; and plenteous redemption, that thou mayest be sought after." And we advert to this passage at present, with a view to confirm what we would desire to impress—the immense practical importance of the doctrine, that the exercise of mercy and forgiveness of sin belongs exclusively to God, and is a high prerogative of his nature, which he will not share nor divide with another. You are aware of the very different opinion which you would entertain concerning the enormity of any violation of the laws of men if you required to sue for pardon to the king, as none inferior could grant it, or if you might obtain pardon upon the easy terms of paying some trivial mulct, or undergoing some slight temporary confinement. Now, on the same principle, you cannot fail to discover, that every transgression of the law of God is infinitely evil—that sin is, in every instance, an awful and fatal deed, when you must apply to God, and to none below him, if you would obtain forgiveness. This doctrine may well impress you with the highest reverence for the holiness of the Divine law, and with the greatest dread of every transgression, however apparently trivial. No power on earth or in heaven, but God himself, can grant the pardon of the smallest sin, for to pardon sin is a sacred and holy act; it is a deed of the utmost moment, and it cannot be performed by any other authority subordinate to His, who is the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise and true God.

In order to establish this doctrine, we proceed to offer a few remarks, illustrative of the grounds upon which it rests. And, in the first place, we observe, that as all sin is committed against God, and is an offence in which his honour is concerned, we are led to the conclusion, that forgiveness is an act, the exercise of which God will reserve to himself, and which he will not delegate to any other. That sin is

committed against God in every instance, must be obvious, when it is considered that it is a transgression of his law, and that it necessarily implies a disregard of his will, and a contempt of his authority, on the part of the individual who is guilty of committing it. The kinds of sins that men may be guilty of are infinitely various, and some discover a greater degree of impiety and of depravity of character than others. They show that the persons who are capable of committing such atrocious deeds, have long ceased either to have any fear of God, or any love to man—that they are equally regardless of the sacred sanctions of religion and the better feelings of humanity, and are wholly given up to the base appetites and the brutal passions of their own depraved natures. But the very first departures from the line of duty, however slight and seemingly excusable they may appear, all involve the infinite guilt of despising the command, of contemning the authority, and of contravening the will of God who has given us a law to keep and obey, and are therefore exceedingly sinful. And it is from overlooking this circumstance, which is most important to be kept in view, that so many seem to be insensible of the danger of first steps in sin, which are usually so decisive of the character and of the future destiny of man. When you can sin against God without remorse or fear, you have already lost the only principle which can effectually secure your continuance in the paths of righteousness; and you are guilty, every hour you do that which you know he forbids, of an infinite offence against his divine authority. As God is infinitely glorious in his perfections; as he is possessed of supreme majesty and power; as he is, moreover, a being of boundless love, and as you are indebted to him for your existence, and for your every blessing, it is your most obvious and sacred duty, to reverence and obey him with the deepest submission. To cast off the fear of God, implies a hardihood the most daring, a presumption the most dangerous, and an ingratitude the most base, on the part of any creature. And here is the essence of sin; here is what constitutes its great, its enormous evil, in every instance. You may, perhaps, be in the habit of excusing yourselves, because your sins are not so heinous in the sight of men as to expose you to the censure of public opinion, or to

the still more disgraceful convictions of public justice; you may feel that you are in a very different state from those whose more flagrant offences expose them to these consequences: but if you are guilty of insulting God, if your lives are spent in opposition to his law, and if you are resisting and setting at nought his authority, is there not in this an infinite extent of guilt, to which nothing appears capable of being added to render it more aggravated?

Now, as every sin, even that which seems the most trivial in the eyes of men, is a dishonour done to God, and an offence committed against his government, it seems peculiarly appropriate that God should reserve the exercise of mercy wholly to himself, and render it necessary for guilty and rebellious creatures to humble themselves before him, confess their guilt, and seek for mercy. Reason prescribes that it is proper that an offender should acknowledge that he has done evil to the person whom he has wronged, and not to another, and with this agree the dictates of Scripture, which uniformly inculcate that God only has power to forgive sins, and that we must confess our iniquity to him, and not to another. And, accordingly, no repentance can be considered genuine which does not originate in a sense of the evil of sin, as committed against God, and which does not lament the wickedness of heart and spirit which made his law be set at nought, his commandments be rejected, and his authority despised. The true penitent, whilst he will lament every evil connected with his unholy life, and will mourn over it under every aspect in which he can consider it, will chiefly bewail it as spent in ungodliness, and as opposed to what the law of God requires; he will accordingly feel deeply his need of the forgiveness of God, and will not rest satisfied with any thing else until he has found this, because what he is most concerned about is the favour of God, which he has lost by his transgressions. In vain is it, though he enjoy the praise of man, and be highly esteemed for the general respectability of his character, and even for the usefulness of his many benevolent virtues; he feels that, whilst he has to do with man, he has to do also with God, and that, whatever he may be in other respects, he has altogether failed in the reverence and the obedience which he owes to his Creator. He separates between

the sentiments which fallible beings, like himself hold concerning him, and the sentiments which God holds concerning him; and he knows that it is perfectly possible to enjoy the approbation of the former, and yet be the object of the just displeasure and aversion of the latter. The law of God prescribes duties, and lays down a rule of life, and inculcates a spirit, in all which he finds that he is wholly deficient, so that he is necessarily subject to the condemnation which the law pronounces. He feels that the very frame and temper of his mind are evil—that he wants the principles of righteousness—and that whatever good actions he has done, they have not been performed from proper motives, nor from right views. Thus, though he has never injured, but in some instances has benefited, his neighbour, still he feels that he has not been governed by a spirit of charity, but has often been actuated by pride and influenced by vanity in the actions for which he has been commended. And in like manner, although he has never mingled in the ranks of the impious and profane, but has been respectable for his religious profession, and regular in the discharge of its duties, yet he feels that he has not been influenced by the love of God, which is the only proper principle from which he should have acted. Now, in all this the true penitent sees much sin, which he is aware God must hate, because God is infinitely pure in his nature, and requires that we serve him with our whole heart and mind, and not rest satisfied with a mere formal and general compliance with duty. And as God is thus offended, even at professed obedience, when it does not proceed from a pure heart and a right spirit, and is justly so, because the very essence of sin is contained in such obedience, which, as we have seen, is a contempt of God, and a rejection of his authority, it follows that it is utterly erroneous to speak of any sin as light or trivial. How can that be justly considered so which involves the greatest possible offence against the Most High? If you live without reverence for God, and if you cherish a secret enmity in your hearts against his law and his truth, can it rescue you from meriting the just condemnation of that God whom you thus dishonour, that you are kind in your dispositions, or amiable in your characters, and that your lives are not stained by any

of the grosser crimes which are sometimes committed? You have to do with God, and you stand in need of his forgiveness, and you must humbly sue for it from him whom you have injured. You must confess in his presence, with deep contrition, that you have not feared him as you ought to have done, and that you have not obeyed his holy law, but have shown yourselves in all things to be perverse and undutiful. You must cast out of view altogether the opinion which man holds of you, and cherish an abasing sense of yourselves, as you know that you are in the sight of Him who searcheth the heart, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. You must renounce the spirit of the Pharisee, who stood in the temple to thank God that he was not as other men; and you must confess yourselves rebels and transgressors, who have done much to incur the displeasure of God, who knoweth all things, and who is intimately acquainted with your true state and character.

II. We observe in the second place, That as God alone knows what the honour of his government and the maintenance of his glory render necessary, upon this ground also we may conclude, that the forgiveness of sin is an act the exercise of which he reserves peculiarly to himself. There is no act of government which requires greater wisdom and prudence than that of dispensing pardon; for if it be done without care, it is calculated to give rise to the most pernicious results. Injudicious and indiscriminate mercy emboldens offenders to go on in wickedness, induces others to be less careful to avoid transgression than they would be, and leads to a general contempt of the authority of law and of the obligations of duty. Hence the most baneful effects ensue when it is understood that a blameable tenderness will arrest the doom of malefactors, and interpose to procure their deliverance from the consequences of their crimes. In human governments, the power of dispensing mercy is a sacred trust, which is deposited with the highest authority in the State, where it will be exercised in wisdom, and with a due regard to the general interests of the commonwealth. Now, if human governments are so careful about exercising mercy, and if no pardon can be administered but with a due regard to the general ends of justice, how much

more must this be the case with regard to the infinitely righteous and perfect government of God!

To conceive that God would surrender to a mere creature the power of forgiving sin, is as difficult to be believed as that he would give a creature power to govern the material creation—to direct its movements, and to dispose of its charges—a work most arduous in itself, and to which the capacities of any creature are wholly unequal. What misery would ensue if the world was left to the direction of any mind less than infinitely wise, or if it was sustained by any arm that was not omnipotent! But to tamper with the laws of the moral world, and to sport with the principles which constitute its basis, were far more pernicious still than to subvert the order and disturb the regularity of the material universe. And what would it be but to allow this, did God give it to any creature to pardon sin in what manner or upon what terms he chose. There would arise from this the greatest disorder and the most ruinous consequences. It may perhaps be said, that this power is declared to have been given to the Apostles by our Lord when he said, “What sins ye retain on earth, they shall be retained in heaven; and what sins ye forgive on earth, shall be forgiven in heaven.” But in answer to this, we observe, that if this power was given to the Apostles, it was given in connexion with the Spirit of inspiration; so that it might be said, that it was still God who forgave sins through them, in the same manner as the power of working miracles, which was a power over the laws of nature, was strictly a communication of divine influence, and not an independent authority which they could exercise as they pleased, and in what manner they thought fit. But it may well be doubted whether the words quoted are to be understood as giving the Apostles the power of definitively pardoning or binding sin, for they may be equally well understood as merely communicating to them the power of preaching the Gospel, and of declaring to men, if believers, that their sins are forgiven; and if they resist the truth, and will not be saved, that they are still in condemnation. But, allowing that the Apostles had the power of pardoning sin, it must still be remembered, that they had it immediately

from God, and that it could as little be said that it was their own proper act, as this could be affirmed of the miracles which they wrought; and no inference can be drawn from their case as to the same power being vested either generally in the church, or being committed to any man, or class of men, calling themselves their successors. Before such a power can be believed to be given to any in the moral and spiritual world, it would be necessary that he should prove his possession of it, by showing a supernatural power over the material world, and demonstrating that he was indeed the successor of the Apostles, by working the signs of an Apostle. But the idea of such a power belonging to any mere man, is utterly preposterous; for how can the wisest man discern between the true penitent and the deceitful hypocrite? How can he know in what case God is willing that forgiveness should be administered, and in what case he sees meet that it should be withheld? But such an idea is not more preposterous than it is dangerous. It subverts the principles of moral obligation; it deceives men with regard to their state; it induces a general indifference with regard to sin, and spreads abroad a neglect of God and of his law. Human nature, which is prone to evil of itself, feels all its depraved principles encouraged, and all its salutary fears evicted, when it can hope to find forgiveness for its worst offences, by transacting with a fellow-creature, and either operating upon his credulity or influencing the more unworthy principles of his nature. But all these bad consequences are done away when men are taught that they have to do with a righteous and holy God, whom no artifice can deceive, whom no bribe can tempt, whom no favour can bias, and whom no fear can dismay. It is only the truly penitent who will ever hope to find mercy from this quarter, and it is to them that the hope of mercy should be confined. To give hope to hypocrites, to ungodly men, to the rich and powerful, is to ruin them effectually, by confirming them in their impenitence and guilt; and is, moreover, to encourage others to imitate their abandoned example, in setting at nought the law of God and despising its judgments. Most pernicious as well as most impious is the assumption, on the part of men, of the power of forgiving iniquity and of dispensing

mercy. It is a work to which they are totally inadequate, from their imperfect nature, and it is a work which they cannot attempt without ruining the souls of all whom they deceive. God, from his infinite knowledge and perfect righteousness, is alone able to dispense pardon in wisdom, and to exercise mercy in truth. Whom he justifieth he sanctifieth, and whom he sanctifieth he glorifieth. When he says, "thy sins be forgiven," he also says, with effect, "go and sin no more." But man cannot do the one; and, therefore, he has no right to affect the other. Man cannot sanctify; and, therefore, he ought not to justify. Man cannot destroy the love and power of sin; and, therefore, he ought not to pretend to the power to take away its stain and remove its guilt; for, in so doing, he is acting with impiety towards God, whose attributes he claims, and ruinously towards man, whom he is deceiving, to his everlasting destruction, by a vain and foolish pretence.

III. But a third reason why we conclude that the act of forgiving sin belongs peculiarly to God, is, that in exercising it, he must have a regard to his other attributes, and dispense it so as to promote his own glory. We know that every work of God is perfect, and as such is worthy of him; and, therefore, the work of mercy must be perfect likewise. God will exercise mercy only in perfect consistency with the truth, the righteousness, the wisdom, and the holiness of his own nature. As such, it is a work which he alone is able to perform, and which no one else is competent to undertake. Who knows better than God himself what his perfections require him to do; what is suitable to them, and what is not?

That God might exercise mercy in consistency with all the perfectness of his nature, he sent his Son into the world, to die in our room and stead; and thus to vindicate the truth, to illustrate the wisdom, and to manifest the righteousness of his government; and he is manifestly guided by the same perfections, in applying the benefits of Christ's purchase, as he was in providing them; so that his wisdom, truth, and righteousness will appear in the forgiveness of all individuals who shall be found among the heirs of salvation. He will at last be glorified in his saints; and the host of the redeemed will unite in singing his praise, "saying, Great and

manifold are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are all thy ways, thou king of saints." The terms upon which forgiveness may be found, are particularly revealed, and they are such as God has seen best to appoint. They are terms remarkable for their freeness, and which none may dispute, without the greatest presumption. "We are saved," says the Apostle, "by grace, through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have access, by faith, unto this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." All these and many other passages might be adduced, to show in what manner forgiveness of sin is obtained, and to whom it belongs. It is obtained through the pure favour and grace of God; it is not given on account of our merits or works—not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. And it belongs to believers, for it is by faith we find access unto this grace; it is by faith we receive the forgiveness of sin, and acceptance with God, and eternal life.

Now, since God has appointed this way of forgiving sins, who may safely act in opposition to it, either for himself, or by leading others to neglect the great salvation? If you believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ, then your sins, you are assured upon the word of God who cannot lie, are forgiven; and surely you do not need the word of a creature to confirm that of God. If you are sincere believers—if you have received Christ as your Saviour, then you are certainly in a state of grace; and whether men honour or defame—whether they bless or curse you, you are become heirs of salvation. But if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you have not his righteousness imputed to you, it is impossible that you can be saved. You may be respected and honoured as the best characters during your lives, and you may be canonized and revered as saints after your death; but, notwithstanding, all this will avail you nothing without faith; for you will have your portion assigned to you in the black-

ness of darkness hereafter, for ever. And as the blood of Christ cleanseth from sin, so it cleanseth from all sin; which teaches that there is no sin so great as to surpass its efficacy, and none so small but requires its cleansing virtue. The greatest sinners will find Christ sufficient for them, if they come to him; and the least of sinners cannot be saved without him. Mary Magdalene, and Saul of Tarsus, were both redeemed by faith in Christ, although the former had seven devils, and the latter was a persecutor of the Church; and the young man who kept the commandments from his youth up, because he did not unite himself to Christ, and become a disciple, continued in his sins, notwithstanding the respectability of his character, and the amiableness of his dispositions. And who may resist, who may dispute this ordinance of God's? The way in which forgiveness is exercised, is the way in which God has seen it best for his glory, and most consistent to his perfection, that it should be exercised. He is consulting in the work of redemption, high and holy ends. To his instructions we should attend, and to his commandments we should give heed, and not to the traditions of men. How can men pretend to know any other way of forgiving sins, than that which God has revealed? If they do so, they are guilty of pretending to be wiser than God—they are chargeable with the crime of opposing God. God teaches that there is only one way of finding pardon, that is, by believing in Christ; and in this way every sin must be pardoned, if it is pardoned at all, whether it be great or small.

From the nature of the work of redemption, the infinite guilt of every transgression of the law, which can only be pardoned through that work, may be easily seen by any one who seriously considers the testimony which the sufferings of Christ bear to the hatred of God against sin. No offence could ever have been forgiven, and no soul could ever have been saved, had not Christ undertaken and accomplished the arduous work of redemption. And is any sin to be accounted venial or small which demanded such a sacrifice to blot it out? Surely God's view of sin is different from such an opinion, else how is his wisdom, how is his love to be justified, in giving up his Son to the cruel death of the cross, to make an atonement for transgressions? You have only to turn your

believing consideration to the cross of Christ, and to think of all that it proclaims, to know that sin is an infinite evil, and one involving unspeakable guilt in the estimation of God. For is that light or small for which the eternal son left the bosom of the Father, and died in the most severe agony, that he might expiate it by his infinitely precious blood?

IV. But in the fourth place, we observe, that as the forgiveness of sin is an inestimable blessing, it is reserved by God to himself to exercise it, that he may draw forth our love and gratitude, in return for his infinite compassion and kindness. God is jealous of all his attributes, and will not allow the praise of them to be given to any other. We might illustrate this with regard to his power, his wisdom, and his goodness, all which he carefully guards against being ascribed or imputed in their proper effects to any other than to himself. It was the sin of Nebuchadnezzar, that he imputed to his own efforts what God had wrought for him, saying, "Is not this Great Babylon that I have built by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" It was the crime of idolaters, that they ascribed the work of creation, and all the wonders contained in it, to others than to the true God, and thus robbed him of the glory of his own operations. Now, *mercy* is an attribute which God values, at least equally, if not more, than any of his other perfections. It is that which he chiefly delights to exercise; he is pleased to be known by that most interesting appellation, the *Father of Mercy*. When Moses asked that he might see his glory, he was not referred to the works of creation for a manifestation of it, but he was taught that it consisted in the moral perfections of God, and especially in his mercy. "And he said," (Exod. xxxiii. 17.), "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy."

So well did the Jews understand this matter, that we find them objecting it to Christ, as a ground of impiety, and as an assumption of a divine character, that he should profess to forgive sins. Nor were they wrong in the doctrine which they maintained upon this point, though they erred in its application, and in the censure

which it led them to pronounce upon Christ. For any mere creature to pretend to forgive sin, is undoubtedly a pretension to divine power of a very daring and unwarrantable nature. "None can forgive sin but God only." He claims and asserts this as his peculiar prerogative, and exclusive honour.

The blessing implied in the forgiveness of sin, is of all others the most precious which men can receive, and the most important which they can seek for. The blessing of existence itself, must sink in comparison with the blessing of forgiveness. For what is existence but a woe and a curse, if spent in enduring the fatal consequences of sin? "Who can dwell with everlasting fires? who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" Now, as it is our duty to love God supremely, it is peculiarly becoming that he should reserve to himself such a powerful motive for engaging and exciting love as the exercise of mercy. Did we owe our existence to God, and our salvation from sin to another, it would be natural that our highest affection should flow in that direction from which we received the highest blessing. But no such discrepancy exists, and no room is accordingly left for the supposed turning away of our affections from God. The same gracious being, whose goodness calls us into existence, places us under a stronger and more powerful reason to love him, by pardoning our sins, and making us heirs of eternal life. And how daring is that individual who would step in between God and his creatures, and lay claim to the power of exercising pardon, and dispensing forgiveness!

There is one spoken of in Scripture, concerning whom we read, "that he opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." It is manifest that this representation must apply to one who pretends to exercise mercy, and to dispense pardon—to bind and to release sinners—to possess authority over the law, and to grant impunity to the guilty. For it is not to be wondered at, although one who is believed to have such power committed to him should be exalted above all that is worshipped, and should sit as God in that temple where he claims the possession of so many perfections which strictly belong to the Most High. But the pretensions of such an individual must

immediately be known to be utterly vain, when the true knowledge of God is received, and when men can distinguish, by the light of Scripture, what is true from what is false. For, in the Scriptures, mercy is uniformly ascribed to God. He alone exercises it. It is a royal attribute—a gem in the crown of the Most High, which reflects peculiar lustre upon his nature, and which he will not give up to any creature. The mercy of God is that attribute which should peculiarly engage our love to him. He forgiveth iniquity, and, therefore, the children of men will call upon his name. They will come to him, they will make their confessions and prayers to him; for he has said, that “if we confess our sins, he is just and righteous to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity.”

The four propositions now illustrated afford four distinct grounds of practical improvement. The first proposition, “That all sin is committed against God,” obviously suggests to us the duty of confessing our sins unto God, and of doing so with the deepest contrition, and the most penitential sorrow. “Take with you words, and turn unto the Lord, and say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips.” If you did evil to a fellow-creature; if you slighted or affronted him; if you acted contrary to his expressed will, or even neglected to execute a duty which he had intrusted to you, would you not feel that you were called upon to confess your fault, and to ask forgiveness? And how manifold are the sins—how aggravated the transgressions which are chargeable upon us, against our most gracious and merciful God. From our early days, we go astray from the ways of his commandments, and the imaginations of the thoughts of our hearts are only evil continually. Let me ask you to inquire at yourselves, whether you have loved and revered—whether you have served and honoured God as you ought to have done; or whether your hearts do not accuse you of having most daringly insulted his authority, despised his judgments, rejected his grace, and contravened his holy will? And this has been the character of your lives, not for one day merely—not on a few occasions of particular temptation, but the prevailing, habitual, predominant character of them.

And consider, moreover, the innumerable actual transgressions of the law of God which you are guilty of committing—your sins in word and deed—your frequent neglect of duty—the abandonment or mere formal attendance upon religious ordinances—the frequent or total disuse of family and private worship, reading the Scriptures, prayer, and praise; and take farther into account all the various personal and relative sins which attach to you—the indulgence of evil passions, of wicked habits, and of worldly inclinations—the breaches of the law of truth and charity—the malice, the wrath, and the deceit—the rash judging, the wicked speeches into which you have fallen—all these things are known unto God, and are hateful to him, and will necessarily draw down his wrath from heaven, unless they are repented of and forgiven. But rejoice that there is forgiveness with God. Avail yourselves of it. Draw near, with penitence and faith, to a throne of grace; and, in the all-prevailing name of Christ Jesus, cry for mercy whilst it may be found. And let your contrition be a tender and filial contrition; let it spring from a sincere grief of having offended so gracious a Father as God, and at having acted so presumptuously in opposition to his good and holy law. Seek that you may have that godly sorrow for sin which worketh repentance unto salvation that needeth not to be repented of; “For the sacrifices of the Lord are a broken heart and a contrite spirit: a broken and a contrite spirit, O Lord, thou wilt not despise.”

II. From the proposition that God only can forgive sin, because he knows what the honour of his government and the maintenance of his glory render necessary, we learn the insufficiency of all human absolution and pardon, and the delusive nature of these rites as practised in the Roman Church. There is no mere man who can enter into the heart of another, and know whether the person who is before him be a true penitent or a deceitful dissembler—whether his confession be sincere or deceitful, full or imperfect, and such as is worthy of being accepted or not. The Roman Church “holds that the Pope’s tribunal and God’s are one”—a tenet as absurd as it is impious, inasmuch as it implies that the judgment of a weak, short-sighted man, is as wise and perfect as that of the holy and omniscient God. Abraham

said of old, "shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" a sentiment truly wise and pious, and such as it becomes all to entertain who possess right views of the perfections of the Most High. But who could apply such an affirmation to the tribunal of the Pope, however much he may be disposed, from education or other causes, to hold its decisions in respect? Is it not a man who sits upon it, having at least all the necessary defects and imperfections incident to our fallen nature, and who must, therefore, be liable to go wrong, both in deciding upon doctrines of a general nature, and upon the actual state of particular individuals. The absolution or forgiveness of sin granted from this quarter, even though it should be preceded by a most careful examination, and scrupulous inquiry into the state of the person absolved, could not be safely relied upon with absolute confidence; for we learn, upon the high authority of an Apostle, "that it is a small matter to be judged of by man's judgment." But does such care, does such inquiry, always precede the granting of absolution? We find the following sentiments expressed in Pascal's letters, as held upon this subject by the Jesuits—a large and influential body of the Roman priests, who were the confessors of the greater part of the opulent and elevated ranks of Catholic countries:—"The confessor, it is laid down, may easily put himself at peace regarding the disposition of the penitent. For if he does not give sufficient signs of grief, the confessor has only to ask him, if he does not detest sin in his heart; and if he answers *yes*, he is obliged to *believe him*. The same thing may be said respecting his purposes of amendment and resolutions for the future, unless in the case where restitution must be made, or some immediate cause of sin must be relinquished." What a loose, what a sophistical, what a dangerous method is this of dealing with immortal souls! If a sinner only goes before a priest, and says he hates sin in his heart—*says it*, he must be believed and absolved; and remember that this act is said to be ratified in heaven. No wonder although this method of proceeding should be pleasant to sinners who are willing to be deceived, and who are anxious to obtain peace, on any terms, or in any manner. But I would ask if there is one here who could venture to place his confi-

dence for eternity upon such dangerous or fallacious ground? If there is, let him listen, not to what man, but to what God says, against all those who are spiritual deceivers, and who are spiritually deceived. See Ezek. xiii. 8.

III. From the third proposition, which is, that God can forgive sin only in consistency with the moral perfections of his nature, we learn the danger of calling any sin *venial* in the sense in which the term is used by the Roman church. According to the tenets of that church, sins are of two kinds, *venial* and *mortal* sin; and the distinction is, that the person who commits a *venial* sin is not so far guilty as that God can in justice punish him. This distinction was introduced from the scholastic divines, who deduced it, not from Scripture, but from the writings of the heathen philosopher, Aristotle; and yet it forms an article of faith necessary to salvation. We might almost suppose that our Lord had the abettors of this dangerous doctrine directly in his mind, as well as the Pharisees, when he said, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." The fact is, that there is a great resemblance between the corrupt system that prevailed in the Jewish church at the time of our Lord's ministry, and the system that prevails in the Roman church. Both receive traditions, and by these traditions make the law of God of none effect. The Pharisees exacted a scrupulous compliance with the ceremonial part of religion from the people, but were more lax with regard to enforcing the obligations of the weightier matters of the law—righteousness, temperance, mercy, and faith. They kept the people in a state of blind subjection to their own authority, and constituted themselves the sole expounders of the law and the prophets, who had the right of determining what the Scriptures taught.

The doctrine of Scripture is exceedingly opposed to any distinction among sins of the kind here referred to. It was the great object of our Lord's ministry to show that what are considered light sins among men are great sins in the sight of God. Thus, in Matthew, 5th chap. ver. 21, we find him addressing himself to his hearers in the following terms:—

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." In like manner, with regard to all other sins, our Lord taught that they originated in the heart, and that when cherished there they were as criminal in the sight of God, who searcheth the heart, as when they are manifested in actual deeds.

The fact is, that every sin is a transgression of the law of God, and, therefore, from its very nature is infinitely evil. And, oh, let this solemn doctrine be improved by us, in leading us to watch over our hearts with all diligence, out of which are the issues of life and of death. It will be of little consequence to you, that you believe sin to be exceedingly sinful, in every variety and degree, unless you cherish the practical influences of the doctrine, and, denying yourselves to all ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly, in a present evil world. Whilst charity requires us to believe that some men are better than their principles could lead us to expect, truth requires us to admit, that others are worse than their principles would lead us to suppose. How many who allow that sin is infinitely evil, yet drink up iniquity like water, and roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongue! Let those who manifest this woful inconsistency between their character and profession, be afraid, and repent ere it be too late. Who shall dwell with everlasting fire? who shall dwell with everlasting burnings? In a little time you shall appear before the judgment-seat of God, to render an account of the deeds done in the body; and, oh, what can it then avail you, by what name you are known among men, if you are found covered with sin, and clothed with the polluted garments of iniquity! Then shall the judge say unto you, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, into outer darkness prepared for the devil and his angels, for I know you not.

IV. From the fourth proposition, that the forgiveness of sin is a blessing, the exercise of which God reserves to himself, that he may draw forth our love and gratitude in bestowing it, we learn the obligation of those who have obtained forgiveness to

devote themselves to the service of God, and to walk before him with attached and dutiful dispositions, as becomes the children of so many mercies. "He to whom much has been forgiven, will love much," and this every sincere penitent will feel to be the case with himself; for he is assured that his sins are infinitely numerous and heinous, and that only the richest grace can pardon them. That man who feels no concern whether his iniquities are forgiven or not, and who presumes to be at peace in sin, is in a state of woful impenitence and hardness of heart. He is not giving credit to the divine testimony respecting the danger of iniquity, and the fearful destruction which will overtake those who continue in its bonds. If he did, he would seek forgiveness with tearful contrition, and importunate wrestling, and would take no rest till he had found an interest in Christ, and was made to enjoy peace through his blood. And such as have received a blessing so great and precious as the *forgiveness of sin*, will be led to abound in gratitude to their reconciled Father, and to feel that all their obedience, and all their praise, and all their devotedness of heart and spirit to the service of God, is too little to testify the love which they feel, or to mark their sense of the obligations which they owe to infinite grace. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" will be the abiding sentiment of every one who has tasted and found that the Lord is gracious, and who possesses right conceptions of the extent and riches of saving mercy. Cultivate, then, this spirit, and let the grace which hath appeared bringing salvation, teach you to deny yourselves to all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in a present evil world. Keep ever in view the inestimable value of your souls, and the great price by which your redemption has been purchased; and let the debt of gratitude which you owe to divine mercy, a debt which you can never fully conceive, constrain you to give yourselves up to God, who has done so great things for you, and to become his wholly, and his only, and his for ever. This is the spirit of the redeemed in heaven, who abound in love and praise to their God and Saviour; and this should be the spirit of all who are made partakers of the grace of the Gospel upon the earth.

Believing, then, in the Lord Jesus

Christ, abound in love, and joy and thanksgiving; sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; cultivate a devout and an adoring sense of his infinite loving-kindness; and, as ye have received mercy from above, exercise it to all men, and be ready

for every good word and work—not living to yourselves, but to him who loved you, and who gave himself for you, that he might redeem you from all iniquity, and purify you to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Amen.

ADDRESS AFTER THE DISPENSATION OF THE SACRAMENT;

Delivered by the Rev. Mr. MARSHALL.—Concluded from page 96.

It is your desire, I trust, to hold fast the profession of your faith, without wavering; it is your desire to adorn the doctrine of God, your Saviour; it is your desire to be furnished for every duty, and for every trial; it is your desire to advance from strength to strength, and to appear at last before God, coming with the rest of the redeemed families, of every tribe, and kindred, and tongue, and nation, “in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” Such, I trust, is your desire. It is right that you should cherish it intensely: and, in order that it may be accomplished, let me exhort you to place your hope in Jesus. Remember the words, “Ye believe in God, believe also in me.” In these words, he expressly invites you, Christians, to cast all your cares upon him, in the faith that he cares for you. He invites you to be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let your requests be known unto him, that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, may keep your hearts and minds.

In the first place, trust in your exalted Saviour, that your wants may be supplied—those wants, of which, if you know yourselves, you must be deeply sensible—those wants which must make you appear in your own eyes wretched, miserable, poor, and blind, and naked. In him, it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. He is constituted head of all principality and power—head over all things to the Church in God. He is made of God unto you, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Look to him when conscience accuses you; look to him when the law condemns you; look to him, when, under a sense of your weakness, your heart and your flesh might be apt to fail. He has magnified the law and made it honourable, fulfilling all its obligations and satisfying all its demands. He is the end of the law for righteousness

to every one who believes in him? there is no condemnation for those who are in him. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?” It is Christ that died, and that is also risen again; and as his righteousness is perfect, so his grace is all-sufficient. “Fear not,” he says, “I am with you. Be not dismayed, I am thy God. My grace is sufficient for thee. My strength is made perfect in thy weakness.” Look to him, I say. “I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. When I am weak, then am I strong.”

In the second place, look to your exalted Saviour, and trust in him, that your sorrows may be soothed. Ye believe in God, believe also in him. “He is an interpreter; one among a thousand.” He knows how to speak a word in season to the soul that is weary; he binds up the broken heart, and comforts those who are cast down; he appoints to them that mourn in Zion; he gives them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. He is not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of your infirmities; in all points, he was tempted as you are, only without sin. He knows what things temptations are, for he has felt the same: and then, my friends, he knows what sore afflictions are. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he was acquainted even with those griefs which chequer human life—those griefs which are occasioned by the disruption of dear and tender ties, the ties of friendship and of kindred. You know what is recorded of him, where it stands written, “Jesus wept.” And will he who wept at the grave of Lazarus, look with indifference at other graves containing dust not less precious than that of Lazarus—not less dear to himself, or dear to surviving friends? He gives us abundant consolation; he hath not left us ignorant concerning those who are asleep. He has brought life and immortality to light, through the Gospel. We

are to rejoice in knowing that those who die in him are blessed—that they have rest from their labours, and their works do follow them—that in leaving the flesh they go to Christ, which is far better—that when absent from the body they are present with the Lord. Again, trust in God the Saviour, to receive your souls at the hour of death, and to make them happy in the society of the blessed. This is the consolation which he held out to the disciples when he was going away, and this is the consolation he still holds out to you. “In my Father’s house,” says he, “are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” My brethren, it is one thing to trust that our departed friends are with our Saviour, and it is another thing to trust that we ourselves shall be with him in due time. These, as you may see, are very different things; and yet I cannot conceive how we can take consolation from the one, without being able also to take consolation from the other. Oh, to be separated for ever from those we love!—to see them sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, while we ourselves are for ever debarred their society! We shudder at such a thought as this; and well we may. And then, what is it to be separated from the Redeemer himself! Oh! let this suggestion have its proper impression upon us; let every one be showing the same diligence to the full assurance of hope, unto the end; let us not be slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises. Let it be our study every day we live to intrust ourselves into the hands of the great Redeemer, that, when the solemn hour arrives, as it must very soon arrive now, when we must bid adieu to this last scene of things, we may be able to say with good old Simeon, “Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace;” or, with Stephen the martyr, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;” or, with the apostle Paul, “I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day.” In a word, my christian brethren, trust in your exalted Saviour, that he will

come again, to call those of you who are dear to him from the grave—to clothe you in robes of unfading brightness, and to open before you the gates of the New Jerusalem. This also, he has most distinctly promised. “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead shall be raised, and the living shall be changed: both together shall be caught up to meet him in the air; and so shall they be ever with the Lord. Behold he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him. He comes in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel. He comes, attended by ten thousand times ten thousand of his mighty angels, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds. But he comes, at the same time, for a far more gracious purpose: he comes to call the sleeping ashes of his saints from the grave; to fashion them after the likeness of his own glorious body, and to conduct them into his Father’s house. “It is sown in corruption; it shall be raised in incorruption. It is sown in weakness; it shall be raised in power. It is sown in dishonour; it shall be raised in glory.” This corruptible shall be clothed with incorruption, and this mortal shall be clothed with immortality. When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality, death shall be swallowed up in victory. What it is to be with the Saviour in his Father’s house, after the consummation of all things, no one can tell. But this we know, that it was his last promise to his disciples when he was going away; and this we know also, that it is the great and crowning blessing which he supplicates from the Father in his intercessory prayer, “Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me.” That city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the Lord himself doth light it, and the Lamb is the light thereof; and the nations of those who are saved shall walk in that light. This is all we know of the matter, but this is quite enough for us to know. May God accompany these remarks with his blessing. Amen.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. Dr. A. O. BEATTIE, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. J. M'NAUGHTAN, A.M., Paisley.

EFFECTS OF THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH ;

A SERMON PREACHED ON MONDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 1833, IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, GREYFRIARS, GLASGOW, SHORTLY AFTER THE DECEASE OF THE
LATE REV. JOHN DICK, D.D., S.S.T.P.

By the Rev. Dr. A. O. BEATTIE,
Minister of the United Secession Church, Gordon Street, Glasgow.

"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"—2 KINGS ii. 14.

BETWEEN the lawgiver and the restorer of the law, there were a variety of very striking resemblances. Both Moses and Elijah had their grandest visions of God upon Mount Horeb ; to both God manifested himself by the emblems of fire, and both were despatched upon interesting embassies to wicked and idolatrous kings—Moses to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Elijah to Ahab in Israel ; both of them were instruments in the hand of God for quenching the burning thirst of a distressed people—Moses by smiting the rock in Horeb with his rod, Elijah by opening heaven with his prayers and bringing down thence a plentiful rain ; both of them furnished a miraculous meal to the hungry—Moses by the manna and the quails, Elijah by multiplying the barrel of meal and the cruise of oil ; and both of them divided asunder the waters to make a passage for those who were employed in the service of God—Moses by his rod dividing asunder the waters of the Red Sea, and Elijah by his mantle the waters of Jordan. The loss of both was great to the church—both had been singularly eminent in the service of the Most High, and both were honoured to live to see successors raised up to carry on that work in which they had been so zealously engaged. Both the lawgiver and the restorer of the law, were forewarned of their departure from the world—both of them took their flight from earth to heaven from nearly the same place, beyond

Jordan, in the plains of Moab ; and both of them departed under the immediate care and protection of the God they had served, Jehovah hid the body of the lawgiver and concealed his grave while his spirit was wafted to heaven, and a chariot of fire and horses of fire removed the other into the realms of bliss. It is not my intention at present to direct you very particularly to the translation of Elijah, although I may have occasion frequently to refer to it in the subsequent illustrations. I consider these words of the prophet as expressive of his sense of the loss which he had sustained in the translation of Elijah, and on turning back to the scene of his labours, as expressive of the consolation which he experienced in the thought, that Elijah's God was still with him. He felt that, although his Head was removed from him, the God of the prophet was still near to support and to comfort, and to render him successful in his labours.

In the subsequent part of this discourse, I shall first of all consider the loss sustained by the removal of Elijah from earth ; and, 2dly, Mention some of those consolatory circumstances which attended his removal. I proceed, then, agreeably to this plan, to consider the loss that was sustained by the removal of Elijah to heaven. And first of all, it was a severe loss to the sons of the prophets. To train up youth for the service of God, is one of the most important

tasks, but to train up those who are destined to be the instructors of others, requires no ordinary talents. That Elijah was eminent in his service is perfectly evident from the context. His last service, you will observe, of a public kind, was a visit to the schools of the prophets. The schools of the prophets were those seminaries under the superintendence of the prophets, where the pious youth of the land were educated in the knowledge of the Scriptures, and trained up to the worship and service of God. It is more than probable, that Elijah himself had erected these schools, and that they were under his immediate superintendence, and before he bids farewell to earth, he makes a visit for the purpose of consoling and exhorting the students in these seminaries. One of them we are told was at Gilgal, the usual place of the residence of Elijah and his successor Elisha; the other was at Bethel, one of the most noted seats of idolatry in the land; and the third was at Jericho, upon the very borders of the land of Israel, and where the inhabitants were particularly exposed to the contagion of idolatry. There Elijah had collected together many of the pious youth of the country; there he instructed them in the knowledge of the God of Israel, and by these preparatory studies fitted them for checking the rapid progress of idolatry in the land. From these schools of the prophets there were sometimes selected the messengers of the prophets, who were to carry to distant parts of the land the announcements with which they were charged; and sometimes the Spirit of God descended upon those who had been subjected to this preparatory training, and they were themselves made the special messengers of the God of heaven. Now, it is evident, my brethren, that to each of these schools the removal of Elijah must have been a very serious loss. They had often received his pious instructions, but they were to hear him no more. They had often joined in his fervent prayers for Israel, but these were no more to ascend before the throne of the Lord of Sabaoth. The holy ardour with which he had guided their studies and pointed them to the hopes and consolations of Israel they were no more to witness. As an evidence, that the translation of Elijah was a serious loss to them, you will remark, that God had actually communicated to each of these seminaries, information respecting the removal of their Teacher

that very day. They venerated his character—they revered his office—they esteemed him very highly in love for his work's sake, and must have joined with Elisha in the grief which he felt at the removal of his Head.

But, 2dly, the removal of Elijah was a serious loss to the prophets themselves. Elisha was the next in the order of precedence to Elijah; but he was not alone—there were many more prophets still in the land. It is a remarkable fact, my brethren, that the number of prophets sent by God to apostate Israel was far greater than those that were commissioned to professing Judah; and you will accordingly recollect, that during the bloody persecution of Jezebel, Obadiah secreted and supported no less than a hundred of the prophets of the Lord; many of whom, according to the ordinary course of nature, must have been alive at this period. Now Elijah from his character, from his extraordinary gifts, was well fitted to be a teacher of teachers. His vigorous faith, his undaunted courage, his unbending firmness, his high-toned morality, furnished an example to all his brethren, that must have been powerfully animating to their zeal, and inspiring to their diligence in the work of the Lord. The character of Elijah added lustre to the office with which he was invested, and formed a shield of protection against the violence of the reigning family. He was well fitted to be the leader of the prophets, and to direct them in maintaining the worship and the service of God, and he won for them some of the most splendid triumphs which the true religion in those days obtained. All the prophets of the land then must have looked up with veneration to Elijah, and must have felt when he was removed, as if a standard-bearer had fallen. If Elisha felt so deep upon this occasion, all of the same profession must have shared with him in his sorrows, and bitterly lamented the event which plunged him into such deep grief. Who, I ask, does not feel it an honour to have been acquainted with those eminent for their wisdom and piety: Who does not feel himself the better for having witnessed the example of the great and the good? Who does not wish to cherish the remembrance of their excellence?—and who does not feel when God is pleased to call them away? “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth.

In the 3d place, Elijah's removal was an almost irreparable loss to the Church. God

very frequently qualifies his servants for the work which they are called to perform, and for the age in which they are called to live. It was, as every one knows, an evil day in which Elijah lived, and he was singularly fitted for such a time of trouble. For a season of almost universal apostasy from the true religion, he was pre-eminently qualified. Faithfully to warn, to expostulate, and to entreat, intrepidly to denounce the judgments of God, and fearlessly to execute them upon an ungodly people, required a soul of no ordinary kind, and Elijah was endowed with a spirit of such fearless intrepidity, that the boldest of the enemies of Jehovah quailed in his presence. When he opposed himself to the torrent, it was effectually checked; when he retired from the scene, it spread like a desolating flood over all the land. How much Elijah may have contributed to the steadfastness of the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee unto the image of Baal we cannot tell; but one thing is certain, that the moment Elijah fled, that moment the whole seven thousand seem to have disappeared from view. No sooner however did he appear again on the scene, than the prophets of Baal were slain—the altars of the idol god were cast down—his worship was abandoned, and the thousands who had fled to the dens and caves of the earth, to hide themselves during the season of persecution again came forth, professed the worship of the true God, and rekindled the dying embers of religion in the land. On his second flight, you may recollect that Jezebel and Ahab again commenced with renewed vigour their cruelties and idolatries, and were a second time checked by the re-appearance of the Tishbite. It is evident, then, that during his whole life the prophet was one of the main pillars of the religion of the country; and all the faithful of the land must have felt sorrow at his removal. There was not a priest of the temple, there was not a worshipper of the true God, but must have felt that he had lost his chief protector when Elijah was gone. There was not a prophet, nor a son of the prophets, but must have felt that one of their strongest supports was withdrawn. If, when Elijah disappeared for a season, the faithful shrunk timidly from the storm, what might not be anticipated as the natural consequence of his removal from the earth? If, my brethren, the saints are likened to the salt of the earth, which preserves it from rapid putrefaction, then the loss of the prophetic

services, and of the high example of Elijah, must have been great to the whole church, of God.

In directing your attention to the first department of the subject, I have said, that Elijah's removal was a loss to the sons of the prophets—a loss to the prophets themselves—and a loss to the whole church of God in the land. I now proceed to the second department of the subject, in which I am to consider, what was consolatory in the manner of the prophet's removal. And in the first place, it was consolatory to think, that Elijah's usefulness had continued to the very last. It is sometimes exceedingly painful to think, that eminent servants of God are neglected and forgotten, when, through the afflictions of life, or the infirmities of age, they are disqualified for their wonted services; but down to the very day in which Elijah was removed from our world, his usefulness, like that of Moses, continued with unabated force. Peter tells the churches, to whom he wrote, that the Lord had shown him that he must shortly put off this earthly tabernacle; and this consideration made him particularly anxious that the churches should have those things which he had written always in their remembrance. Now, under the influence of the same spirit, Elijah paid a visit to the schools of the prophets, that he might exhort and bless them before his removal from the world, that he might charge them to have in remembrance the living and the true God, and that they should maintain, at the hazard of their lives, the worship of the Holy One of Israel; and of what advantage must it have been to the sons of the prophets; and what an impression must it have left on their minds, to think that they had been visited and counselled by the man of God, when he was on his way to heaven! As the oracle of God, and with something of the fragrance of that world, upon the very borders of which he was now standing, they must, at each of the places visited by him, have received his farewell address. They knew, you will observe, that Elijah was standing upon the very isthmus of time. They knew that he was upon the very threshold of glory. What a powerful impression then must the lessons of truth have produced upon their minds, delivered under these circumstances! Down to the very last moment of his life he was of advantage to

Elisha. Once and again the man of God wished to shake himself free from the presence of his servant—first at Gilgal, then at Bethel, and afterwards at Jericho. Whether Elijah wished, in this manner, to try the fidelity of his servant; whether he was ignorant that a communication, similar to that made to himself, had been revealed to his successor; or, whether he wished in pious modesty to travel to the scene of his translation solitary and unnoticed, we are not told; but, for once, and only once, Elisha disobeys his master and resists all the attempts that were made to induce him to return, and to cease from following after him. He knew that the prophetic blessing, like the patriarchal, was given at the moment of parting, and on, and on they travelled together till heaven came between them. And O how profitable to Elisha to witness the scene of his predecessor's triumph! What exalted ideas must this sight have imparted to him of the heavenly world! And how must it have animated him in the discharge of his duties, as a prophet of God! But this was not all. When Elijah was treading his very last step upon earth he was eminently useful, and that moment he prayed for the double portion of his spirit—the double portion of the spirit of prophecy, of fidelity, of zeal in the service of God, for his successor Elisha; and, perhaps, this was the most important service of the life of the prophet. Literally, then, down to the very last moment of his continuance upon earth, he was eminently useful to the Church of God; and was it not, I ask you, exceedingly consolatory to all who had shared in his services to know that these were prolonged to the very last moment?

In the second place. In Elijah's removal, death was robbed of its triumph. This too was a high consolation. He was translated to heaven without tasting death. A similar demonstration of a future state of existence had been given to the antediluvian world; and it is not a little remarkable, that the only two visible demonstrations of this truth were exhibited to ages that were remarkable for their unbelief and their profligacy. To invigorate the faith of the people of God in an apostate season, Elijah had exposed himself to the most imminent perils; and upon the slaughter of the 150 prophets of Baal, Jezebel, in a rage, swore by her dishonoured gods, that by to-morrow she would make

his life like one of theirs. But that God whose worship Elijah maintained, and to whose service he devoted himself, not only protected him from all her fury, but destined him a more honourable egress. Elijah's entrance upon his ministry and his departure from it were both remarkable. The first account that we have of the man of God is in these memorable words: "As the Lord God liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be rain, or dew, these three years, but according to my word." And as an eminent writer has expressed it, "he who enters with a tempest departs with the whirlwind." Once and again Elijah had called down fire from heaven, in vindication of God's honour and glory, and now God sends down the celestial fire to transport him thither. After Elijah had smitten the waters of Jordan and entered that district which was the prophet's native land, they proceeded along the plains of Moab, conversing in all probability about the affairs of God's distressed church and about the glories of the heavenly world, till the celestial fire separated them. This to the eye of Elisha, seemed like horses of fire and a chariot of fire bearing away the prophet to the realms of light. No doubt it was by the ministry of holy angels that God performed this service, and translated his servant to heaven. We are told in the Scriptures "he makes his angels a flame of fire." Those ministers, who had on many former occasions in their intercourse with the family of man, assumed the appearance of mortals, now appear in their native splendour, and as horses of fire and a chariot of fire ascend in the whirlwind to heaven. The fire and the whirlwind, you recollect, were two of the most magnificent objects in which God revealed himself to Elijah when he was in exile on Mount Horeb, and now with all the resplendence of the one, and with all the speed of the other, he is carried to the regions of immortality and bliss. Never, surely, never was there a more splendid triumph gained over the last enemy by any of the children of men than at this time. What a bright emblem was the translation of the prophet of the triumphant ascension of Him who, having conquered death, and him that had the power of death, ascended up on high leading captivity captive! And, if this was not comforting to Elisha, and if this would not be comforting to the sons of the prophets, who stood afar off, and if this would not prove comforting

to the whole church, of which Elijah was so bright an ornament, I cannot, my friends, tell you what would comfort them. To have the evidence, that those whose loss we mourn have gone to a better world, are entered into the joy of their Lord, is the highest possible consolation which we can ever enjoy. We may, even on such occasions, weep, but it is impossible we can "sorrow as those who have no hope."

We may see, and we may mourn to see, their agonizing struggles with the last enemy; but if we have the evidence, that they are "more than conquerors through him that loved them," we have a consolation akin to that which would have been experienced if we had seen them translated, soul and body, in a chariot of fire to heaven.

In the third and last place, what Elijah left behind him was highly consolatory to the survivors. No sooner did the afflicted Elisha perceive that the man of God was removed beyond the reach of his eye, than as expressive of the sense which he entertained of his own loss, and the loss sustained by the whole Church of God, he rent his clothes in pieces. But the descending mantle of the man of God, no longer necessary in that land upon which he had now entered, furnished Elisha with a most seasonable and most honourable supply of raiment. The influence of this mysterious mantle of the prophet, Elisha had already experienced; and when, some years ago, upon his first interview with its owner, it was cast over him, it was possessed of such a charm, that he instantly left his father's house and all his earthly prospects and followed Elijah. And now he takes it up as doubly precious in his estimation; precious however, you will observe, not so much as a relic of the departed prophet, as an evidence that the request he had presented for a double portion of his spirit, was granted unto him. With this mantle he solitarily retraced his steps to the banks of Jordan, and while he stood alone and sorrowful by the brink of that celebrated flood, he was comforted to find that he had still the presence of the Lord God of the prophet. Jordan's waters might not know the mantle which Elijah possessed, but they knew the command of Elijah's God, and were smitten hither and thither. Now this was not merely consolatory to Elisha himself, it was equally comforting to the whole Church. When they who stood afar off saw the waters of Jordan smitten a second time,

and a second time obedient to the mandate, and permitting Elisha to pass over on dry ground, they joyfully exclaimed, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha," and they received and they welcomed him as the anointed prophet of God. The Church has here great consolation, when God in righteousness, and perhaps in mercy, has been pleased to remove eminent servants from the scenes of their labours. O! I recollect that when the great prophet of the Church himself was about to be removed, and when he would comfort his disciples under the bereavement which they were shortly to experience, he promises that he would send him another comforter, even the Spirit of truth, which should abide with them for ever. If we ask, then, my friends, where is the Lord God of Elijah, the answer is at hand. He is still present—he is still present to render his word and his ordinances effectual—he is still present to carry on the work which eminent servants were not permitted to stay, and to see fully accomplished.

I have said, then, in directing your attention to what was consolatory in the manner of Elijah's removal, that his usefulness was continued to the very last; that in the removal, a splendid triumph was gained over death, and that what he left behind him was well calculated to be comforting to survivors.

To conclude the subject. We have no reason, my brethren, to lament the removal of any of God's servants on their own account. However painful to relatives, however afflicting to friends, however great the loss to the people of their charge, however great to the Church in general, it is joy to them. In every point of view, their removal is advantageous to themselves: death to them is gain; absent from the body, they are present with the Lord—they cease from their labours—they enter into their rest—their works do follow them, and could they address us, their language would be that of our Great Master, language to which your attention was very lately called: "If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I go to the Father." But for ourselves, we have indeed reason to lament; and one of the first things that presses itself upon our notice is, how the concerns of the Church may be affected by the removal of burning and shining lights, and then what influence it may have upon the concerns of this world, when they who were the salt of

the earth, and they who were the pillars of the land are taken away. O! when individuals who by their holy intercessions averted calamity, and by their fervent and importunate prayers brought down blessings, are taken from us, it should certainly increase in us the spirit of prayer; it should induce us with holy and persevering fervency, to entreat that God, by double effusions of his Spirit's influences, would make up the loss—that a double portion of these may be imparted to us, and may be imparted unto others. When the lesser lights in our spiritual horizon are quenched, O! we should earnestly pray to God that we may have larger measures of the illuminating influence of the Sun of righteousness. To ourselves, my friends, this subject speaks the language of comfort. We may not, the children of God's family though we are, be exempted from the stroke of death. No; but is it not comforting to be assured that we shall be "more than conquerors through him that loved us?" God may not send his angels to translate us, soul and body, as in a chariot of fire to heaven. No; but is it

not comforting to know, that "they are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation?" We may not be told of the hour of our departure; but this is designed to render us habitually diligent in the work to which we are now called, it should make us feel that we are at all times upon the very verge of an eternal world, and that the realities of the invisible scene may in a moment burst upon our view. Is it not comforting, my friends, to know, that when eminent men are removed from the Church of God on earth, this does not involve in it the removal of God's Spirit—the withdrawal of God's promises—or the absence of God himself? The same Gospel shall still be preached; the same Almighty energy shall still accompany its proclamation; sinners shall still be converted; saints shall still be edified; God shall still be glorified, and the Saviour honoured. The voice of providence may bid us cry "all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the grass," but the voice of revelation bids us add, that "the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

THE CURSE CONVERTED INTO A BLESSING

A SERMON PREACHED IN GREENOCK MID-PARISH CHURCH, ON SABBATH EVENING,

10TH FEBRUARY, 1833,

By the Rev. J. M'NAUGHTAN, A.M.

Minister of the High Church, Paisley

"Howbeit, our God turned the curse into a blessing."—NEH. xii. 2.

THE history of Israel's tribes is a beautiful epitome of the history of the world; and the eventful circumstances attendant on their progress to Canaan, and settlement in the land of promise, pictures forth the wakings and travail of a human soul emancipated from the bondage of Satan, and struggling to obtain an entrance into that rest which remaineth for the people of God. While the sons of Judah traversed the parched desert under Almighty guardianship, supernaturally protected, and divinely led, their difficulties and trials were neither few nor small. The dangers of the wilderness, pathless and barren, the fluctuations of their faith ever ebbing and unstable, and their anxious forebodings in the prospect of encountering a nation whose prowess was as

notable as its energies were abundant, all tended to disquiet the spirit, and arouse the fears of the children of promise, lest they should fall a prey to the giants of Canaan, or suffer from the treachery of the craftier sons of Amalek. Still, however, shielded by the pillar of fire, and guided by the column of smoke, Jacob moved forward to claim his inheritance; and all who withstood his progress, and attempted to obstruct his marchings, became the trophies of his triumph—the evidences that the Lord fought for his people. Idolatrous and blinded though the Canaanites were, they could not fail to remark, that an invisible arm was the bulwark of the camp of Israel, that a superhuman vigour animated her armies, and that her victories were achieved,

not so much by the valour or the number of her warriors, as by the unseen, though everywhere exemplified, influence of supernatural uncontrollable agency; and therefore despairing of arresting her movements, save by an equivalent power, they sought to match divination against what *they deemed* divination, and the power of devils against what *really was* the working of Jehovah's outstretched arm. The career of Abraham's descendants had been so resistless that the hearts of their enemies were dismayed. In the simple but expressive language of the King of Moab, "the people seemed to cover the face of the earth, licking up all around them, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field;" and, therefore, to revive the drooping courage of his people, and avert that mighty inundation that rolled towards his territories, he sought for the chiefest diviner, despatching to him his princes and the elders of the tribes of Midian loaded with presents and with promises, to obtain his aid in cursing the aggressors—believing firmly, that whomsoever he would bless should be blessed, and whomsoever he would curse should be cursed.

In the mercenary spirit of Balaam, Balak found a ready coadjutor—one whose covetous soul impelled him to a ready compliance with the wishes of his monarch, but whose restraint and subjugation served only to magnify more perceptibly, the omnipotence of Jehovah working even in the heart of this abandoned soothsayer, and eliciting from his unwilling lips the notes of admiration, and the melody of Israel's praise, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! how lovely are thy dwellings, O Israel!" Doubtless he might have been permitted to fulfil his purposes, to act in servile obsequiousness to his prince, to thunder forth his anathemas and denunciations against the children of the covenant, without injuring their prospects, or marring their prosperity—their fate and their fortune were in higher keeping than his; and while the right hand of the Eternal was around them, the breath of his blasphemy could no more unloose their security, than the breeze of morning could rock the everlasting mountains, or bow the perpetual hills. The only effect would have been, to have strengthened the hearts of the soldiers of Midian, who, trusting that the blessing of Balaam was written upon their shields, would have contended more valiantly, and ascribed their

ultimate defeat to some other cause than the fact that God fought for his people. Even this effect was prevented by the overruling power of the Infinite magnifying its influence over a heathen heart, and testifying amid a pagan people, that neither the altar, nor the sacrifices, nor the priests, of Baal, could prevent the fulfilment of the divine decrees, even through the instrumentality of an ungodly man. Balaam came prepared to curse, but the mind of the Lord was, that he should bless—the evil intended, was converted into a blessing. Midian and Moab stood upon their hills, scowling on the whitened tents of Israel, that filled the valleys beneath; the honours and the treasures of their lands lay at the feet of their choicest prophet, and the hearts of the people were prepared to greet with exultation his curses and execrations, but it was found that "surely there was no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there divination against Israel; his tents were as the valleys spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign-aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." Thus was the incantation of Balaam overruled; and, ever after when the sons and daughters of the favoured people were met together to declare the doings of the Lord, this theme of mercy was not forgotten, and every heart rejoiced that, in his love and in his mercy, God had turned the curse into a blessing. And we, my brethren, if the sons of the living God, in reviewing the past dealings of that all-wise and ever-merciful Providence, whereby all things are made to work together for good, especially in reverting to the soul-destroying assaults of sin, and the manner in which the machinations of the Evil One have been counteracted, under the influence of the recent views we have had at a communion table of the love of God in Christ Jesus the Lord, are bound to take up our song of praise, and say, "Hitherto the Lord indeed hath helped us, converting even the curse of sin itself into a positive blessing. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he alone doth wondrous things, excelling in glory, and blessed be his holy name for ever and for ever!" In further discoursing from these words, we would generalize the language of our text, applying it not to Balaam's threat, but to the actual curses wherewith man is afflicted—showing how these have been so overruled as to become positive blessings; and as the limits of a single discourse will

not permit us to specify each individual curse, we would simply advert to these three—sorrow, sin, and death.

I. Sorrow is a curse, but God hath turned it into a blessing. No one, we presume, will insist upon proof, that the affliction and misery included in the term "sorrow," is a curse. These formed no part of man's condition when the world bounded into space, fresh and blooming in yet uncorrupted youth, covered with spontaneous fruitfulness, and filled with creatures, all whose feelings were joyous, and habits blissful; but when sin had blighted this terrestrial paradise, and man stood forth in the eye of his creator a self-condemned criminal, from that hour the curse of sorrow became associated with our race, and evil in this life, and death in that which was to come, were denounced against the children of darkness; and thus, just as the gleam of twilight is the harbinger of noon's brightness—just as the falling and scattered drops prenotify the bursting cloud, so certainly were man's first afflictions, in so far as human power was concerned, the very preludes and foretastes of those weightier ills that should oppress the unpardoned soul for ever and for ever: undoubted punishments, the wages of undoubted transgressions, frequently found linked with special offences, to testify the righteousness of the Holy One, his strictness to mark iniquity, and his determination that, though hand should join in hand, the transgression of the wicked should, by no means, go unpunished. Every wo and sorrow of life, therefore, to an unreconciled sinner, is at once a portion and an evidence of the curse of God—a positive evil, destructive of the wicked's short-lived peace. But to the Church and people of God their afflictions, however apparently severe, are so controlled and directed as to prove blessings not merely in disguise, but frequently in reality and in appearance. These times, when the spirit is sobered down to solemn and serious thought, are made the seasons for the special manifestations of the presence and love of God, when sin is seen portrayed in much of its truest drapery, and the consolations of the Gospel felt in their peace-imparting character. When the soul is sequestered from the world and its cares—when its temptations want power to please or fascinate—when its pleasures are over-spread with the poison of distaste—it is then that the humbled believer has vouchsafed

to him in their fullness the communications of God's grace, deepening his hatred of iniquity, enlarging his views of the character of the sovereign Ruler, and causing him to rejoice, because when his sorrows have abounded, his joys have abounded also—the trial of his faith working patience, and experience, and hope. Hence the language of the afflicted monarch of Israel, "Thou hast comforted us in all our tribulation; thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversity." "Blessed be the Lord, for he hath showed me his marvellous kindness." Now, saith the Apostle, "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby; being for their profit, that they might be partakers of God's holiness. Now for a season ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Were it necessary, it were easy to confirm these passages, by adverting to the recorded history of God's people, showing how their afflictions had proved decided blessings both to themselves and to others. We might tell of the blessed effects of the captivity of Joseph—the means of preserving his father's household, and the lives of the thousands of Egypt. We might speak of the happy results of Israel's national calamities; how they were led to seek the Lord in their sorrow, and the Lord hearkened and heard them. We might tell of Paul's imprisonment issuing in the conversion of his jailor and his household; or we might speak of John's banishment to the lonely isle of Patmos, where his spirit was refreshed with those wondrous discoveries of God's doings and purposes, that form the last book in the Canon of Sacred Writ.

In these instances, sorrow is not to be denominated a curse, but a blessing—not a punishment, but a medicine; it is in the hand of a merciful father—just the outpouring of the waters of love on a brand plucked from the burning, to quench the fire which else would consume it—the careful and skilful application of the pruning-knife, that the tree may be strengthened and its fruitfulness promoted. True it is that sorrow has been styled the winter of the soul, because it freezes up the streams

of comfort, and ices the soul over with the frosts of sadness ; but, like as that season rough, and stormy, and bleak as it is, is conducive to the ultimate fertility of the earth, so the moral winter at once prepares for the fuller enjoyment of the coming spring of peace, and is productive of a richer harvest of righteousness to the praise and glory of our God. Affliction has been styled the storm of life ; but, like as those tempests that agitate the bosom of the ocean serve alike to overpower the shattered bark, and to urge forward others more speedily to their desired haven, so these moral tempests, while they may overwhelm the wicked and impenitent, are ever conducive in speeding forward the journey of the children of the kingdom, to heaven and to God. Affliction is, in short, like the gushing waters that fell around the ark of Noah, when the windows of heaven were opened, that served to drown and destroy an unbelieving race, but which only served to lift up the ark on their bosom, bearing it above the earth and elevating it nearer to heaven. Such is the effect on all who have entered into that living ark where there is a covert from every storm, and a hiding-place from every tempest ; they feel and realize the truth, that where their afflictions do most abound their joys abound also. In these remarks, we refer to the tendency of afflictions and to their ultimate effects, and not to a Christian's present estimation of them ; to him no present calamity is a joy but a grief—oftentimes felt most keenly where the flesh is least concerned. The affliction of the Spirit, the agonies of spiritual desertion, the fear of being given over for ever to the hardness of a reprobate mind, are felt to be more mournful and appalling than the griefs that are bodily, and the sorrows that spring from earth ; but the submission of spirit, the reaction of soul when again entered into covenant and communion with God, is blissful and delightful in proportion to the previous depression. The feelings are just like what we may fancy to have been experienced by the blind man whom the Saviour cured. Who can tell his amazement when the first evening began to close around him, when darkness drew her sable curtain across the arch of heaven ? Doubtless as day receded and evening darkened he must have fancied that his cure was only temporary, and feared that he was now again to sink back to his pristine blindness ; and well and

anxiously would he watch till the blush of dawn should pencil the world with its rays of loveliness, and reveal to him again the creation of the Almighty, while it told him of his own perfect cure. And similar are the feelings of one who, having seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, fears that every wo is the opening of the portals of spiritual death, but the issue of whose calamities has been to rivet the soul in its security, filling it with the persuasion that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth, making all things work together for their good, converting even the curse into a blessing.

II. We remark, that God hath turned the curse of sin into a blessing. Herein, especially, are the wisdom and the mercy of the Omnipotent displayed, that the very entrance of transgression hath served to magnify the riches and the fulness of his grace. Sin, the parent of unnumbered evils and of endless calamities, is itself an undoubted curse—the breath of hell, scorching the spirits and withering up the holiness of mankind, blighting their future prospects and ruining their present peace, destroying that cheering hope of life which continued obedience would have secured, and placing under a debt of guilt and of demerit, which no future penitence could cancel as no after labour could remove. Sin was a curse, because it left man an insolvent debtor, writhing beneath the prospect of coming retribution, without the prospect of justification in the sight of God. Sin was a curse, because it entailed ignorance on the creature, blinding his mind and hardening his heart, obscuring his spiritual understanding and sealing up his soul in moral gloom, leaving its children at once the enemies of Jehovah and the objects of his provoked vengeance. Even this curse, however, was through the cross of Christ turned into a blessing ; for, when there was no eye to pity and no hand to save, when men had no merit and sought no mercy—even when we were sinners, God commended his love towards us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins ; redeeming the guilty ; not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.

On this the evening of a Communion Sabboth, surely it is no inappropriate digression to pause for a moment, and turn

aside to bless the Lord for this his matchless grace, stirring up our souls, and all that is within us to magnify his holy name, and seeking to awake the minstrelsy of a thousand hearts strung with the chords of gratitude, and thrillingly alive to the remembrance of a Saviour's love. Let every crown that angels wear and every diadem that saints enjoy be cast at the feet of the exalted Jesus, while the incense of ten thousand songs in earth and heaven ascends in sweetest melody to the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, to Him that was dead and is alive again, and liveth for ever and for ever. Man, in his holy and uncorrupted state, was admitted to sweet and immediate intercourse with his eternal Father; he knew of his love and felt of his goodness, excelling in the contemplation of his character, and finding his chiefest delight in continued communion with a being so glorious and bliss-giving; but sin terminated that nearness and severed from that joy; man was cursed in his understanding, and the effect of that curse was the immediate dissolution of the sacred fellowship, and the "darkening of man's foolish heart." But in the cross of Christ that evil is counteracted, a way of access to the Father is revealed, containing in itself all the elements of restored communion, and the fullest discovery of Jehovah's attributes. Yes, if it be the end of all God's dispensations to disclose himself; if it be man's highest happiness to know God as he is, then sin has been converted into a blessing, inasmuch as its counteraction has been the means of bringing out the glories of the Godhead more fully and splendidly than would have been otherwise accomplished. Jehovah is most perfectly known when he is known as the just God, and yet as the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. Wonder, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth, that over the grave of man's hopelessness, where all things promised eternal darkness, mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and peace have embraced each other. Justice has been emblazoned in awful sternness. Holiness has appeared in most unblemished purity, Sacred Truth in most unbending rectitude; while mercy, gentle and unsullied, is seen beaming over the godless, plucking the sinner as a brand from the burning, and setting him down amongst the living in Jerusalem. Thus the curse was turned into a blessing.

Man, in his holy and uncorrupted state had the promise of his Maker's favour so long as he continued in the paths of perfect obedience, but still he must occasionally have indulged the thought of possible failure in duty, and so of the future loss of all his joys; the crown almost gained might be lost, and the inheritance never attained to; when almost arrived at the shores of endless peace, one blast of transgression might drive him back to the ocean of despair; and thus, in his best estate, the prospect of future glories must always have been uncertain, and the issue of man's probation proved his frailty and the mutability of his former ground of confidence. But herein also is the curse changed into a blessing. Our help was laid on one mighty to save, even upon Jesus Christ the righteous; he stood forth as the Saviour and the sanctifier of sinners, draining the bitter dregs of wrath, humbling himself to the death even the death of the cross, and thus purchasing and procuring life and immortality for all who trusted in him, so that now, instead of final peace being periled on man's obedience, it rests securely on the changeless merit of a Redeemer. Instead of glory hanging suspended on the result of man's practice, it flows forth resistless from the cross of Immanuel, and therefore is now made stable and secure; placed in higher keeping than that of the creature, based on a righteousness that is perfect and challengeless for ever, the believing sinner may rejoice in its fulness and in its certainty—exulting that *now* there is no condemnation to them that believe in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again;" and because he liveth, his people shall live also to inherit his crown and to share his glory.

Even, however, if man had successfully resisted the wile and temptation of the adversary; if he had walked in all the statutes and commandments of the Lord blameless, and had at last been transferred to the upper sanctuary to inherit the promised blessing, he could only have been regarded as a faithful *servant* of the Lord—a little lower than the angels—rendered capable of sharing their felicities, and mingling in their praises. But now that the omnipotence of grace has been manifested in the sinner's salvation, a richer glory and an higher honour

are provided for the redeemed. They become the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus, and are no longer treated as *servants*, but regarded as *sons*—adopted into God's family, they are made heirs of glory, and joint heirs with Christ. Yes, they who are savingly united to the Messiah, become the children of the kingdom, the heirs of the covenant; and the Eternal Word whom angels obey and seraphs worship, is not ashamed to call them brethren. Who are these with veiled faces and covered feet, that fly throughout the measureless expanse of heaven, exclaiming in tones of deepest humility, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts?" These are the angels, the cherubim that never sinned. But who are those that stand in white robes around the Lamb, hymning the praises of one who bought them with his blood, following him wherever he goeth, and experiencing his continued care? These are they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and who dwell for ever with the Lord, exalted in his exaltation, and abundantly experiencing in their supereminent glory, how their God hath turned the curse into a blessing.

III. God hath turned the curse of death into a blessing. It were a waste of words to attempt proving that death is indeed a curse: it was the wo specially denounced against men as the result of transgression—the ill inflicted on the workers of iniquity. There are many persons who have not individually felt that sorrow is the bitterness of life, having lived amid the sunshine of undisturbed peace, fearing not the Lord, and shunning not his curse, who yet see in death a something so opposite to man's matured fondness for the world and its joys—a something so destructive of his natural love of the present existence, as to invest it with multiplied terrors, and to robe it in all the drapery of a curse. Here, however, the wisdom and the mercy of the Lord are also exemplified, and this dispensation, all dark and gloomy as it is, is converted into a channel of positive blessing. Doubtless these features of death which render its advent most undesirable, are its certainty to usher us guilty and unchanged, into a new state of being, while yet amenable to a righteous vengeance, and only indulging the prospect of a coming retribution; it is not so much the dissolution of nature's ties, the snapping asunder of the many and sacred bonds whereby we are knit to time, (though this must cuter into the estimate) as the

fact, that death ushers in the judgment, and parades the sinner before the bar of a despised and unchangeable God, it is this that really darkens the aspect of the change and paints out death to the sinner in all the horribleness of the King of terrors.

But through the obedience and death of Christ the Redeemer the sting of death has been destroyed, the uncertainty of the future has been dissipated, and by the destruction of guilt, separation from the world has been revealed as the beginning of a perfected happiness and an enlarged blessedness to the believer. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and to be conducted from this earth is to enter into that blessed rest above, where all the cares and griefs that now canker and consume the soul, shall be known no more, where those who watched and wept together below, shall meet in mutual peace to dwell before the throne for ever and ever. If it is indeed a blessed thing for a spirit weighed down with a sinking mortality, and groaning beneath the load of unnumbered ills, to flee away from its troubles, and soar amid the cloudless light of immortal day; then death has been turned into a blessing, since it merely cuts asunder the chains whereby we are bound to earth, and admits the spirit to a land of light and of joy.

If it is indeed a blessed thing for a being long pent up amid the closeness of a dungeon, to exchange its pestilential air for the fragrant breath of Paradise, then death has been turned into a blessing, since it serves to dissociate the children of the covenant from the pollution of this world, and advance them to the regions beyond the grave, where the Lamb shall feed them and guide them to fountains of living water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Surely, then, Christians, surely, to minds assured of eternal unfading glory, death is no curse; it is the step to a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory, the bridal morning of a ransomed soul, the passage from a howling wilderness to that peaceful and lovely state, where there are gathered together an innumerable company of angels the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, all united in praising Him that liveth and abideth for ever and for ever. I say if God hath made death the very instrument for exchanging earth for heaven, for ending the warfare and strife of time, and crowning believers with the unspeakably precious reward, then un-

doubtedly, while they exultingly proclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"—they must not cease to remember that death was indeed a crying evil, a bitter curse, but that our "God turned the curse into a blessing."

For these, for all his mercies, let his people sing a perpetual song; ye, especially, who have this day shown forth the dying love of the Saviour, exult in the matchless undeserved mercy of Jehovah; rejoice that grace, infinite, boundless, unthought, hath been extended to the guilty; that God hath commended his love towards us, in that, while yet sinners, Christ died for us, and let the thought of this amazing lovingkindness constrain us to live now and for ever to the praise of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Finally, let the faithless and impenitent reflect that in regard to them the curse still exists in all its reality; sorrow still wears its

sickening aspect, the manifestation of heaven's displeasure; sin is still fraught with its condemning power, and stamps the soul as hell-deserving; and death is still disclosed in all its horribleness, disclosing the time when, in ghastly triumph, he shall conduct the unsatisfied, unredemmed soul to the place of endless misery and unutterable woe. Reflect, ere it be too late, what it is to be living beneath the Almighty's curse, sealed to eternal death; what it is to be exposed to the wrath which shall wither up the sinner's shattered peace for ever. Mark the consequences of final impenitence—the blessedness of communion with God—and let the fear of the one and the love of the other constrain you to seek the Lord while he may be found, to call upon him while he is near, lest he come and smite you with a curse, and there be none to deliver. Amen and Amen.

*** WE had taken down in shorthand, for the SCOTTISH PULPIT, the Sermons of Dr. Mitchell of Glasgow, and Dr. Peddie of Edinburgh, delivered on occasion of the death of Dr. Dick, Professor of Theology to the United Secession Church, and the latter was actually in type before we learned that both were to be published by request. We cheerfully make the following extract from the former:—

"Of his abilities and attainments, I need not speak particularly. The proofs of these are before the world, and the public have appreciated them. 'His praise is in all the churches.' These talents, however, we may be allowed to say, were of the first eminence. Seldom has such a combination of faculties, in respect of variety and energy, been conferred on one human being. He was highly gifted by the God of nature, and of grace. Few have possessed such power, and penetration, and perspicacity of mind—such capaciousness, correctness, and retentiveness of memory. Few have made such proficiency in extensive, and accurate, and varied scholarship; and few have acquired such treasures of knowledge, literary and sacred. His taste was chaste; his imagination was well regulated; and he wrote the English language with a purity, a precision, and an elegance, which have, we apprehend, been seldom equalled. Of his diligence in study, you are all witnesses. His preparations for your instruction, from Sabbath to Sabbath, were careful, assiduous, and greatly varied. Verily, he served not his God, or you, with

what cost him nought. 'He gave himself wholly to the things of the Lord.' His public discourses, accordingly, bore testimony, uniformly, to his travail for your benefit, being digested into a simple and luminous order, and replete with sound sentiment, comprehensive views, just criticism, and scriptural illustration. 'Like a scribe who is instructed into the kingdom of God, he brought forth out of his treasury things new and old.' His delivery, partaking of his constitutional simplicity, was natural, correct, and dignified—entirely exempt from affectation of any kind. And with regard to the discharge of his professorial functions, those who were so happy as to be placed under his care, will all, we are assured, with one accord bear witness to the punctuality and assiduity of his labours, the ability and excellence of his instructions, the impartiality of his ministrations, the judiciousness of his criticisms and counsels, and the condescending kindness of his attentions. Long will his 'works praise him in the gates,' and long will his pupils speak of him with affectionate veneration."

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN HUNTER, Edinburgh.
LECTURE by the Rev. JAMES MACLEAN, D.D., Glasgow.

CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE;

A SERMON PREACHED ON SUNDAY, 17TH FEBRUARY, 1833, IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH,
IN BEHALF OF THE EDINBURGH SOCIETY FOR THE RELIEF OF INDIGENT
AND DESTITUTE OLD MEN,

By the Rev. JOHN HUNTER,

One of the Ministers of the Tron Church, Edinburgh.

*"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them
who are of the household of faith."*—GAL. vi. 10.

IN discoursing to you from these words, I propose to direct your attention to the principle of christian beneficence, to its objects, its qualities, and its value. Let us then attend, in the first place, to the principle of christian beneficence. The excellence of any action in the sight of a heart-searching and holy God, depends entirely on the motive from whence it proceeds, and on the spirit with which it is performed. We are strictly enjoined in Scripture to give alms to the poor of such things as we have; but it is not every deed of mercy that is acceptable to our great Creator. Many acts of liberality, which have gained the applause of the world, have originated, there is reason to believe, in vanity and ostentation. Though destitute of any feeling of duty, and devoid of any emotion of sympathy and compassion, we yet sometimes perceive men ready to bestow their substance for the relief of the poor and afflicted. The liberal contribution is cheerfully given—the splendid hospital is reared—the charitable institution is supported—or the eloquent appeal is made to the benevolence of others, while the sacred flame of love has never been kindled in their own bosoms, while the duties of domestic life are habitually neglected, and while they are entire strangers to those secret acts of kindness, which shun the view of mortals, looking for their reward from God alone. In the language of our

blessed Saviour, they sound a trumpet before them, and do their alms to be seen of men. I need not say, that such is not the charity of the Gospel. However beneficial its effects may sometimes prove, its principle is strongly reprobated by the divine Author of our religion; nay, it is condemned even by the worldling and the profane; and the very multitudes, who act habitually under its influence, carefully endeavour to hide it from the view of others, and if possible, to conceal it from themselves. But, there is a beneficence of a higher order, which is still widely different from that which is enjoined by the Apostle in the text. It is the impulse of natural feeling, and not the result of christian principle. Look around you in the world; you perceive individuals who exhibit no marks of love to God—of gratitude to Christ—of resignation to the divine will—or of zeal for the interests of religion, who are yet possessed of mild and amiable dispositions, and who are ready to perform every deed of mercy, or to engage in every labour of love. They rejoice at the happiness and prosperity of others. Their hearts are deeply moved at a scene of woe. They delight to soothe the sorrows of the children of misfortune, and to comfort those that mourn. To persons possessed of such a character, none can refuse the tribute of regard. They enjoy the esteem and gratitude of their fellow-creatures,

and the pure and exalted satisfaction which arises in the mind from the cultivation and exercise of the kindly affections of our nature. But still their alms ascend not in sweet memorial before the throne of God. They are not bestowed from a sacred regard to his authority, nor from a sincere desire to obtain his approbation. They love the creature, but the Creator has not a place in their affections. They are grateful to an earthly benefactor, but their souls are unmoved by the goodness of God Almighty. They can weep over the sorrows of the child of a day, while they shed not one tear at the tomb of a dying Saviour. They have indeed their reward, but it is confined merely to the present state of existence—it reaches not to eternity; and while a good man must deeply mourn over the want of piety which is exhibited by some, whose benevolent qualities have gained his affection, he must at the same time acknowledge that the heart which has no gratitude to its God and Saviour, is unfit for heaven. Christian beneficence is founded in the noblest of principles—love to our God and Redeemer. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,” said Jesus Christ, “with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, for this is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” When gratitude to God is kindled in the human bosom by the powerful energy of the Holy Ghost, we learn not to love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. The heart that was formerly cold, is now warmed with the kindest emotions; and he whose deeds of charity spring from mere constitutional feeling, becomes influenced by a principle purer in its origin, more diffusive in its nature, and more uniform and steady in its operation. Feeling that he derives his existence, his enjoyments, and his hopes, from the goodness of the Almighty, the Christian longs to make others partakers of that bounty of which he himself has so liberally tasted. He earnestly desires to have a portion of the benevolence infused into his own character, which he adores and loves in his heavenly Father. While he dwells on that unmerited and boundless compassion which led the Most High to give his only begotten Son for the salvation of a lost world, he is willing to spend and be spent for the good of others.

While he contemplates and experiences the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in becoming poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich, he strives to acquire a nearer resemblance to his divine image, and joyfully submits to many a labour, and endures many a privation, to soothe the sorrows, and increase the happiness of his brethren of mankind. While he remembers that sovereign mercy, which plucked him as a brand from the burning, and rendered him a partaker of a new and a divine nature, it is the fervent desire of his heart to promote the interests of vital Christianity in the circle in which he moves, and to lead all around him to the knowledge, the love, and practice of the truth as it is in Jesus. He knows, indeed, that he cannot add to the glory, or increase the felicity of the Lord, who hath bought him with the price of his blood; but he endeavours to evince the sincerity of his gratitude, by doing good to his people. Never was there a principle which has operated more powerfully in promoting to deeds of charity, than love to our God and Saviour. In the primitive ages of Christianity, it led many opulent individuals to sell their possessions for the relief of the poor, and the support of their brethren in Christ; and from the Apostolic writings, we learn, that every believer laid by him in store on the first day of the week, whatever he could afford to give for the promotion of these important ends, even as God had prospered him. St. Paul commends in the strongest terms the liberality of the church of Macedonia, who, in circumstances of great affliction contributed to the utmost of their power, and even beyond their power, to promote the cause of Christ, and the good of their fellow-creatures. After the days of the Apostles, we learn from the page of history, that the same minute attention was paid by the followers of Jesus, to works of beneficence and mercy. The emperor Julian, the inveterate enemy of Christians, mentions, to the reproach of the worshippers of his own gods, that the impious Galileans, for so he termed the Christians, not only provided for their own poor, but even for the poor of the heathen among whom they lived. Amid all the ignorance and vice which in subsequent times have prevailed in the lands that are called christian, we have still the satisfaction to remark, that wherever the authority of our divine Redeemer has been acknowledged,

institutions have been formed for the support of the indigent and the aged, for the relief of the sick and the afflicted, and for mitigating the various distresses incident to man in this sublunary state. We behold the salutary influence of Christianity in this respect upon the conduct of many who have never imbibed its genuine spirit; and in the character of every sincere believer, we possess a living commentary on that royal law of love, which was enjoined by the authority, and exemplified in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We come, in the second place, to consider the objects of christian beneficence. Although men in no period of the world have been entirely destitute of the common feelings of humanity, universal benevolence was in a great measure unknown, and completely unpractised, previous to the promulgation of the Gospel. Heathen philosophers and moralists satisfied themselves with enjoining acts of kindness to those with whom we are connected by the ties of nature and affection, or deeds of heroism, in order to extend the authority and promote the fame of the land of their birth; while the inhabitants of every other nation were considered as barbarians entitled to no marks of regard, and whom, in some instances, it was not only lawful, but even meritorious to oppress and destroy. The Jews, although favoured with a divine revelation, containing an infinitely purer system of morals, in which the laws of humanity were distinctly recognised and inculcated, were little less contracted in their ideas, and deficient in their practice of this great virtue: their favourite maxim being, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy*. How widely different the morality of our Saviour and his Apostles! They teach us, that men of every kindred and clime are our brethren, children of the same almighty Father, possessed of one common nature, subjected to the same calamities, and journeying with us to the house appointed for all living. They tell us that every human being is entitled to our benevolent wishes, to our fervent prayers, and to every office of kindness we may have it in our power to bestow. Christianity does not, indeed, like some modern systems of philosophy, attempt to annihilate the peculiar claims of country and kindred, and to eradicate, under the pretence of universal philanthropy, some of the strongest and the best affections of our nature. No; its language and its spirit are directly opposed to such wild and visionary

speculations. It hallows the ties which connect us with each other; it enjoins those who are united by the sacred bands of matrimony to live together in peace and love, and to be helpers of one another's faith and joy; it confirms that instinct of our nature which leads a parent to love his children with the most sincere and ardent affection; it reminds him that he who provides not for his own, hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel, and that while we are taught to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, we are at the same time commanded not to be slothful in business, to strengthen the obligations of filial duty by the authority of a divine revelation, which enjoins the young, in language the most impressive, to honour their father and mother that it may be well with them; which informs them that Jesus in early life was subject to his parents, and that one of the last actions he performed, before his eyes were closed in death, was to commend his mother to the care of a beloved disciple. The claims of friendship were neither overlooked nor neglected by the divine Author of our religion. From among the multitudes who attended his instructions, he chose twelve individuals as companions of his ministry and partners of his sufferings, in whom he reposed his joys and his sorrows, and whom he admitted to a share in all the kind endearments of domestic life. Even among these there was one whom our Lord peculiarly loved, who leaned on his bosom at the Last Supper, and who received a most interesting and affecting proof of his regard, while stretched upon the cross. Towards the land of his birth our Saviour exhibited the strongest affection; he chose it for many important reasons as the scene of his labours, and he commanded his disciples first to deliver the glad tidings of salvation to the inhabitants of Judea. The guilt and misery of the Jews inspired his heart with the most poignant regret, and we are told that when he approached the city he wept over it, saying, "If thou, even thou, hadst known in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are for ever hid from thine eyes. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

But while our Lord has sanctified, both by his precepts and example, these instinc-

tive feelings of our nature which bind us to our country, our relatives, and our friends, he at the same time commands his followers to cultivate the most sincere and ardent brotherly love to every member of the household of faith. True believers are united to each other by the most sacred and indissoluble bonds; they have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one hope of their calling; they are justified by the same grace, sanctified by the same Spirit, and heirs of the same immortal life. In the days of the Apostles, and in the early ages of the primitive Church, those who were converted to Christianity had the strongest claims on the sympathy and tenderness of their brethren in Christ. They were often obliged to relinquish their pursuits and occupations; they were forsaken by their friends, persecuted by an evil world, doomed to endure all the hardships of poverty, and exposed to every species of suffering. In these circumstances the disciples of a crucified Redeemer were called to sacrifice every personal gratification in order to advance the common cause, and to promote the good of their fellow-labourers in the vineyard of their divine Master. Our condition is, indeed, considerably different, but it still becomes us to remember, that while every child of misfortune has a claim on our sympathy, from the religion we profess, and the relation in which we stand to the Lord Jesus, we are peculiarly called to minister to the wants and necessities of the pious, humble, and devoted Christian. But the benevolence of the Gospel is not confined within the limits of any country or clime; it reaches to every human being whom the hand of the Omnipotent has formed. Wherever ignorance can be removed, guilt reclaimed, sorrow soothed, the influence of religion diffused, or joy communicated, there the believer is bound to stretch out the hand of mercy, or to utter the prayer of love; even to our most inveterate enemies the law of christian charity extends. A good man cannot entertain the same degree of regard for the worthless and unprincipled, as for the pious and benevolent; he cannot feel the same affection for the individual who has defamed his character, or ruined his prospects in life, as for him who has been the companion of his youth, and the friend of his riper years, but it is his duty, he feels, freely to forgive the most aggravated offences, and to be ready to do every kind office in his power towards those who have wronged him without a

cause. The precept of our blessed Saviour is perfectly clear and explicit, "Love thine enemies: bless them that persecute you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for those that despitefully use you and persecute you;" and with his dying breath our Lord uttered this prayer for his merciless tormentors, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

I now proceed, in the third place, to point out the qualities of christian beneficence, and here I must confine your attention to two observations. Christian beneficence is active in its nature, and constant and unwearied in its operations. First, then, christian beneficence is active in its nature. Every professing Christian will readily admit the obligations under which we lie to the exercise of mutual love, but innumerable are the apologies which are urged by no inconsiderable part of mankind, in order to exempt themselves from the labours of that charity which the Gospel enjoins. They allege that small is the mite they are able to bestow upon their poorer brethren, that they feel for them the sincerest pity, but can do little or nothing to promote their welfare. They have a rank to maintain in society, a numerous family to support, and many are the demands which are made on their generosity. Over the tale of fictitious woe, they can shed the tear of sensibility, but they refuse to visit the orphan and the widow in their affliction, and they turn with disgust from the view of poverty, disease, and wretchedness. If mere expressions of good-will to their fellow-creatures were all that was requisite to render them benevolent, they might assert their claim to that truly valuable quality, but if time is to be sacrificed, if favourite amusements are to be relinquished, if economy is to be practised, and if feelings are to be brought under restraint and control, in vain do we look for their co-operation or assistance, to do good to the bodies or the souls of those with whom they are called to associate. Well might St. James observe, "if a brother or sister be poor or naked and destitute of daily food, and you say unto him be warmed and clad, while you give him not those things that are necessary for the body, what doth it profit?" Very different are the feelings and conduct of the true Christian. He knows that certain talents have been given him for the glory of God, and the good of mankind, and that at last he must render an account of his stewardship. He aims

not at the discharge of duties that are beyond his reach, or which providence hath allotted to other men, but he labours to be diligent and faithful in that which is appointed to him, whether it be much or little ; he marks the particular sphere in which he is called to move, and carefully reflects on the way in which, by his natural abilities, his influence, his wealth, his instructions, or his prayers, he may be most useful in his day and generation ; he constantly bears in mind the apostolic admonition, as he has opportunity to do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Is he possessed of riches ? he views himself as an almoner of the divine bounty—he is eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the poor, and the cause which he knows not he searches out. He bestows his alms with wisdom and discrimination, never affording encouragement to idleness and profligacy, or by injudicious charity, increasing the evil which he intends to relieve, but carefully inquiring into the distresses of the poor and afflicted, and forming schemes to promote their industry and virtue, while he adds to their comfort and happiness. This diffuses joy around him ; he experiences the truth of our Saviour's declaration, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Is the believer placed in humbler life ? he remembers that he is not exempted from the deed of kindness or the labour of love ; he applies with more diligence to the duties of his station ; he denies himself to some comfort, or retrenches some luxury, that he may be able to afford instruction to the ignorant, or to give to him that needeth. He remembers that it is not the extent of the gift, but the spirit in which it is bestowed, to which the Almighty looks. He enters into the abode of distress, and views many a heart-rending scene of woe ; he makes known the wants and sorrows of the wretched, and earnestly solicits the aid of those who are possessed of greater affluence than himself, and while the alms which he is able to bestow is small, he may frequently become the instrument of the most extensive usefulness to the destitute and miserable. Even the humblest follower of Jesus may do much for the benefit of others. His active exertions may enable him to support an aged parent, and his kind affections may alleviate the infirmities incident to the decline of life. From his frugal meal he may spare something to a neighbour still more destitute than himself. He may contribute

by his enlivening or instructive conversation to cheer the mind of him who is confined to the chamber of solitude. To the man who is stretched on a bed of sickness, he may perform many acts of kindness. The thoughtless sinner he may arouse to serious consideration, and persuade to flee from the wrath to come. To the mourner he may impart lessons of heavenly wisdom, and the cheering consolations of the Gospel of peace ; and the dying he may teach to cleave to that Saviour, who alone can support the mind amid the last agonies of suffering humanity, and present his people holy and unblamable in the presence of their heavenly Father. It is indeed a melancholy fact, that we behold multitudes in every rank of life, who, while they are sincerely desirous to promote the temporal interests of their poorer brethren, never employ a single effort to advance their improvement in the graces and virtues of the Christian character. We mark with emotions of unfeigned approbation, the tear of pity which they shed over the calamities of others, or the cheerfulness and pleasure with which they contribute their alms for the relief of the wretched, but no sooner are means proposed for the instruction of the ignorant, the conversion of the sinner, or the diffusion of Christianity throughout the world, than we perceive them listened to with the most chilling indifference, or treated as the chimera of a wild and enthusiastic imagination. The believer has not so learned in the school of Christ ; he feels the littleness of time, and the infinite importance of eternity. All the sorrows of humanity shrink into insignificance, when compared with the awful thought of the ruin of an immortal soul. Could he dispel every fear, assuage every pain, and bestow every comfort which the world can afford upon the sick and dying man, it would appear as nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity, to the delight with which his heart expands, in being the humble instrument in the hand of Providence, of rescuing him from the dominion of sin and Satan, and rendering him meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. He knows that soon the body of this victim of disease, shall descend into the grave, moulder in the dust, and become the food of worms, but that his spirit shall live for ever in a state of everlasting joy or endless woe. He dwells with feelings of the profoundest awe on that mysterious change which awaits it when it shall for ever have quitted its

earthly tenement, and he earnestly implores that ere the pulse of life hath ceased to beat the dying sufferer may have obtained an interest in a Saviour's righteousness, and be regenerated by the power of the Spirit of God. In this high and holy vocation, the loftiest monarch and the meanest peasant may labour with equal zeal, and anticipate the period when they shall be permitted to enter into those happy regions, when the wise shall shine as the sun, and they who turn many to righteousness as the stars, for ever and ever.

2dly. Christian beneficence is constant and unwearied. Many are the discouragements which the good man is called to encounter in his labours of love. In domestic life he may often be doomed to endure the violence of ungoverned passions, or those harassing feelings which arise from associating with persons of an envious, peevish, or jealous disposition. The strictness of his religious principles may render him the object of ridicule, or even of dislike to those for whom he feels the most ardent attachment, and may convert that home which ought ever to be the abode of peace and love, into a scene of strife and discord. While he labours to promote the best interests of his country, the envenomed breath of calumny may blast his reputation, and may accuse him of being actuated by motives of the meanest and basest kind. In his visits to the hovels of poverty and wretchedness, he beholds much from which a delicate mind recoils, and which is but too apt to cool the ardour even of christian charity. He detects the artful tale of imposture, he views the union of guilt and misery, he witnesses disease presented to his view in its most loathsome form, and frequently experiences the deepest ingratitude from those to whom he has manifested every proof of kindness and love. In his exertions to promote the religious and moral improvement of mankind, he is often unsuccessful. There is an ignorance which seems almost invincible; there is a hardness of heart which remains alike unmoved by the terrors of Sinai, or the mild accents of the Gospel of peace; there is a sorrow which abandons itself to the bitterest lamentations, and which even the promises of grace, or the hopes of immortality appear utterly unable to soothe. Where beneficence is the mere result of natural good temper, or the dictate of pity, unsupported by higher and nobler principles, it quickly becomes weary in well-doing, and

relinquishes the pursuit of those objects which it once ardently desired to attain. Very different is the conduct of the true Christian. He recollects that it was for rebels against the divine authority, that the son of God became incarnate, that Christ, when reviled, reviled not again, that he went about doing good to them who despised his authority and blasphemed his holy name, and that he has taught us, that it is not the measure of success we enjoy, but the zeal with which we devote ourselves to the performance of our duty, which will receive approbation and be rewarded by him at the great day of final retribution. The believer is mild and gentle to all. By prudence and consistency, he disarms prejudice, and conciliates the esteem of those with whom he is associated in life; while his heart glows with benevolent emotion to every human being who is in distress, he exercises that christian wisdom in his charities, which is dictated by a sound judgment, and enforced by the principles of our holy faith. The duplicity, the ingratitude, or the vices of some upon whom he has bestowed relief, do not prevent him from persevering in deeds of mercy, for he remembers that it is God who has commanded him to do good and to communicate, and that the faith which the Gospel inspires, is a faith which worketh by love. He shrinks not from the performance of those acts of benevolence which may require many a painful sacrifice, or from which his feelings powerfully revolt; for Jesus has taught him, that if any man will come after him, he must *deny himself, and must* be ready to cut off a right hand, or to pluck out a right eye. He is not discouraged by the failure of these plans of usefulness which he has formed, for he knows that all events are under the divine control, and that, when we have performed our part with fidelity, we must leave the result to Him who ruleth in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

Such was the spirit that animated the Apostles of our Lord; they joyfully submitted to ignominious contempt and persecution, and even to bonds, imprisonment, and death, to extend the triumph of the Redeemer's kingdom, and to make known the glad tidings of peace and salvation from pole to pole. A similar spirit has been exhibited by many of the followers of Christ, in every age and country. Shall I remind you of the philanthropic exertions of a Howard, who

visited almost every prison in Europe, in order to soothe the sorrows and promote the temporal and spiritual interests of the wretched inhabitants, and who at last fell a sacrifice to a benevolence which was unwearied in its labours, and which remained alike unappalled by the dread of danger or of death? Or shall I dwell on that truly apostolic zeal which leads the christian missionary to relinquish all that is dear to him in life, and to visit many a distant shore, and many an inhospitable clime, in order to rescue the children of ignorance and guilt from degradation and misery, and to elevate them to the privileges and hopes of the sons of God? These are bright examples of a cheerful compliance with the precept in the text. Let each of us learn to be followers of them, even as they also were of Christ.

And for our encouragement, let us consider in the fourth and last place, the value of christian beneficence. We are not, indeed, for a moment to suppose, that liberality to the poor can atone for our transgression, or merit the favour of the Almighty. The idea is directly opposed to the first principles of Christianity. Obedience is a debt which we owe to our great Creator, and when we have done all that is commanded us, we are enjoined to acknowledge ourselves to have been unprofitable servants. The performance of present duty can never cancel the guilt of past transgressions. Every deed of compassion we perform, is stained with imperfection and error, and, even he whose whole life has been spent in acts of beneficence, must acknowledge that all that is good in the temper of his mind or the actions of his life, is derived from the influence of the Holy Spirit, and that he is entirely indebted for salvation, from first to last, to the free grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Still, however, the Supreme Being views with peculiar approbation, the labours of love in which his people engage. They are the marks of the endearing relation in which they stand to himself; for God is love, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. They are the fruits of a living faith in the perfect righteousness of our blessed Saviour; for if we believe that he loved us even unto the death, we are powerfully constrained to live as brethren, and to do good unto all, but especially to those who are of the household of faith. They are the test of our obedience to the will of our Supreme

Legislator, for he himself has said, "A new commandment give I unto you, that you love one another," and with the sacrifices of unfeigned charity God is well pleased. Many are the proofs which our heavenly Father affords of his regard to the beneficent man, both in this world and that which is to come. Sometimes he is blessed with affluence and prosperity, and he experiences the truth of the declaration of Scripture, that he that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord. He enjoys the approbation of his own mind; and the remembrance of the distresses he has relieved, or the happiness he has communicated, affords him purer satisfaction, than all the riches, the honours, and the pleasures of time. He possesses the esteem of the wise and good, and he is generally beheld with respect, even by the profligate and abandoned. The fervent supplications of the poor and afflicted, are daily offered up to heaven in his behalf. He is frequently permitted to experience a large share of that divine peace which passeth all understanding. The Lord is with him in trouble, he strengthens him in the hour of affliction, and makes all his bed in his sickness. While he walks through the dark vale of the shadow of death, he fears no evil, for he knows that it is the entrance into that world, where the sound of discord is heard no more, and where peace and love for ever reign. But the gracious Author of our being does not confine the reward of Christian beneficence to the present state of existence: "I heard a voice," said St. John, "saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." Every benevolent wish which the saint has uttered, every prayer of affection he has offered at a throne of grace and every deed of mercy he has performed are recorded in the book of the divine remembrance. His good works may have been unknown to his fellow-creatures, but his Father who seeth in secret will reward him openly. The heavens shall pass away, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up; but they whose hearts expand with love to God and man, shall enjoy a bliss, pure as the fountain of life, and lasting as immortality itself. They shall be admitted into the presence of the God of love. They shall be united to that Saviour who shed

his precious blood for their redemption, and who cherishes towards them all the affection of a friend and brother. They shall join the society of those seraphic beings who ministered to them while they dwelt upon earth. They shall associate with the whole company of the redeemed, and perhaps be permitted to receive the blessing and congratulation of those whose bodily wants they have supplied, whose sorrows they have soothed, whom they have led into the way of truth, or whose faith they have strengthened, whose hopes they have enlivened, whose patience they have supported, and whose zeal they have increased. Still, however, their hearts are swelled by no proud imagination or vain thought. They cast their crowns before the throne of the Eternal, and acknowledge with emotions of the warmest gratitude, that it is God who hath made them to differ from others, and that they have not any thing which they have not received from him.

After the observations that have already been suggested, it seems unnecessary for me to say much in support of the peculiar claims of the truly christian charity, whose cause I have this evening undertaken to advocate. It was instituted about twenty-seven years ago, by a few of its present members, who were then boys attending the High School of this city. While studying the classic lore of ancient times, and striving to acquire that information which might fit them for discharging the duties of the different professions which they might hereafter be called to fill, they had learned the important lesson, that it was more blessed to give than to receive, and they resolved instead of spending their little pocket-money, entirely on selfish gratifications, to devote a portion of it to the relief of the destitute and the miserable. After a short time, they made choice of indigent old men as the objects of their peculiar care, having been reminded by their friends, or aware themselves, that by directing their good offices to one class of sufferers, they were likely to confer more real benefit than by a beneficence of a wider and more indiscriminate range. Various societies were already in existence for affording food, and fuel, and clothing to aged and destitute females, but none had hitherto been formed for alleviating the distresses, and adding to the comforts of old men, whose situation, in many respects,

appeared to be still more forlorn and hopeless. The former, although feeling the weaknesses and infirmities of declining life, could discharge a variety of little offices for themselves, which the latter, trained to habits of a different kind, were utterly or in a great measure incapable of performing. They felt, that it well became the young, the healthy, and the happy, to minister to the wants of the aged, the destitute, and the afflicted; and we trust and believe that these labours of love were powerfully blessed in promoting their own moral and spiritual improvement. In the abodes of poverty and misfortune, they were taught the precarious tenure by which we hold life, and health, and every created joy, and were instructed in the morning of their days to make provision for the winter of age, and the approach of dissolution. At times, perhaps, they heard the old man bewailing his misimprovement of the talents and advantages which he had enjoyed while health bloomed on his countenance and joy sparkled in his eye, and calling upon them to act a wiser and a better part. And it might even be their precious privilege to listen to the afflicted and dying saint humbly and thankfully praising the God of his fathers, that he had learned to fear the Lord from his youth, and shun the path in which destroyers go, and to acquire through the Redeemer an interest in those consolations and hopes, which render the close of life peaceful and happy, and afford the well-grounded hope of a blessed immortality. The numbers of this juvenile society were at first small, but they were gradually augmented by the junction of many others, who united with them in the same pious and beneficent labours. The objects of charity which were chosen in youth approved themselves to the ripened judgment of more advanced life, and the members of this society have often experienced the exalted pleasure which springs from the blessing of him, who, but for their friendly aid, was ready to perish and had none to help him. The regulations of this benevolent institution are highly judicious. No individuals are admitted as pensioners, until every circumstance connected with their character and claims is fully and minutely examined. They must at least have reached the age of sixty years. They must be incapable of supporting themselves by the labours of honest industry. They must be destitute of friends who are able,

or willing to afford them relief, and they must be sober and moral in their general habits. Weekly visits are paid to them at their houses, at periods of which they have received no previous intimation, that thus artifice, or imposture, may be detected, and real misery alone obtain that relief to which it has so powerful a claim. This institution has not only ministered to the temporal interests of the aged poor, but we trust that in many instances it has also been the instrument of promoting their sanctification and eternal salvation. Its members have often afforded instruction and warning to those who neglected the interests of their immortal souls, and they have delighted to administer consolation and hope to the poor and afflicted members of the Church of Christ. They have also frequently acted as the spiritual almoners of the Bible and Tract Societies, and they have for some years past united to their own efforts the constant exertions of a pious and excellent individual, who has been long accustomed to visit the abodes of poverty, and to adapt his counsels and prayers to the circumstances and condition of those to whom he has been called to minister. Many and urgent are the claims upon the beneficence of this Society, which they have been forced to refuse, from the limited funds of which they were possessed, and which are now considerably more than exhausted. I think I need hardly urge a stronger motive to induce you to contribute to this truly

excellent charity, than to state, that the average age of the pensioners, who receive relief from it, exceeds seventy-two years, and although the measure of assistance afforded to these individuals, is extremely small, yet it has been, to my own knowledge, the instrument of prolonging life, of diminishing its misery, and of increasing its enjoyments. I can bear my testimony this evening to the piety, talents, and worth of not a few of the members of this society; and the others with whom I have not the pleasure of being acquainted, I have reason to believe are equally deserving of your unlimited confidence. Let me, then, entreat you to retrench a portion of your comforts, and to deny yourselves to some of the gay and dissipated amusements so common in the world around us, in order to fulfil the royal law of love, to enjoy the refined luxury of doing good, to imitate the example of our divine Master. Let me entreat you by your beneficence this evening, to cause the aged poor to descend in peace to the house appointed for all living, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest, and from whence the saint shall arise to meet his Redeemer and his God, and to enter into a world where the sorrows of a short night of wo are succeeded by a morn of everlasting light, purity, and joy. Go, then, my christian brethren, and cast your mite into the christian treasury; and may your prayers, and alms come up in sweet memorial before that Being, in whom compassions dwell.

THE LORD HATH MADE ALL THINGS FOR HIMSELF;

A LECTURE,

By the Rev. JAMES MACLEAN, D.D.,

Minister of Gorbals, Glasgow.

"The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished."—PROVERBS xvi. 4, 5

(ABRIDGED.)

THERE is much important matter contained in the axioms which are here laid down for our consideration, much to engage the thoughts of the contemplative person every hour he lives, even when he stretches

his talents to the utmost. There is at the same time matter set forth of which every man ought to be a competent judge; every man must feel from his own experience whether or not his satisfaction and delight

arise from cherishing that proud state of mind here described as an abomination to the Lord.

In the fourth verse our attention is directed to God, to his general formation of all things, and to the arrangements which in that creation he has unquestionably adopted. And this is that to which I refer when I mention that we have matter in these proverbs which might employ the contemplative mind not merely during the space of a lifetime, but throughout an eternity which is to follow.

It is here said, "God hath made all things," and these are words which you must take in a very comprehensive signification, for nothing can be clearer than that God is the universal Creator; and yet you will be surprised when I tell you that the spirit of the ancient philosophy was generally displayed to find out another maker of all things than God, and that if you read the writings and publications even of the modern philosophers you will see that they also try to find another maker of things than God. The Atheist, if such a character does exist, would be willing to acknowledge any thing as the maker of all things, rather than admit a first cause and last end—a first designing cause, and a last designing end. Now, here is a truth which this proverb takes for granted, and which if you do not allow, you cannot enter into the spirit of it. If you think that there is any thing that God has not made throughout the vast expanse of creation, even when you stretch your thoughts to the utmost, and wander from world to world, and come to the utmost verge, as you suppose, of space, you must be taught that you admit not the principles of revealed religion. Wherever there is existence, there the hand of God has been put forth in conferring that existence. Therefore, when we come down to these things with which we are conversant, which we see with our eyes, which we handle with our hands, or which, by the help of those instruments that man has made subservient to his faculties, we are forced to acknowledge to exist, every one of them must be recognised as a part of that work which God has done or a part of that existence which God has made. In starting from this principle you come to the conclusion that God has made every thing just as a Being absolutely perfect ought to make it. He has made angels, and archangels—those who have kept, and those who have not kept their first estate. He

created man, as he tells us, after his own image; he created him in holiness and in happiness; he gave him every inducement to continue holy and happy, but man has forfeited that state, he has fallen from that innocence, and has therefore incurred the penalty. Now, you will observe, that though God made man upright, he did not make man a sinner. Man has made himself a sinner; therefore, every thing that is understood as implied in the term "all," is not to be laid to the charge of the Creator. And here is the grand difficulty, my friends, which rises upon the Calvinist and the Arminian. The Arminian thinks to get rid of the difficulty by saying, that God has created every thing conditionally, *i. e.* upon the supposition either of man's sinning, or of man's remaining holy; but this is employing different words, and not changing the meaning at all. The Calvinist, on the contrary, says, and with propriety, God foresaw man would sin, and arranged his covenant upon that foresight. His foresight of sin does not make God the author of it; it does not render God amenable or accountable for it. His designs of mercy and grace in Christ are formed, but formed in foresight; and, therefore, the Creator has no more hand in the guilt of the creature than he can have any hand in that which is contrary to his own existence. The Calvinist says, I do not go the length of those who are called Supralapsarians in the language of Theologians, but of distinct and honest men, looking to these sacred writings—that man was made innocent by God, and the covenant made before he had fallen, supposed he would fall; and this is uniformly stated, both in the Old and New Testaments. There is a vast distinction between absolutely foreseeing, and so interposing as to have a hand in the production of guilt. If man would but abide by what he understands, he would soon cease from these idle controversies, which are mere words without meaning, for there are persons who in speaking or writing, wish to see themselves in print, or to be heard declaring points they do not understand.

Now, God has said that "he hath made all things for himself." He origin is, and end. And this, just like the first cause, is doubted and denied by many—by all who admit not the authority of divine revelation; and they think themselves wiser than their neighbours when they have not only first disputed, but perhaps denied that there is

any such thing as a cause in existence. Some philosophers of old, for example, maintained that man sprung up on the banks of the Nile, and that the heat of the sun formed him into what we now see him, and that this was the beginning of man. And there are other philosophers of christian times, who reject the Bible, when they say that God is not the end of all things, but that there are a variety of ends; and accordingly they fix one upon one, and another upon another. It must be admitted with these persons that there are subordinate ends, in number and in wisdom, which strike the mind of every serious examiner. For example, there is nothing, not even the smallest vegetable that exists in the world, that does not serve many useful purposes—to purify the air, to support the animal that browses upon it, to give delightful pleasure to the bystander and the onlooker. And in this manner you will observe, that the existence even of the grass of the field has subordinate ends to serve, but all these subordinate ends rise up and lose themselves, if you allow the expression, in God the great end of all, showing his wonderful wisdom in making such a despised vegetable productive of so much benefit to man and to many of the other creatures he has made. I might instance the same thing in the very heat which we find generated in our bodies, and which is absolutely necessary for our existence, health, and usefulness, but which, when it advances to too great a degree, becomes destructive to us. And, by the way, philosophers dispute whether light or heat are different things, for men trouble their heads with questions that cannot be solved. Heat is more universal in its operation for the support of men and animals in this world, than is commonly supposed. Were it not for this heat you could have no water. The sea would be hard and frozen, as you know ice must be, and no grass, no trees would exist; in fact the appearance of the polar circles, of which you have heard so much of late, would be universal over the whole of this our globe. Now, here are subordinate ends; but still the existence of our world, as it advances, goes clearly to make known God's plans of mercy in Christ for sinful men, to unfold his covenant of mercy, and finally to bring those who are adopted as his children, and sanctified, and affectionately called by his grace, to the full enjoyment of that glory which he has revealed; and, therefore,

God has made all these things for himself. He is the ultimate end of all; and every subordinate end is to be regarded as only helping forward the grand design, bringing the intelligent mind to fix on God as the last end, as he must undoubtedly be admitted the first cause of all.

Now, at this stage of our inquiry, it might occur as a difficulty, even to pious and thinking minds, This is all very well as to sinners in general, and as to God being the first cause and last end of all things, even of sinners; but what shall we say with regard to individuals? Now, the last clause of the 4th verse points directly to this subject: "The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." Here again, you must recur to his foresight. He allows some sinners to go on in their guilt till death finds them ready for eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power; and, therefore, at every stage in which these wicked ones may be contemplated, they are still to be considered as the works of God, supported by him, provided for by him, carried through life by his providence, and fixed in death to that everlasting destruction, which he tells us awaits those who despise the riches of his goodness and his tender mercy. Now, here again the heart recoils, and is at variance with the head. While our judgment tells us this is just for exercising the right which God possesses, and is just the right which every man exercises every day, giving the good repose and inflicting punishment on the wicked, yet the feeling of the heart rises in opposition to the dictates of the head, when we come to apply this to God. We think of God as all-merciful, and not a God of justice. We forget, that we are judging for God, that we are stepping out of our whole province, and meddling with those decisions which belong not to us, which God has consigned to none but himself. We will never make the slightest alteration upon his plans, and therefore God has said, "The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." The day of evil looks to the final retribution of all things. We are to ascribe to God the existence, and the support, and the maintenance of those very individuals who are rising every moment in rebellion against him, who are doing all they can to destroy religion in the earth, and to bring their fellow-men to be as wicked as themselves.

But this makes us look up from these wicked men to God, and recalls to us, that in these very instances, we have proofs of the divine forbearance, and longsuffering, which should never pass out of our minds. We see that God is not like man, limited to a day, or a few days, or years, and therefore man meets not his reward, or his punishment during his lifetime. God may allow the wicked to rise to the height of prosperity, and he does so sometimes, allowing a throne even to be occupied by the very individual who is a disgrace to it. And, if this person die unconverted, he is in the hands of Him who made him, and continued to support him; but he will now languish and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power. I have no doubt that to make this important proverb plain, would detain you long; but if I have, in the first place, riveted on your minds this truth, that you owe your existence and all you have to God, that his divine providence has been your provider and protector, and continues so still, and must continue so, not only down to the grave, but through all eternity; and if, in the second place, I have impressed upon you that you should employ every thing you have to the glory of God; and if, in the third place, you are satisfied, that the wicked are as much in the hands of God to be punished by him, as the good are in his hands to receive undeserved kindness, then important truths have been laid before you, and I have not laboured in vain.

The next proverb will not need much exposition, because we have met with similar sentiments already. "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished." The term translated "unpunished," if you look at the marginal readings of some of your Bibles, or consult the original Hebrew, might be translated, "may not be held innocent," and that is equivalent in the sight of God with actual punishment. "Though hand join in hand," every concerted scheme God will inquire into, every concert to keep the man

proud in heart, will be found utterly unavailing, for that person, though held innocent by man, yet shall not be by God, nor allowed to pass unpunished. "Proud in heart" is to be understood as expressive of pride as much concealed as possible, just hid as much as we possibly can under a humble garb. The very existence of this pride it is impossible to conceal from God; he is perfectly acquainted with every thing. And, therefore, the society of Friends, although they have a uniform dress or male and female, may yet be liable to all the guilt and punishment which this proverb holds out; for, if they conceal their pride, they only conceal it from their brethren, but it is pride in heart which will not be concealed from God, and therefore is said to be an abomination to him. It is one of those things he most dislikes; it is one of those things which may be unknown to man, and which, therefore, goes unpunished by him. Although every precaution be taken to prevent its ever being suspected that a man is a proud man, yet this quality is perfectly seen and known by God, and will bring the individual to punishment. The Lord our God will not suffer that man who is proud in heart, and who, of consequence, is an abomination in his sight. Now this speaks to all; it calls upon every man, even upon him who has gained the highest praise for humility and christian self-denial, to consider what is deficient in himself and how far he is yet behind in christian attainment. It more loudly addresses the christian individual, who, while he knows he is proud in heart, and thinks that that pride is an abomination to the Lord, yet forgets that, while he may conceal it from his fellow-men, it is impossible to conceal it from the eyes of an all-seeing God. Therefore, the bounden duty here held forth to us is this, the lowest humility, the utmost self-denial as to the state of mind which becomes the disciple of Jesus; and while we adhere to every path of christian duty, remember that we cannot be low in our own estimation, without rising high in the estimation of the Lord; for the True and Faithful Witness has said, "God giveth grace unto the humble."

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM MUIR, D.D., Edinburgh

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BUCHANAN, Saltoun.

CHARITY IN UNION WITH LOVE TO GOD AND PERSONAL PURITY;

A SERMON PREACHED IN BEHALF OF THE EDINBURGH AND LEITH HUMANE SOCIETY,*
IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON THE EVENING
OF SUNDAY, 3d MARCH, 1833.

By the Rev. WILLIAM MUIR, D.D.,

Minister of St. Stephen's Church, Edinburgh.

"Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."—HEB. xiii. 1, 2, 3.

YOU are quite aware that Christian teaching includes both the statement of doctrines and the prescribing of duties, and St. Paul lets us see clearly, that no carefulness in declaring the doctrines is ever to prevent the minutest enforcement of the duties. The doctrines of the gospel imply the duties, and are the grand principles on which the duties are enjoined. To teach what is practical, therefore, without constant reference to what is doctrinal, is as unreasonable an attempt, as to render effects independent of their causes; while on the other hand, to teach the principles of the gospel, so as to exclude their application to the heart and life is just as unreasonable. Occasionally there has been an upholding of the one kind of teaching, to the disparagement and rejection of the other. It has been said by the advocates of the one kind of teaching, that we cannot be wrong, if our endeavours be always to establish right and fixed principles; and it has been said by the advocates of the other, that we cannot be wrong, if our efforts be directed exclusively to the describing and enforcing moral actions. But our inquiry as to the mode of instruction which is best fitted for the great design of religious teaching, must turn on what the Scriptures have actually prescribed, and not

on what we may think the best; and if so, we shall clearly see the necessity of our never separating for an instant the two branches of Christian address. Both are to be found in the very same Apostle's discourse; and to separate for an instant what the divine wisdom has thus united, is most criminal. Neither the doctrinal train of discoursing is to be followed to the rejection of the practical, nor is the preceptive address to be without an unceasing address to the principles of faith. In short, the style of gospel teaching must contain the well proportioned mixture of the two. The portion of St. Paul's writings now before us is a proof of this. There is more of a theoretic character in this Epistle than in almost any other; but there is a peculiar inference passing richly and most impressively through all the windings and perplexities of the Apostle's argument—some duty is enforced, or some holy resolution is excited, or some urgent motive to godliness is deduced. More especially here, however, at the close of his argument, are we called to see how practical those designs are, in which the views of the sacred writer all terminate. He presents us in the verses I have read, in the two which precede them, and in the verses which follow, with a digest of all the

* This Society was instituted in 1784, and has been instrumental, under divine Providence, in preserving hundreds of individuals from premature death.

Christian precepts, so brief, that it is easy to be committed to memory, and so comprehensive, that we cannot mention a single obligation of righteousness which is not expressed or implied in it. It has been suggested that the verses preceding and following the text ought to be taken together; that the solemn exhortation given in the two concluding verses of the 12th chapter, ought to be received in strict union with the precepts of the first six verses of the 13th. All duties, as you are aware, are either relative or personal, and their objects therefore are God, your brethren, and yourselves. In this very order and dependence it is necessary that you regard them, and you must beware of invading in the least upon this systematical arrangement. He who is Supreme has the first claim upon your heart, and your duty to your neighbour is truly defective whenever it is not accompanied with a sacred regard to the authority of God. In the first, second, and third verses, you are admonished on the subject of your relative obligations; the virtue of charity is enjoined, and the threefold union of obligation is not to be mutilated by you. You are to serve God with reverence and godly fear, because God is a consuming fire, nor can you be serving God acceptably if brotherly love be not cherished; you cannot say that benevolent intercourse among your brethren is guided by right principles, if all the while serving God acceptably through grace form no part of your character; nor must it be said for a single moment, that a regard to the human weal can make up for want of personal purity. Is it not true that men have often conducted themselves, as if they had said, Though we may never have cultivated brotherly love, we still attempt to serve God in stated worship, and to preserve ourselves from dishonesty; or, We have, indeed, long ceased to observe religious ordinances, we seldom go to church, and we cannot say that our lives are unsullied, but who can say that we are not strict in the discharge of every thing that is neighbourly, kind, and friendly? Here a selection of the claims of duty is made, but all this betrays a total misapprehension, or rather a wilful rejection, of the Christian scheme. The duties we owe to God, to our brethren, and ourselves, form a system, and an attempt to cherish one branch of obligation at the expense of another, is cutting at the root of all. Wherever the graces of moral obedience grow, their love to you

God and Saviour is fixed as the root. True charity and personal purity rise up in most blessed union along with piety. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and let that fear be once planted in the soul, and most assuredly there will be a loving of mercy, and a keeping ourselves unspotted from the world, as inseparable companions from walking humbly with God.

Be then exhorted, in the first place, to serve God, to celebrate his praise, to offer him thanksgiving, to confess your sins in his presence, to render glory to his name by the solemnities of the Sabbath, by religious meditation and prayer in your families and in your closets. Serve God; maintain the thoughts of his superintendence and government over you, and cherish an ardent love and regard to his authority, by feeling that you live and breathe in God, by resignation in all your calamities to the sovereign will of God, by the committal of your way unto him who can order your way aright, by an accumulation of prayer for his mercy and protection, by seizing every occasion of speaking well of his blessed name, and increasing among those around you reverence for his character. Thus the very business of the world will come to be associated with the religious exercises of the sanctuary, the communion of your souls with the Father of spirits will be maintained, and, feeling yourselves ever in his presence, you will be happily led, whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, to do all to the glory of God. Then it is said in the passage we have read, serve him acceptably. Consider how it is that you are rendered acceptable in the sight of God—not through any merit of your own. Bear in mind that you are fallen beings, and live in an apostate world. Let your dependence in every thing be settled on the cross of Christ: to this be ye counselled to look steadfastly for the power to serve God. Most attractive, indeed, are all the displays of your Saviour's cross; and all its benefits are given without money and without price. How strongly encouraged, then, ought you to feel in all your endeavours to serve God! Away from you all the depressing weight of those suspicions and fears which would change the service of the Lord into the yoke and burden of a tyrannical transaction. But to serve God acceptably, you must entertain right views of his character, and of your relation to him in that character, as given in the Scriptures of truth. You behold his power that is to be dreaded,

his authority that is to be sanctified in your regard, his holiness that is to be glorified by you, and his free mercy which is held out at once to attract and solemnize your minds. Most amiable, indeed, and engaging is the view of his character that is given; but still the grandeur of his justice, and the purity of his holiness, and the unchanging purposes of his rectitude, and the severity of his judgments—all convince you, that “God is a consuming fire” to the impenitent and unbelieving. You are to serve him with joy in him, as your Saviour, and yet with the subdued and humble sentiment which realizes him as your Judge. His ineffable goodness is never to turn you away from his ineffable greatness. No.—Unite the two objects of religious contemplation. While you serve God acceptably, through the pardoning and sanctifying grace of the Saviour, you are to serve God still with reverence and godly fear; “for our God is a consuming fire.”

Now, the first great commandment is the necessary introduction to the second, “Let brotherly love continue.” Strictly, they who are the objects of brotherly love, are those who live with you in the same society, and particularly in the same religious society. By the Hebrew converts the sentiment of brotherly love had been already exercised. It was not the beginning of the divine affection, but the continuing of it, to which they were exhorted. The brotherly love described in the Apostle’s writings, had reference to all who had received like precious faith with themselves. And though, as you well know, there are precepts which direct believers to cultivate philanthropy on the largest scale, yet here, and elsewhere, the exercise of the benevolent affections is pointedly directed towards those with whom you are intimately connected, and especially the household of faith. To counsel us to give our first services to those who are so nearly allied to us, illustrates the wisdom of the divine teachers. Other teachers have spoken of such counsels disparagingly, and have written volumes to prove the superior claim and beauty of what they call universal benevolence, but these volumes of sentimentalism exhibit a mere parade of feeling. It is quite useless to speak of affectionate concern for the whole, and not for the portions that compose it. Surely the circle that turns immediately around you must be cared for ere you pass on to

the next circle. Your family, your friends, the society of your neighbourhood, your native land, exert claims upon you, each of them in their order. Let the whole human race have your affectionate desires and prayers, and, as far as you can, your labours of charity, but waste not in idle sensibility that time and those talents which ought to be devoted to the interests of your brethren. Be careful that this divine affection of brotherly love be not interrupted, nor allowed to decay.

But that this limits not the exercise of charity to your brethren alone, is well proved by the command to the hospitable treatment of strangers, enjoined by the Apostle in the second verse. First, love and charity to the brethren is prescribed, and then the shelter of the roof even to strangers. You follow the spirit of this precept, when you studiously avoid all those illiberal considerations which insinuate themselves under the name of economy, and make you give grudgingly and sparingly to the needy; and when, on the contrary, you studiously cultivate these generous sentiments which prepare you for assisting the destitute, for yielding to what friendship prompts you for the good of all, and especially for the household of faith; thus cultivate the spirit of mind by which you are ready, whenever you have the opportunity, to do good, and you may become instrumental in assisting those whom God has called his especial servants; for did the Patriarch Abraham, when he hastened from his tent to welcome the wayfaring men, discover, under their disguise, the heavenly character of the strangers? At first he was prompted by generous feelings to give them hospitable shelter under his roof; and, oh! how welcome to his heart, when he found that, unawares, he had entertained angels. And let me remind you, that it is always the most powerful of excitements to every good word and work, that even the humblest service done to any one in the name and for the sake of Christ, is acknowledged to be done to the Lord of angels.

In verse third, you are told to “remember them that are in bonds,” to think where the burden most heavily presses upon them, to view them as they are racked with pain, or mourning under spiritual darkness, or drawing near to death, or actually passing through its valley and shadow. Let your observing of these be no

hurried observance of their state; you are "to remember them." And instead of this being to you an uninteresting spectacle, let it be as if you were bound up in the same griefs with them. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." You are to sympathize with them in the spirit, and to encourage them, when you cannot remove their troubles. O! surely the consideration, how affecting, that the very calamities you are called to sympathize with, are portions of the universal life! That *you* are liable to them every moment, may well impress this sentiment upon you. Think you always upon them who suffer any adversity, so as to show that you also conceive yourselves as suffering in the body of sin and death. Your exemption from affliction is owing to the free grace and sovereign love of God. The sympathy now asked from you may soon be needed by yourselves. What assistance you are now required to yield may soon require to be imparted to you.

Now, the precept to that brotherly love which is to animate and guide you throughout every portion of your duty to men, is introduced by the precept to serve God; and let it be added, that the personal duties must ever be conjoined with the relative, and therefore the Apostle subjoins certain statements to show you the necessity of personal purity. For the want of this last, no excuse is to be drawn from prodigality and beneficence. That pretension to charity is unfounded and most deceitful, which is made in the courses of a licentious and profligate life. These, though spoken of as doing no harm but to those who follow them, produce a prolonged curse on the whole of society. The persons who walk in these courses boast of themselves as possessed of very amiable dispositions. They have parted with something for charitable purposes. It may be, they have done what has received for them the credit of kindness on the part of others. But there is no real charity in the heart of that man who is profligate. The very essence of this is selfishness, and yet the profligate man, the man who has broken all the bonds of religion, who has spurned from him the wretched, who has overwhelmed the hearts of brothers and sisters with a sense of disgrace not to be taken away from them, that profligate man will still dare to lay claim to amiable and generous dispositions; and his companions

talk of this conduct by names that smooth it down; the man is still received among the first ranks of society; he would resent an imputation against his honour; if he throw his alms into some public Charity, he may come to be regarded as the benefactor who deserves gratitude, and even higher reward. But what says the Apostle in the text? "God will judge." Society may be silent, but "God will judge." His friends may receive the man back to their circle, but says the Apostle, "God will judge." The public prints, those industrious caterers for a diseased curiosity, may treat the whole as a matter of trivial gallantry, but says the Apostle, "God will judge." His own conscience may be scared, and his course of sensuality may be reviewed by him without awakening a single apprehension of what it is leading to, but says the Apostle, "God will judge." "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

The Apostle acquaints us also with a dissuasive against covetousness. He gives the dissuasive to every movement of the heart towards the goods of this life, which would remove us from serving God acceptably and doing good to our brethren. Cherish contentment. Envy not the situation of others. What you receive, you have from God. What things he has bestowed, are they not far better than any thing your righteousness deserved? Are they not best fitted to promote your own good, and the glory of the giver? And will you not remember, that, if you are his people, you are interested in his promises, which are exceeding great and precious? Insufficient in yourselves, he will make his grace sufficient for you. Feeble in your own resources, he will perfect his strength in your weakness. It is on the arm of God that you lean; it is under his guidance that you proceed; it is through his strength and mercy that you conquer and are crowned. Well, therefore, may you as his people triumphantly exclaim, "I will not fear what men shall do unto me!"

Now, this is a very hurried inspection of the particulars in the text; but can there be a more striking exemplification of the practical turn the Apostle communicates to his system of moral duties? You are first directed to the service of God, the love of whom is the source of righteousness. To

show that this will never, however, obstruct you in your duty to man, you are exhorted to brotherly love, which again is to grow into kindness and beneficence, and to extend even to strangers; while, at the same time, no concern for others is ever to withdraw you from a serious regard to your own character and state, but, on the contrary, to lead you to cherish the affections and habits of Christian purity, simplicity and grace.

Dr. Muir now adverted to the valuable Institutions for which the contributions of his numerous and respectable auditory were requested—the Dispensary and Humane Society—the former confining its benefits to its own locality, but the latter presenting an object of extended interest. As to the Dispensary, said the Rev. Doctor, it gives to thousands of our fellow-creatures the assistance that is most needed, and has been the instrument of prolonging many a useful life. Disease, wherever it is seen, will awaken in us the sentiment of painful interest and compassion; but disease, when it is seen in the houses of the poor, strikes upon our sympathies with the force of a peculiar call. How prone are we, when enjoying health ourselves, to neglect the poor and the infirm, or actually to forget that we are living in a world of suffering, and to grow quite callous to the miseries which prevail around us! Surely then the lessons taught us by an institution like the one I am speaking of, are needful lessons. It suggests to us what abundant cause of gratitude we have for the measure of health and prosperity we enjoy; it deepens obligation to the divine mercy; and it prescribes the devoting of a portion of the favours bestowed on ourselves for the relief of others, who are sunk low in circumstances of degradation and calamity. The families of the poor live in the same city, in the same neighbourhood with ourselves. They are crowded together in confusion and filth, while the bed of straw, cast into the corner, holds the diseased creature who, in the absence of a dispensary, would pine away. Now how many, in this large city, never pass a single thought upon this suffering? and how many more would remain in apathy, were it not for such an institution bringing them into view? Its managers penetrate for us the sick apartment, and brave for us the infection; they employ the skill and dispense the medicines, which, by the bless-

ing of God, restore health or mitigate the sharpness of pain; and all that they require from us in return, is but a small portion of that money we have so often expended on useless and hurtful indulgences, to enable them to carry on their work of utility.

Then as to the Humane Society, its objects are the conveying the sufferer promptly to medical aid, and the employing all the means for restoring the animal functions, the suspension of which, were it not for these means, might end in dissolution; not that in the case of suspended animation, the attempt to resuscitate is made on any vague notion, as if the soul could be brought back to the body. Once, once it has departed there is no bringing of it back. But innumerable facts, now recorded in the books of Humane Societies, prove, that even while the vital principle is still resident in the tabernacle, there may take place a suspension of the animal principle; and that where resuscitation is not too long delayed, the attempt is often successful in loosening the stiffened joints, restoring the colour of the pallid face, and bringing back, as if from the grave, that being who had been given up by his weeping friends. Encouraged by that experience, these Societies have been multiplied in England, and in our own land, while every addition to their numbers supplies new proof of their success. Many a parent has been gladdened by the restoration of a child who had just been laid out before him in all the appearance of death. Many a family has had its tears dried up by seeing the father restored to it, who but a few minutes before had been given up for lost. Not a few, also, of those miserable beings who have rushed, with impetuous daring, to voluntary death, have been snatched back, not only to life, but to reason, and the good hope of ultimate salvation.

The utility of the established means for reviving suspended animation, is illustrated very clearly by the Leith Institution. Not less than from 72 out of 80 cases have been successful; and here, also, attempted suicides have been snatched from destruction, and the victims of despair restored to a better mind. You will not resist, I am sure, the claim which the society now presents to you. Its design is deeply interesting; its practicability is shown by the most triumphant success; its object is a human being ready to perish. The rank of the sufferer is not thought of. Like the good Samaritan, it hastens to every one whom it can save.

This society, however, incurs an unceasing expense. Who can tell when the calls for its interposition are to be made? and is it possible that these expenses are to be left unprovided for? Can there be any hazard of its managers, from want of the necessary aid, being obliged to relinquish their humane undertaking? Can you bear it, that for want of your contributions this evening, the managers should be obliged to say to the bearers of the next dying person at their doors, No, we cannot receive you, though we begged from you, though we pleaded through the mouths of Christian ministers,

our calls were unattended to. How hard, how cruel to reduce them to this necessity? Two dying men last Tuesday were conveyed to them. How dreadful if they had been refused admission! No doubt it was the will of heaven that one of them perished, but, thank God, the other now lives; and if the voice of that stranger could be heard this evening, it would press on you the value of an institution, which has been the means of snatching him from premature death, and giving him back to his friends, to the ordinances of grace, and, we trust, to his soul's salvation.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS ;

BEING THE ANNUAL DISCOURSE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE GLASGOW INSTITUTION FOR FEMALE ORPHANS AND DESTITUTE GIRLS, PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THURSDAY, 21st MARCH, 1833,

By the Rev. ROBERT BUCHANAN,

Minister of Saltoun.

“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.”—MATT. xxv. 14, 15.

So far, my friends, as we are able to discover, diversity appears to pervade every department of creation, throughout the whole universe of God. Of the various planetary orbs of which that universe is composed, even the most ignorant observer can tell that there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, and that even one star differeth from another star in glory. If, again, we turn from the survey of the heavens, to the contemplation of this lower world, we find the same diversity. Not only do we find in its mineral and vegetable kingdoms, that endless diversity which exists between the solid and unyielding rock, for example, which the storms of a thousand winters leave unchanged, and the loose sand which is stirred by the lightest wind, or washed away in a summer's shower; between the hardness and brilliancy of the diamond, and the dull but plastic clay; between the loveliness of the flowers of the field, and the unseemliness of the rank and noxious weed; between the grandeur of the cedar that is in Lebanon, and the lowliness of the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: not merely, I say, do we perceive that endless diversity, which distinguishes from each

other the various classes of objects, of which these mineral and vegetable kingdoms are composed; but, within each of these separate classes, we find a variety as great as that which distinguishes one class of these objects from another. Every production, and every element, indeed, whether of air, or earth, or sea, seems to be alike impressed with this character of diversity. The wind moves at one time with the gentleness of a zephyr, at another, with the devastating fury of a hurricane. Here the earth swells into an elevation so gentle, that even a child may climb to its summit; there it elevates itself in some giant mountain far into the region of the clouds, too high almost for the eagle to soar. Here the waters flow in a streamlet so small as scarcely suffices to quench the thirst of the traveller, stooping ere he steps over its narrow bed; there they roll on in some majestic river, whose expanded bosom might float the fleet of an empire. And between these several extremes, what endless diversities may be found? Nor does this diversity belong only to the objects of the inanimate creation. The animal world is throughout all its extent pervaded by a like diversity. What an im-

mense gradation of being between a seraph and a worm! between the intelligence that can comprehend, and the moral feeling that can adore the glories of the Godhead, and the feeble and sensual capacities of the brutes that perish! And even if we narrow the view still farther, and, from the animal world in general, confine our attention to man, that variety of being to which we ourselves belong, we find, in his order of existence, the same all-pervading diversity, affecting its every property, and its every condition. As to the bodily part of our nature, it presents every variety that can exist between the dwarf and the giant, between health and disease, between beauty and deformity. As to its spiritual part, it exhibits in one extreme, intelligence adequate to sway the counsels of a nation; in another, an understanding too dull even to be taught, and a heart too hard even to feel. And as to the condition in which this variously constituted nature may be placed, it is just as diversified as the nature itself. It may be in circumstances of ease or of difficulty, of wealth or of poverty, of bustle and business or of quiet and seclusion, of loftiest rank or of lowliest obscurity, of freedom or bondage, of civilization or barbarism. Now the conclusions which wisdom would draw from these indubitable facts are surely these: that as diversity thus appears to pervade every department of creation, it is in unison with that economy which an all-wise God has seen it good to establish throughout the universe, that there should be diversity in the condition of men; and, moreover, that, as that diversity was impressed on all these departments by the hand of God, in order that by the separate fulfilment of the various parts assigned them, they might combine more perfectly to the manifestation of their Maker's glory, so it is in the same way that man is to fulfil the ends of his being; that as one plant, for example, yields its fragrance, and another its medicinal properties, and a third its nourishing, and a fourth its useful materials for the protection and shelter of man, thereby manifesting the wisdom, and the power, and the goodness of him by whom all these were made and bestowed; even so one man must yield his wealth, and another his influence, and a third his knowledge, and all their time and their labour, for the advancement of the common good, and for promoting the glory of their common Lord.

The parable before us, and which has given rise to these introductory remarks, is not only in strict coincidence with that principle in the divine government I have been endeavouring to set forth, but is itself at once an illustration and an enforcement of that principle. Not merely does it exhibit such endless diversities in human character and condition, as being one and all of Divine appointment; but it expressly enjoins it as the duty of every man so to act, that his particular character and condition may serve their proper end; and, indeed, for the faithful accomplishment of which, the parable farther reminds him, he is personally responsible, and shall in the great day of reckoning be made to give account unto God. "For the kingdom of Heaven," or the administration of God under the gospel dispensation, that dispensation under which alone men are taught all they ought to believe concerning God, and the whole of that duty He requires of men, "is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey." In the parallel passage in St. Luke, it is further added, that along with these talents the solemn injunction was given:—"Occupy till I come." In these words, you will at once perceive what has just been adverted to; that there is a distinct recognition and enforcement of that great principle which the introduction of the discourse was designed to bring into view; the principle, namely, that the diversity which characterizes the condition of man, and which characterizes so far as we know every thing else throughout the universe of creation, is to be reverently and submissively regarded as the wise and gracious appointment of God: and that as the ends of that diversity are, that all the departments of creation fulfil the part assigned them; so in the case of man, his duty is to be discharged by the diligent cultivation and faithful improvement of each of the peculiar talents he has received for the service and glory of God. Then you will observe in the parable, that he is expressly styled God's servant; nay, more, God's own servant, intimating that he, and he only, has a title to his entire and unreserved obedience. Still farther, we are here explicitly

taught that the goods which these servants received, were not their own, but their Lord's:—"He delivered unto them *his* goods." Nay, more, we learn from this parable that distribution was made of these, not at random, so to speak, but with a strict reference to every man's several ability, and his wants; that the portion assigned to the individual, as a subject of the gospel kingdom, is precisely that portion best suited to enable him to fulfil the ends of his being. What a blessed and glorious change would not the practical and habitual recognition of these simple but noble truths, work in a professing christian world! that man is God's own servant; that his bodily and mental powers, his time, his wealth, his knowledge, his influence of every kind, are all God's own fruits, bestowed for God's own service; and that the measure of these he has received, is precisely that measure best suited to fit him for the great ends of his being. If I am God's own servant, why is God so little regarded in all that I say, or think, or do? If every thing that I possess be God's own goods, why are these goods so often made the ministers of my pride, or vanity, or selfishness? If my place have been assigned me by infinite wisdom, why, instead of cheerful contentment, are envy and dissatisfaction so often rankling in my bosom? Who, my friends, can answer these questions without condemning himself?

But having thus adverted to the great truths taught and enforced in the parable before us, and having noticed, in passing, the lamentable inattention and indifference with which they are peculiarly treated, by multitudes of those who profess themselves to be subjects of that kingdom which these truths were given to regulate, let me now entreat your attention to two great errors which, in reference to the truths taught in this parable, too commonly prevail. The first is the error of what are commonly called the fair and honourable of the men of the world; the second is the error of those who, with a pious profession, as to many of the direct acts and exercises of a religious worship, are found to be practically negligent of many of the leading, moral, and relative duties of life. And, first, as to the error in reference to the truths taught in this parable, of what are called the fair and honourable of the men of the world. In this class I include all those of whatever situation, who maintain

what is affirmed in common conversation to be a reputable character; who are honest, for example, in the main transactions of business, charitable in their dispositions, and decent in their outward behaviour; but who, at the same time, though still claiming for themselves the christian name, feel no interest in, and pay little regard to, religion. Such men are pretty numerous in every community; and from the mixture in their character of much that is at least very commendable in itself, they are not unfrequently pointed out as examples of all that is estimable in human conduct. It is, therefore, only the more necessary for their own sakes, as well as for the sake of others, that the grievous and fundamental error in which they proceed should be clearly defined, and the evil consequences it engenders exhibited to you. It is their great error, then, that they regard religion as if it were just one out of a number of subjects, all of which had equal claims upon their notice. There is business, say they, to be transacted, and there is knowledge to be acquired, and there are friends whose acquaintance and affections are to be cultivated, and there is a competent portion of this world's goods to be secured, and there are families to educate and provide for, and no doubt there is also religion. They place them all, so to speak, on a level; and if it should happen, as in such cases it must always happen, that in the crowd of objects which are thus soliciting their attention, religion should be jostled aside and forgotten altogether, they are ready to plead as their excuse, that while they do not deny its comparative importance, they have no time to attend to it. In their hearts it may be, though they may seldom avow this, that they are ready to think it is not their province; that religion may be very well for the sick, or for children, or for the aged, or for them whose business it is to teach it; in a word, for all those who have nothing else that they can do; but for the men who are engaged in the active business of life, there is really no great harm in passing it over altogether; and it may be, in looking forward to the great day of reckoning, that they please themselves with this fond imagination, that they will have so much to adduce in vindication of their faithful improvement of many of the talents committed to their charge, that their neglect of the single subject of religion will not surely be visited with any severe

condemnation. Now the whole of this conduct and reasoning I pronounce, on the infallible authority of divine truth, to be one erroneous and fatal error. As those who still claim for themselves the Christian name, they are bound to regard religion not as a matter standing on a level with any of the relative duties of life, but as, on the contrary, the very spring and fountain of all these duties; as the light which alone can clearly indicate what their duty is, and as the only source of that strength in which any duty can be rightly discharged. The simple fact that Christ, the Son of the living God, came into the world to establish the kingdom which the parable figuratively describes, a kingdom of which God must be the acknowledged Lord, and his holy law the acknowledged standard of obedience, is of itself sufficient evidence that men were not previously living under its rule; that God did not possess that place in the affections of his human creatures, which his adorable character is entitled to hold, nor receive that submissive obedience to his authority, which his sovereignty is entitled to demand. When Christ, therefore, in his three-fold character of Prophet, Priest, and King, came to found an empire in the hearts of the people of every kindred, and tongue, and nation, whom he purchased with his blood, the truth, in which he then made known the character and will of God, and the condition and prospects of men, became the sole guide, the only infallible rule of faith and manners for every subject of his kingdom: and what does that involve but the religion of Christ? To neglect this religion, then, is not, according to the false and pernicious doctrine which I am engaged in combating, to neglect one talent, but it is to disqualify for the right exercise and improvement of every talent; it is, in the case of every man who does so, and yet claims for himself the Christian name, nothing less than the glaring inconsistency of calling himself the subject of a kingdom whose sovereign he does not recognise, and whose laws he does not care even to understand. And where else, might we not ask, can he expect to find a safe guide to direct him through the complicated mazes of human life? Is it in the dictates of his own heart? Alas! if he knows himself, he must know that his thoughts and imaginations are evil, and that continually. Is it in the example of the world? If his eyes have been opened, he must have seen that it lieth in wickedness. No, my

friends, it is in the truths of our Christian faith, and in the devotional exercises which give these truths their seat and influence in the heart, that alone he can find light to guide him in every perplexity, motives to encourage him under every difficulty, consolation to sustain him under every sorrow; and thence, above all, it is that he must derive that sanctifying power which alone can truly consecrate every talent he possesses, and enable him to become, in his whole life and conduct, a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto God.

The second error that I would notice, as prevailing in reference to the truths that are in the parable before us, is that of those who, with their pious profession as to many of the direct acts and exercises of religious worship, are negligent of many of the leading moral and relative duties of life. It cannot be denied, that both in the gospel, and in the religion which is founded upon it, there are many things fitted to excite the interest, and to command the attention even of a carnal and unregenerate mind. Such a mind may, in the mere natural exercise of its powers, not only examine, and be satisfied with the evidences which prove the gospel to be of divine authority, but may readily perceive that many of its truths are of most momentous importance. It requires nothing more than the common instinct of our nature to revolt from suffering; and as the gospel professes to be a remedy avowedly provided for the removing of such an evil—an evil to which every pain that afflicts his body, and every sorrow that agonizes his heart, emphatically proclaims that he is very liable in the life that now is; while the still small voice of his oft reproving conscience amply confirms the saying of the gospel, that to that evil, but for the gospel remedy, he must be far more exposed in the life to come, there is in this an argument presented to his mind, to which the very selfishness of his mind may prompt him to listen; and at the same time that he may remain altogether ignorant of the essential evil of his condition, and totally unconnected with what constitutes the true blessedness of that state to which the gospel offers to restore him, he may, nevertheless, under the mere influence of that instinctive impulse I have described, not only recognise the general importance of the gospel, but yield a ready compliance with many of those external observances which the religion of the

gospel enjoins. But still looking to the gospel, merely as a remedy for suffering, (*i. e.* for the penal consequences of sin, and not as a remedy for the cause of that suffering,) the removing of sin itself, he sees no inconsistency in a rigid religious profession altogether unaccompanied by sanctification of heart, or holiness of life. In this carnal way of looking to and embracing the gospel, he no doubt sees it necessary, in so far, to conform his outward conduct to the precepts of that gospel, as he knows it to be essential to a professor of its faith. Without this external conformity, he could neither pretend to the world nor himself to any interest in its blessing; but with this external conformity, his connexion with religion substantially ends; and for any thing beyond the mere arranging of his external deportment, the correction of such outward habits, or the giving up such flagrant sinful indulgences, as would give the lie to a Christian name, his religion leaves him just where it found him. Now this is precisely the description of that class of men to whose error I now allude, of that class who practise upon themselves the monstrous delusion of imagining, that religion may be preserved in its integrity, at the same time that it is divorced from all the moral and relative duties of life. They seem to look on religion as if it were a subject of study, isolated from all other human affairs, the various exercises of which have just been appointed as the price of salvation. In performing these exercises, accordingly, they would appear to be under the impression that they are thereby just paying the debt due on account of their sin, and acquiring, on that ground, a title on which they may confidently repose the hope of everlasting life. They read the Bible, and attend on public worship, and I fear even join in the holy sacrament of the supper, virtually with the same feeling that actuates the superstitious Papist in repeating his Latin prayers he does not understand, or in inflicting on himself the various severities of a self-imposing penance. Having complied with the form, they seem to think themselves constituted subjects of the kingdom of heaven, and heirs of its blessed inheritance. Were not the heart of man deceitful above all things, as well as desperately wicked, the folly of such conduct would be altogether inexplicable. Does the youth become the ingenious artisan by simply possessing himself of his

tools? Does the timid and peaceable citizen become the brave and accomplished soldier by simply arraying himself in a uniform? As little will the mere external performance of the forms of religion, however real, make any man what is implied in a subject of the kingdom of heaven. Thus to disconnect religion from the great duties of life, is not only to mistake, but altogether to pervert the grand purpose for which religion was given. It was given, not surely that it should stand detached from every thing else, but on the contrary for the very purpose that it should bring every thing in human life under its sanctifying control; that, as I have said, it should be a light clearly to indicate in every case what our duty is, and furnish that strength through which alone any duty can be rightly discharged: its truths contain the laws of Christ's kingdom, and its devotional exercises become the medium under the divine blessing of imparting the spirit of willing obedience to what those truths require. But when that truth, instead of being set on a candlestick, is hid under a bushel, when, instead of being taken as a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path, in every part of our conduct and conversation in the world, it is confined entirely to the outward ceremonial of devotion, to the sanctuary, and to the Sabbath, then, I say, its purpose is prostituted, and its use destroyed. It then subdues no sordid passion; it then purifies no unholy desire; it then exalts no earthly feeling; it then spiritualizes no carnal thought: it teaches not humility to the proud, nor charity to the selfish, but serves only to leave the ruthlessness and ungodliness of the unregenerate mind in the more peaceable and undisturbed possession of its dominion. Neither of these two classes, my friends, have any thing of the true character of the subjects of the gospel kingdom. By the former, the Lord of that kingdom is virtually disowned; that Lord hears not the confession of his sins, nor receives the homage of his adoration. He trusts not in the efficacy of that Lord's atonement for pardon, or in the efficacy of his grace to strengthen him for the performance of duty. If he sin, it is without repentance. If he do what is good in itself, it is without any reference to the divine command; and plainly, whatever he profess, he practically denies he is God's servant, that his talents are God's goods, or that the end of their bestowment is God's glory; and

fair and reputable as his life to himself and the world may appear, it is a life spent without God, and therefore without any well founded hope in the world. As for the other class, again, the pious in profession, but unsanctified in heart and life, they are serving the Lord of the kingdom with the shadow, while they are giving the substance to the flesh and the world. They are hearers of the law, without being doers of the same; and, therefore, like that servant who knew his Lord's will, and did it not, they shall assuredly be beaten with many stripes. Very different from what has been yet described, are the character and condition of the true subject of the gospel kingdom. Knowing that when left to himself, in every country and in every age, man has proved himself to be alienated from the love and life of God, ignorant alike of his duty and of his destiny, he gratefully embraces and submits himself to that Lord and Saviour, who hath come to rescue him from the ignorance and the slavery of sin, and introduce him to the life and liberty of the sons of God. The truth in which that Saviour has made known his whole condition, is a light which he feels to be as necessary for the guidance of his moral being, as is the sun in the firmament, for the direction of his bodily movement. It contains that law of the Lord which is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord which is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord which are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord which is pure, enlightening the eyes. The knowledge of this truth, therefore, is more precious in his estimation than rubies, more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. In its holy precepts, he finds the unerring rule of his conduct; in its great and precious promises, he is furnished at once with the comforting assurance of pardon for every acknowledged and repented transgression, and with the encouraging assurance of grace to strengthen for every commanded duty. In the glorious prospect of life and immortality it sets before him, he finds a consolation and a hope adequate to sustain him under life's deepest sorrows, and a peace that will not forsake him even in death. His study of this truth, therefore, and his attendance upon all the religious exercises which it enjoins, while in themselves they are occupations in which he finds his chiefest delight, are at the same

time exercises which reflect a powerful and habitual influence over his whole life and conduct; for if the principle unfolded in the parable has been correctly exhibited, it will be readily perceived that it bears equally on all the moral and relative duties of life, investing them with a character which proclaims that they are not matters to be performed or neglected as it may suit our fancy or convenience, but every one of which we are bound to discharge to the utmost of our ability. To follow out this principle, however, and to point out its operation in each individual case, is manifestly impossible on the present occasion. Suffer me only, in drawing towards a conclusion, to make a few remarks in reference to its bearing on such a duty as that of contributing to the truly Christian charity, in behalf of which I am now permitted to address you. One important reason why I have selected this parable as the ground on which to rest an appeal to your Christian benevolence, is just because of the authority wherewith it enables, even a stranger, to speak to you upon such a subject—is just because it plainly teaches us, that if the poor be with us always, so it is under the divine administration whereby God has made good to arise out of the very evils of our fallen state. One great purpose which your existence serves, is to cultivate and to cherish these compassionate and kindly feelings which serve to bind the human family together, and without the diligent cultivation of which, we can never love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

The charity, in whose behalf I have been requested to solicit your aid, is one which, you are well aware, is not only unexceptionable in its pure and Christian object, but admirable in the care and fidelity wherewith it is administered. It is a charity, my friends, designed not for the relief of slight or imaginary privations, not to be squandered away in some splendid and visionary scheme of speculative philanthropy—it is a charity whose sphere of operation is your own city, and whose administrators are from among yourselves. And, if, then, there be a society willing to undertake the work of pure and undefiled religion, in visiting the fatherless in their sore affliction, in searching out the secret places where youthful female hearts may be breaking under the sorrows, or corrupting under the neglects of orphanage and destitution, surely you will not leave such a society to witness wants

which they cannot supply, hunger which they cannot feed, or cold and nakedness which they cannot warm and clothe. I would appeal to parents, who know the weakness and the helplessness of childhood—I would ask them to look around their own domestic circle, on their little ones, who are there the objects of their own fondest and most anxious care, and just to think what it would be to have them east out at their defenceless age, on a cold and merciless world, with no protecting father, no tender mother to guard them. I would appeal to children, who have experienced parental care, who have grown up in their happier homes, strangers to those bitter privations, to mitigate which is the great and Christian object of that valuable institution whose cause I am now privileged to support. And,

both to parents and children, I would say, in reference to those poor and neglected little ones, “do you unto others, as, were your case theirs, you would that others should do unto you.” Remember, my friends, what a solemn admonition is conveyed in those words which our blessed Lord shall address to them who have allowed the talent of relieving the destitute, and the naked, and the poor, to remain neglected and misimproved altogether, and for which he may soon see reason for excluding them from his heavenly kingdom, “I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not; inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me.” May God bless his word, and to his name be the praise.—Amen.

THE following is extracted from the Sermon of the Rev. W. Thomson, of Glasgow, on the death of the Rev. W. Limont, of Edinburgh, which we had taken down for the Scottish Pulpit, and which was in type before we learned that it was to be published in a separate form:—

Mr. Limont was born in Glasgow, on the 16th of May, 1799. The care of watching over him in his tender years, and the important charge of his education, devolved entirely on his prudent, pious, and indulgent mother. After he had gone through a regular course of classical education at the grammar school, and completed his classical and philosophical studies at the university of his native city, he studied theology under Professor M’Gill. Being very young, I am not aware that, during his university career, he was distinguished for any thing like superiority of genius. He was licensed to preach the Gospel on the 7th September, 1819. His trial discourses met with great approbation; and from this period may be dated his rising fame. Petitions crowded into the presbytery for a trial of his gifts; and the vacant congregations strove with each other who should be the first in inviting him to be their minister. After preaching a few months, he received a harmonious call from the Relief Congregation, Kilmarnock; and, after pass-

ing through the usual trials, he was ordained pastor there, on the 3d of May, 1820. In Kilmarnock, he had laboured little more than a year, when this church, virtually vacant through the indisposition of the Reverend James Smith, having heard of his fame as a preacher, gave him a harmonious call; of this he accepted, and was translated to Edinburgh, on the 18th of July, 1821. He has now officially laboured among you upwards of eleven years; so that from his licensing to the close of his ministerial labours, can be reckoned little more than thirteen years. If life is to be estimated by its active services, Mr. Limont may be said to have lived long in a short time.

Having gone to Glasgow, to visit his brother, who is labouring under severe illness, he returned to Edinburgh, on the last Thursday of the past year. On Friday, he was attacked by erysipelas, and, in six days thereafter, notwithstanding the best medical assistance, he died. Thus terminated the labours, and the mortal career of this eminent man of God.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. J. MITCHELL, D.D., S.T.P., Glasgow
SERMON by the Rev. ALEXANDER HARVEY, Glasgow.

THE MISSION OF PAUL ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN WELLINGTON STREET CHURCH, PREVIOUS TO THE ORDINATION OF TWO MISSIONARIES FOR AMERICA, MESSRS. GEORGE MURRAY AND JAMES HARPER,

By the Rev. J. MITCHELL, D.D., S.T.P.,
Minister of the United Secession Church, Wellington Street, Glasgow.

"And he said unto me, Depart ; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."—
ACTS xxii. 21.

THESE are the words of Jesus, the great Head of the Church, addressed unto the Apostle Paul, the first Missionary to the heathen world.

Of all the histories recorded in the New Testament, if you except the biography of the Saviour himself, there is none so wonderful as that of Saul of Tarsus. The narrative of his conversion is strikingly miraculous, and has been employed, as you may know, to demonstrate the truth of that religion with whose history it is incorporated, and in subservience to whose propagation it was wrought. Never was there a more stupendous display of the sovereignty and of the power of divine grace ; and never, by any divine interposition, was there gained a more powerful auxiliary to the cause of truth and of goodness. Instantaneously and irresistibly accomplished, by it a persecutor, the most active and furious, was converted into a champion, the most powerful, and ardent, and unwearied. The world saw and wondered. And as the Gentiles were the special objects of this conversion ; so, in the course of his ministry, he travelled to the remotest quarters of the earth, as then known, to preach "the faith which he had once attempted to destroy ;" to spread "the renowned fame of a Saviour he had formerly vilified ;" and to urge the acceptance of a salvation he had formerly disdained and spurned. Such is

the interesting fact, involved in the commission now before us.

The marvellous story of that great change, which passed upon this very extraordinary man, is told thrice in this book—once by the sacred historian, twice by the Apostle himself ; while in each of these relations, his destination is particularly mentioned. And this, as we have already suggested, is the earliest instance of a foreign mission recorded in the New Testament. The ministry of our Lord was restricted to his countrymen, although its influence incidentally extended to others, as in the case of the woman of Samaria : "I am not sent," said he, "but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And, while it is sufficiently evident, from the terms of the commission given to the Apostles, that the earth at large was intended to be the grand scene of their ministry ; and while, as on the day of Pentecost, and in the case of Cornelius, Gentiles, even from the beginning of the dispensation, occasionally shared the benefit ; yet, till the date of the conversion of Paul, all the Apostles had confined their labours to the land of Israel, and indeed seemed to have had a strong aversion to pass beyond its bounds. At this memorable epoch, however, he, by the divine appointment, went forth on this extended field of labour ; and in the text, *you see the Saviour himself in the very act of*

missioning this illustrious preacher of righteousness to the vast and distant sphere. "Depart," said he, "for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

All that I propose, through divine aid, is, very briefly to exhibit, in a few remarks, the spirit and the references of this address, as they relate to Paul, and may be transferred to others who shall be sent forth upon a similar mission.

And we may observe,

First. That when God has any great work to accomplish, he will not want proper means to execute it.

The call and conversion of the Gentiles was a new and most interesting object. It had been the purport of many a promise, and of many a prophecy, from the days of old, and since the scheme of grace began to be unfolded. The era was now arrived when it should be realized; and while the Apostles, influenced by Jewish prejudice, felt a repugnance to undertake this enterprise, lo! God, by a wondrous interposition, has raised up Paul for this purpose, and is about to introduce him into this large but neglected scene of labour. "He is a chosen vessel unto me," said Jesus to Ananias, "to bear my name before Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." The world you see is destined to be the grand sphere of his ministry, and he is about to occupy it; mankind are to be its objects, and he is going forth to address them everywhere.

Men may often conceive magnificent plans, and project gigantic enterprises, but want the means of executing them. Indeed, in proportion to the extent of the sphere of operation, and the magnitude of the undertaking, must, in such cases, be the deficiency of the means. Nay, man may not only be incompetent to provide the means, but be incapable of contriving them, or even of imagining what they should be; and the very grandeur of the design, as far as human beings are concerned, may render the execution impracticable and hopeless. But it is not so with God. His understanding and his ability are equally infinite. If he contemplate the end, he can also command the means. Yea, if adequate means and instruments at the present time exist not, he can create them, and apply them effectually, to the fulfilment of any purpose he may choose to form, of any project he may choose to entertain. He can construct that lever, which shall move

the world. He can "call the things which be not, as though they were." He can convert and qualify the missionary, who shall willingly go forth to evangelize tribes the most remote and the most unenlightened. Again, we may remark,

Secondly. That God often fits instruments *prospectively* for his purpose, and ere the work be assigned them.

One of the greatest efforts of human wisdom consists in improving means already prepared. And few men indeed, especially in great emergencies, know how to do so effectually, and to the uttermost. A commanding genius alone can obviate formidable obstructions, avail himself fully of existing circumstances, bend opposing causes to his will, impress his character upon the age, and in short, turn passing events, and present instruments to the best account. But, God can do more—far more. He can provide the means beforehand, and adapt them, with the most consummate skill, to the end in view. Thus, the temple of old, constructed "according to the pattern shown on the mount," was built of materials which had been already hewn and fashioned on the sides of Lebanon, and in "the quarries" of Israel. And thus Paul was not only converted to "the obedience of the faith," and filled with the Holy Ghost, at the epoch when his great work was to commence, but God had been previously fitting him for it, by his training "at the feet of Gamaliel," by his profound knowledge of the Jewish system, by his proficiency in the Greek tongue, then the current language of the east, and by his acquaintance with the learning and the philosophy of the heathen world. So was it in other cases. Thus Moses, by having roamed as a shepherd amid the deserts of Arabia, was fitted to conduct the children of Israel through that great wilderness. Thus David, while he tended the flock of his Father Jesse, was acquiring that taste for poetry and for music, which afterwards contributed to raise him to distinction—was executing in humble guise and in miniature, the duties of a prince, to which he was appointed; and in his conflicts with the lion and the bear, was exercising that courage, and achieving those victories, which, in the sequel of his extraordinary history were so signally approved and illustrated in his combat with Goliath, and in his encounters with the enemies of the people of God all around. So is it still. And, as

that diamond is ripening silently in its bed, under the agency of the hidden processes of nature, which is afterwards to shine in the diadem of the Prince, and brighten the splendours of empire;—so the servants of God are often, unconsciously to themselves, preparing, by a course of previous and varied training, of gracious experience, perhaps of painful discipline, of acquaintance with general learning, of the knowledge of human nature and the world, of the study of God's holy word, and of practice in the art of public teaching amid the administrations of the sanctuary, for a destination, which neither they, nor their friends had before contemplated. All is of God. He provides for the accomplishment of the end, by preparing the means in due time. We remark,

Thirdly. That God never suffers the powers which he has conferred upon any of his servants or messengers, especially powers which are extraordinary, and which he has been pleased to provide for some great work, to remain long unused.

Human beings, if left to themselves, may suffer their talents to rust, their energies to slumber—may be indifferent, and want a suitable excitement—may not perceive the time when they ought to start in the career of usefulness, and of course remain idle—may not comprehend the use of the means which they command, and therefore decline, or delay, to apply and to improve them. Not so God! When the time is come, “the time that God hath set,” then the instrument which he had been preparing shall be brought forth, shall be introduced into the scene of labour, and engaged in the work. No sooner, accordingly, was Paul converted, than, feeling the divine impulse, he cries out, “Lord, what shall I do?” and as soon as his eyes were opened, as Ananias had laid his hands upon him, and as he is called to go forth to the Gentiles—immediately he starts up, quits the bounds of Palestine, descends into Arabia, and returns again by Damascus, to Jerusalem. No crisis is lost under the government of God—the time appointed, the fit season, is the time seized and improved. When the period arrives for commencing a certain ministry, for calling forth a certain labourer into the vineyard, for sending out a certain messenger; then, “in due time,” God turns the attention of others, especially of the chosen Agent himself to it, inclines him to comply with the

call, and causes conspiring events in providence to point to the object, to prepare the way for the mission, and to facilitate the execution of the holy enterprise. Cornelius and his household having been prepared, Peter is sent for, and is found ready. And the vision “of the man of Macedonia,” mentioned in the sixteenth chapter of this book, who “prayed Paul, saying, come over into Macedonia, and help us,” gave an unexpected turn to the journey of the apostle, causing him assuredly to gather that the Lord had called him to preach the gospel in that new, and it should seem, till then, unthought-of region of evangelical labour.

Fourthly. We may notice, that it belongs to God to fix the scene of the ministry of each of his servants.

It was he who prescribed to Paul, when “he said unto him, *depart*,” whither the Apostle should go in general; and often in the course of his subsequent travels, the Great Master, by the intimations of his Divine Spirit, by the suggestions of his inspiring wisdom, by the events of his providence, by the wants of mankind, by means common and extraordinary—controlled the inclinations or over-ruled the purposes, and always guided the steps of this his faithful and devoted missionary. And to him this prerogative still belongs. If it be his to “determine the bounds of our habitations,” how much more to point out the scene, and fix the limits of the ministry of each? Often he does so by the decisions of his servants, and not unfrequently, by the secret impulses of his own Spirit, by the obvious leadings of his providence. And surely, it well becomes a servant of God to consult the mind and will of his Divine Lord, and to submit with alacrity to the heavenly destination in such matters. He should be ready to go, like Paul, whithersoever his God and Saviour may send him; and to labour wherever the great Head of the Church shall appoint. Wo to him, if, in devoting himself to God and to the ministry of the saints, he consults, exclusively or chiefly, with secular and selfish interests! Should he, like Jonah, decline any service to which God calls him, and attempt to flee from the presence of the Lord, he shall find that God can follow him, can arrest his progress, can make him see his sin in his punishment, and can reduce him to penitent submission by something that will awfully subdue his proud and refractory spirit. He must not

say, with Jeremiah, in awed despondency, "Ah, Lord God, I cannot speak, for I am a child;" nor with Moses, amid unbelieving trepidation, and with a view to decline the work, "O, My Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send—" for as the great Head of the Church, the Lord of all, and the "only wise God," has an undoubted right to command the services of all; so he knows best what is good for them, and for the Church his own body. He alone perceives fully the relation of things, the end from the beginning; and, doubtless, in his wisdom and in his mercy, selects for each of his devoted servants that sphere, which, upon the whole, is most suitable for him, and where his labours will by his blessing, be crowned with the greatest success.

Fifthly. The region to which a minister of God is destined, may, however, be greatly remote from the scene of his birth, and of his early education. "Depart," said Jesus to Paul, "for I will send thee *far hence* unto the Gentiles."

Most frequently, it is true, he allows his servants, especially in a peaceful and settled state of the Church, to remain, and to labour in their own country, and among "the children of their own people." Thus the eleven apostles continued to minister in Judea, while Paul went forth to those Gentiles who resided in foreign countries, and in distant places. And, generally speaking, this arrangement is desirable, for home is *sweet*, most sweet to the wise and good, the man of tender sensibilities and kind affections. It is deeply interesting, being surrounded by a thousand peculiar, and pleasant, and powerful attractions and associations. The heart lingers around the land of our fathers—the residence of our kindred and friends—the scenes of early life and education—the haunts of hallowed recollections and relies. "Let thy servant, I pray thee," said Barzillai to David, who had wished him to spend the residue of his days with him in his palace at Jerusalem, "die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother." "Shall we say to the bones of our fathers," exclaimed an American Chief, who had been invited to quit the ancient possessions of his tribe, "rise up and follow us to a strange land?" Such is natural feeling; and God, in the exercise of his tender mercy, comparatively seldom requires his servants to do violence to it, or to rend asunder the

ties that bind the heart to a native country, the home of their childhood. Yet he did so, in the case before us, for the wisest and most benevolent purposes; and so has he done, with similar views, in other instances. Nor in vain. His servants have obeyed, and been blessed. So Abram, being called of God to follow him to a land unknown, "by faith went out, not knowing whither he went," and God prospered him greatly. So Jacob, having been invited by Joseph, and encouraged of God, to go down into Egypt, and spend his last days there, amid a people of strange language and of strange manners, descended into that country, and God multiplied him there, so that his posterity "became a mighty nation," and at length were brought forth with great spoil. So Jonah, after being disobedient for a time to the heavenly vision, and suffering dreadfully for his rebelliousness, undertook the mission which had been assigned him, but to which he was at first so exceedingly averse—"preached the preaching" which God had "bidden" him at Nineveh, a far distant city—and was thus the means of saving very many, both old and young, from impending destruction.

Sixthly. With the Divine commission in his hand, no minister of the Lord Jesus need fear to go wherever his Great Master shall send him—to any scene the most distant, to any people howsoever strange.

Far be it from us to make light of the difficulties connected with a mission of this character. Doubtless, the sacrifices which it involves are "neither few nor small." And to a susceptible nature, to a reflective mind, to an affectionate heart, to a person even of imaginative constitution, of acute and tender sensibility, these sacrifices must be peculiarly painful and trying. The aspect of every foreign country to the emigrant must wear a stranger's face. The manners of every new people, howsoever nearly allied, must be to him, in several respects, uncouth, perhaps repugnant. The privations and hardships connected with the exercise of the ministry among an unknown tribe, especially if rude and scattered, can hardly be fully estimated beforehand. And while the society of friends and brethren at home supports, and cheers, and guides the servant of God amid his toils, he who goes forth to preach the gospel abroad among scattered settlers, or amid an unenlightened community, must frequently feel a want of counsels which he cannot enjoy, of encour-

agement which he cannot receive, and be afflicted with a sense not only of homelessness, but of intellectual and official destitution. Still "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." He is everywhere with his servants, and should they "take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, there would his hand lead them, and his right hand would hold them." His covenant, extending to "the dark places of the earth," is replete with treasures of appropriate supplies, as well as precious promises; and he who trusts his God shall not want all necessary support, even in a strange land, and amid an unknown people. How wonderfully was Paul sustained! How marvellously was his ministry blessed!

Seventhly. The work to which God calls his servants everywhere, at home and abroad, is great and honourable—glorifying to himself, and beneficial to man.

When you turn to the tenor of Paul's instructions, and of God's engagements, as recorded in the subsequent chapter, (verses 16, 17, and 18) you will be convinced that it is so. "I have appeared unto thee," said Jesus, "for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a witness, both of those things, which thou hast heard, and of those things, in which I will yet appear to thee, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." What ministry, indeed, can be more desirable and delightful, more sublime and excellent than this? You may say of such a department of the service of God, what is said of his own administration, "It is honourable and glorious." Think upon the character of the work: it is highly intellectual and spiritual, holy and heavenly—the ministry of the saints, the word of salvation. Think upon the subject of it. "To me," cries Paul, "who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Think upon the object of it—to save perishing souls, and train up men for a glorious and blissful immortality in the heavens. Think upon the issue of it, when humbly, diligently, and conscientiously prosecuted—it leads to

an acceptance the most honourable, to a commendation the most enrapturing, to rewards the most glorious. "Well done," is the language with which the divine Saviour will greet every such one at last, "thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "And what is our hope," exclaims Paul, addressing himself to his converts among the Gentiles, "or joy, or crown of rejoicing! are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy." "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."

Lastly. We may observe that through divine mercy, the success of such Missionaries, it may be hoped, will be proportioned to the difficulty of the enterprise, and to the dignity of the work.

When Paul began his course, certainly in his own account, and most probably in the judgment of others, no instrument could appear more inadequate, no attempt more unpromising. What was it? He had to go forth among nations who nauseated the very name of Jew; he had to minister, all alone, in the midst of an ignorant, immoral, ungodly, hostile, gainsaying world. He had to advocate a cause the most odious, to introduce a religion the most obnoxious, the most uncompromising, and the most intolerant to all other systems. He had to glory in the cross, which was an offence to the whole world, and to publish salvation through a crucified Saviour, to unenlightened men, the most incredible, and the most abhorrent of all doctrines. He had to proclaim a faith founded upon the most sublime views of Godhead, and fraught with the most extraordinary and astonishing facts and claims. In short, he had to contend, single-handed, with the principles, and passions, and prejudices, and superstitions, and systems of the whole heathen world. And, judging by the past, it could not be expected, that he would make any considerable impression upon this vast mass of error, and iniquity, and idolatry; for, how little had the Jews effected, although their history abounded in miracles, and their economy exhibited the doctrine and worship of "the one living and true God," under a form the most magnificent and imposing. Nay, the Apostle had to contend, not only "with flesh and blood,"

with the various oppositions of depraved humanity, "but with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, and with spiritual wickedness in high places." Now, who could have augured any successful result from a conflict so unequal; far less an issue so splendid? Yet, lo! what mighty success attended the ministry of the devoted Apostle! As he advances into remote places, and proclaims the tidings of salvation among strange, and sometimes barbarous tribes, multitudes flock to his ministry, crowds hang upon his lips, thousands are "converted to the obedience of the faith, christian churches rise up on every side, and from the uttermost parts of the earth are heard songs, even glory to the righteous."

From this subject we may learn,

1. The great and universal rule of Christian obedience. It is to comply in all things, with the divine will; to go where he bids, and come when he calls; to abstain from what he prohibits, and to do what he enjoins. The sole question with each of us should be, the sole question with every real convert will be, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?"

2. The glory of divine grace, as a practical principle. You see, in the example of Paul, what it will prompt a man to undertake, and to achieve:—to some, to do all, to bear all, to sacrifice all—kindred, country, friends, yea life itself, for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

3. The best sphere of duty—that which God assigns, be it abroad or at home. We are poor judges of what is most eligible for us; and, if left to ourselves, would often mistake the scene, misapply the means, and mar the work. But should God, by the indications of his providence, or the suggestions of his Spirit, or the decisions of his servants, point out the place and seal the commission, if we comply with the intimation of his will, all will be well, and the best issues may be anticipated.

Lastly, The blessed consequences of simple devotedness in a servant of God. David, the stripling, advances with his sling and his pebble, and lo! Goliath falls, Moses approaches Pharaoh, armed only with a slender rod, and miracle after miracle confounds the monarch, desolates his realm, and leads on to the deliverance of Israel—Paul goes forth, all alone, to subdue the world to the obedience of the faith, and mark the result; his career is splendid, his

success unexampled—the world is shaken—the temples of idols tremble, and the Priests flee from the falling shrines—the sanctuary of Jehovah "the one living and true God" is erected upon their ruins—the banner of the cross waves in triumph every where, and the religion of Jesus becomes the religion of mankind.

My young brethren, I dare not bid you expect such amazing results of your mission and ministry as the great Apostle of the Gentiles attained; for ye are not inspired, ye have not the power of working miracles, and we cannot suppose that ye are equal to him in intelligence, in grace, or in eloquence. But if ye go forth to the work with a simple mind and a devoted heart, the Lord will be with you, and it is probable the issue shall far exceed your most sanguine expectations. And, arduous as your enterprise is, untoward and unpromising as in one of its departments it may appear, there are some circumstances connected with it, which I apprehend will tend, in no small degree, to facilitate your success.

The difficulties you have encountered, and the sacrifices you have made, to go over and help the distant strangers, will recommend to them the message you carry. One of you is about to sow the seed of the gospel on a new soil, "covered and manured by the forest leaves of ages—and on that account, as the ground is fresh, and inviting culture, it bids fairer for a large increase. Both of you are going from old to comparatively recent Institutions. Now, there is a vigour, and an elasticity, about young Communities as well as Individuals, which if rightly drawn forth, will powerfully aid their improvement. Our churches may be compared to old standard-trees or moss-grown stocks, which are not easily revived when reduced to a state of decay; whereas young trees shoot up quickly, push forth vigorously, and, if well dressed, bring forth fruit abundantly. Those who have long enjoyed a rich dispensation of the grace of God are apt to overlook its value, and to slight or spurn, both the message and the messengers; but they to whom it is new, and among whom it is comparatively rare, may be struck with amazement at its discoveries, or, at any rate, will be more likely to prize its possession, and to greet those who bring it with a cordial welcome. And, though your ministrations should not meet due acceptance, or be blessed with splendid success; is not the salvation of one sinner, be his estate or his

country what it may, more than a recompense for all the bereavements you can sustain, for all the dangers you can encounter; for all the toils you can undergo?"

Finally. My young friends, farewell. "Follow the Lord fully," and fear not that God will bring you to the land of which he has spoken to you. Abide by him, and he will stand by you. Act for him, and he will bless you. The Lord go forth with you, and preserve you. Whither can ye go from

his presence, or flee from his spirit. God is in that distant country to which ye are destined, and I trust you will find him there. "Depart, for God is sending you far hence to the Gentiles." And now, dear brethren, what can I say more? "The Lord bless you and keep you—the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you—the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace."—Amen and Amen.

FIDELITY TO CHRIST ENFORCED;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, JAMES' PLACE, EDINBURGH, ON THE EVENING OF SABBATH, 17TH FEBRUARY, 1833, AFTER THE DISPENSATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

By the Rev. ALEXANDER HARVEY,

Minister of the Relief Church, Calton, Glasgow.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."—Rev. ii. 10.

THE visions unfolded to our contemplation in this book of Sacred Prophecy, are of the most sublime and captivating description. The curtain which conceals futurity from human inspection, is lifted up, and the persecuted apostle in his lonely banishment has a magnificent disclosure made to him of what was to, be hereafter. The dispensations of providence, which relate to the Church, are minutely unfolded. The trials she would have to encounter, and the sea of tribulation through which she should have to pass before she should enter on her Millennial rest, are distinctly foretold. The revelation is not indeed given in plain language, but under the more striking form of hieroglyphical symbols. Like a panoramic exhibition, one scene after another comes in rapid succession into view, and one symbol after another arrests the attention of the astonished apostle till the revelation is complete; and each scene unveils a portion of the history of the Church till she is seen far in futurity completely triumphant over all her inveterate foes. Then the curtain drops. Divine revelation closes. The heavens are shut, never to be opened till the Son of Man shall come to judge the world in righteousness. The symbolic writing is not destroyed. It is in our hands. And it becomes us attentively, and in the exercise of fervent prayer to watch the evolution of events, under the firm conviction, that the amazing realities, of which

these were but the types, either have been, or shall be unfolded, on the theatre of the world.

The first scene in the vision exhibits the glorified Redeemer arrayed in all the overwhelming splendours of divine majesty, and walking in the "midst of the seven golden candlesticks." This attitude denotes the minute inspection he takes of his Church—the tender care he exercises over her—and the rightful claim he has to the supreme regard of every one of her members. The unrivalled dignity of the Saviour, and his high title to the supreme adorations of men and of angels, are demonstrated by the authority which he possesses over the visible and invisible worlds, the minute knowledge which he has of every circumstance connected with the personal history of the humblest of our race, and the awards of judgment, by which the changeless condition of every order of rational intelligences shall be fixed.

In the epistle to the Church in Smyrna, he describes himself as the "First and the Last," as he who "was dead and is alive." He assures her members, that he was well acquainted with their "works of faith and labours of love"—that he knew the sacrifices they had made for his sake—the violence with which they had been assailed by the emissaries of Satan—the bloody persecution they had endured—and the accumulating trials to which they would yet be

exposed. But, instead of shrinking back from the thickening conflict, he encourages them to hold fast their integrity, retain their courage, and dismiss their fears. And he urges them to unflinching steadfastness in the course on which they had entered, by the assurance of a glorious reward, and a splendid triumph at last. But he conceals from them none of the sufferings they might previously be called to endure. He assures them, that before they could hope to obtain the promised crown, they might expect increased hardships. The bloody sword would remain unsheathed. They might anticipate bonds and imprisonment, torture and death. As individuals, they might be called to seal their testimony with their blood, and as a Church, they might expect an extended term of tribulation; but amid all their sufferings, they were not to darken, by cowardice, their bright hopes for eternity. All their losses and pains would be much more than compensated by the successful issue of the conflict. How glorious to ascend to heaven from the scaffold of death to receive the martyr's crown!

You, my friends, are not exposed to the same severe trials, losses, and sufferings, for the sake of Christ, as the Church in Smyrna. But as the adherents of the "captain of salvation," you must endure hardships as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. While you are in the world, you will have to fight the battles of the Lord. The enemies of your souls are still as hostile to the spiritual welfare of the friends of Christ as ever, and as full of malignity against your glorious leader. Circumstances are indeed changed. The world is now more formidable in its smiles than in its frowns, and more destructive by its allurements than by its terrors. And Satan's policy is likewise different. Instead of appearing in all his native deformity to work on your fears with more cunning, he now puts on the garb of an angel of light. Instead of employing his agents to light up the burning pile, and use instruments of torture to appal the followers of the Lamb, and induce them through terror to apostatize, he rather endeavours to gain them over to his cause by flatteries. Still you "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." And while you maintain the same conflict, the same

inducements to fidelity are held out to you as those which cheered on the confessors of former ages. The promise is still sure—the reward is certain—the prize of immortality is still to be won—and the glorified Saviour is still saying to every one now present, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

These words contain,

I. A solemn exhortation, and

II. A gracious assurance.

Both of these topics claim our serious attention. And may the Spirit of all grace aid the speaker, and impress his hearers with a deep sense of the vast importance of the subject, that each of us may, during life, with ceaseless aim, seek after glory, honour, and immortality.

I. The SOLEMN EXHORTATION demands our consideration. "Be thou faithful unto death." Fidelity is the duty here enjoined. The meaning of the term is level to the understanding of every one, and therefore does not require any lengthened explanation. It has an obvious reference to the proper and conscientious discharge of every duty which we owe as moral, social, and responsible beings. So long as one incumbent, especially recognised duty is neglected, the claim to entire fidelity is forfeited. And in this unhappy condition every individual of our species is placed. But it is not in this extensive sense that we design to consider it in this discourse; but as descriptive of what the disciples of Christ owe to him as their Saviour and Lord. His claims to their fidelity are unalienable and just in themselves, but recognised to be so by those who assume his name, and solemnly profess their attachment to his person and cause. Viewing the exhortation as delivered by the glorified Redeemer to his followers, we remark,

1st. *That Christians are urged to fidelity in their professions of personal attachment to the Saviour.*—The claims which the Son of God has on the faithful adherence of all his followers, are so many and powerful, as to defy enumeration. The infinite glories of his divine person—the intrinsic, and manifested excellences of his mediatorial character—and the amazing undertaking which he executed for man's salvation, exhibit him to every believer in a light the most attractive and amiable. It is impossible for one who knows and feels that he has been rescued from impending destruction by the generous interposition of another to

refrain from cherishing towards his benevolent deliverer the most grateful emotions. And surely every sentiment of wonder and glowing attachment must rise to its highest exercise, when the redeemed sinner remembers the unparalleled love, and boundless compassion of Jesus to guilty men, and the striking proofs which he gave of these. When our race must have perished for ever, had he not interposed, he became their surety. He came forth from the bosom of his Father, where he was venerated and adored by all the heavenly hosts, and appeared on our earth in the "form of a servant." Though he had made the world and all its inhabitants, yet, when he came to it, he found no birthplace but a stable, and no cradle for his infant head but a manger. And he was not ignorant of the reception with which he would meet before he appeared among men. He knew that penury, toil, reproach, and persecution would be his constant attendants—that every obstruction which earth and hell could throw in his way to impede his benevolent enterprise must be encountered—that in the execution of his magnificent undertaking he would have to bear the ingratitude of men, and the attacks of devils—the fury of the powers of darkness, and the wrath of offended heaven—that in the fulfilment of his covenant engagement with his Father to save sinners, he must pass through scenes, and sufferings, and conflicts such as never were before exhibited, nor endured, and never shall be again. The sun suffered a miraculous eclipse to conceal the terrors of the hours during which Jesus hung suspended on the accursed tree. And the signals which announced the victory won, and salvation completed, were the loud voice of the expiring Saviour, exclaiming, "It is finished!" rending rocks, supernatural darkness, and a great earthquake. Now, all this was fully known to the Son of God before he entered on his mediatorial undertaking, or came on the benevolent errand of saving souls from the second death; and yet he willingly came, and pressed forward with a holy impatience to the hottest of the conflict, that he might overthrow, for ever, the enemies of our salvation, and work out for us an eternal deliverance. O! there is a grandeur and sublimity in the love of Jesus, harmoniously blending with all that is winning and attractive, which cannot be correctly appreciated without exciting in the believer a triumph

of the most pleasing, yet indefinable emotions. In the love of Christ, there is every thing which is best fitted to produce love in return. The vastness of its extent—its immeasurable depths—the intenseness of its regards—and the disinterestedness of its sacrifices, are well calculated to make the deepest impression on the soul of every Christian.

Now, my friends, you profess to have appreciated the character, the work, and the excellences of Christ, and to be influenced by love to him. You have avowed your attachment to him in the most solemn and public manner, and you are bound by every consideration of duty and consistency, habitually to act under the constraining influence of love to Christ. The pulse of this heavenly affection ought to beat strongly and steadily within you, so long as your heart retains its natural warmth. Your love to Jesus must not blaze like a meteor, but burn like the sun. No combination of external circumstances must quench the pure flame of heavenly affection to the Saviour. Providence may frown, friends may disclaim you, or like the leaves in Autumn, may drop into the grave—health may depart—the languor of disease and the fell grasp of death may paralyze your faculties, but whatever you may have to encounter from the attacks of enemies without, or suffer from within, endeavour never to allow the ardour of your love to cool. So long as it is in vigorous exercise, it will bear you up over every calamity. You will not hesitate to suffer for Him who did so much for you. Seek then to have your love fed with the holy oil of heavenly influence, that you "may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." Then shall you evince the reality and intenseness of your affection to your Saviour, and prove your fidelity to him. And as his love to you was not cooled by the indignities he endured, the agonies he suffered, or by the grave in which his sacred body for a while lay entombed; so "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

2d. The exhortation calls on Christians to be faithful in their adherence to all the doctrines of Revelation.—Correct views of divine truth are essential to the formation of the Christian character. "The truth" is the great instrument which the Holy Spirit employs in regenerating and perfecting believers, and for fitting them for the services and enjoyments of the blessed on high. Divine truth is the lamp of heaven, by which the dark soul is illuminated, and the footsteps of the Christian pilgrim directed in his way to the promised rest. The Bible is the mirror in which the moral deformity of our hearts is most strikingly reflected, and the beauty of holiness most attractively displayed. The doctrines of revelation well understood, and cordially believed, influence every spring of moral action, and give an impulse to right conduct. To insinuate error into the mind, is like casting poison into a fountain. The streams which issue from it become pestiferous, and impregnated with death.

It must be of vast importance, then, that you form accurate views of those doctrines which the Spirit of the living God has unfolded, and whose truth he has demonstrated by the most splendid miracles, and by other evidence no less satisfactory. To estimate lightly the worth of any truth taught in the Bible, is to betray an utter want of respect for the authority of Christ, and of fidelity to his cause. Those who would persuade you that you ought to attach no importance to the articles of your creed, provided you keep strict watch over your conduct, are to be avoided as poisoners of the very springs of moral action. They do every thing in their power to infuse into the soul, one of the most certain elements of spiritual death. Their own crude opinion, when once embraced as a practical principle, proves fatal to all correct morality. It is indeed possible for a man of bad principles, occasionally to do an outwardly good action, but it is impossible that it can be so estimated by the Searcher of hearts. Though thousands of his fellows applaud, the righteous judge will condemn him. But as a general maxim it holds true, that as a tree is known by its fruits, so are a man's principles by his conduct, and the converse of this statement is equally certain. Be not then indifferent to any one doctrine of revelation. Hold fast the form of sound words, which are contained in the oracles of truth; contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the

saints. You cannot surrender the smallest portion of divine truth, without hazard to your spiritual welfare. And if through ignorance or unbelief, you neglect, overlook, or abandon, any of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, the consequences may be awfully fatal. You must not shape your religious principles by the prevailing opinions of the world, but by the word of God. To give up in complacency to the enemies of Christianity, or in courtesy to the spurious liberality of the age, any of the doctrines of the gospel, is to prove a traitor to Christ. You must be decided in your adherence to every truth contained in the Bible, and determined to hold it fast though you should stand alone. Consistency, safety, and fidelity, require this of you—you must never be ashamed even of those doctrines against which the wit of the scoffer, the reasonings of the rationalist, and the contempt of the profane are most bitterly directed. You must take your stand at the foot of the cross, grasp it as the standard around which you must valiantly fight, and take as your war-cry the words of inspiration, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

The text calls on Christians,

3d. To be faithful in maintaining the royal authority of the Saviour, and his Headship over his Church.—Jesus was foretold by the prophet, as a priest on his throne, intimating very forcibly that he would unite in himself the offices of a king and of a priest; that while he would come in all the meekness of a lamb to be slain, and in all the compassion of our great High Priest, to offer up himself a sacrifice, and to bear the infirmities of his people, he would come likewise in all the majesty and authority of a king to legislate for his church, and to throw over her the shield of his own omnipotent protection. These laws are contained in the Bible, which is the only statute book of the church. They are plain, perfect, and easily understood. They are of universal obligation, and bind as firmly the greatest monarch on earth, as the lowliest individual. Every man is commanded to study them for himself, and to judge for himself. The commands—prove all things—hold fast that which is good—let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind—are addressed indiscriminately to all to whom revelation comes. No man, nor class of

men—no counsel, assembly, or parliament, can, without daring arrogance, issue an authoritative interpretation of any passage of Sacred Scripture, and enforce it upon the conscience of another. To your own Master you must stand or fall—every one of you must give an account of himself to God. One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.

But though these statements are as reasonable as they are scriptural, they have been sadly overlooked, both by individuals and churches. The authority of Christ has been set aside by human enactments, and the sacred territory of conscience invaded. His own blood-bought church has been torn from under his own almighty protection, and put under the patronage of man, whose breath is in his nostrils. The wall of fire which the Redeemer has reared around his own Zion, is not deemed sufficient for her safety, but the visible arm of earthly power is sought as a substitute. As the sworn subjects of the Prince of Peace, you are bound to vindicate his insulted honour, and assert the Supreme authority of your King. It is treason to Jesus to allow a usurper to enter his sacred province, and dispute with him his authority, or claim an homage which is exclusively his due.

The conduct of all the worthies of former generations, loudly calls on you to imitate their heroic example. The cruel threatening of an arbitrary despot—the alluring influence of voluptuous music—the showy pomps of an idolatrous worship—the prostrate knees of sycophantish multitudes—the burning fiery furnace, seven times heated, combining, as they did, all that is alluring on the one hand, and appalling on the other, could not shake the courage of the Hebrew youths, nor secure their ignoble compliance with what they regarded as sinful. Daniel chose to be cast into the lions' den, brave the loss of worldly honour, and encounter the rage of a despotic king, rather than offend his God, and wound his conscience. Reverence for the royal authority of Jesus, led many, in former days, to the scaffold and the stake. Scotland, too, has had her martyrs in the same noble cause. Our natal soil has been watered with sainted blood. The individuals, who call it their own, and claim kindred with those who resisted every human encroachment on the authority of Christ, and yet tamely surrender their religious liberties, and allow men to legis-

late for the church, dishonour the cause with which they claim alliance, and are traitors to the Saviour. Whatever then it may cost you, maintain the exclusive authority of Christ over his Church, and over the consciences of his followers. "Be faithful unto death."

But, your loyalty to Christ must not stop here. While you contend for his prerogatives, you must yield yourselves up wholly to his service. He has instituted ordinances to be observed, and given laws to be obeyed. His authority attaches alike to every one of them. To neglect the one or disobey the other, is to forfeit all claim to the character of a Christian, and to incur his righteous displeasure. His will must be your rule—his glory your end—his ordinances your delight—his favour your life, and his smile your heaven. Then, when he comes, bringing his reward with him, to give to every man according as his work shall be, he will say of you, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

The exhortation requires you,

4th. To be faithful in paying your solemn vows.—Many of you have come under the most solemn obligations to devote yourselves to the service of God. His vows are upon you. They are registered in the Book of his Remembrance, and you never can deface the record, or recall the sacred transaction. It shall remain indelible till it be exhibited before an assembled universe, and read in the hearing of countless multitudes. Whatever may have been the character of these transactions, whether in the shape of resolutions, promises, subscribing with the hand unto the Lord, or seating yourselves at the communion table, they are for ever binding upon you. Whensoever they may have been made—whether when you were first awakened to see your guilt and danger as a sinner, or when the earthly house of your tabernacle seemed dissolving, and you had the near prospect of becoming an inhabitant of eternity, or when surrounding the sacramental board, with the affecting symbols of a crucified Saviour in your hands, or when your hearts burned within you for benefits received, and mercies enjoyed; it matters not what may have been the time or circumstances in which you vowed to be the Lord's; his claim to your services is

unquestionable. You cannot set it aside. You are bound to glorify him in your bodies and your spirits, which are his.

Give up, then, my dear friends, the sins you vowed to forsake—abandon the company you resolved to shun—whatever sacrifice this may cost you, do not hesitate for one moment to make it—present pleasure, secular advantage, worldly friendships are less than nothing when put in the balance with the salvation of the soul. Give yourselves cheerfully to the work of the Lord—enter with holy ardour and stern resolution on that course which appeared to you so desirable from a Communion Table or the borders of Eternity; let your language be, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

But if you in opposition to all your engagements and professions, abandon the Saviour's cause, how dreadful must be your eternal condition, and how terrible your doom! Does it not now make your blood run cold and stagnate at your heart, to conceive it possible, that instead of rising from your graves with joy, to join the myriads thronging to take their place on the right hand of the Judge, you may be called out of your prison-house to be dragged as a perjured traitor to receive the condemnation you have merited; and instead of obtaining the crown of life as the reward of fidelity, to be given over into the custody of death and hell, to be tormented for ever with the devil and his angels as a cowardly deserter from the cause you had sworn to defend.

The text commands you

5th. To be faithful unto death.—When you made a profession of religion, and enlisted into the army of the Captain of Salvation, it was not for a short campaign but for life. Having put on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are henceforth to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness—having set out in your way to heaven, you are not so much as to look back; you are to press on towards the mark for the prize

of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. You are not to use your religion as you do your Sabbath attire. It must be worn as your habitual garb—you must be clothed with it. Alas! there are many who make a profession of religion who are utterly ignorant of its great principles, and have never felt its sanctifying power; they put on a profession as an upper garment to cover the native deformity of an unregenerated heart, and to impose on their fellow-men. Hence it is that so many apostatize—they did not count the cost before they entered on their undertaking, and they are not able to finish. So inadequate are their conceptions of the real excellency and vast importance of religion, that they will not surrender a single temporary gratification to secure the eternity of glory which it promises.

It is vastly different, however, with the genuine Christian: he knows the truth, feels the power and experiences the joys of religion; his attachment to it strengthens with time, and the more he knows of it the higher does he value it; it incorporates all its benign influences with every faculty of his soul, and deepens the features of its own lovely image on his heart. The service of Christ is to him more delightful than all the vanities of the world. Rather than desert the cause of Christ, he would cheerfully suffer the loss of all things. It is the power of religion and the presence of the Saviour that throws the serenity of heaven over the martyr's countenance amid the fellest blasts of persecution—the keenest tortures of the rack—the hottest flames at the stake—and the most cruel death. The same holy influences support the dying saint under the gathering infirmities of decaying nature and the struggles of dissolution. His pains increase—his strength sinks—his eye closes—his grasp of love relaxes—his pulse stops—his breath departs—the dews of death are on his clay-cold cheek, but his sainted spirit as it fled left fixed on his pale countenance the image of peace, and took its flight attended by ministering angels into heaven to receive “the crown of life.”

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, A.M., Edinburgh.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN BRUCE, Edinburgh.

FIDELITY TO CHRIST ENFORCED ;

Preached by the Rev. ALEXANDER HARVEY.—Continued.

II. ATTEND NOW TO THE GRACIOUS ASSURANCE.

“I will give you a crown of life.”

Here notice,

1st. *The gift*—“A crown of life.” A crown is the highest object of earthly ambition, and the possession of it the loftiest pinnacle of worldly glory—to obtain it, no toils, struggles, or sacrifices are deemed too great. Rivers of human blood have flowed in the cause of ambition, and in forcing a way to a throne—and after its honours were secured, how transitory its possession, and harassing its cares. The glories, which dazzled at a distance like the lovely hues of the rainbow, vanish when grasped like the meteor which emits a temporary flash, and is then quenched for ever. And yet with what breathless eagerness and incessant toil are such honours sought by the children of men? The competitor in the games of ancient Greece submitted to a long period of previous training, before he presented himself as a candidate for the laurel crown by which the conqueror was to be rewarded in the presence of applauding thousands of his countrymen. But between this crown of life and all the glory and honour of this earth, there is no comparison. As eternity surpasses time, as heaven transcends earth, so does the celestial crown which the Saviour shall place on the heads of all his faithful followers in the midst of an assembled universe.

It is a crown of life, and this is indicative of the pure, lofty, and endless enjoyments to which it introduces. It is when the struggles of mortality are over, and the conflict with corruption, and all the enemies of your spiritual welfare are over, that this supreme felicity shall be obtained. Escaped from the wreck of a decaying body, your immortal spirit shall be the eternal inhabitant of a deathless world. You shall appear as one among the countless myriads who shall surround the throne of the Lamb, wearing

crowns of life as brilliant and unfading as your own. When a few earthly monarchs meet to deliberate on the destinies of nations, how do the chroniclers of this world's transactions summon up all their powers of description and of flattery to magnify the importance of the rare occurrence—but the vastest assembly on earth, the most splendid concourse of the monarchs of earth, dwindle into utter insignificance when compared to the meeting of all the ransomed of the Lord in heaven—every saint shall have in his hand a palm of victory, in his mouth a song of triumph, and on his head a crown of life. Contemplate through the medium of prophecy the multitude, which no man can number, arrayed in white robes, and listen to their lofty song. With united voice, they sing unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and to his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

Meditate

2d. *On the glorious giver*—It is Christ who is to bestow the crown of life. Those who are to wear it, have not won it by their own prowess, obtained it by their own merit, or inherited it by their natural birth. It is given freely by Him, by whose blood it was secured, and by whose munificence it is bestowed. What shall be the emotions of the Redeemed, when they receive this inestimable gift from Him who created the heavens, formed the earth, and gave life to every order of animated being. How shall their hearts glow with unutterable emotions when this royal diadem of immortality shall be placed on their heads by him, whose toilsome life, and excruciating death procured it for them! With one simultaneous burst of gratitude shall they cry, “Thou hast made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign with thee. It is beyond the power of imagination to conceive, now they shall feel when those hands still bear-

ing the print of the nails, by which he was fixed to the accursed tree, shall hold out the crown of life as the glorious token of his victory for them, and of their victory through him. When "on the cross, he spoiled principalities, and powers, making a show of them openly; and when he vanquished death, and him that hath the power of death, that is the devil." Eternity will seem too short to show forth all his praise.

Reflect,

3d, On the solemn period at which this crown shall be bestowed. The text directs forward our expectations to the solemn period of dissolution when this reward shall be obtained. This advantage is peculiar to Christianity. There are many circumstances associated in our minds with death, which renders it truly appalling. The pains, the griefs, the dying conflict, the shroud, the coffin, the dark grave, and the consequent corruption. The very thought of being torn from this warm and living world—from kind friends, and endeared companions, rends the heart. But the bright prospects unfolded in the gospel to the departing Christian, reconciles him to all these, and secures for him a glorious victory over the king of terrors. At death the conquering hero lays down his crown, and leaves all his worldly glory behind him. He has no communion with those who herald his praise, sculpture on his tomb the paltry symbols of royalty, and with these emblems of rule distinguish the place which keeps a monarch's dust from the mass of mankind, who tenant with him the regions of the dead. But, at death the Christian triumphs. Then he puts off his armour and receives his crown. His conflicts terminate, his enemies are for ever defeated, and death has swallowed up in victory. Instead of death killing the immortal inhabitant, he has merely pulled down the frail tabernacle in which it was imprisoned, and allowed it to escape to glory, honour, and immortality. When we remember that it is the deathless spirit that thinks, feels, and enjoys, we are in some measure prepared to imagine the happy and glorious transition which takes place when a redeemed soul passes from time into eternity, leaves an emaciated and putrescent body to dwell with kindred spirits; and is severed from weeping friends to behold the face of Jesus. How great its transport, when the music of

heaven, the songs of angels, and the glories of eternity burst on its enraptured ears and astonished vision, and when it makes its first attempt to join in harmony with the countless throng, who are celebrating the triumphs of redeeming love.

But, the crown of life shall be given in a more solemn and public manner to every believer at the resurrection of the just. The transactions of the day of judgment shall be awfully and inconceivably grand. Imagination staggers under the load of magnificent images, by which its dread occurrences are represented in Scripture. When the last sand has dropt from the hour-glass of time, then shall the whole system of nature begin to give way. The sun shall grow dim, the moon become as blood, the stars be quenched by the brilliancy of a more glorious light. The vaulted arch of heaven shall open, and the mighty Judge appear in his own glory, in the glory of his Father, and attended by all his angels. The archangel shall herald his approach, and blow the trumpet, which shall announce the commencement of the last assize. Then shall the throne of judgment be set, and the books be opened. The graves shall give up the dead that are in them, and the sea the dead that are in it. Then the living shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and all the generations of men shall meet in one vast assembly, in the presence of faithful and fallen angels, to receive their changeless doom. Methinks I see the great white throne—the universal Judge—the mighty throng; there you shall stand—there I must appear. At that dread tribunal, we must meet face to face, and give an account of all our privileges, and of this evening's service. Then the sentence shall be pronounced, which shall never be removed. Hear it, ye faithful followers of the Lamb, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then shall ye receive the crown of life, and be admitted into eternal glory. Hear it ye neglectors of the great salvation, and tremble at your awful doom. "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." "Then shall the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." Then an eternal order of things shall commence. Hell shall remain to be

the prisonhouse, in which the ungodly shall be tormented for ever with the devil and his angels. Heaven shall remain to be the endless habitation of the righteous, when they shall dwell with Jesus, and all holy beings, and cast their crowns at the feet of him, whose death saved them, and sing without ceasing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing—salvation be to the Lamb that was slain."

In conclusion, I call on you to continue faithful to Jesus in defiance of every opposition, even unto death. Every motive which is fitted to operate on a rational being, is presented to you in the word of God. The Bible speaks to your hopes, and to your hearts, to your desire of happiness, and your dread of suffering, to your hope of heaven, and your horror of hell. Oh! could I secure for you a repetition of

that vision which John saw when in banishment for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus, it would produce a powerful impression on your mind. Were the heavens now to open, and disclose the glories of its inhabitants, their number, their songs, their palms, and their crowns, how would you long to join their company, and share their blessedness. These objects you cannot see by the eye of sense, but faith can penetrate within the veil, and realize all the visions recorded in this Book. While you read it in the exercise of faith you hear their lofty anthems, you behold their glory, you listen to their welcomes. And the voice of the glorified Redeemer falls on your ear, and rouses all your dormant energies. Your failing courage is revived, and your staggering purpose is confirmed. You hear him saying, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Amen.

CHRISTIAN HUMILIATION ;

A FAST-DAY SERMON, PREACHED ON THE 4TH APRIL, 1833, IN ST. DAVID'S CHURCH, GLASGOW,

By the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, A.M.,

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"And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."—EZEK. ix. 4.

JERUSALEM, at the period when this intelligence was given, was surrounded by the armies of the Chaldeans, and this once privileged, but now devoted city was given up by God to their power. Having trampled upon the high advantages which they were privileged to enjoy, having refused to listen to God's counsels, and expostulations, and reasonings, and reproofs, the command was now given forth ; "Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand." The command was given by Jehovah, "Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women." There was, however, even at this period, a remnant in that city who were to be spared. There were those, who, instead of going along with the prevailing current of iniquity, sighed and cried, because of the prevailing abominations ; and these were the objects of Jehovah's special attachment, the objects of his peculiar delight, and at the very time that the injunction was given to "slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children,"

there was a provision made for the safety of these individuals, who did thus protest against the wickedness that prevailed. Jehovah, we read at the conclusion of the third verse, "called to the man," to whom there is particular reference in the preceding verse, "clothed with linen, who had the writer's ink-horn by his side, and said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." And then we find at the sixth verse, that where there was the command given, "Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women," yet it is added, "Come not near any man upon whom is the mark." In this manner does God teach the importance of humiliation and prayer, the importance of those exercises, to which we this day are in a peculiar manner called. He teaches us the high advantage connected with these exercises both as respects the life that now is, and that which is to come ; and what I there-

fore propose, in a dependence on his grace and strength, is, in the first place, to direct your attention to some of the grounds we have for humiliation before God, for sighing and crying, because of iniquity; in the second place, to the mark by which all who do thus sigh and cry, are distinguished from their fellow-men around them; and in the third place, to the benefits, to the salvation, that shall be enjoyed by all who have this mark.

God is entitled to the love and service which he receives from us. He made us, and in requiring that we should devote those powers and faculties with which he has endowed us, to himself and to his service, he only requires that property which is his own, and which should be employed in a way that is agreeable to the great Author and owner of that property. Jehovah is also infinitely worthy of the supreme love and devoted obedience of his people. He is possessed of every possible perfection—he is distinguished by every moral excellence in a degree that is infinite. The angels, from the first moment of their existence, have been engaged in the investigation of Jehovah's attributes, in the contemplation of the extent in which these moral perfections exist within his breast, but they have not yet been, and never throughout all eternity shall be, able to find him out unto perfection. God has also been exceedingly kind to us. He has heaped upon us unnumbered benefits. He supplies our daily, our hourly, wants, and he has not only made provision for us in time, but at the expense of his own Son's life, he has provided also for our eternal happiness. He tenders to us the forgiveness of our sins—the sanctification of our hearts—the sweets of his friendship—and a blessedness that is for ever more. And besides all this, the service to which God calls us is not only obedience to which he has a right, but it is also obedience of a kind that is calculated to confer upon those who render it, the highest degree of satisfaction. The law of God is pronounced in the Bible to be not only right, not only pure, not only perfect, but its statutes are declared to be sweeter than honey and the honey-comb; the ways of wisdom are pronounced to be the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be paths of peace. This then being the case, this the relation in which we stand to God, these the benefits we have received at his hand, this

the nature and character of the service he demands from us, how utterly inexcusable on our part, any kind, any degree, of transgression? How heinous is even one sin? One transgression is directly opposed to the nature of his kingdom. It tramples upon his authority—it lifts up a testimony against the excellence of his law—it requites his kindness with ingratitude—it sets at nought his threatenings—it expresses disregard to all those promises which he has been pleased to annex to obedience. This is the character of even one transgression, this is the heinousness by which even one sin is characterized. Thus, my brethren, then, have we ample grounds of humiliation were we this day chargeable in the sight of God, with having only once deviated from the moral path of God. But, oh! how often have we wandered from it! Never once have we given to God the holy sense of love he is entitled to receive at our hands. Every moment of our conscious or waking existence, we have been guilty of coming short of what it was our imperious duty to have rendered. In this sense we may adopt the words of St. Paul when he declared, that “in all things we offend and come short of the glory of God.” But besides these shortcomings which have been thus innumerable, oh! how numerous, and also how aggravated our actual positive transgressions! My friends, I have not enumerated them; you cannot enumerate them; you cannot call them all even to remembrance; myriads of them have escaped your recollection; but oh! forget not that Jehovah could in the twinkling of an eye set them all in array against you, could present them before you in all their aggravations. And oh! seek to enter into the spirit and temper of mind that characterized the individuals of whom in the words of my text we have an account. Instead of hardening yourselves upon the subject of your sins, instead of thinking of sin as a light or trivial matter, instead of going in search of excuses and palliations for your sins, seek to be acquainted with them in the whole extent of their vileness, seek to view them as God views them, seek that *your* sentiments and *Jehovah's* sentiments upon this point should be both at one, and seek not only conviction upon this point, but the impression that conviction ought to give. Seek, oh! seek the contrition, the humiliation of soul, which a sense of sin

ought to inspire. But you will observe, that the individuals to whom our attention is here directed, were not only humbled on account of their own sins—they not only sighed and cried because of the abominations with which they were themselves chargeable, but they sighed and cried because of the abominations that prevailed around them. “Go through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” And, my brethren, have we not ample cause of humiliation upon this ground also? There is no one acquainted with his own heart, but must be sensible that much iniquity dwells there. There is no one who reflects with candour and discrimination upon his past life, but must be sensible, that what he has done which he ought not to have done, and what he has left undone which he ought to have attended to, should this day lead him to adopt the language of God’s ancient servant, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” But besides iniquities within, do not iniquities also prevail around us, of a very heinous and aggravated character; iniquities in a high degree insulting to the name of God; iniquities in a high degree calculated, if we would have the Lord’s indignation averted, and if we would be distinguished by the state of mind with which such prevailing iniquities should be contemplated by us all, to lead us to sigh and cry because of them?

Lying is a sin of great magnitude in God’s estimation. It was by a lie, by a lie of Satan, that sin was first introduced into our world. It was a lie that brought leprosy upon Gehazi. It was a lie that brought sudden death upon Ananias and Sapphira; and it was a lie that brought calamity upon the Israelitish nation of old. This you will find by turning to the Prophecies of Jeremiah, 9th chapter, at the 3d verse—“They bend their tongues like their bow for lies; but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth: for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves

to commit iniquity. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord.” And mark what follows, verse 7.—“Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them.” And then at the 9th verse,—“Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” These are God’s sentiments respecting lying—these are the judgments of which this sin has, in time past, been the effect. Oh! to what an extent does this terrible crime prevail in the midst of us! How much of it is in the ordinary intercourse of life? To say nothing at all of the higher departments of commerce, the deceit, the imposition that prevails there; how much is there of positive lying in the simple, ordinary transactions of buying and selling—how much of exaggeration on the one hand—how much of depreciation on the other—how much effort, on the part of the seller, to attach to the article qualities that do not belong to it—how much, on the part of the buyer, to deny those which it really possesses?

Sabbath-breaking is a sin of great magnitude in the sight of God. The Sabbath-day was an institution in Paradise. It was first appointed in the garden of Eden. The Lord, when he made all things in six days, rested on the seventh, and thus, by his example, enforced and recommended the observance of the Sabbath-day. The Sabbath was again enjoined amidst the thunderings and lightnings of mount Sinai. The Sabbath ought to be peculiarly endeared to us, who are under the dispensation of the gospel, because it is not only the completion of the work of creation but of redemption—the commemoration of Jesus Christ rising from the grave—the day when he himself was pleased to meet with his disciples, to come into the midst of them, to breathe upon them, and to say, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” The Sabbath is an ordinance teeming with unspeakable and invaluable benefits to the race of men. It gives a day of rest to the poor which they would not otherwise enjoy. It gives opportunities of instruction to those who would otherwise have no means of acquiring it, and, beyond all question, there are many, many souls now happy, blessed by God, remembering the time when they wandered from God and from happiness, and remembering, at the same time, the

Sabbaths when they repaired to the sanctuary and there heard the word that was made effectual to the conversion of their souls. How atrocious, then, the sin of breaking the Lord's Sabbath! We may learn its atrocity from a passage of Scripture in the book from which the words of my text are taken, the 20th chapter of Ezekiel, at the 24th verse. "Because," says the Lord, "they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my Sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live. And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord." To what an extent does this sin exist? How much is there of Sabbath idleness? How much is there of Sabbath visiting? How much is there of positive Sabbath desecration? Oh! is it not the case, even among ourselves, on the Lord's Sabbath, that business is carried on, respecting which Jehovah has commanded, that not only we ourselves, but our children, our servants, and the cattle within our gates, shall rest from their labour.

Drunkenness is a sin of great aggravation in God's sight. The drunkard not only shows his disregard for God, but tramples upon those blessings that distinguish him from the brutes that perish—upon the blessing of possessing a rational and intellectual nature; he tramples upon those distinctions that exist between himself and the brutes, reducing himself to a situation that must be pronounced inferior even to theirs—and not only pursues a line of conduct that is ruinous to the soul, but is most detrimental even to the constitution. He exposes himself to the charge of a double suicide—the murder of his soul and the murder of his body. What are the judgments God declares shall result from drunkenness? What are the judgments he has unfolded, as having already, in time past, resulted from it? You will find these by turning to the Prophecies of Isaiah, the 5th chapter, at the 11th verse. "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, are in

their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it." We have only to go forth upon our streets—we have only to open our eyes upon the scenes that are every day exhibited, to be sensible that we are greatly indebted to the forbearance of the living God for refraining to inflict judgments, because of this most debasing crime.

Profane swearing is a sin, in the sight of God, of great abomination. The man who steals, contemplates some advantage as likely to result from his crime—the man who lies does the same with regard to his crime—the man who, in commercial transactions, deceives his neighbour, does the same with regard to his crime, but the blasphemer employs one of the noblest gifts with which God has endowed him, the gift of speech, in blaspheming the very Author of it; and he does this again and again, reaping no benefit from it. And, in proof of God's sentiment regarding this sin, let me only remind you of the short declaration in the Bible, "Because of swearing the land mourneth, the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up."

Uncleanness is a sin in the sight of God, of great abomination. This is the instrument, from year to year, of sending myriads out of this world to graves of infamy, to the blackness of darkness. In reference to this sin, as well as to some others we have been adverting to, read the testimony of God in the Prophecy of Hosea, 4th chap., from the beginning: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away."

In the last place, the abuse of Christian

privileges—living in the midst of such advantages, but, instead of improving them, neglecting them, or positively resisting the influence which they are calculated to serve, is also spoken of in the Bible as a sin of great heinousness in the sight of God, and which, in a very special manner, exposes to Jehovah's judgments. In proof of this, read the address of God to the Israelites, recorded in the 5th chap. of the Prophecies of Isaiah, at the 3d verse. "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes. And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it."

These are all abominations in the sight of God. Were it the case that only one of them could be proved to prevail, the thought of the prevalence of that one ought to send us all to our Bible, ought to lead us to sigh and cry because of such abomination. But, when we think that those sins, every one of which, in time past, has brought down Jehovah's judgments, do now, one and all of them prevail, oh! how much need have we to sigh and cry because of the abominations that are around us!

II. But, in the second place, there was a mark to be put upon all that sighed and cried in Jerusalem, in consequence of which, there was not to be a possibility of mistake respecting them as distinguished from the other inhabitants of that city. It is not less true, however little it may be thought of, that a mark equally distinguishing and characteristic, is still stamped upon every child of God. Yes. And oh! mark what will be capable of distinguishing these children on the great and final day. They have the impress of God's own image upon their character—they have those moral lineaments of character stamped upon them, by which God himself is distinguished—they are thus marked as Jehovah's property, as in a very peculiar and special manner his own; and, regarding all such, it may unhesitatingly be affirmed, that because of prevailing abomina-

tions, they sigh and cry. Although we were only to take one of the words, "crying," and consider it as referring to prayer, we should unhesitatingly say that each man of prayer, every individual, without exception, who really and truly gives himself to this exercise, has the mark, the distinguishing mark, which consists in the impress of God. But, it may be asked, do not many, perhaps the majority, in a Christian land pray? We say, no. They do not pray in the sense in which the Bible speaks of prayer. They do not pray in the sense in which that exercise is admirably defined in the well known compilation, where it is spoken of as "an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." It is by no means my intention to enter largely into that definition. I shall only take the commencing part, "Prayer is the offering up of our desires." Here at once we come to a feature of prayer that is quite characteristic. There are many whose prayers consist of the mere utterance of words, not at all of the offering up of desires. They enter into their closets—they shut their doors—they fall upon their knees—they give utterance to the language of adoration, of confession, of supplication, of thanksgiving; but all the while, where are their hearts—where are their desires—what is it they are longing after—what are the blessings which really and truly they are desirous to receive? All the while their thoughts are on the mountains of vanity. Nay, not only is it the case that multitudes of those who go through forms of prayer, have no accordance with the petitions, the supplications to which they give utterance, but the desires of their hearts are at complete variance with the utterance of their lips. They really do not wish for the bestowment of that which their lips express. How true is this with regard to the petition to be saved from sin? No man goes on his knees that gives not utterance to this prayer; but how many are found day after day on their knees, while instead of being desirous of deliverance from sin, they are desirous that it shall be rolled as a sweet morsel under their tongue? Oh! if so, their prayers are cursed—they profess adoration, supreme adoration to God, but they adore him not. They profess humiliation because of sin; but they show that they have no such feel-

ing by loving sin and still practising it. They seek deliverance from sin, and probably their very first act, after the scene of prayer is over, is to betake themselves to their former ways. We say then, that the men who cry, and pray, and humble themselves in the dust, not in form, not in hypocrisy, but in deed, and in sincerity, and in truth, in the sight of God, the men who are really and truly desirous of being delivered from sin, and from all sin, have the mark. And in prayer we join humiliation, because of sin. This, of course, implies right views of its enormity, desire of deliverance from it—not only desire of personal deliverance, but desire for deliverance from sin being the privilege of our fellow-members. Sighing and crying, because of prevailing abominations, is here spoken of, as indicative, as it undoubtedly is, of a saving work of the Spirit of God upon the human heart. It may be unhesitatingly affirmed, that every man who does thus in sincerity sigh and cry because of prevailing abominations, has in God's sight the distinguished characteristic mark that proves him to be God's, and separates him from a world lying in wickedness. What then was the advantage that resulted from possessing this mark? Slay, utterly, old and young, both maids and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark." From this interesting period, a salvation was wrought out for God's people, and at many other periods have they who had the mark, by sighing and crying, been saved even in a temporal sense, while myriads around them have been overtaken with judgments. It was so with Lot; it was so with Noah and his family; it was so at the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah; it was so at the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Those who showed themselves on the Lord's side were saved. It was so on the night of Egypt's calamity. "Then Pharaoh rose up in the night, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt: for there was not a house where there was not one dead." But the blood sprinkled over the houses of the Lord's servants protected *them*—pestilence was in their dwellings; yet not one of them was slain. It was so at the final destruction of Jerusalem. Awful were the judgments at that time, so awful that it is computed by a Jewish historian, that upwards of eleven hundred thousand were

slain, some by the sword, some by fire, some by the violence of their fellow citizens; but the little flock, the men that had the mark, the disciples of the Redeemer, had been forewarned to flee to the mountains, and there, history informs us, they were made the objects of God's protection. And still even in this view, oh! how desirous that we should seek to have the spirit that is here adverted to by the Lord! Is calamity at any great distance from *us*? Are there no threatening clouds lowering above *us*? Have *we* no lesson actually given upon the subject of Jehovah's vengeance? Have we not heard of the forebodings of a war, that is to be a war of opinion. Are there not signs in the Sun, and in the Moon, and in the Stars, by which, you are probably aware, we are to understand regal and imperial governments? Are not the sea and the waves roaring, by which we are to understand popular tumults and commotions? Has there not been pestilence already on the earth? And shall we hear of God's protecting care of his people, of his command to them to enter into the chambers of his promises, to hide themselves in the secret of his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle to hide themselves, and not feel how incumbent it is upon us to cast in our lot among this people, and, instead of going along with prevailing wickedness, to separate ourselves from it, to protest against it, and to show by our elioice that we abhor it? The destruction of the world by the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of Jerusalem—all these may be regarded as only so many emblems of a day that is yet to come, a day that is fast approaching, a day in which the inhabitants of the universe are to be assembled together, a day when we are all to be alive at the opening of the book of judgment and the establishing of God's throne in the heavens, and when the scrutinizing eye of the Eternal is to be fixed upon every individual—but a day in which all who have the mark shall be saved, a day in which all who have the impress of God's image stamped upon them shall be secure, peaceful, tranquil, full of the anticipation of the joy that is at His right hand—and when, with respect to those who have not the mark, the command shall be given, Go forth among them, whatever they may be, bind them hand and foot, cast them into that lake that burneth for ever and ever.

Let us ask, then, how is it with us? Have we the mark, or have we it not? Is there an individual within my hearing, who has it not? Is there an individual, who, so far from seeking to be distinguished by it, is going on from day to day in the commission of sins, which we are called to avoid, and, therefore, because of which, we ought to humble ourselves before God? Oh! I would say to that individual, that that hour of amazement, when the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah saw the heavens gathering blackness above their heads, the fiery flame issuing forth from the clouds, and bringing destruction upon their wives, and children, and neighbours, and all around them, is nothing to be compared with that which awaits you. And oh! would that, forsaking your sins, you would remember the words, and follow the command; "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed." And if thou hast any other

in the city besides thee, sons-in-law, or daughters, bring them out hence along with you. Oh! then miserable indeed must it be to experience the infliction of the wrath of God, miserable to be treasuring up this wrath against the day of wrath, and miserable to be injuring those around you—for the man who perseveres in a course of wickedness, is a curse to himself, a curse to his neighbour, a curse to the community where he resides, a curse to the nation in which his lot is cast. He adds something to the amount of that moral wickedness that tends to provoke the indignation of God. Seek then the Lord. Go to the blood that can take your present defilement from you, and clothe you with all the beauties of holiness. And oh! seek every day to increase in resemblance to Christ, every day to advance in all those principles, features, and characters, that will make you at last meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Amen.

THE DUTY OF GLORIFYING GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED

By the Rev. JOHN BRUCE,

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"What! Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."—1 COR. vi. 19, 20.

MY friends, seeing an Apostle introducing, as St. Paul does, an argument with such awful considerations as these to induce us to glorify God, one might be apt, at first sight, to imagine that it was at least no uncommon thing for men to account the service of God, neither a privilege nor a duty. But to be convinced that it is otherwise, to be satisfied that there exists, by nature, in almost every man's bosom, a strong sense of the duty and blessedness of serving God after all, you need only bring yourselves to consider, how almost any man would feel, supposing that instead of this command and injunction to glorify God, there were addressed to him this day, an intimation, that God will no longer suffer or permit him to do so. Imagine just to yourselves, that in place of addressing to you this solemn command to glorify and serve your Maker, we had come out to address to this whole congregation a prohibition so to do; would you think that you had lost nothing?—Is there so much as one man among you that would think he had lost nothing, in being sent home this day with so distinct a dismissal from the service of God? Were God to declare to

any of us, as of old he declared by the Prophet, "I have no pleasure in you, neither will I accept an offering at your hand," and again by the Psalmist, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, that thou shouldest take my covenant, in thy mouth."—Is it not morally certain, that, besides the fear of punishment and of inevitable death, there would be laid upon us a most weighty sense of disgrace and degradation, forcing us to regard ourselves as infamous in the universe of God, as dismal outcasts, like Cain, from the paradise of God? How humbling and reproachful then to think that we need to be reasoned with by such mighty considerations, to be diligent, and true to that service, which, nevertheless, I see it is quite natural for us to regard as a thing essential to, and inseparable from, our well-being! I wish you to see to what a state of corruptness our nature has got down, when, instead of its being enough to appeal to man's natural conscience, charging him to consider that he is not at all his own, but that the God who made him claims him as his own, that instead of its being enough to appeal to a man's conscience by

the argument of his Maker owning him as his property, you can make nothing of him at all without shifting that argument upon new ground altogether, and teaching him how he is God's property—not merely because he who made him keeps him and upholds him as his servant, but because, further, he hath bought him with a price and redeemed him, as saith an Apostle, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot." Nor is even this most solemn of all equitable considerations quite enough, by itself, to give a practical effect to our admission of the duty and blessedness of our glorifying God, with our body and our spirit, which are God's. To persuade a man to glorify and serve God in body and spirit, it seems as necessary to remind him that his body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in him, and which he hath from God, in consequence of his having been bought with the precious blood of that spotless sacrifice. So exceedingly little, however, has the mere natural force of intellect on a man's conscience that unless reminded of both these, he will never keep serving God with body and spirit—however holding the opinion that this service is a debt he owes, the exclusion from which would cover him with infamy, the exhortation is really inadequate to the end proposed, if both these solemn considerations are not exhibited. But then on the other hand, it seems that this opinion has so strong a hold, so permanent a place, in the scheme of the Gospel, and is so practical, that this Apostle could not but express his utter amazement at believers failing to evince, by their life and conduct, a corresponding devotedness to the service of their Lord. "What! know ye not," exclaimed he, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price." Every one sees that the man who wrote these words, means to profess his amazement at the conduct of professing believers, in condemning the equitable claim of God, after they had heard the solemn asseveration which comprehended, in fact, the whole substance of God's wonderful testimony; and thus, confidently, does he intimate his own reliance on that testimony, if only we believe, to deter us from the deliberate commission of any known sin, and to persuade us, if only we believe, to glorify God with our body and our spirit, which are God's. Let us

then observe, in further prosecuting this subject, some of the leading peculiarities of these two asseverations adverted to by the Apostle, as comprehending such distinguished motives for our glorifying God; and, though mentioned as second in order, yet let us consider the peculiar force of the argument, "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price."

It is but too evident, that men in this world make little or no practical account of their Maker's equitable claim on them. They cannot but admit, that, as their Creator and Preserver, they owe every thing to God; and yet never, perhaps, in their whole life, did they feel the emotion of pure gratitude, or of praise, or turn it to any account to God's service. In our intercourse with one another, men will scarcely embezzle the property which they find in their hands for another's behoof, or committed to their management under another's instructions. They vest it in the hands of a man of good repute in society, and tell him that they mean him just to have the pleasure of steadily disbursing it for another's advantage; or, at all events, that being their property, they expect him to use it according to given instructions, and agreeably to their will. Whether it be that that man regards his own conduct and character, or dreads the future accounts or reckonings of law, or whether it be the force of pure probity and honour which leads him to abhor dishonourable dealing; certain it is, that among the men of the world, you find thousands, and tens of thousands, quite fit to be trusted—and yet the most trust-worthy of these make scarcely any account at all of the equitable claims of God. Though they are honest stewards and servants, and punctual to the literal performance of all letters and instructions of the party who made the deposit in their hands of property not their own, yet, when God comes to them and says, in the very same way, your bodies are mine, your spirits are mine, and all you have is not your own, I have graciously announced the sweetest of all present pleasures, and the richest of all rewards hereafter, to your managing these according to certain rules which every one of you knows, they are yet resolved to keep all their honesties among themselves, and they make no account of God, they are ready enough to tell him that they know his will, but never tremble to think that somehow they will be excused from doing it. This is the only ease you ever saw on earth, in which men think it enough to admit that they

have received a great trust. This is the only case in which they seem to go up and down, supposing that no further questions will ever be asked of them. This is the only case in which it ever seems to occur to them, that they can spoil, and embezzle, and plunder, and appropriate to themselves the possessions intrusted to them by another.—Yes, nor prohibition, nor the hope of future reward, nor the dread of future reckoning will persuade the apostate man to make conscience of the just and high claim of his Maker. It is idle to reason with him simply, as one of God's people; and, if any thing is proved in the history of man at all, it is this, that till the argument is made to stand on some other ground, it is ridiculous to call on him to glorify God in his body and spirit, which are his.

Would you see, then, the force of the Apostle's interrogation—would you see how the insertion of the words, "ye are bought with a price," makes the argument of nature altogether abortive; you must look how it is fitted to obviate the three following hinderances, to some one or other of which our particular notions of God's providence may be traced. The most careless observer of nature, or of his own heart, knows that of the many reasons of our making so light of God's equitable claim, our first is our having some indistinct, uncertain, and certainly often troubled hope, but still some hope, that God himself is not unwilling, at least, to compromise or modify his claim to a certain amount. Next, there is a perfect conviction, that, if God shall really prosecute us at law for the full amount of debt, or for any thing like it, then being bankrupts, and quite ruined already, it is of less concern to mind how much deeper we go. And, third, there is the supposition that man is the slave of God—a supposition necessarily incident to every creature who reckons God to be arbitrary. The removal, however difficult, of all such contradictory and groundless conceptions, is necessary to enforce our compliance with the equitable claim of God. God, instead of compromising or growing careless about his claims, is ever urging them on our ideas. And, according to what?—not the fancies of men, not the schemes of doctrinal and disputatious men, but the works done in the body.—How difficult to convince a man of all this, and yet, at the same time, not greatly to offend him, or consign him to despair!—What is to fill that man's heart with overflowing hope, and unutterable joy—what is to send that man away, to withdraw him

from the creeds and corruptions of men, and reject the surface judgments by which they are pulling us about as children pull one another in their contests, and make him earnest to be alone with God, and to know the exceeding breadth and loftiness of his commands, to make him pray without hypocrisy, for the coming of God, for the revelation of the last day, and the last judgment, in the person of the Son? You must be sensible of a difficulty here which no skillful dexterous handling of the argumentations of nature can remove—Jesus Christ, presenting himself, and coming before you a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour to God, that every man among you who yields himself his faithful and willing disciple, may be presented to his Father, without spot and blemish, in the judgment of the great day—Jesus Christ so offering to redeem you from your vain conversation—Jesus Christ so offering himself and telling you he has purchased you with such a price, is the only Being in the universe who at once enforces the claims of God's law, and the conscientious and affectionate address God claims from the heart. But he does so in a way all his own; and it cost Him who bought release for us lost sinners, unutterable sorrows of soul and body, ere ever he could take his stand as one entitled to say, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." What then we ask, is the gratitude due to that Redeemer who has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, and, who, after bearing the whole weight of God's wrath and curse upon him, seeks no other return from sinners on earth, unless this, that they will consent to follow him in the paths of virtue and salvation. It seems to me undeniable and exceedingly plain, that were we, at any hour of the day, to realize this historical fact as that which oversteps all other transactions that ever sun did shine upon, we would say, Lord, I will go whithersoever thou goest. And if any thing is to move us to be conscientious with God—if any consideration can deter us from employing our time, our money, our thoughts, our talents, our invention, our genius, our imagination, our powers of reasoning, our powers of body or of mind, according to our own wills, reckless of God's glory, is it not this simple truth, that a man is not his own, but bought with a price, body and soul together, even the precious blood of Christ.

But even this consideration, peculiar as it is, does not comprehend the whole amount of the Gospel. In fact, the Apostle

is led to place first in order that other religious truth—"Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, and which ye have of God." How often, and how effectively the Apostle urges that solemn argument of what is termed by divines, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost? And it is instructive to notice how in adverting to the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, he invariably delivers himself in the language of another, using the very words of the Lord or of the High Priests of the Lord, who had gone before him. In the following epistle, he makes an express quotation from the Prophets, and seems always to speak of this subject, of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, as a man that perfectly knew that he could never trust himself with any words of his own. He judged it quite enough for creatures who know not so much as how there is an indwelling of their own soul in their own natural bodies, and who nevertheless speak of that reasonable soul as dwelling in that frame, because united with it so intimately and affecting it so sensibly, to be told, that the Holy Spirit of God is so intimately conjoined, or in communion with their bodies and souls together, that he may be said to be dwelling in them. He never dared to employ such ingenious illustrations as schoolmen and imaginative men are so ambitious to do, for had he been nothing more than a man of sound understanding, he must have seen that creatures such as we, who can by no illustration be made to understand the indwelling of the soul in the body, can by no illustration be made to comprehend the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. For the enforcement of that solemn truth, however, though never for its explication, you find him taking up the language of another, speaking of the symbol of the church, speaking of living men as being living temples, alluding, no doubt, to the holy temple of Jerusalem, which God, who fills all space, did nevertheless glorify by special evidences of his presence. This Apostle means to say, that every professing believer is as solemnly bound to employ his body and spirit for the glorifying of God, and in no impure, no selfish, no sinister, no wilful way whatever, but according to the known instructions given him, as the priests and Levites, and

sworn guardians of the temple were bound to employ it to the worship of the true God. And if you could conceive the true priests of God's house consenting to set up the abominations of heathenism within the holiest of all, then may you conceive the guilt that arises from consenting to seek the world as the chief good, after having been so wise as, once enemies before God, now to profess to know that they are not their own, or, referring more particularly to our own circumstances, could you conceive aught so horrible, as just after summing up the solemnities of the great day of atonement, the very man who had handled the golden censers, and put up the prayers of saints, and burned incense at the altar, and sprinkled the blood of God's covenant, and borne the chief part in that ceremony whereby God signified that he set apart that house to his glory, on the morrow, deliberately turning that house into a house of merchandise, and being foremost to commence there that impious trafficking which raised Christ's indignation—then you can compute the guilt of that man, who, forgetting the symbols of the true atonement, ceases to regard himself so soon as the temple of the living God, so as to glorify God with his body and his spirit, which are God's. When the Jews turned that house into a house of merchandise which God had appointed in which to set his name, I have no need to remind you how very near that temple was to its final darkening and desertion, and the fulfilment of the prophecy, "There shall not one stone be left upon another." Oh! then as you would ward off such a misery, and as you are temples of the living God, be encouraged to watch most faithfully as keepers of the Lord's house—as your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost, let your feet be swift to run in all his blessed ordinances of mercy, and your tongue to utter his holy praises, and your hands to perform diligently whatever you have got to do, and thus, as Christ said of his own body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again," even so do I say to you, the temples of the living God, lay them low as the dust, even before to-morrow—and what matters it? Christ shall bring them back again more glorious than they have ever been. Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT GORDON, D.D., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. A. ROBERTSON, A.M., Greenock.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT;

A SERMON PREPARATORY TO THE DISPENSATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, PREACHED
IN ST. ENOCH'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON SATURDAY, 6TH APRIL, 1833,

By the REV. ROBERT GORDON, D.D.,
One of the Ministers of the High Church, Edinburgh.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death 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."—HEB. ii. 14, 15.

AT the 10th verse of this chapter, the Apostle has declared, that it became God the Father the Supreme lawgiver, "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 suffering. For both he that sanctifieth, "this Captain of salvation, and they who are sanctified, are all of one nature, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren," the children of the true God.—And in the verses before us, he proceeds to state, more particularly, wherein this evenness of nature consists, and for what purpose it was assumed on the part of Christ. "Forasmuch then as the children," *i. e.* those who are sanctified, and whom Christ is not ashamed to call his brethren, are partakers of flesh and blood, "he also himself likewise took part of the same," assuming a true body and a reasonable soul, becoming very man, though essentially and indubitably very God. And, if this act of marvellous condescension on the part of Christ was necessary, that he and the children should be all of one, it was not less necessary, for the accomplishment of the work he had undertaken, inasmuch as this work was to be effected by his own death. Because, said the Apostle, "the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he took part of the same, that through death," that being dead, "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."

Now, in considering the nature and design of Christ's mediatorial work, in the light in which it is set forth in the text, the question naturally occurs, what are we to understand by the declaration that the devil has the power of death? And, in reply to this question, I need only refer to the Scripture account of the introduction of death into the world, and to what the same divine record has taught us of the nature, the extent, and the consequences of that death. We are told, that when God had made man after his own image, and in his own likeness, he placed him in the garden of Eden, saying to him, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of *it*; for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." In opposition to this solemn declaration of God, the serpent, after insinuating that the restriction was an unreasonable one in itself, directly asserted to our first parents, that they should not die, but, on the contrary, that they should be "as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also

unto her husband with her, and he did eat." The melancholy effects of this act of disobedience, were very soon manifested. He who had before held frequent and familiar intercourse with God, in all the confidence of conscious innocence, became suddenly overwhelmed with fear and with dismay, at the first intimation of the divine presence, and virtually declared by his conduct, that there was nothing in the universe which he dreaded so much as to be brought into a state of nearness to his Creator. For, we are told, that when Adam and his wife "heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," they "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." And what, my friends, is the whole of the scripture record, whether historical or doctrinal, but one continued testimony to the melancholy fact that the same alienation of heart and conduct which prompted Adam to hide himself from the presence of the Lord God, characterizes every individual of his apostate offspring, and proves, that if left to follow the dictates of their own will and understanding, there is nothing to which they feel a greater aversion than the devout contemplation of the divine character, and a deep and solemn and realizing sense of the divine presence? "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside—they are altogether become filthy. There is none that doeth good, no, not one. The fool hath said in his heart, "No God." The threatening with which man was threatened, in the event of his disobedience, implies unspeakably more than the mere separation of soul and body. It is a matter of fact, recorded in the inspired volume, and there illustrated by the history of 4,000 years, that sin not only subjected man to sorrow, and suffering, and temporal death, but that it was instantly followed by the separation of the soul from God, the estrangement of all its affections from every thing good and heavenly; and this estrangement which has been emphatically called spiritual death, did obviously from the very nature of things, involve in it a principle of propitiation, inasmuch as without the interposition of divine grace and power, there was nothing in creatures so debased that ever could incline them towards that God from whom they had been so alienated. The Scriptures accordingly represent the

penalty of sin, not merely as it is exhibited in the death of the body, but as the everlasting separation of the sinner from God, and the perpetual endurance of the divine displeasure. "The wages of sin," says the Apostle, "is death;" and he determines the meaning of the word death by placing it in contrast with eternal life as its opposite; for, he immediately adds, "But the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The same truth is distinctly taught in all that the Scriptures assert concerning the redemption of the body. It is said of him who came to seek and to save that which was lost—and immortal creatures were lost—that he "has redeemed his people from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them," that being by nature the children of wrath, we become the children of God, being the children of the resurrection, that whosoever believeth on the Son of God, shall not perish. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." And, finally, the nature and the extent of that death to which men, as sinners, have been subjected, is still more awfully stated in what the Scriptures testify concerning the final condition of those who shall be found to have despised or neglected this great salvation; for it is said of such, that they shall rise again "to shame and everlasting contempt," that they shall "go away into everlasting punishment," even as "the righteous into life eternal," and that they shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."

Such then is the nature of that death, which man incurred by sin, and over which the Devil is here said to have power. Of course we are not to understand the expression as meaning, that the Devil possessed any authority to inflict death, either temporal or eternal, upon any of God's creatures at his pleasure; and in this sense, therefore, he cannot be said to have the power of death, but it may be, and it is, true in a spiritual sense that he has the power of death, inasmuch as by his hostility, "sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Nor is it on this ground only that he is represented as possessing that power. It is repeatedly declared of the old serpent called the Devil and Satan, that he de-

ceived the whole world. He is said to have been a liar from the beginning, and to be the Father of lies, while liars and murderers, are called his children. Christians are warned against the depth of his devices, and the fierceness of his assaults, being told that he is sometimes transformed into an angel of light, and walketh about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And to demonstrate more forcibly the extent of his dominion, he is represented under very appalling figures—under the figure of a kingdom, even the kingdom and power of darkness. He is expressly called the god of this world who blindeth the minds of those who believe him, the prince of the power of the air, who leads men captive at his pleasure, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. He is said to have the power of death, because by his hostility he first caused man to sin, and by a mighty, a very mysterious influence, he strengthened the power of sin in their hearts and in their minds, in consequence of all which they are brought into condemnation, bound over by a righteous judgment of God to the endurance of death, even to death in all its extent, which has been denounced as the penalty, and has been declared the wages of sin—and being thus under sentence of condemnation, the practical and experimental effect is, that through fear of death men are all their lifetime subject to bondage—a declaration which does most faithfully describe the condition of those who are still without the hope which the faith of the gospel can alone inspire, and who, so long as they are so, must be strangers to that liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. The fear of death, to which men are in bondage, is not merely that natural dread of dying, which is an instinctive principle of our nature, common to us with many other creatures, and rendered subservient to the wisest and most beneficial of purposes—it is the fear of death in its more extended signification as the penal consequence of sin; it is the dark foreboding of a guilty mind in the prospect of a hereafter; it is the anticipation of a judgment, with the inward consciousness of being little prepared to abide it; it is the secret dread of the ungodly here, of being brought to deal immediately, and very closely, with the high and holy God, whose intercourse and fellowship in this world were never courted, and could never be endured. And is not

this truly and literally a state of bitter bondage? In point of fact, I am well aware, men may not at all times, and in all circumstances, be alive to such misgivings, and hardly sensible of the misery of the bondage under which they are thereby laid; nor does the text assert more than that all their lifetime they are subject to be so oppressed, and so disturbed. In various ways, I am aware, they may, and do contrive to dismiss their fears, and to neglect and make light of their danger. Some may be so sunk in ignorance, so insensible to every thing that is interesting to intelligent beings, as scarcely ever to have entertained for one short hour a serious thought, or solemn reflection on death or eternity. Some may have surrendered themselves to cold indifference, so hardened themselves in the pursuit of ungodly pleasure, as that conscience is almost, or altogether silent, and their every thought has been the resolution of making the most of this life, come of the next what will; and others may have laboured, and apparently with success, to convince themselves, that they have nothing to fear from a hereafter, either because they fancy there is no judgment before them, or are prepared to meet it, although their hope is no ways connected with the name of Jesus, the only name whereby men can be saved.

In these various ways men may contrive to get quit of the feeling of their bondage. But need I observe, that no such delusion can avail them, or secure them, for one moment, against being awakened, at any given instant, to a full sense of their misery and their danger. There is in all men, even the most ignorant, a natural conscience which bears witness that they are guilty. If along with this they possess but one fragment of revelation, even a traditional revelation (and what nation on earth is without such) then I defy them to think at all of death, without feeling under bondage to a fear, a fear that there is, or may peradventure be, a reckoning for sin hereafter. Conscious that they have sinned in the present world, with an anticipation that in the other they are to be called to account for it, they cannot look on death, without feeling that they are in bondage for fear of its consequences. The votary of pleasure, in a moment of satiety and lassitude, or at the close of a life of folly, may be compelled to contemplate death, judgment, and eternity, and feel coming on

him a dark and terrible foreboding, which he has no longer the vigour to repel or the liberty to despise. Even those who have contrived to slip along by the speculations of a vain philosophy, or the dictates of self-righteousness, will have at times their misgivings, as to the extent and conclusiveness of their own arguments; and all have secret doubts now and then, whether it is wise and safe to venture their all for eternity, upon mere probability, a probability upon which they would not peril any portion of this world's possessions. And with regard to those who wish really to have the great question concerning futurity settled, but who are either ignorant of the gospel, or misapprehend its meaning, you will readily confess, that fear of what may befall them hereafter is more than enough to embitter every pleasure, and oppress or discourage them in every pursuit; and whatever, therefore, the apparent exceptions, it is true of mankind, generally, so long as they are without the faith and hope of the gospel, that through fear they are all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Now the Apostle here asserts that the great purpose of Christ taking part of flesh and blood, was to deliver man from the bondage, or this fear of death, and that he was to accomplish his purpose by destroying him that had the power of death, that is the Devil. It is hardly necessary to remark that the word *destroy* is not to be understood as implying that Satan was to be destroyed as to his being; the word literally signifies to overcome, to subdue, to render inefficacious, and expresses therefore, very distinctly, what is everywhere said in Scripture respecting the effects of Christ's mediatorial work, in counteracting the consequences of man's overthrow. The Devil is said to have the power of death from sin, not because he has authority to inflict it, or even to award it, as the penalty of sin, for to award it is the righteous act of God as supreme Lawgiver and Judge, but because of his activity and influence in having brought men into a state of sin, in consequence of which they became subject to the sentence of death. The power of the Devil to bring or keep men under condemnation actually lay in this—in the inseparable connexion between sin and death as an eternal principle of the divine government; and therefore to destroy his power, or to counteract his work of malignity and mischief, it was necessary that this principle

of the divine administration which has solemnly awarded death as the wages of sin, should be vindicated and established, while at the same time his victims are rescued from the death they had incurred, and restored to the divine favour they had forfeited and lost. This was the undertaking of Christ as Mediator, and therefore the Scripture says everywhere, that the purpose of his mediatorial work, was to destroy, counteract, or undo the works of the Devil. In the first intimation of the Saviour, he is represented as the seed of the woman that should bruise the head of the serpent. Throughout the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, his work was foretold and prefigured, by deliverance to the people of God from temporal bondage and oppression, as a fit emblem of the deliverance to be wrought by him who ascended up on high, and led captivity captive. When Christ appeared, the commencement of his personal ministry was marked by an event strikingly illustrative of the truth we are now considering. For forty days he was exposed to the temptations of the devil, in circumstances similar to those in which our first parents were placed, but infinitely more severe, and the result was an unyielding resistance to all his assaults, and a triumphant refutation of all his lies;—a defeat which to the enemy of truth and righteousness must have been inconceivably bitter, inasmuch as it was won over him by the same nature he had, and under circumstances far more unfavourable than those under which he had originally triumphed. And the course of our Lord's ministry gave intimation of the same truth, that the design of his coming was to destroy him that had the power of death; for we learn that no small proportion of the miracles which he wrought, consisted in casting out Devils, which had for a season been permitted to possess the bodies of men; permitted, I doubt not, for the purpose of rendering palpable to the very senses of men, the still more appalling influence the Devil had obtained over men's moral and spiritual nature, and the still more glorious victory to be achieved by his expulsion from that strong-hold of his malignant designs. The same view of the purpose of Christ's manifestation in the flesh was given by our Lord himself, when, on the return of the seventy he had sent out to preach the Gospel, and who came again to him with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name,"

he answered and said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven: behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you." In accordance too, with all this, is the language of the Apostles. St. Paul declares that he had expressly, directly, received from Christ to go to the Gentiles, and "turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus." The same Apostle has elsewhere stated; that Christ "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross." And the Apostle John expressly asserts, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil;" so that the text accords with what is everywhere attested in Scripture, concerning our Lord's mediatorial undertaking, when it says that Christ took part of flesh and blood, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the Devil."

And how, it may be asked, did Christ by his own death destroy or subdue him that had the power of death? That such an effect should have followed such an event is a mystery, which no created wisdom, unaided by revelation from God, ever could have discovered or explained. It continued for many ages a mystery to the Church itself, on whose account it was wrought, and to whom it was partially revealed, although by symbolical ordinances. Angels too are represented as desiring to look into it, and from the eagerness with which the tempter assailed Christ himself, and instigated Peter to deny, Judas to betray, and the Jews to crucify him, it is evident that he was little aware of the consequences of Christ's death in destroying his power, and subverting his kingdom of darkness. Even when this mystery was unveiled, and the doctrine of Christ fully set forth, it was regarded by many as a very idle and conjectural thing; for we have the testimony of an inspired Apostle, speaking from his own experience of the fact, that Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumblingblock, and to the Greeks foolishness. But as the same doctrine then was, to those that believed, the power of God, and the wisdom of God, so now to such as have found in

the Gospel any thing like a refuge and resting-place, from their fears and doubts, no lengthened discussion is necessary to explain to them how Christ crucified, can deliver them who, through fear of death, have been all their lifetime subject to bondage. We have already seen that by an eternal and unalterable principle in the divine government, death, as already explained, is declared the wages of sin; so that if sin be committed, death must be the consequence, and that if the work of the Devil, in seducing men into sin, is to be destroyed, and if the sinner who is doomed to die, is to be delivered from condemnation, it must be in such a way as to uphold and vindicate this great principle. And such a method of maintaining the rectitude of the divine law, and, at the same time, providing for the pardon of the guilty, has been found in the death of Christ, who undertook man's nature, and did actually endure the penalty which man had incurred; so that, in the emphatic language of Scripture, God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Accordingly, we find that from the beginning it was intimated concerning him who was to destroy the works of the Devil, that it was by suffering and by death he was to do so. When it was said of him and the serpent, "it shall bruise thy head," it was at the same time added, "and thou shalt bruise his heel," an expression which is now made very plain to us, by what Gospel history has recorded of the temptation, and suffering, and death, to which Christ was subjected, through the instigation of the great adversary of righteousness. The same truth is taught emblematically, but very expressly, by animal sacrifices, from Abel to Christ downwards, wherein Christ was typified as "the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world." In Old Testament prophecy, he was foretold in every variety of expression as a sufferer, as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, as having laid on him the iniquity of us all, as bearing the sins of many, as being wounded for our iniquities, as pouring out his soul unto death an offering for sin. And in the New Testament, the death of Christ is everywhere brought prominently forward as the grand leading subject of Apostolic preaching, the subject, to the faith of which is ascribed all the hope and consolation of Christians. It is there declared, that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree:

that he gave himself a ransom for many: that he suffered for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God; that he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; that he redeemed us from the curse of the law; being made a curse for us; that he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, and that being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And if he did thus by his death remove from us, and take upon himself the endurance of the penalty we had incurred; and if to them who are in him there is now no condemnation, then he has indeed through death destroyed him that had the power of death, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. It is true, that the benefit of this deliverance extends only to the children whom God has given him, the many sons whom, as captain of salvation, he is to bring to glory, those whom he sanctifies, and whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren; and it is equally obvious, from the very nature of the thing, that they only who believe in him, and from heart and soul do cleave to him, as their refuge and hiding-place, can know what this is, as matter of experience, as they alone know, that he has endured what they were bound over to endure—the belief of this is what alone gives them relief from fears. But in the death of Christ, as a propitiation for sin, God has revealed the great principle of his righteous government, whereby sin and death are inseparably connected, and at the same time has provided for the free forgiveness of sin, even of the greatest; so all are invited and commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they shall be saved. And with regard to those who do believe, they find, in Christ's death, a sure and solid ground of hope, such a hope as no vague idea of the general mercy of God alone could ever have given. They look for no compromise of the rectitude and rigour of the divine law; for, were that the foundation of their hope, they would be for ever strangers to peace and joy. It would still be matter of doubt to them to what extent this compromise was to go. The hope of believers rests on something very

different. They see in Christ a fulfilling of that law, even to the uttermost of its demands. There is presented to them, in that atonement, a clear and definite principle on which God proceeds, an atonement and pardon of the guilty. They approve of the principle as the only one, according to which it is befitting a God of truth and righteousness to deal with sinners; and while there is unveiled a deeper insight into the guilt and deformity of sin, as that with which no compromise can be made, they are at the same time set free from that slavish fear of its consequences, which the consciousness of guilt awakens, and by which they were held in bondage, so long as they did not clearly comprehend the gospel method of reconciliation. This freedom from fear and confidence towards God, will grow and gather strength, as they depend on the perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon, and yield obedience to the divine commandments, not as a servitude by which they hope to have a reward, but from a principle of gratitude for pardon freely bestowed. They have the witness in themselves that they are the children of God, that they number among the many sons whom Christ, as Captain of salvation, has brought to glory. They may indeed be more or less subject to that fear of dying, which is natural to all men, and of which Christians themselves do sometimes taste; but from this, too, the Lord will at length deliver them. In proportion as they become familiar, by faith in him, with the great rewards of eternity, they will cease to be alarmed by the terrors of that death that leads to it, and though unable to adopt the confidence of some, yet when actually called to encounter the trial, they will assuredly, in heart and conscience, participate in the victory which that language expresses, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." "O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." May God bless his word. Amen.

SEASONS OF TRIAL, TIMES OF PREPARATION;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE WEST PARISH CHURCH, GREENOCK, ON THE AFTER NOON OF SUNDAY, 17TH MARCH, 1833,

By the Rev. A. ROBERTSON, A.M.

"And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath."—MARK XV. 42.

THE unrenewed mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. It is conformed to the world, and is prepared only to act in things pertaining to the present life. The individual who is influenced by religious principles, while he is not slothful in business, is also fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Things seen and temporal have a tendency to carnalize the affections, and we are apt to forget whence we come, what we are doing, and whither we are going. He, therefore, who is preparing for a happy immortality, gladly embraces seasons peculiarly devoted to the concerns of the soul. The Sabbath, in its regular return, is intended to arrest the current of our worldly thoughts, to remind us of our common origin, of the one way of access to the Father, of death, and of eternity. In the estimation of every fearer of God, therefore, the Sabbath has a retrospective and a prospective aspect. A pious divine has justly remarked, that one part of the week is properly adapted for reflection, and the other for preparation. These acts of the mind should be more intense, in proportion as we are the more immediately connected with the Sabbath. Though the Jews, at the period referred to in our text, had sadly degenerated, yet customs, which originated in times of piety, were observed even by those among them who were actuated merely by a form of religion. Saturday evenings, generally, and particularly those preceding festivals, were seasons of preparation; and while the pious Jew endeavoured to dismiss worldly cares from his mind, and made arrangements suitable to the proper observance of the Sabbath, the arrangements of the nation, generally were in accordance with the solemnities of a day of spiritual rest. Hence, though the week about to be closed had been disgraced by scenes of maddening violence, the evening of Saturday no sooner arrived, than anxiety is

manifested, that the Sabbath should be observed with accustomed decency. This wish was commendable, though its origin can be traced merely to sanctioned use. Many pious persons, among ourselves, are accustomed to devote Saturday evening to preparatory meditation; and notwithstanding the laxness of principle, and the prevalence of impiety in the present day, the manner in which Saturday evenings are spent, serves as a fair test of character to try the moral state of our population. By many, that evening is sadly abused, because that it is in immediate connexion with a day which they pollute, and their preparation for the Sabbath is in unison with their known principles of action. Among a choice few, to whom the Sabbath is a delight, and honourable, in "remembering the Sabbath" they forget not preparatory exercises, and as far as leisure permits, Saturday evening is employed as the direct stage from a week's business to a Sabbath's fervency of spirit. The text, therefore, authorizes us to press upon you the propriety of spending Saturday evening, as a preparation for the exercises of the ensuing day. This idea, however, we merely notice in passing, and we leave it for your private consideration, and we request your attention to other ideas of still greater importance suggested by the text. A time of preparation, generally, is a season of trial, and is painful to flesh and blood. Examination, confession, and humility, are as congenial to a Saturday evening, as adoration, gratitude, and praise, are to a Sabbath night. Training is not enjoyment, but the means by which it is acquired. The way to heaven is through a wilderness, and by a vale of tears. Times of refreshing revivals, Sabbaths to the Church, are ushered in by a night of preparation, often dark and portentous. The present is an era of conflicting principles, a night of preparation, and, having past, we anticipate a

Sabbath on which the Son of righteousness shall shine, in bright effulgence, to dispel the darkness in which we are at present enveloped. What may be said of the state of the Church, is also true of every individual; it is a time of preparation, because every individual is either preparing for happiness or misery. These two ideas we intend to illustrate in the following discourse.

1st. Times of preparation in the Church are seasons of trial.

2d. Life is a time of preparation for every individual, and either works for his good or evil according as he is exercised.

Every individual who is acquainted with the history of the Church, knows that it has undergone various changes. It is subject to incessant fluctuations, and either is progressing or retrograding. Such a state of things may be expected, under the spiritual warfare, in which the Church is engaged. The existence of Satan is distinctly stated in the Bible, and from 1st Timothy iii. 6, the cause of his expulsion from heaven seems to have been pride—a feeling, which succeeding to unbelief in our first parents, through Satan's agency, expelled them from Paradise. From Jude, verse 6, we learn the place of his habitation. His disposition is described by the terms—Satan a stumbling-block—the Devil an accuser—Apollyon the destroyer—a serpent cunning—a lion savage and destructive—not only a murderer, but a murderer from the beginning—and not only a liar, but the father of lies. As a potentate, he is over the powers of darkness, and is the prince of the powers of the air. The world lieth in wickedness, or in the evil one, expresses the extent of his dominion, and Legion shows that his agents are many. His direct agency on the mind of man is incontrovertible. He entered the heart of Judas. He tempted David to number the children of Israel, and without adding quotations, it is sufficient to state, that he rules in the hearts of the disobedient.

Though the manner in which Satan influences the mind of man is above reason, yet this doctrine harmonizes with Scripture and experience. If we deny the agency of Satan because incomprehensible, on the same grounds, we may also deny the agency of the Divine Spirit. Both are received on the authority of the Bible, and both are known to us from their effects.

If both be denied because incomprehensible, on the same principle, we may deny that angels ever communicated any thing to the mind of man, in dreams and visions. If such communications be granted, why not grant that other communications may be made to the mind of man? If supposed to be made by angels through the medium of the senses, cannot Satan as a created angel, influence our mind through the same channel? The organs of sense, besides, are not essential in communications from mind to mind, for unembodied angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, enjoy the society of each other, and therefore what we cannot comprehend, we believe from experience, analogy, and, above all, from the express declarations of Scripture.

Satan does not possess one attribute of infinity; but, though fallen, he possesses all the qualities of a mighty, created intelligence, which fit him for his station over the powers of darkness, and as the prince of the power of the air; and, having numbers at his command, they accomplish as far as they are permitted his mandates. In exact proportion as the heart is impure, so is the influence of Satan—and when the heart plans and evinces its wicked determinations by actions, Satan, seeing its prevailing tendencies, suggests, encourages, and excites. It is remarkable that Satan in tempting our first parents, and afterwards in tempting our Saviour, assumed a bodily form, and one, in each case, adapted to the prepossessions of those he assailed. Whether, in tempting innocence, this indirect method is necessary, we do not at present inquire; but this we know from the Scripture representation, that in an invisible manner he influences the mind of fallen man.

The world in Scripture is uniformly spoken of as a platform on which a mighty contest is maintained between heaven and hell. When a check is given to Satan's power, his malice is increased, and the movements of both parties excite a commotion, which ultimately produces the most beneficial effects. The decreasing of his influence excites his wrath, and this excitement in the moral world is overruled by God, for the promotion of piety; and Satan, baffled in his schemes, adopts new plans of resistance; and, thus, though the contest continues unabated, the struggle is more or less severe, according to the extent of the moral change to be made in the world.

Principles, besides, have their due influ-

ence only when legitimately applied. The Church is not merely in the midst of enemies, but she only can maintain her position by continued vigilance, and unceasing exertion. Security begets confidence, and this state produces, on the one hand, indifference, and on the other, renewed activity. The friends and foes, besides, in this contest, possess not the same determination to defend their respective cause. The mind of man, naturally, is set on evil, and the adherents of Satan, in opposing the interests of true religion, are gratifying their natural propensities. Those who are on the side of God, are determined in their conduct, just in proportion as they are renewed in the spirit of their mind. The remains of indwelling corruption within their hearts, inclines them to listen to the suggestions of their enemies, and hence their principles of action lose gradually their legitimate influence. A process of assimilation thus commences, and continues till it is arrested by divine agency. Exposed to trial, the Church is aroused from her lethargy, and as is the extent of her apostasy, so must be the severity of her trial, the process of refinement through which she must pass, to regain among the children of men her proper influence. In effecting this change, those who are on the side of God, are exposed to severe privations. In giving a tone to their minds suitable to the conflict in which they are to engage, prepossessions must be overcome, prejudices subdued, and a spirit imbibed, which, in the first instance at least, counteracts more or less their inclinations. In other words, they must submit to a system of training, to which human nature has an aversion. On abstract principles, therefore, it is evident that preparation implies trial. In the nature of things, we arrive at this conclusion, and independently of facts, we may be satisfied of the necessary connexion between a state of trial, and a state of improvement in the Church. Truths, however, proved by abstract principles, make a feeblér impression on the mind of man, than the same truths embodied in examples. Hence, in the Bible, generally, instruction is furnished to us from examples, and this palpable method is used on the most important occasions. The faith of Abraham is illustrated by actions, which lead us irresistibly to the conclusion, that he was the friend of God, and justly is called the Father of the faithful. The

goodness of God in Redemption, likewise, is strikingly exemplified: for "In this was manifested the love of God toward us; because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him." In accordance, therefore, with this mode of Bible instruction, we shall prove from a few examples, that the time of preparation is a season of trial. These words, "so God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him," are beautifully significant. They remind us of the moral condition of man at creation. All his wishes were in unison with the will of his Creator. His desires rose in regular order, and were seasonably gratified. In spontaneous movement, his heart heaved with gratitude to his Benefactor, and his lips embodied in accents of praise the feelings of his mind. A change soon was effected. The voice of temptation was heard, listened to, and obeyed. The poison of the serpent swallowed, moral death ensued. The celestial fire which burned in his breast at creation, was extinguished, and the moral image of God effaced. Disbelief produced distrust, pride urged to rebellion, and the forbidden fruit plucked gave decisive proof of man's moral condition. Reasoning led to despair, and hope, the last stay of man, left the earth. "Adam, where art thou?" connected the past with the future, and filled the mind of man with bitter regrets and unavailing wishes. This period in the history of the church, was a time of preparation, and a season of trial. From the fall to the promise of a deliverer, trials, severe and unprecedented, were endured by our first parents. They had lost happiness and innocence, entailed misery on an expected race, and subjected themselves and posterity to the horrors of a violated law. Their conduct was disgraced by disbelief, pride, ingratitude, and imbecility; and tears were all that remained for them, or anguish too deeply seated in the heart to allow even the enjoyment of that relief. Angels cannot suffer pain, but circumstances, of a peculiar nature, may awaken keenly their curiosity, and so excite their benevolence, as to raise in their breasts a turmoil of feeling. If of them it ever could with justice be said, "they sat retired in wondering mazes lost," it was at the eventful period to which we have referred. Their sympathies were awakened for man, and yet the wish that mercy would operate in his behalf, led to consequences at which

their pure minds instantly revolted. Reasoning on the moral character of their Creator, and reflecting on the consequence of the rebellion of the fallen angels, they were convinced of the necessary connexion between disobedience and punishment. Every view of the case made them acquiesce in the immediate infliction of that sentence, "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." This time of preparation to man was a season of despair, and to angels, of perplexing thought. It was an even of preparation before no expected Sabbath—the mere interval of respite from merited and anticipated punishment. During this period of preparation, light arose from darkness. In the garden of Eden, God appeared, in the cool of the day, rebuked his rebellious children, and in the relentings of parental affection, announced a plan of mercy, worthy of his character, and exactly adapted to the state of his fallen creatures. How pleasant to our first parents would be the transition from despair to hope. In proportion as the even of preparation was severe and trying, so would be the enjoyment of the spiritual exercises on the Sabbath which followed. The wrath of Satan, made to praise God in additional honour and blessedness procured for the justified and sanctified of the human race, and new aspects of character exhibited in the Godhead, would astonish and enrapture the angelic host; and if ever their feelings of ecstatic admiration were strung to their highest pitch, it was when, in the overflowings of compassion, the Creator said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The land of Canaan was promised to the Patriarchs, as a sure inheritance to their posterity. Their descendants in Egypt seem not to have been anxious for the fulfilment of God's promise. They were prosperous, and their minds were unprepared for such an event. "And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceedingly mighty, and the land was filled with them." God's ways are not as man's ways; and before the fulfilment of the promised deliverance, his people had to endure an even of preparation. "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph." "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour, and

they made their lives bitter with hard bondage." This was the dawn of mental preparation, but sharper trials were necessary to loosen their attachment to Egypt. Additional burdens imposed, subdue their spirits, and widen the breach between them and their oppressors. "And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage; and they cried, and their cry came up unto God." When Moses and Aaron first interceded in their behalf, their case was hopeless in the extreme. Under the power of a haughty and imperious tyrant, escape from his territories seemed impossible, and complaints rendered their bondage more intolerable. The faith of the pious Israelites might be strong in the veracity of God; but every event seemed in direct opposition to the accomplishment of their wishes, and the fulfilment of God's promises. Those who calculated merely from appearances, would pronounce their deliverance to be an impossibility, and would endeavour to resign themselves to circumstances, which they could not control. All passing events, however, were overruled by God, to the confusion of their oppressors, and to give the minds of his own people a proper bias for the mode of life on which they were to enter. While Pharaoh was hardening, they were softening. Their even of preparation was come, and with a strong hand, and out-stretched arm, they were delivered from bondage. Their even of preparation, however, was not past, when they triumphantly marched from the confines of their prison-house; for though they were prepared to leave Egypt, they were unprepared to enter Canaan. Trial after trial happened, and wonder succeeded wonder, in their wanderings in the wilderness; and, while every occurrence was intended for their mental preparation, their history serves as a lesson-book to every succeeding age. God generally accomplishes his ends, by making passing events subservient to his will. The sighs of the children of Israel, in Egypt, were the notes of preparation for songs of triumph. Those who were qualified to appreciate deliverance from thralldom, were unworthy to possess a land, flowing with milk and honey. The carcasses of a rebellious race fell in the wilderness; and a generation, reared during an even of preparation, enjoyed the rest of the promised land. "And the Lord said, Because all those men which have seen my glory and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in

the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it. But my servant, Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereunto he went, and his seed shall possess it. But your little ones which ye said would be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the Lord which ye have despised."

If we fix our attention, on that even of preparation, referred to in the text, and connect with it past events, and those which immediately succeeded, we will be fully convinced, that a time of preparation is a season of trial. After the Babylonish captivity, the Jews were little given to idolatry. The means of instruction were more widely diffused, and, with this change of circumstances, the carnality of their heart operated in new channels. Satan adapted his temptations to their moral state, and while externally they worshipped God, the internal homage of the heart was withheld. Their religion was a form of godliness, without its power. The Essenes retired from the noisy crowd, practised austerities, and gratified their morbid temperament. They were the Monks and Nuns of Judaism, and yielded to passions which should have been resisted by divinely appointed means; and, instead of contending against the vices of the times, they deserted their posts, and injured themselves and society. The Sadducees were the infidels of the old dispensation. Reason was their idol, pride their actuating principle, and present gratification the consummation of their wishes. The Pharisees were the representatives of the religious people among the Jews. This is the reason why our Saviour uniformly reproves them with marked severity. They wished to be reckoned truly religious, but the Saviour traced their religious principles to selfish motives, and all these pretensions, to the desire of gaining the applause of men. Attention to ceremonies and vain tradition, made a good Pharisee, though by him the sanctification of his heart was neglected. At this period, the heathen nations lay prostrate at the feet of Satan; and the Jews, with few exceptions, yielded to his will. During this even of preparation, Simcon had a few sons, and Anna some daughters, who observed the aspect of the

times, and waited for the consolation of Israel. The sceptre had departed from Judah, and every event seemed to hasten the grand consummation, foretold by the Prophets. An astonishing personage appeared, in whom their hopes centred.—With wisdom unequalled, benevolence unwearyed, and power uncontrollable, he seemed to be the desire of all nations. Hosannas ascend to his praise, and he is welcomed as the anticipated deliverer of Israel. He announces that his kingdom is not of this world, and the crowd cease their acclamations—he reproves vice, and sinners overawed retire, determined on his destruction. The disappointed change their wishes into accusations. Envy brooded over his virtues, and could not bear the contrast. The reproved thirsted for revenge, and all joined in the cry, Away with him, crucify him, crucify him! The hour and the power of darkness was come, and the Saviour of mankind was apprehended, insulted, and nailed to the accursed tree, between two malefactors. The sun was ashamed to witness such a scene, and was vested in darkness; and nature murmured her complaints in thunder—the earth shook, and parted her rocks asunder. The Saviour bowed his head and gave up the ghost. This was, if not the hour of despair to spiritual Israelites, at least it was the even of preparation—the season of trial. Even those who had imbibed the spirit of prophecy, had much to agitate and perplex their minds. The promises of God they could not doubt, but how they were to receive fulfilment, was beyond their comprehension. The faithful disciples were scattered as sheep without a shepherd. The mangled body of the Saviour was entombed; and hope, though still lingering in the breast, scarcely durst embody a wish. The Jewish Sabbath passed, next morning the Christian Sabbath dawned, and a slumbering Saviour burst the bands of death asunder, triumphed over death, and him who had the power of death. The preparation over the trial in the divine economy had accomplished its purpose, and a different scene is now presented to our contemplation. A triumphant Saviour, enraptured disciples, a stupified Sanhedrim, an amazed multitude, a conqueror ascending on high, bearing gifts for men, the spirit bestowed on Pentecost, the heralds of the cross endowed with miraculous gifts, numbers added to the Church, and Christianity proclaimed throughout the vast extent of

the Roman empire. The night of diffidence, doubt, and perplexity, was the immediate harbinger of confidence, assurance, and clear manifestations of heaven's approbation. In proportion as the even of preparation was awfully portentous, and severely trying, so were the triumphs which followed, and the pleasures which the faithful enjoyed.

The same topic we might strikingly illustrate from events which occurred at the Reformation. An infidel Pope, the sale of indulgencies, and marked degeneracy among the clergy and laity, were unpropitious harbingers of better times. The persecuted few, the seed of the Church, under the various names of Waldenses, Hugonots, and Lollards, the invention of printing, and the reading of a Bible by an obscure monk, were the divinely appointed means to change this eve of preparation into the splendid dawn of the Reformation. These and similar topics, which will readily occur to reflecting minds, we leave for private meditation, and shortly apply to present times the principles which we have illustrated.

Among christians who observe passing events, and consider their bearing, the general opinion seems to be, that the present is an even of preparation. Wonderful events have of late happened in the world. A mere glance at the aspect of society, is sufficiently convincing that its appearance is portentous. The changes in South America, in Africa generally—the spirit of freedom imbibed by the states of Europe—the desired amelioration of oppressed operatives, and the emancipation of slaves—the spread of knowledge—the union of mankind by commerce—the translations of the Scriptures—the prevalent desire for temperance—the revivals in America, and the spread of the gospel—are some of the signs of the times, from which preparation, a Sabbath of spiritual refreshment may be anticipated. Heathenism is gradually decreasing, and the active exertions of Missionary and Bible Societies, have prepared the way for extensive

inroads into Satan's kingdom. Popery, on the Continent, is on the wane. France never was a favourite daughter of his Holiness. Too volatile for the austerities of a debasing superstition, under the name of Popery, in varied forms, she worshipped the goddess Reason. The reserved Spaniard, and haughty Italian, are clamorous under the thralldom of an ignorant and tyrannical priesthood. The delusion of Mahomet is rapidly declining, and Mahometans themselves acknowledge that a change seems inevitable. The power of the Sultan is gradually lessening from the inroads of Persia, Russia, and Egypt. Egypt, in the language of prophecy, the "basest of kingdoms," seems to have completed her degradation, and the fulfilment of that remarkable passage is not far distant:—"The Lord shall smite Egypt, he shall smite and heal it, and they shall return to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them." If the Jews are to be restored to their own land, on their conversion, Palestine is of so little value to its present possessors, that were it demanded for its former inhabitants, it would scarcely be withheld. The issue of present events is necessarily involved in much obscurity, but connecting the aspect of the times with the sure word of prophecy, the faith of the Christian leads him, from this even of preparation, to a Sabbath about to dawn on a spiritually benighted slumbering world. True, as yet we see on the horizon merely an ominous cloud of small size, but it is rapidly increasing, and will soon descend, in fertilizing showers, upon a parched world. Satan yet holds his sway, seemingly undiminished among the nations; but the Captain of our salvation, going forth conquering and to conquer, will rescue his prey from the hand of the mighty, and with the rapidity of lightning from heaven, the power of Satan may decline. Times of refreshing we may anticipate from the presence of the Lord, and the present commotions, political and religious, may be the appointed preparation to effect this desirable end.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. A. ROBERTSON, A.M., Greenock.
SERMON by the Rev. P. CHALMERS, A.M., Dunfermline.

SEASONS OF TRIAL, TIMES OF PREPARATION;

Preached by the Rev. A. ROBERTSON, A.M.—Continued.

OUR even of preparation, as a nation, is peculiar, and may be one of no ordinary trial. With us it is a conflicting era of opinion; the struggle of principle and the war of party. We are not heathenized, beguiled by delusion, degraded by superstition, or devoted to infidelity. We are a compound of the whole, and the idol of our worship is neither an image of clay, nor iron, nor brass, nor gold. We are a discordant mass, and require to be harmonized by a powerful divine agency. Not one half of our population are church-going, and we have, in general, more of the form than the power of godliness. The saintly virtues of past times are chronicled, not exemplified. Our standard of spirituality is lowered by yielding to the influence of deteriorating example. Our light shines enough in words, but too little in works. Where there is found a knowledge of Bible principles, in too many cases there is an aversion to their just self-application. Our sympathies are awakened at moral misery in the mass, but the detail, as it meets our every-day observation, is little regarded. The schemes of modern times are truly characteristic of our christianity. We do things on a grand scale, but by grasping at too much, the individuality of religion escapes our observation, and we feel disappointed that the effect does not correspond to the means employed. Our Sabbath Schools are justly extolled as moral nurseries for training youth; but many seem to consider them as a primary, and not a secondary, means for this end; and, hence, in the present day, we too seldom hear the pressing call to parents, the natural guardians of youthful morality, to become spiritual teachers

in the endearing circle of home. A mighty moral machine is kept in action, and humble exertions in retirement are not sufficiently guided, aided, or respected, and their collected effect scarcely recognised. The translating of the Bible, and the sending it by missionaries to heathen lands, was an attempt worthy of united christian philanthropy, but in the splendours of such a dazzling scheme we overlooked the mass of our population perishing for lack of knowledge. We need not give additional examples, for it cannot be denied that even our most laudable efforts have little tendency to self-application, and the effect is the prevalence of nominal christianity and infidelity in various grades among the different classes of society.

This state of things has favoured the increase of popery, infidelity, and ungodliness. Popery is addressed to the senses, the religion of the unsanctified nature, in every possible variety, under the semblance of christianity. Modified in this country to existing circumstances, it is peculiarly eusnaring to the unstable and imaginative, and an increasing ignorant population readily embrace it, because it so easily coalesces with the spontaneous movements of their unspiritualized hearts. Unitarianism is a species of religion more subtle in its elements, and peculiarly adapted for a certain class of minds. Assuming an appearance of reasoning, it allows of mental efforts, flatters natural pride, cherishes the spirit of infidelity under disguise, and furnishes apologies for moral wanderings, which make a few separatists so eagerly pursue this meagre phantom. Impiety is the offspring of folly, for the fool alone has the wish—No God. A heart set on evil

is the source of ungodliness and ignorance, and evil habits combined make it assume its most revolting forms.

To counteract this state of society, means in our power should be employed, and, blessed from on high, our even of preparation may usher in a Sabbath on which many weary souls may find rest. Speculation in religion must yield to the self-application of principles, and we must discriminate more correctly between their legitimate use and abuse. Parents should be urged and directed to rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and neglected youth committed to foster parents, ardent, experienced, and pious sabbath school teachers. Artificial barriers should be overthrown, and plans adopted for the instruction of our spiritually destitute population. Pride and envy, the sources of partisanship, must merge into brotherly kindness, and the war of party now raging must cease, and a spiritual crusade be undertaken against sin, Satan, and the world. Christians having one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, should leave minor differences to jarring spirits, and unite in the godlike enterprise of spreading the triumphs of the cross. Pastors must come more frequently in contact with their flocks, and discipline be regulated by the word of God. All the means which should be adopted we attempt not to enumerate, but our duty done, conscience will approve, and the result must be left to a wise overruling providence. "Trust in the Lord and do good," is the motto worthy to be inscribed on every christian banner unfurled in the cause of christianity. Perhaps, as a nation, the dawn of preparation has only commenced, and severe trials we may have to endure, before we are prepared to enjoy the glory of the latter day. For a time we must sojourn in the wilderness to acquire a temper of mind fitted to enter Canaan. In our camp the rebellions must be visited with sore judgments, and the carcasses of the unbelieving must fall by the way, but our Calebs who follow the Lord shall enter the promised land. Our Joshuas shall lead the host of the Lord from victory to victory, and the angel of the covenant shall be our defence. A cloud by day shall overshadow the ransomed ones, and a pillar of fire by night direct their path, till their wanderings are over and their trials passed, they enter the heavenly Jerusalem with songs of praise, to eat for ever angels' food

and drink the water of life, clear as crystal, issuing from the throne of God.

2d. Life is a time of preparation for every individual, and either works for his good or evil according as he is exercised.

From a consideration of the character of the Creator we conclude, that benevolence is an essential attribute of his nature, and that his tender mercies will appear throughout all his works. The mind naturally acquiesces in the doctrine of a creating and superintending power arranging for the happiness of those whom he creates. Hence, rather than exclude this idea from their minds, the Heathens adopted the opinion of good and bad Deities, and the Eastern nations of an evil and a good principle, sharing the government of this world. The idea, besides, is confirmed by incontrovertible evidence; for in the Bible we are assured, that God made all very good, and delighted in the work which he had produced. This world, as wheeled into space, was crowned with beauty. It was worthy of the creating hand of a benevolent being, and a suitable abode for innocence and happy creatures. Man was the lord of the creation, and his habitation afforded him every enjoyment which his heart could wish, or his imagination conceive. He himself was curiously wrought, and admirably adapted to his situation. His body was immortal and fresh in undecaying youth, health nerved his arm for action, and his body was capable of obeying every impulse of his mind. His powers and faculties were strong—his mind vigorous—his heart glowed with devotion—and innocence unsullied adorned his nature. A contemplation, therefore, of man's original state, proves the benevolence of God, and that he wishes to make his creatures happy.

Every creature is finite, and, coming perfect from the hand of God, may become imperfect from personal acts. By an act of creation God peopled heaven with finite perfect beings, but some of them rebelled and were driven from their habitation. This was a necessary consequence, for heaven is a place of holiness, and sinful beings cannot remain within its sacred enclosure. Though sinful beings cannot dwell where God more immediately displays his glory, yet it seems, from the history of his proceedings, that fallen angels might visit sinless creatures in parts of created space. Satan, therefore, had access to the globe which we inhabit and tempted

our first parents to rebel. Hell, therefore, was the proper abode for man as a sinful creature. Generations were to descend from our first parents, and God adapted the earth to their state as a temporary residence in their journey to eternity. God revealed his plan of deliverance to them, and the earth, though under a curse, is peculiarly adapted to the present probationary state of man. He is placed in it now, under a new economy, to prepare for a future existence. This globe, therefore, which Satan considered as a part of his empire, and its inhabitants as his slaves, is made the platform for the exhibition of astonishing events, under the moral government of God. By the fall, man was not only liable to punishment, but had become morally depraved. Christ by dying bore the penalty of a violated law, and thus delivered believers from punishment, and he procured the agency of the Spirit to create the heart anew, and thus restored the divine image which was lost by sin. The deliverance from punishment which Christ effected for believers is an act, and is called justification, the renewing of the heart is a work, and is called sanctification. The latter being progressive, though an act of grace, is accomplished by means.

Life to christians frequently is a chequered scene, and at every remarkable stage of their pilgrimage to eternity, fresh proofs of an unseen directing power are furnished. They are often led by a way which they know not, and conducted to an issue which they did not anticipate. Ordinary occurrences are much under our own control, and by certain modes of action we can, in not a few cases, predict the result. Circumstances, however, which we did not foresee, and which, from our ignorance of the cause, we term accidents, give new directions to our plans, and change, in a greater or less degree, the aspect of our personal history. The meeting of a friend, the death of a relation, or a single word dropped in conversation, may be connected with a course of events which may either embitter or gladden our future existence. Situations of importance may excite to activity minds which otherwise would have corroded with ennui, repined in solitude, or been frittered away on trifles. Individual and general good may result from such overruling dispensations. Minds of the strongest grasp and finest mould may be wasted in uncougenial pursuits, but while

God's ends are not frustrated by such an arrangement, the individuals so circumstanced are kept in a state of preparation. Prosperity engenders pride, and adversity balances, in some minds, the actuating powers. A sickly existence may preserve the soul in health. Bereavements loosen the heart from created objects. All works for the good of the Christian, and the fluctuations to which he is exposed, prepare his mind for the spiritual employments of heaven.

Every individual in future will be rewarded according to his works. As we sow, so shall we reap. He that sows sparingly, shall reap also sparingly. Among the angelic hosts there are various degrees, and though all are happy in heaven, the capacity for enjoyment is infinitely varied. As vessels all are full to overflowing, but all cannot partake of the same extent of enjoyment. In the joy of our Lord as we have employed our talents, so will be the measure of our reward. This peculiarity in heaven's jurisprudence is too much overlooked by Christians in their preparation for eternity. Heaven is spoken of by us in general terms, and the godly ambition recommended in the Scriptures escapes our notice. We endure no ordinary struggle, and submit to most unpleasant preparation to gain our wishes in this world. The temporal object is seen and stimulates us to continued exertion. Spiritual things, though superlatively important from the medium through which they are viewed, make a weak impression on our minds. Our Heavenly Father, therefore, brings us more closely in contact with the things which belong to our peace, by preparation often perplexing, and generally unpleasant. We prefer present enjoyment to future happiness, and by a process of training suited to our case, our Heavenly Father bends our stubborn minds, that the future may not be neglected in the engrossing anxieties of the present. Hence the trials which we suppose calculated to bring our gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, are the divinely-appointed means of ripening us for glory. The moral culture which we are receiving is necessary, that we may grow, flourish and bloom for ever in the Paradise of God.

Tired of the vexations of life and an unspiritualizing world, we are apt to exclaim, "Oh that we had wings like a dove, that we might flee hence and be at rest." This

wish is improper, for the mental state which has urged us to embody such feelings, shows that we are not fully resigned to God's way in preparing us for heaven. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, they rest from their labours and their works do follow them." Heaven is rest from pain and every afflicting feeling, but it is not a state of inactivity. The capabilities of mind acquired in a probationary state are kept there in active play without any disturbing force. The wonders of creation, the intricacies of Providence, the varied sublimities of redemption, with a consideration of the past, present, and future, open to them endless fields of inquiry, in which they can expatiate with rapture. The higher, therefore, the tone of spirituality acquired in the even of preparation, the more exalted the enjoyment during an endless heavenly Sabbath. Here Saturday well spent prepares the mind for the exercises and enjoyment of a coming Sabbath. There the activities of the even of preparation are exchanged for employments adapted to every mind, and the more refined and capacious the energies, the higher the range of wonders unfolded, the more ravishing the enjoyment and ecstatic the praise. Here the Sabbath is intended for bodily rest and spiritual refreshment; there the weary pilgrim finds repose from distracting cares, the malice of an evil world, and the perversity of a wicked heart; there blooms the tree of life—is found the hidden manna—rivers of pleasure which gladden the city of our God—society—the most estimable employments—congenial joy, without a wish or a fear of its termination.

The conduct of a parent towards his family exemplifies the system of moral training to which God here subjects his own people to prepare them for the exercises of heaven. Children wish to enjoy the present, and see the future only through the imagination. The restraints under which they are placed, and the punishments which they endure are seldom imputed to the real motives. The parent who does his duty anticipates futurity, and prepares his children to be useful members of society by mental training. It is unpleasant to check the lively buoyancy of youth, and force the unwilling mind to labour. If he is directed by feeling, he may spoil his children by indulgence, and incur their blame in after years, but if he is guided by right principles he will train

them for the sphere of life in which they are most probably destined to act. His children and he therefore have different ends in view with present time. His children wish it for enjoyment, and the wise parent wishes it to be employed in preparing for active life. The wish of the one not unfrequently will oppose that of the other, and authority must interfere to gain the desired end. The parent may have to struggle with the finest feelings of our nature in enforcing obedience when correction is necessary, and from affection to his child, and for his future welfare, he may subject him to severe chastisement. Is the loving parent at this time devoid of feeling when he puts his child to necessary pain for future benefit? We appeal to every judicious parent before us, if chastisement is not resorted to for future advantage. This consideration overcomes the quiverings of nature, and with excited feelings, and even the tear starting in the eye, the parent causes grief to his child from the purest motives. And is there such a plan of sensibility in a parent's heart in chastising his offspring, and will not our Heavenly Father have towards his own whom he afflicts, the overflows of parental love. God is perfect in his nature and no impulse of feeling will make him withdraw that stroke which is to improve the heart. The grief which he causes has a direct connexion with the glory of a better state of being. Whom he loves he chastens; and though his mode of culture be unpleasant to nature, yet knowing the end he has in view, the language of faith is, "It is of the Lord, let him do what seems good in his sight."

It has been supposed, that the kindness of God would be more manifest to our race, were there no sorrow in the world. This supposition originates in a mistake. There was a time when affliction did not depress the mind of man, but sin has entirely altered his moral constitution, and he has to be treated according to his circumstances. Were there no grief, there would be no sin; and were there no sin, the present race of beings would require to be swept from the face of the globe. This is not the result wanted by the objector, for he supposes the present state of things to exist, and wishes complete happiness to be connected with a sinful state. In other words, he wishes an impossibility. He wishes God not to train man for immor-

talities in the way best adapted to his nature. God trains for heaven by affliction; and the objector wishes the result without the means, happiness without the unpleasant moral training.

Were Satan's power annihilated, and man's heart changed, then grief could not exist. This is just what God has in view by his system of moral training, and, to wish such an end, under the present state of things, is not only to complain of God's way in leading his own to heaven, but argues a desire for enjoyment without the necessary preparation. What important end can be gained without labour, privation, and patience? and is this earth to be heaven, while it is only in the nature of things preparatory for that state? Could the possibilities be realized to which we have adverted, would it be kindness in God to grant a state of things in this world directly opposite to the preparation required for heaven. Were there no misery in this world, would we not easily forget the world to come. Were all happy here, would we sigh for the happiness of futurity. How would our sanctification be promoted, were our minds not impressed with the evil of sins? Where would be the compassion to lull us into a sleep profound, and not to disturb our repose till the terrors of futurity burst on our astonished view? Such a state of things would be most destructive to man, and dishonouring to God. In fact, it would merely be an act of forbearance. Were we allowed to dwell in Paradise, or rather in this world, such as Eden was, and at a certain period, without one previous pang, allowed calmly to retire from it into a state for which we were unprepared, oh! where would be the goodness of God in this act of forbearance? Is it not the meltings of compassion to warn us of coming danger! Is he not the friend who snatches us from imminent danger, though, in the act of doing so he causes momentary anguish? And is it not from fatherly affection that God sends afflictions to stop abounding iniquity, and to prepare his own for that place where sorrow and sighing are unknown? When Jacob saw the end God had in view by his trials, he found that he should not have said, "all these things are against me." Job remembered, with satisfaction, his trials, and was satisfied that the Lord is compassionate. David suffered much, but frankly confessed that it was "good for him to be afflicted." Christ was

made perfect through sufferings, and all works for good to those who are called according to God's purpose.

The inhabitants of the globe are divided into two great portions—the children of God, and the children of the devil. Those who are under the power of Satan may not, in every case, require the interference of God. For wise and inscrutable purposes he may let them alone, and may reserve the development of strict justice to another world. Hence, a vast number of irreligious men are allowed to prosper, but in the secret counsels of God, they may be fattening for the day of slaughter, and preparing for an awful reckoning. Their minds may be of that nature that affliction would not profit, and God overrules their prosperity to answer his plans of moral government. He has compassion for them, and does not take the enjoyment from them which would not individually profit, and which they may enjoy, and his moral government he secured. Some among the irreligious, however, who follow wickedness with greediness, require to be checked in their course; and though in their case no salutary effect follows, yet, by their trials, they may be reminded that God abhors evil, and these may be of that nature which arise directly from sins committed, and may lead the minds of many, by the training under which they are placed, to think of God and on eternity.

Towards the wicked for whom God has designs of mercy, afflictions not only exemplify his abhorrence of sin, but are a direct preparation for a beneficial change. These are means of grace through which the Spirit operates and produces new principles of action. Some minds cannot enjoy prosperity without forgetting God, and it is to them actually a curse. Their euphoria overflows, and they quaff with pleasure the honied draught, and amidst creature enjoyments forget the Creator. God feels for the wanderings of such, and though they have no compassion for themselves, He sends trials that He may prepare them to consider their ways. Unforeseen events may occur, and one unexpected disaster after another may destroy the pride of life and bring haughty looks low. Plans may be disconcerted, and mental anxiety be produced, which may convince them that vanity and vexation of spirit are connected with every created object.

Around the table like olive plants a

healthy family may be reared ; but disease may wither hopes, and foreboding fears may mar the enjoyment of the domestic circle. The soul may be bound up in the pledges of love, and death may mock the sympathies of the heart, and convert the sweets of home into gall and wormwood, Plenty may extend her hand, and the noise of revelry invite to the social board, but disease may have cloyed the appetite, the blood may flow in rapid speed, or sluggishly move in its channels, and the sick room, and the nurse, be the abode and the friend. God knows the state of every mind, and when he afflicts, that his training may end in a salutary change, the visitation is adapted to the mind, and to the result to be produced. How many thousands can date serious impressions from the causes we have specified ; and is not this proof conclusive, that times of preparation are seasons of trial ? Oh ! it is painful to nature to mourn over a fortune ruined, to shed the tear of bereavement, and to droop under disease, and linger out a sickly existence ; but if the heart is improved, how great the kindness of Him who visited thus for beneficial purposes. The depression of the mind has been the blessed means under grace of changing the heart. The temporal loss has been spiritual gain. The riches which flew away like an eagle towards heaven, have been exchanged for durable riches, the treasures of heaven. The family circle has been lessened ; but a portion better than sons and daughters has been given. Sickness has mantled the world in sackcloth, and embittered the cup of enjoyment ; but glory is seen in distant prospective, and a new relish acquired ; the soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness is filled. God, therefore, by seasons of trial, in many cases promotes spiritual welfare, and by an even of preparation, leads from sin to holiness, and from misery to happiness.

We now shortly address those who are not preparing to meet God. For the wicked life is an even of preparation ; but not the harbinger of a coming Sabbath. Anticipate we beseech you the grave, and remember that as the tree falls, so it must for ever lie. Think on the solemnities of a judgment day, and with an accusing conscience from among the assembled family of Adam, listen to a sentence which cannot be repealed, " Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his

angels." Life is the season of preparation and death is the avenue leading to eternity. As the joys of heaven are proportioned, so are the punishments of the wicked. Some receive few stripes, and others are beaten with many stripes. There is a worm to gnaw, and a fire to devour. If even the indifferent endure the second death, what will be the portion of those who live in the concealed or open violation of God's commandments. The moral government of God will be as fully developed in another world in proportioning punishments as distributing rewards. His detestation of sin will then be manifest, and the frown of incensed deity will be more awful, as the mind is morally degraded. If the nations who forget God shall be turned into hell, what is meant by " wo unto you hypocrites," and the sorer punishment of those who trample under foot the Son of God ? With hearts as varied as the human countenance, so will be the different capacities of the wicked for enduring suffering. Living to the flesh you will reap corruption, and as the quantity of seed sown, so will be your harvest. Sowing to the wind you will reap the whirlwind. Drudging in Satan's service you will not lose your reward. Were your state fixed we would not add to your wretchedness by adverting to it ; but you may yet escape impending danger, and by fleeing from the wrath to come lay hold on eternal life. By such appeals we imitate the compassion of our Saviour, and the tenderness of his Apostles, who urged sinners by coming wrath to be reconciled to God. This is your day of preparation, and a lifetime is short enough to prepare for heaven, and if the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall you appear ? If such things happen in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry ? You will repent, you suppose ; but in the act of procrastination you miscalculate most egregiously. The labourer was accepted in the eleventh hour, who never before was called to enter the vineyard ; but you repeatedly have been called, and as often have successfully resisted. From one solitary instance recorded in the Bible, will you reason on the possibility of salvation at a dying hour ? Granting that you have made a covenant with death for a specified period, is the interval of grace to be abused, and is any other period of your life so much adapted for repentance as the present ? In the case of Felix, did present trembling

resisted lead to a change of life, or did the convictions of the stony-ground hearers end in conversion, and will your present resistance not increase your insensibilities, and do you not convert life, actually, into a curse by preparing your minds for enlarged capacity of suffering? You are moving onwards in a state of moral degradation, and escaping from the ordinary means of conversion, you are rapidly assimilating to the mental condition of your future associates. Your pulse yet

throbs, and yet there is hope. The angel has not lifted his hand to swear that time shall be no longer. The present movement of your mind may be the strivings of the Spirit. Cherish convictions. Grace is omnipotent. Mercy is boundless. The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin, and a Zoar of safety is prepared for you from impending wrath, into which enter and be safe, and the Sun of Righteousness shall shine on you and direct your feet to everlasting habitations Amen.

GROUNDS OF THANKSGIVING UNTO GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THURSDAY, THE 11TH JANUARY, 1833; BEING A DAY OF THANKSGIVING HELD IN THE TOWN OF DUNFERMLINE, FOR THE GREAT GOODNESS OF THE ALMIGHTY, IN REMOVING THE PESTILENCE, AND SENDING A PLENTIFUL HARVEST.

By the Rev. PETER CHALMERS, A.M.,*

One of the Ministers of Dunfermline.

"Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."—Ps. l. 14, 15.

MET as we are this day, my friends, for the express purpose of making grateful mention of the delivering and bountiful hand of God, and of considering the corresponding duties incumbent upon us, the words now read must appear peculiarly suitable, and will suggest materials for some useful reflection. To glorify God, you know is the first and great design of our being. "For his pleasure we are and were created." His honour he makes the end of all his own procedure, and for this obvious reason that he can propose no nigher. And, if he make it the object of all his doings, so ought we to make it that of ours. It is impossible, indeed, for us to add to the essential glory of his character, to the native lustre of his perfections. His attributes natural and moral, are unsusceptible either of increase or diminution. All that we are capable of, is to declare, in some measure, that which already exists in him to make an open acknowledgment of what we behold venerable and lovely in his nature, works, ways, and word. In this sense, even inanimate objects glorify God by exhibiting in their structure the wisdom and goodness of their great Framer. Thus "the heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge" concerning him.—"His glory covers the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise. All his works praise him." The irrational tribes, in like manner, unite in proclaiming the honour of their Maker, affording signal manifestations of his skill and kindness in their formation,

preservation, and adaptation to the various purposes of their being. This is peculiarly, however, the service of the intelligent and renewed part of creation, who understand and feel what they outwardly announce. "His saints bless him."

But the homage thus rendered to the divine Being is never, for a moment, to be conceived as awakening in him any emotions of self-complacency, as making any addition to his blessedness. Such an effect, indeed, is produced upon a fellow-mortal, by our promoting his honour; and, from this we may thoughtlessly imagine, that a similar result will follow from a similar act, when directed to the Almighty. Against such a notion, however, we must carefully guard. He is independent of us and of our services for the sources of his enjoyment. His happiness was complete, before we were known amid the works of his hands; and would continue so, although we were, this instant, blotted out from created existence. He possesses in himself all that is fitted to promote, and he has the entire control of all that could obstruct, the felicity of his nature. When he calls upon us, therefore, to glorify him, it is not to increase either his excellence, or his blessedness, but merely to perform a duty incumbent upon us, from the relation in which we stand to him, and the obligations under which he has laid us by all the tokens of his power and goodness.

The specific manner of performing this duty is, in general, the offering unto him of praise and thanksgiving, that is, acknowledging him in all the displays which he

* This Sermon was obtained from the Author, at the request of the Kirk Session and members of the Congregation.

has made of his existence, perfections, and operations; but more especially in those instances of his bounty and grace, in which we have an immediate concern, cherishing and expressing the corresponding sentiments of gratitude and joy, believing his word, and obeying his will. It is to own our dependence upon him for life and all its comforts, to avow him as the giver of whatever is agreeable in our present lot, and of whatever is animating in our future prospects, to cultivate the habit of tracing every, even the smallest blessing, to his hand, from which it truly proceeds, and to maintain in lively exercise the inward feeling which this habit outwardly betokens.

We may not be always in words formally recognising every minute pleasure which we receive through the exercise of our corporeal powers, or mental faculties, or the beneficence of others, as the immediate gift of the Almighty; but we are ever to live under the influence of a disposition to do so, and be ready to embrace every suitable call for making the acknowledgment.

We are too apt to rest satisfied with discovering and owning secondary causes of our comforts—to fix our thoughts and affections as we necessarily do our senses, on the external instrument, which conveys to us what delights and blesses us, without reflecting on the source from which that instrument, if inanimate, derived its power, if animate, and much more if also rational, its will as well as ability to serve us. We talk of *chance* and of *nature*, but these terms are devoid of meaning, separated from an intelligent agent. What we cannot immediately discover the cause of, we affirm to be the work of chance; but it is only as an indication of our ignorance, that this word can have any meaning. In truth, every effect has a cause, whether we know 't or not. And as to nature, what is it, disjoined from nature's God? He it is who established, and still maintains in operation those laws, by which all that is natural or ordinary, either in the material or moral world is brought about. He gave the first impulse to the wheels of the great machine of the universe, and his divine energy is constantly exerted, as it is constantly needed, to preserve and direct their motion. Such, then, being the fact, it should always be remembered and acknowledged by us. It is true that these secondary causes of our blessings are not to be overlooked or undervalued, for it is with these we have an immediate concern; but their primary agent demands our chief regard. And in so owning and celebrating

God's bounty, while we discharge a duty at once dictated by reason and commanded by Scripture, we enhance the worth and dignity of our comforts, viewing them as we then do, as direct instances of the kind and favourable attention to our interests of our heavenly Father. Nor can we fail to be impressed with the great guilt of those who "when they know God, glorify Him not as God, neither are thankful."

And what abundant reason have we to offer praise and thanksgiving to our Divine Benefactor! How manifold are his mercies, how far beyond our reckoning! As guilty and accountable beings, what provision has he made for our deliverance from sin and misery, and our restoration to holiness and happiness, in the gift of his own Son as our Redeemer, and of the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier and Comforter: in furnishing us with his written word, in which this great and full salvation is revealed and freely offered to all of every rank and character;—in making known and appointing to us his Sabbath, and Sabbath ordinances for our temporal as well as spiritual benefit; and in having ordered our lot in this land of light and liberty, where all have such ample and easy means of literary and religious instruction, where the poor no less than the rich have the gospel preached to them, and where every man may worship God according to his conscience, dwell under his own vine and his own fig-tree, without any to make him afraid! As members of society, what cause of thankfulness have we in the security of our persons and the protection of our properties, in the enjoyment of a civil constitution, which, with all the defects that may attach to it, (and what work of man is without defects?) is unquestionably the best which either ancient or modern history records, and under whose salutary sway, whatever may be the errors, real or imagined, of its successive administrators, none will or can harm us, if we be "followers of that which is good," means of redress being open to all, who innocently suffer! Nor as individuals, are we without numerous and striking proofs of the tender care and loving-kindness of our God, which it becomes us duly to consider, and thankfully to acknowledge. If each would just reflect on the past period of his life, what cause could he find to praise the Almighty for the measure of health and strength which he has enjoyed, his exemption from diseases to which others have fallen victims, his escape from dangers which threatened to destroy him, his rescue from embarrass-

ments and support under trials which were ready to unhinge and overwhelm him, his possession of dear relations, kind friends, valuable counsellors, and agreeable acquaintances, the use of a sound mind and unimpaired faculties, the regular refreshment of nocturnal rest after the fatigues of daily labour, the unfailing supply of needful food and raiment, together with a thousand other nameless conveniences and gratifications of life, personal and domestic, and of the very least of which he is unworthy.

And have not we, my brethren, at this moment, in a social capacity, much reason to glorify God, by a thankful mention of his great kindness, both in delivering us from the ravages of pestilence, and in blessing us with a plentiful harvest? In reference to the first we have already complied, although very imperfectly, with part of the exhortation in the text. We had "a day," a long day of trouble, uncommon, severe, and fatal. For two months* at a time did our town suffer from that disorder which has laid in the dust of death, it is computed, above fifty millions of mankind in all quarters of the world; and twice before, at different periods, were other districts of the parish afflicted with it. Then did numbers amongst us, we doubt not, call upon the Lord in private, with much earnestness, humility and faith, confessing their sins, and beseeching him to remove or to mitigate the visitation, and to sanctify it to all; and then twice did we assemble in public for a similar purpose, first as a nation,† and, afterwards as a community.‡ So deep and general was the feeling of the obligation and propriety of thus setting apart to humiliation and prayer a portion of that time which we ordinarily call our own, that comparatively few, we believe, complained of it as an unnecessary or unbecoming suspension of business. And is it unreasonable or unwarranted by Scripture, to believe, that for such contrition and supplication, the Lord was pleased in mercy, through the merits and mediation of his Son, to interpose, turning away the pestilence from us, and lightening its severity while it continued? Certainly not. In the language of Revelation we may hope that "having believed God and proclaimed and observed a fast, and cried mightily unto God, resolving to turn every one from his evil

way, for who could tell if God would turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perished not?" God then saw our works, that we turned from our evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do and had even begun to do unto us.

That indeed the repentance then professed, and the amendment then begun, have been followed up by a permanent change of heart and life, in all so affected, observation and experience will not, we fear, permit us to say; yet we trust that some, we would hope that many, can affirm it to have been the case with them. Multitudes, we lament to know, whatever compunction for their past sins they may have felt, or whatever purposes of reformation they may have formed during the continuance of the calamity, are now living in the most careless, irregular, and riotous manner, so that they at least have not been benefited by the visitation. "Out of the ten that were cleansed," they and others not so hardened and shameless in iniquity, yet indifferent to spiritual things, are "the nine who have not returned to glorify God," either by their words or actions. But still we would charitably believe, that not a few did then truly humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, and truly plead that for the sake of Christ, he would pardon, renew, sanctify, and quicken them, and if spared from the destruction that was abroad, that he would dispose and enable them by his grace to serve him better than they had ever done before; on whose account he may have been pleased in the abundance of his compassion to send us this deliverance. Surely the language of the Psalmist may be that of many on this occasion: "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was

* From 3d Sept. to 1st Nov. 1832, during which time 462 cases, and 176 deaths, were reported to the Board of Health. In March preceding, there were 20 cases, and 7 deaths, at Hallbeath colliery; and from the 9th June to 28th August, same year, there were 22 cases and 11 deaths at Limekilns.

† 22 March.

‡ 11th October, 1832.

brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." Glorifying, then, God, as we did, or attempted to do, when in the fires of our affliction, by contrition and prayer, and that publicly as well as privately, (the affliction being one with which all were threatened,) surely it becomes us similarly to glorify him, when we have, by his gracious Providence, been brought out of these fires. The greatness of the deliverance, and the singularity of the mode of it, loudly call for such an expression of our homage to the God who sent it. In estimating the former, you have just to consider the awfulness of the calamity, from the assault or the dread of which you have been released. When, in the memory of the oldest among you, was there a distemper so prevalent and so fatal, that within two months nearly five hundred of yourselves or neighbours were more or less severely seized with it, and nearly two hundred fell victims to it, among whom were numbered persons of all ages, sexes, stations, and characters, attacked sometimes with little or no previous warning, and becoming the tenants of the tomb only a few hours after they were seen moving in health and strength in the busy walks of life; and that after enduring an agony, the very sight of which few had courage to witness, and within the sphere of the supposed contagiousness of the disease occasioning which, even the nearest and dearest relations scrupled to place themselves, although for the performance of the most necessary duties of humanity to the dying? When was there a period in your recollection of such general, sudden, and appalling mortality, that every morning you awoke, you felt glad that as yet you had escaped the "terror by night," and equally rejoiced in the safety of the other members of your families, blessing God for your mutual protection, while your hearts might be moved with grief and sympathy upon hearing the new tidings of those to whom the same defence had not been extended?

And did not this period of death and alarm pass away just as suddenly as it arrived? Was there not as much mystery in its departure, as in its approach and progress? Was it not obvious, that the hand of the Lord lifted off just as it had laid on the affliction, that human instrumentality, benevolently and vigorously as it was exerted, could not of itself

account for its disappearance? You have now returned to your usual state of tranquillity, seeing disease and mortality only in their ordinary forms, but in judging of the value of your present peace, never forget the state of discomposure and alarm by which it was preceded, and by the contrast learn the greatness of your deliverance; and from this, as well as the rapid manner in which it was accomplished, be disposed to say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes." Never, perhaps, before, had you such strong impressions of the nearness and power of God, and of the utter helplessness of man, under the divine chastenings. Seek, then, to retain these impressions of solemn awe, and of holy fear, whenever you feel inclined, or are outwardly tempted to sink into irreverence, carelessness, and neglect of duty. And now that God is shining forth again in the exercise of mercy, yield yourselves to the feeling of it, and be ready to glorify that perfection by offering him thanksgiving for so signally interposing. Be sensible of his goodness in having preserved, and in still sparing your lives, while so many lives, some of them as valuable as yours, have been taken away.

But great as this special blessing is, it is not the only one which you have this day assembled yourselves to commemorate, and devoutly and gratefully to acknowledge. While the Lord has been delivering you, as by an outstretched arm from imminent bodily peril, he has, at the same time, been loading you with his providential bounty for the supply of your natural wants. He has now, as heretofore, "not left himself without witness, in that he does good, and gives us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." The earth brought forth, you know, this last year in more than usual abundance, sustenance for man and beast, sustenance which was no less remarkable for excellence of quality, than for largeness of quantity. As a necessary consequence of this ample supply of nature's provisions, these are to be procured at a moderate expense. The value of this blessing the operative and the poor man must, of course, especially feel, and to him it is unspeakable. When, at best, he can with difficulty, by his utmost industry and care, obtain the necessities, and a few, it may be, of the comforts of life for himself and his family, how much more must this prove a hard task to him when provisions are dear and wages are low? Unhappily, of late, his labour has been but scantily remunerated, and had

this been aggravated by a scarcity or high price of provisions, his privations and sufferings must have been great indeed. How kind then, has Providence been to him, in remedying, in some degree, by natural causes, the evils arising from an artificial state of trade and manufacture, in lessening, by the fertility of the fields, the misery produced by excess of competition in the commercial market! And how peculiarly seasonable was this, at a period when disease and death were drying up the ordinary sources, and exhausting the ordinary means of subsistence and comfort! Surely "the Lord has been executing only righteous judgment, and even in the midst of wrath has been remembering mercy." His hand, indeed, is not directly perceived in covering the fields with plenty, any more than in removing the Pestilence, and as to both mercies, the thoughtless and the unbelieving may refuse to acknowledge or "regard the operation of his hand," and rather account for both by mere human and ordinary instrumentality; but the reflecting and the pious will own that they alike proceed from the kind interposition of Heaven, working by earthly agencies, partly known and visible, and partly secret and unseen. They will unite with David, in saying of the productiveness of the earth, "Thou, O God, crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the vallies also are covered with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing;" and with Moses, as to the abundance of Isaac's fields, "Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received, in the same year, a hundred fold: and the Lord blessed him."

See, then, my friends, that you glorify God, by offering unto him thanksgiving, not of the lip merely, but of the heart, and through the channel of the Redeemer's merits and mediation, by which alone it can be acceptable, both for the blessing of an unusually good harvest, and for that of the removal from your district, and the general abatement, through the country, of the desolating pestilence. He cannot, indeed, be made more glorious, or more happy, by such thanksgiving, but still they are due to him from you his creatures, on whom he has lavished his kindness, and they are the natural and appropriate indications of the existence of the feeling of gratitude in the heart. Thus does a child act toward a worthy parent—an orphan towards a faithful guardian—a scholar towards a kind and useful master—a prisoner towards a gener-

ous deliverer—a patient towards a skilful, attentive, and successful physician. And much more does it become us to pour out the sentiments and affections awakened in our bosoms, by the deliverances and gifts of Providence, in suitable expressions of praise to him from whom they flow, and flow so freely and generously. "Whoso thus offereth praise," at once acquits himself of an incumbent obligation, and "glorifies God."

But, besides this mode of honouring God, namely, by offering unto him thanksgiving, and that publicly, as well as privately, when the mercies received have been of a public and common nature, the text also requires us "to pay our vows unto the Most High." This has a particular reference to the solemn promises we made, and purposes we formed in the time of our distress, and which, when that distress has been removed, it becomes us to fulfil. These, in the present case, were generally to forsake our sins, and to serve God more faithfully than we had previously done. Viewing the distress as a divine judgment, on account of abounding iniquity, we were, or should have been, at pains to ascertain our individual share in it, to repent of it, and to resolve to turn unto the Lord in new obedience, to live hereafter to his praise, should we be spared to do so. We were, in all our religious exercises, understood to be making confession of sin, personal and relative, as what merited and brought down the chastening rod of Heaven, and now we are required to show the sincerity of that confession, by hating and abandoning whatever we know to be our besetting transgression; and we were understood by these exercises to be in search of a mercy, even the preservation of our lives amid the prevailing mortality, that we might have space and opportunity for more diligently preparing for the world to come, and now having obtained that mercy, we are required and expected to employ our spared and prolonged existence in this intended preparation. All, no doubt, did not make even a profession of such acknowledgment of sin, and resolution of amendment amid the general solemnity and alarm which prevailed. Many, we fear, were deaf to the warning voice of God, and would not, even by his terrible judgments, be brought to know him as revealed in the gospel, so that their hearts were hardened, rather than softened, and, "because sentence has not been speedily" and completely "executed against their evil works, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil." They are now as we see and hear of many, proceeding from one degree of impiety, dissipation, profligacy

and mischief to another, alike in mad defiance of the divine power and justice lately manifested, and in ungrateful disregard of the divine forbearance and mercy now displayed, until they fill up the measure of their iniquity, and then, unless the grace of God prevents, they will be visited with swift destruction. They have been unawed and unreformed by the terrors of the Lord, and they are now "despising the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance," and thus, if they continue to do so, "they will after their hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Oh, that while the day of their merciful visitation lasts, they would be led by the providence, the word, and the grace of God, to repent, that they may not perish, to believe and obey the gospel, that they may be saved!

But, we trust, there were many who, during the late calamity, really felt and lamented their past carelessness, in regard to religion, or their positively unholy principles and practices, and sincerely purposed, through divine strength, if spared, to be more attentive to the one, and wholly to abandon the other; to seek with more earnestness and diligence the one thing needful, and "to deny themselves unto all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" and that there were others, the true people of God, who perceived and lamented their manifold deficiencies, much unfruitfulness, and occasional backslidings, and who resolved, if they survived the visitation, to aim, in a dependence on divine strength, at greater consistency, and higher eminence of Christian character, to do more for the glory of God, the cause of Christ, the good of souls, and their own well-being, than they had previously done. Let, then, both these classes of persons remember their solemn engagements, and be solicitous to fulfil them; this will be the best evidence of the sincerity with which they entered into them, and of their gratitude for the mercy with which it may be, in answer to their petitions, they and others have been visited. Having made, let them now pay, their vows unto the Most High, and having glorified him, as the last verse of this Psalm expresses it, by offering him praise for his preserving goodness, let them, now, as the same verse declares, "order their conversation aright, and then to them God will show his salvation," both in this and the future world.

There is one sin, against which, in reference to the present dispensation and the present season, I would especially caution you all, that of Intemperance. It was this sin, you are aware, which seems to have been a special object of the divine rebuke in the late afflictive dispensation, intemperance having particularly predisposed to attack by the disease, and rendered its progress more rapid, and its fatality more certain. There were many, no doubt, of whom, from their tender age, and sober habits, this could not be affirmed: but, still, as to a great number, the fact was too obvious to be disputed. Bear this, then, in mind, whenever you either feel disposed, or are tempted by others to go to excess; and beholding Heaven's wrath imprinted on the vice, flee from even the appearance of it, as you would, if possible, from the plague itself. Recollect, too, that while Providence has marked it out, both by extraordinary and ordinary dispensations, as the subject of punishment even in this world, the word of God solemnly denounces it as being so heinous in his sight, that it will, if unpented of, exclude from the kingdom of Heaven. And at this particular season of the year, when indulgence in spirituous liquors is more general, and the temptations to excess are more frequent and insinuating, be particularly watchful that you be not ensnared. Let your moderation in the use of every lawful comfort be known unto all around you, seeing that the Lord is at hand, as your present witness, and as your coming Judge.

There is one duty, too, especially suggested by the other mercy we are this day acknowledging, and appropriate to the present season, that of charity. Having partaken of the divine liberality, we are called on to dispense out of it, and in imitation of it, to the relief of the necessities of our poorer brethren. There are many of them who, although in a measure benefited by the abundance and cheapness of provisions, still fare but scantily every day. Be you, therefore, whose outward circumstances are more comfortable, mindful of their privations, and by your public and private beneficence, as the Lord has prospered you, be forward to lessen them. "He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord." "By Christ," says the Apostle, "let us offer the sacrifices of praise continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good, and to communicate, forget not for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. T. CHALMERS, D.D., Edinburgh.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BRODIE, A.M., Glasgow.

ON THE SMOOTH THINGS BY WHICH MEN ARE APT TO BE
DECEIVED ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, GLASGOW,

By the Rev. T. CHALMERS, D.D.,

Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh

"Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."—ISAIAH xxx. 10.

I PROPOSE in the following discourse to instance a few of those deceits and those smooth things which teachers may address to the people who love to be deceived, or wherewith the people themselves lay a flattering unction to their own souls. The first of these which, though not generally ranked among the smooth things, I hold to be the universal deceit, and that in virtue of which we so magnify the present world, give such an exaggerated importance to things present and things sensible, regard time as if it had all the worth and endurance of eternity, and look on eternity as a thing of remote and shadowy insignificance, the care and consideration of which may be indefinitely postponed. This is the false security of all those who make the world their all, who account it their precious and enduring portion on this side of time. It is sometimes ministered to in sermons, and particularly by those clergymen who expatiate much on the respect of good neighbourhood, on the wealth and prosperity of this life, or on other temporal blessings, as great persuasives to a life of virtue; and many are the sons of affluence who minister thus deceitfully to themselves, and, like the man in the parable, say, "Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry." Now this is a delusion which we would do well in giving no rest to, but should assail by all the arguments of reason and scripture. Our hearers should be reminded, at every turn of the rapid flight of time, of death, and of judgment, and of eternity. They should be told again and again of this, for, however often it be come back upon, men let it slip into forgetfulness, and upon them it comes always once more in the character of a new lesson they have

yet to learn. They are the better of being again and again told, that even as manhood is come, so old age will come, and the last sickness will come, and the very last look they will ever cast on their acquaintances will come, and the agony of parting breath will come, and the time for the coffin that is to enclose them will come, and that hour when the company assembled will carry them to the churchyard will come, and that moment when they shall be thrown into the grave will come, and the spreading of the green sod over it—all, all will come, and in a few short years the minister who now speaks, and the people who now listen, will be carried to their long home. It is just that wealth and worldliness should be taught of their flattering hopes, and on this most levelling of all arguments, the argument of death; they who have even the greatest demand for smooth things from the preacher, of all others ought not to be spared. They should be impressively told, that they are building their chief good upon a foundation that is perishable, that they are labouring for one portion only which will be speedily wrested from them—they are labouring for a portion in this world's substance, and in the possession of it they shall have their reward; but in regard to the substance which endureth, as for it they never laboured, so it they will never acquire. They have thought to be arrayed in perishable glory, and flutter for an hour in earthly grandeur, but that hour will soon come to its termination, and death shall leave all possessions untouched, but will lay his hard and resistless hand on the possessor. The house may stand in castellated pride for generations, but, alas! perhaps in half a generation, death may shoot his unbidden way

Respecting this Sermon, see Note at bottom of p. 12, Vol. II.

to the innermost apartment, and without spoiling the Lord of his property, he will spoil the property of its Lord. Men yield, and perish, and fall like useless and forgotten things away from it. It is thus that death smiles in contempt at all human aggrandizement, he lays hold of the occupier, not the things occupied, and this is complete deprivation to him. He does not seize on the wealth, but lays his hard and resistless hand on the owner, and turns the soul adrift on the cheerless waste of an endless and neglected eternity. So much for the first of these smooth things that attaches to what may be called the carnality of our nature.

Now the second of these smooth things which may be addressed from the pulpit, or which men of themselves address to their own consciences, is a meagre and superficial imagination of their guilt, and proportionally to this, a slight apprehension of their danger. They hear a great deal of guilt and corruption and liability to a violated law, but they know not what they have done that should land them in so frightful a consummation. They know not how it is that they should be doomed to eternal misery. They will admit that they have failings, but nothing commensurate to the punishment of hell. There may be some desperadoes in wickedness, a few men, stubborn-hearted men, of fiend-like atrocity, whom the children of this world so little resemble, that the world, that all, would shudder at them. These may be fit inmates of that dire pandemonium, but surely, as to those kind and companionable men of our own daily walk, with whom we exchange the offices of hospitality and the smiles of benignity and good-will, you could not assimilate their guilt with that of the daring outcast who passes through life in utter recklessness of all its duties and decencies. This cause of peace is distinct from the former cause. It is a judicial principle that is quite current among men that are at peace, because they do not see that theirs is at all a guilt so heinous as to bring down upon it the burden of a wounded conscience, but they see a peace which is no peace, for there is in all this a very complete delusion. For a man to be executed he must have outraged the laws of society. Now, if men have acquitted themselves in a tolerable way, what, they will think, have they to fear? But there is another relation to which belong distinct duties, we mean the relation in which man stands, not to each being of his own species, but to the Being who created him. He may have disengaged himself of all he owes to his fellows on earth, and yet be utterly unmindful of what he owes to heaven. He may have a liking to his fellow-men, and yet have felt no attraction to him who is the great Creator and Preserver of men. There may be many a close and mutual reciprocation of mutual esteem and tenderness, and yet the whole of this terrestrial society be in a state of utter disruption from Him who is at once the source and centre of the created universe. The matter of this world might retain its cohesion, but, loosened from its attraction to the sun, it becomes an outcast from the movements of the great mundane system. This is precisely the case with the men of this world. They have broken their affinity to God. They retain many of their affinities to each other, but they live in a general departure from God. It is experimentally true, that the men of compassion and cruelty, who are so differently affected at the sight of distress, may be in the same state of practical indifference to God. It is in the spirit of sound philosophy that humanity, with all her complexional varieties of character between one specimen and another, may be throughout impregnated with the deep spirit of ungodliness. This is the representation of that Scripture which speaks to us from heaven. When brought to the bar of public opinion, of social and conventional morality among men, you may be fully and honourably acquitted, yet when brought to the bar of higher jurisprudence, there may be laid on you the burden of an overwhelming condemnation. Then ungodliness stands forth, and then the Being who made you takes up His own cause; and then the question is made, not of the claims which men have upon you, but of those peculiar claims which God has upon you. Then you are met with the question, what have you done unto God? In reference to the moralities which custom enjoins, there is perhaps not an earthly tribunal before which you might not stand. In reference to that transcendent morality which the gospel enjoins, man's boasted righteousness melteth away. This language is not too strong for the guilt and turpitude of that enormity wherewith humanity is chargeable, yet the majority of our world are all insuspicious of having a heart so vile and enormous. When a son feels a scowl on his countenance, or a disregard in his heart towards his earthly parent, you then can readily admit

that no constrained obedience of the hand can atone for the disaffection of the heart; and the parent now feels it the sorest agony of nature, that he should have brought up a family who do not love him. Then neglect has a painful effect upon him. Yes, we are capable of feeling the utmost indignation when an earthly parent is thus robbed of that moral property which belongs to him: and how then shall the far more emphatical obligation to a Father who is in heaven be regarded? What can be made of that great human family which has cast off the allegiance of their hearts from him, and turned every one to his own way? Do ye call it nothing that man, if not lifting up the cry of positive rebellion, should be losing all sense of his own universal regardlessness? What think you of man walking through life so heedlessly and independent of his Creator, receiving from his hand the inspiration and breath he draws, but with an habitual separation of the soul from him—nourished from his cradle to his grave, by the gifts of an all sustaining providence, and reckless all the while of the giver—selfishly revelling in the midst of the thousand gratifications, but without any gratitude to Him who has poured forth such luxuriance—being every hour under the guardianship of a God who watches over him, and yet with his own eyes almost continually averted from him—looking abroad upon a glorious panorama, but without the recognition of his unseen benefactor—inhaling fresh delight through every organ of his sentient economy, yet having all his senses steeped, as it were, in forgetfulness of that great Being who has so adapted him to the theatre which he occupies, that the air, the water, the earth, and all the elements of surrounding nature are administering to his enjoyment! You know how is denounced the ingratitude of a child to his earthly parent; and is there no denouncement against the ingratitude to our unseen, but constant benefactor? You know how to feel for the agony of a parent's wounded bosom; and is there nothing in that voice which says, Behold I have stretched forth my hand, and no man regarded? With what feelings should we regard the guilt of creatures who have dishonoured their Creator? the deep criminality of that soul that has departed from its God? I consider the acceptance of this smooth thing as the greatest bar in the way of gaining acceptance to man from the ordinances of religion. If people are under the imagination that there is a slight disease,

they will be satisfied with a very slight remedy, and the connexion between the application of a slight remedy, and the failure of the cure is obvious. That man will not see his need of a severe application, who does not see his disease to be of an aggravated nature. He will only consent to a cure that will be superficial also—and it is with the hurt of the soul, as with the hurt of the body, the malady may be fatal, but if the patient think not so, he will be glad to put out of the way the very mildest of sanatives. And thus it is with those who slightly and smoothly feel the hurt of their own souls. They will not go to the physician with them. The Lamb of God tells them to wash out their sins in his blood, and beckons their approach to that fountain of perfection which has been opened in the house of Judah; but they care not for the virtue of that atonement through which the foulness of guilt may be done away, and still less for the operation of that regenerating power which shall reach the heart, and turn all its affections from the world unto God. They will look for safety in another way than by a dark and dreary passage of spiritual distress, than in a translation into the marvellous light of the Gospel, and than by a general reformation of character, so as to form them a peculiar people, whose converse is in heaven, and whose great business on earth is to perfect their holiness. They would, therefore, decline the whole question of their eternity, or take their own way of salvation, and wish upon a slender reformation to get to heaven as comfortably as they can.

Now, it strikes me, that this second is very nearly connected with the third of the smooth things which I shall instance. A man who feels his disease so slight, will be satisfied with a very slight remedy; and accordingly the remedy which men are satisfied with, is resting on the general mercy of God. God is represented as a Being full of tenderness, thus making it the whole character of the Godhead, and in this way lulling themselves into a deceitful security—not thinking of one set of attributes, justice, truth, and righteousness, but keeping these in the background, and bringing in the foreground, God being of universal tenderness and benignity, and who will not be severe on the follies of his poor erring creatures. The third, then, of the smooth things, is a false trust in the general mercy of God. They who are under this delusion, look unto God as a God of tenderness, and nothing else. In the employment of the

imagery of domestic life, they ascribe to Him the fondness rather than the authority of a Father. In the ingenuity of their imagination there is not the slightest approach to severity, and far less sternness of character. There is but one expression they will tolerate, that of gentleness and complacency—all else is banished from their creed, and is no sooner offered to their notice, than all their antipathies are put in arms against it. The smile of an indulgent Deity is that with which they constantly regale themselves, while the scowl of an indignant Deity is that upon which they would most carefully shut their eyes. They would admit of no other aspect of religion than that of uniform blessedness, and they appeal to all that is mild and merciful. They look on the soft and flowery landscape, or towards that evening sky behind the inimitable touches of whose loveliness one could almost wish to rest, and infer all that is benignant in the Creator. Confining our prospects to the realities with which earth is peopled, and leaving the fields of poesy, and viewing the waving field or placid lake, it is most readily thought, that surely he from whose creating touch all this loveliness has arisen, must himself be altogether gracious, benignant, and merciful. At present, we do not stop to observe, that if the divinity is to be interpreted by the spirit of nature, nature has earthquakes, hurricanes, and thunders, as well as the other things on which they love to dwell, but we hold it of more importance to remark, that the delusion which is thus fostered, is not confined to the sons and daughters of poetry. It is a delusion that may be recognised in humble life, and which we believe to be of standing operation on our most untutored peasantry. I have often heard from people in humble life, such expressions as, we are poor frail creatures, and God never made us to die. There is a disposition even among the poorest of society to build upon the goodness of the divine character. They ascribe a certain facility of temperament to Heaven's sovereign, a sort of easy good nature of which they avail themselves. They fondly dwell on the maxim, that God is ever ready to pardon. It is this beholding of the goodness, without along with it the severity of God, that lulls the human spirit into a fatal complacency with its own state and prospects. It is this in virtue of which man may take to himself the privilege of sinning just as much as he pleases. From this fearful state of relaxation arise this dislike for a religion of gloom, and this demand for a religion of cheerful-

ness and pleasure. It is thus that men keep out of view the holiness, and justice, and high sovereign state which compose the awfulness of the character of Deity. It is this that serves to break down the fence between obedience and sin, to nullify all moral government, and, by tampering as it does with the authority of the divine jurisprudence, to overspread the face of our world with a deep and erroneous security, at the very time that each may be walking in the counsel of his own heart. Now, this delusion requires very strenuous management on the part of the minister who is faithful, for its exposure. In expounding the character of God, and more especially his ways to men, the faithful minister cannot too frequently enter his protest against the smooth thing which I have noticed. He cannot too loudly and frequently maintain to his hearers, that there is a righteousness on the part of God—that there is a law which will not be trampled upon—that there is a lawgiver that will not be insulted—that there is a throne of high jurisprudence that is guarded and upheld by all the secrets of truth, and a voice of authority of which we are told that heaven and earth shall pass away, ere one of its words pass away. In the economy of the government under which we sit, there is no compromise with sin—the face of God is unchangingly set against it. There is no toleration with God for what is impure or unholy. There may an access be found in his goodness towards the sinner, but towards the sin there is nothing save unsparing warfare. Sitting, as he does, in lofty and unapproachable sacredness, he cannot feel the least toleration for sin, but in that way in which his justice shall be vindicated. And surely, my brethren, were we to read the Bible, we would be convinced that these views accord with the real nature of God. What displays, for example, have we in Scripture history of God's hatred of sin, from which the august Being who presides over the world has never once been known to change! In the whole history of God's ways, we cannot light upon a single instance of his falling back from the severity of justice—not from the hour of the one transgression of our first parent—not from the flood which rained down from heaven to wash away wickedness from the face of a world that Heaven could no longer tolerate—not from the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai, when the thunder and lightnings gave awful demonstration of its authority—not from the entrance of Israel into the pro-

mised land, when God, to avouch the truth and terror of his judgments, gave forth his edict to exterminate the nations who were before him—not from the subsequent dealings of many centuries with his own perverse children among whom he sent famine and pestilence, and against whom all his prophecies of evil were felt; and, lastly, not from that terrible period when the Jewish economy was swept away, and even the cries of a compassionate Saviour did not avert the approaching overthrow. In all this there is a lesson for us. How awful are the threats of Heaven against impurity! Let us then beware of laying any flattering unction to our own souls. But while we thus expose the vanity of this confidence in the general mercy of God, the Gospel mercy cannot be too freely and fully and affectionately urged on the hearts of sinners.

I do not like to pass from the 3d to the 4th delusion, with the view of exposing it, without one passing reference, at least, to the sure and infallible way in which all who put their trust in God's mercy, on the footing on which he proposes it, will most certainly be saved. You should be told, then, that though God is a God whose justice must be vindicated, it is not because of his delight in the sufferings of his creatures, but because of his justice, and holiness, and truth. His delight is in the happiness of that sentient nature which he himself has formed, and except it be to the injury of those high moral attributes, he ever rejoices in scattering the fruits of his beneficence over a grateful and rejoicing family. When he is vindictive it is because of the righteousness of his character, and because the stability of a righteous character demands it. Could he so manage it as that this lofty connexion would not suffer by it, could the sacredness of the Godhead, of which so direct a manifestation is given in his work of vengeance, be carried forward to a work of mercy, then would we be assured that he who has no pleasure in the death of his children, after such a way had been opened up and cleared of all its impediments, would appear alone causing his grace and goodness clearly to descend and spread over even to the utmost limits of his sensible creation. It is this which distinguishes the evangelical mercy, which is gratuitously held out to the acceptance of all, from that general mercy in which so many confide, but by which none can be saved. Were we asked, in brief definition, to state what that is which embraces in the Gospel its essential characteristic, we

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should say a mercy in awful conjunction with righteousness. It magnifies and does honour to the law in which it cancels the guilt that has been incurred. All the exhibition that God could have given of his character is still given unmutated. The mercy of the gospel mixes with the truth of the law.

The fourth and last, and here I shall be brief, of the smooth things which I shall instance, is that which many, and some of those who are called the professing people of God, love to be told of from the pulpit, or to cherish, in the secret complacency of their own hearts, a certain antinomian security which they connect with the doctrines of grace and justification by faith. This is a delusion which cannot be too frequently protested against. It stands opposed to all the tenor of the New Testament, and Christianity is everywhere represented as a busy, laborious, ever-doing, and pains-taking service; and, therefore, when we see people reposing on their orthodoxy, and making use of it as a soporific to lull themselves, we should ply them with questions founded on the true representation which the New Testament gives. Are they running so as that they may obtain? Are they fighting so as that they may gain a hard won victory? Are they striving so as that they may force an entrance at the strait gate! Where, we ask, are there any symptoms of warfare? There is a whole host of people who do stand forth and signalize themselves as the religious of the day; but amid all their appearance and profession where is the practical result? Where is the strenuous, the sustained effort that cometh out from the heart and willing hands? How few are there who are labouring for heaven, as if pressed with the conviction that without labour they will not obtain it, and that even after the utmost labour they will scarcely reach the goal? Surely, if they proceeded on this view of the matter, the appearance would be that of men upon the stretch, of men in a state of constant and great urgency, and who are beset with many obstacles. Now, we scarcely meet with this degree of intensity, not certainly among all, if indeed among any, of those who are called the professing Christians. They have more the semblance of men who have been lulled asleep by the sound of a pleasant song, than of men roused to action. Their orthodoxy acts rather as a sedative than a stimulant. They are more like men under the power of a lethargy than in

readiness for service, having their loins girt and their lamps burning. Christianity is deeply injured whenever it is imagined that all this activity and labour is not needed. They are sadly misled in creeds who fancy that the death of Christ is that in which the believer has only to rest and do nothing. Instead of this it is the starting post. "Christ gave himself for us," says the Apostle, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The faith of the gospel so enlarges the heart as to make him on whom it has acted run in the way of its commandments. The work which is given a Christian to do is not a work done so easily that it may be lightly, carelessly, or superficially gone about, but of such difficulty that they who do accomplish it, accomplish it scarcely. Keep thy heart with all diligence. To keep a strict and resolute guardianship over the inner man amid the temptations by which he is plied from without, and most insidiously operated on from within—to follow after peace when surrounded by provocatives for war—to maintain charity—to be patient under calumny

and injustice, and master that most difficult of all achievements, the love of enemies—to put away all the incitements of sensuality, is at once difficult and arduous. In addition to the labours of the unseen spirit we have to labour in our closets, in our families, in the ordinances of religion, in attention to offices of social intercourse, in the visitations of liberality and kindness. These are the toils of Christianity here. These are the treasures laid up for us in heaven, but not as forming our title-deeds to the glorious inheritance of the saints. All the possible acts and virtues of humanity cannot build up a claim, but they form an indispensable character—they compose not that imputed righteousness of Christ, but that personal righteousness of his disciples, which is their essential qualification. These mark the work and labour of Christianity such, that it scarcely can be done. These give emphatic truth to the saying, "That the righteous can scarcely be saved."—Awake, therefore, if you would escape the fearfulness, the doom of those who say Lord, Lord, while they do not the will of their Father who is in heaven. I add no more. Amen.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP DELINEATED;

A SERMON PREACHED AT KILMARNOCK, ON SABBATH, 14TH APRIL, 1833, AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW RELIEF MEETING-HOUSE.

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Jesus saith unto her, woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father; but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."—JOHN iv. 21, 23.

WE are informed, in the commencement of this chapter, that when our Lord was passing through Samaria, the disciples went for a supply of provisions into the town of Sychar, while he waited at Jacob's well in the immediate neighbourhood. As he rested there in the heat of the day, fatigued with his journey, a Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water, from whom he requested that she would "give him to drink." This request so little in the manner and spirit of the country to which his dress and accent bespoke him to belong, for the Jews had an implacable enmity towards the Samaritans, filled her with a surprise which she did not attempt to conceal. The surprise was increased on hearing the answer given to the question so much agitated between the two nations, and which, on discovering his prophetic character, she put to him, Whether Gerizim or Jerusalem had the preferable

claim as a place of worship. Instead of assigning the superiority to either, an exclusive claim was denied to both. This accords with the representations which the Scriptures every where give of the liberal spirit of the christian system, in conformity to which the disciples of Christ are, at this moment, assembled in so many different places, under such a diversity of outward circumstances, with the same expectations of acceptance.

The reflections which this subject suggests, are at no time misplaced, and cannot certainly be so regarded in the circumstances in which I now address you. These circumstances are honourable to the spirit and enterprise of the members of this church. There may be, and there often has been, an ambition for architectural display in edifices appropriated to divine worship, to which little commendation is due

Among those who adopt the voluntary principle in the maintenance of religion, this is not likely to be offensively prevalent—and it will probably be less so, than it has been in other quarters. When municipal funds shall be under proper control, they may find a different and a more profitable direction. The error, however, in this case, to which the dissenting portion of the population has been most liable, is on the side of indifference and neglect. From this charge you are free. You have enlarged your church accommodation in a way equally creditable to your liberality and your taste. The reproach which has been cast on dissenters, that it is “the religion of barns,” would not suggest itself to one placed either in your situation or mine.—But these are matters of subordinate importance. The appropriate beauty of the house of God, is the beauty of holiness. “The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”

I. Let us consider the *negative* description of the character of christian worship—*what it is not*.

1st. It is not *sectarian*.

None present will suppose that I use the epithet *sectarian*, in the sense in which it is often used, as descriptive of those who separate, however conscientiously, from the established forms of the religion of their country. The attribute of Christianity which I have in view, is directly opposed to the narrow feelings which this application of the epithet indicates. Rightly interpreted, it describes a character not confined to any one class of the professors of religion, but extensively prevalent among all. At the period to which my text relates, it was not, as the Jew wished to maintain, exclusively applicable to the Samaritan, nor is it now exclusively applicable to the advocates of dissent. He is the sectary, and he alone, who would introduce into religion the principle of monopoly, who neither sees nor wishes to see any thing good or praiseworthy beyond the limits of his own denomination.—Sectarianism is in the mind rather than in the outward act. There may be no separation from others in the one case, where there is, and where, unless all moral distinctions are to be confounded, there ought to be a separation in the other. To assert that we are not justifiable in withdrawing from the communion of those

whose religious practices and principles we deem unscriptural, would be to represent Protestantism itself as a criminal schism. But our benevolent regards may be cherished towards those from whom we conscientiously separate. Though to us they appear to err, charity will lead us to hope that, in many cases, the errors are not wilful, and not inconsistent with general religious sincerity. In this world we “see darkly as through a glass.” Even inquiring minds, with equal degrees of candour and zeal for the truth may, in religious matters, arrive at very different conclusions. Party distinctions as such, and separate from the motives in which they originate, and by which they are sustained, are of no importance in the sight of God; and experience shows, that they are but equivocal tests of character. In communions the farthest removed from the purity of scriptural requirement, sincere though misguided worshippers may be found. In communions, on the other hand, whose principles and forms are adjusted with a professedly scrupulous regard to the divine injunctions, there may be little of that spirit which imparts to them their chief value in the sight of God. An exclusive religion can never be a scriptural one. Christianity reveals the way in which guilty creatures can be reconciled to God, and every one who, in faith and penitence, has received the proffered remedy, and whose faith operates as a purifying principle, stands accepted in the sight of heaven, whatever misapprehension in regard to subordinate points he may still cherish; and to whatever uncharitable judgment he may on this account be exposed among men, themselves equally fallible and imperfect. “Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father. But the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”

2d. It is not *local*.

An improper estimate of the importance to be attached to particular places was alike the error of the Jew and Samaritan. In the former, this feeling was strengthened by the misapprehension or perversion of the divine direction given to his forefathers, “Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even to his habitation shall ye seek, and thither shalt thou come, and thither ye shall bring your burnt-offerings; and there ye shall eat before the Lord your God.”* To the most scrupulous observance of this injunction, no criminality could attach. It would have been highly presumptuous

tinuous to have offered sacrifice, or to have observed any of the annual festivals elsewhere. The error lay in ascribing an efficacy to the place, independent of the character of the worshipper. An error of the same kind, but with less to justify it, was adopted by the Samaritan. He could not say that there was any divine command directing to the choice of Gerizim, as being particularly suited to the offices of religion. He could say, however, that tradition pointed it out as the spot on which Abraham and Jacob had worshipped. And he attached to it, on this account, a sanctity equal to that which the Jew claimed for the temple at Jerusalem. That the same superstitious spirit should still be seen among the votaries of false religion, is natural. The Hindoo, performing his weary pilgrimage to the temple of his idol divinity, and the Mohammedan offering a similar tribute to the tomb of his prophet, are spectacles which the spirit of their respective systems would have led us to expect. But what shall we say to opinions and usages equally superstitious among the professors of Christianity? What shall we say to the religious value which was formerly, and is still attached, to a visit to the local scenes of our Saviour's miracles, and sufferings, and death? What shall we say to those religious pilgrimages which are made to spots far less remarkable? In what light, I might add, are we to view the religious veneration which, even among Protestants, is sometimes paid to consecrated buildings? It is proper, where practicable, that particular edifices should be appropriated to the worship of God; but no peculiar efficacy belongs to these places. Even Zion, with all its sublime associations and solemn remembrances, has now ceased to be suered. It is on the spirit, not the local situation of the worshipper, that his acceptance depends. "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father. But the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

3d. It is not *external*.

To the mere forms of religion a very undue importance was attached, both by Jews and Samaritans. This was especially the case with the former. There was a conformity to the divine requirements in the constitution of the Jewish priesthood, and a splendour in their temple-services, which could not be claimed for the rival system. The improper spirit which these tended to cherish, is too congenial to the depravity of the heart, to be confined to a particular

period or people. A dependence on mere outward observance, and, when it is possessed, a glorying in ritual splendour are equally the error of the superstitious part of the professors of Christianity. The same proud feelings with which the Hebrew worshipper formerly regarded the architectural magnificence of the temple, and the graduated ranks and gorgeous vestments of its ministers, find a counterpart in the feelings still cherished both by Catholics and Protestants, towards the imposing forms of cathedral worship. The same boastful terms on which the Jew was accustomed to speak of the one, are still employed with reference to the other. It may be justly questioned, however, whether these services are entitled to the very lowest species of merit which has been claimed for them—that of being adapted to impress the imagination, and whether it is not at first only, and on the minds of strangers, that this effect is produced. It is not those whose forms of worship are most simple, who have least of what may be called the poetry of religion. It is the truths presented to the mind, rather than the forms exhibited to the eye, by which the imaginative faculty is cultivated. A Protestant peasantry will, perhaps, be found in this respect, to have the vantage ground over a Catholic. When a popular delineator of the character of our covenanting ancestors, describes the imagination of even the illiterate part of them, as imparting to every thing the colouring of religion, there is more of truth in the representation, than there is in some of his other statements respecting men who, from the virulence with which their memories have been assailed, may be considered as still victims of religious and political intolerance. Be this as it may, of one thing there can be no doubt, resting as it does on the stubborn evidence of facts, that the feelings produced by mere outward means of excitement—by the majestic tones and lofty modulations of the organ, the splendid habiliments of the priests, and the delightful chanting of singers, differ in no respect from the emotion produced by any other pompous ceremony, and are not necessarily connected with the feelings of devotion. The supplications of penitence, the humility of faith unfeigned, the confidence of christian hope, and the love of God in the heart, are the sweetest sounds, and the most delightful sight, and the most exquisite feelings which can enliven our devotion. But they are impressions which a pompous ritual cannot impart, and for which, when wanting

It can be no substitute. "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father. But the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

II. Let us consider the *positive* description of the character worship—what it *is*.

1st. It is *spiritual*.

The mere homage of the lips, were it known to be so, would not be accepted by one man from another. The language of insincerity, however flattering, is justly considered as disgusting in the common intercourse of life. And it cannot surely be less so, when it is presented to an omniscient God. Even at a time when local and external worship was in its fullest operation, there was evidence sufficient that something more was necessary to acceptance. No language could convey a more striking idea of the immensity of the object of worship, and of the spirituality required in the worshipper, than that employed by Solomon at the dedication of the temple. "Will God, indeed, dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house which I have builded?"* Similar to this was the language which, through Isaiah, was employed by God himself. "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.—Where is the house that ye build for me, and where is the place of my rest? To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite heart, and who trembleth at my word." It is, nevertheless, true, that, in one respect, outward observances had, under the former economy, a value altogether independent of the character of the worshipper. Being intended to prefigure and introduce a higher dispensation, they answered an important end, even when no spiritual qualities were possessed, and no spiritual benefits were received by the offerer. At the time when our Lord held this conversation with the woman of Samaria, the sacrifices which were still observed with all the nicety of ceremonial precision, had lost none of their original typical significance, though, in a great majority of instances, it was custom, not intelligent piety, which dictated the observance. But no such secondary adventitious value belongs to the rites of Christianity. The age of typical institutions is passed. Unaccompanied by the devout feelings of the worshipper, all outward observances are worse than useless. It is not merely the rising incense

and the bleeding victim; even the bended knee and the out-stretched hand, if inward principle is wanting, will be only a solemn mockery. "God is a spirit, and they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth;" in spirit, as opposed to *foras*; in truth, as opposed to shadows.

2d. It is *filial*.

Terror in all ages has been the predominating spirit of idolatrous worship. This was the necessary consequence of the circumstances of the worshippers. With no higher illumination than unassisted reason, conscience tells us that we are sinners. Unassisted reason, however, cannot impart to us the certainty of forgiveness. And if the certainty of this is not possessed, there is nothing to exclude the tormenting dread which must be the inseparable accompaniment of the consciousness of guilt. This feeling is, accordingly, strongly depicted in the outward features of idolatry. Its ceremonies have been principally *deprecatory*, or intended to avert punishment. The sanguinary rites of Moloch, so often referred to in the Old Testament Scriptures, and in which human victims were the offering, have been widely prevalent. Of this revolting character were the Druidical rites of our forefathers in this island. Of the same kind are the religious rites of many heathen nations at this day. Nor is this the character of the rites only. The very hideous forms of their idols (those which have been brought from the South Sea islands, are an example,) are a striking testimony to the fact, that terror is the predominating feeling in the religion of those who are destitute of the light of Divine Revelation.

The same feeling, though in a much smaller degree, characterized the worship of the Jews. Not that that highly privileged people were left in uncertainty respecting the doctrine of forgiveness. In respect of the *mode* of it, their conceptions might be indistinct and imperfect. But there was no obscurity in regard to the *fact*; that being as clearly promulgated under the Jewish economy, as it now is under the Christian. Accompanied, however, as the information was, with so many and such striking displays of sovereignty and power, the feeling of awe was, in most, as prevalent as that of love. It was reserved for Christianity to merge these sterner attributes of the divine character in those that were more attractive, and, by one potent word, to dispel every vestige of terror from the minds of the worshippers. It is not in the relation of a king, sovereign, or master, that you are called on

* 1 Kings viii. 27.

to approach the divinity, but in the endearing relation of a father—a father who seeks only the happiness of his spiritual offspring, and whose character has been rendered palpable by the engaging attributes of Him who is “the impress of his person.” Fear is in this way supplanted by love, and a filial, not a slavish spirit, pervades our devotions.

3d. It is *universal*.

Simple and spiritual in their nature, there is no place where the observances of Christianity may not be performed, and performed with acceptance. The proofs of this are coeval with its origin. How unlike to the spacious halls and the lofty arches of the Jewish temple was the upper room in which the members of the first Christian church were accustomed to meet? Yet it was there that the principal prediction respecting New Testament times was fulfilled—that what was spoken by Joel and reiterated by a greater prophet was verified. “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like unto fire, and it sat upon each of them.” How inferior even to the accommodations of the upper room were the circumstances of Paul and Silas in the prison of Philippi, and of John in the isle of Patmos! But it was in the former of these cases, that the devout exercises of these holy prisoners were heard by God, as well as by their companions in bonds; and it was in the latter case that the privileges of the scraph were conferred on the saint, that the veil was removed from the beloved disciple which concealed things future and things celestial from his sight. We admit that these things occurred in an age, in which the administration of religion was in some respects supernatural, but there was nothing peculiar to that age, in the acceptance of the services of these primitive confessors. This was in no degree connected with the religious character of the *place*. When in later periods the true worshippers of the Father have been similarly situated in regard to outward accommodations, we doubt not but their services have been equally pleasing in the sight of heaven. Far different from the circumstances in which you are now placed was the lot, at a former period, of the godly in our own land. Theirs was not “the religion of Cathedrals,” or “the religion of churches,” or even “the religion of barns.” It was on many occasions the den and the cave

which responded to the sounds of their devotions. But these devotions, springing from faith, and hallowed by suffering, mingled with the hallelujahs of angels, and the anthems of the spirits of the just. Nor are these remarks to be confined to periods of persecution, or to the religious services of those who were its victims. We doubt not that there are thousands at this moment engaged in the undisturbed observance of the same ordinances with ourselves, in places which have been subjected to no forms of ecclesiastical consecration, and which have not been even exclusively appropriated to religious exercises, whose services will come up as “a memorial before God.” And the period, if we mistake not the meaning of prophecy, is fast approaching, when the universal character of Christian worship, will be still farther and more strikingly illustrated, in the *restoration* of that people to whose local religious predilections our text specifically refers. It is not necessary to the fulfilment of the predictions respecting that restoration, that the Jews should literally return to their own land, any more than it is necessary, according to the literal import of some other predictions, that all nations should be assembled for worship in the ancient capital of the Jews. When these wandering outcasts shall look with penitence to Him whom their fathers pierced, their predicted restoration will be effected. In whatever place, or under whatever circumstances they are, they may then be said to be worshippers in Zion, and to be inhabitants of Jerusalem. Spiritual in their nature, their thanksgivings shall be “as incense,” and the lifting up of their hands as the evening and morning sacrifice.

“By foreign streams, they’ll cease to roam,
Nor weeping think on Jordan’s flood;
In every clime they’ll find a home,
In every temple see their God.”

“Neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father; but the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”

1st. In the exercises of God’s house let us guard against a *superstitious* spirit.

The gross superstition of the Jew and Samaritan, to which the text refers, is not the error into which, at the present time, we are most likely to fall. It may be presumed, that there are few or none present who adopt the opinion, that any circumstances of local character, or any forms of ecclesiastical consecration, can

possess or impart any spiritual efficacy. All of us, however, are in danger of laying too much stress upon the mere externals of religion. A very undue importance is often attached to the mere outward act by which we are initiated into the profession of Christianity. There are many who would be shocked at the idea of a child remaining unbaptized, who would feel no compunction in the habitual neglect of all practical solicitude for the spiritual interests of their offspring. Equally unscriptural and delusive is the confidence which is frequently derived from participating in the ordinance of the Supper. To that ordinance it is too common to apply the language, and with the language the ideas, of a Popish ritual, and to suppose that there is a higher degree of acceptance in this than in any other divine appointment; and that this is necessarily connected with the mere act of observing it. These are opinions which the mode of its celebration, and the instructions which accompany it, have not always a tendency to counteract. The difference is palpably striking between the language of those who speak of *high communion sabbaths*, and the phraseology which describes the commemorative rite by the simple designation of "breaking of bread," and which classes it with "the Apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and prayer." We need not say which of the two it is safer to adopt. No greater benefit can be derived from a formal observance of the Supper than from a formal observance of any other institution of the Gospel. The religion of the soul is the soul of religion. If the heart is not right, no ordinance however Scriptural, can be acceptable. If the heart is right, it will give a value to every ordinance of divine appointment.

2d. In the exercises of God's house, let us guard against a *formal* spirit.

To the importance of what are termed the sealing ordinances of our religion, nothing disparaging is intended in the remarks which have been now made. Baptism, whether administered by immersion or affusion, whether an adult or an infant is the subject of it, is an impressive rite. By the application to the body of that element which cleanses from natural defilement, it exhibits to the eye the necessity of the spiritual purification of the soul, and points to the religion, of which it is the introductory ordinance, as being the instrument in the hand of the Spirit of effecting

this purification. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." The lessons symbolically inculcated in the ordinance of the Supper are not less important. The doctrines which it shadows forth and impresses on the mind are of the life of godliness. It is calculated to affect us deeply with the evil of sin, the love and condescension of the Saviour, and our obligations to serve him. But, for this purpose, it must be something more than an outward observance. "Bodily exercise profiteth little." The mere participation of bread and wine is not communicating. The fact which was intended to be exhibited in this commemorative rite must be remembered. The scene of Calvary must be realized. The death of Jesus, not so much in its tragic and sentimental, as in its religious and doctrinal aspect and interest, must be present to our minds. Strangers to these feelings, you are symbolizing with the condemned practices of the church of Corinth. You liken a religious ordinance to an ordinary meal. You do not "discern the Lord's body."

3d. In the exercises of the house of God let us guard against a *bigoted* spirit.

The devotional language and feelings of the first Christian worshippers were eminently Catholic. It was not on those churches only to which the pastors ministered, on which they invoked blessings from on high, but on "all that in every place called upon the name of Jesus Christ, their Lord." We come short of the Catholicism of their language, and still more of the Catholicism of their spirit. In none of the service of the house of God is this deficiency more discernible than in that which of all others required the predominance of opposite feelings. If the fence, as it has been sometimes called, which it is customary to draw round a sacramental table, had been intended to exclude none but those who were wanting in the principles, tempers, and conduct, essential to the character of the Christian, it had been well. We cannot too frequently, or too earnestly, impress on persons of this description, that their commemoration of our Redeemer's death is unwarranted. The *free* communion for which we contend, is not to be confounded with a *promiscuous, indiscriminate* communion. But it is not to the irreligious and immoral that the sentence of exclusion has been confined. In some cases it has been extended to all, however excellent their character, who had not the sectarian impress of the adminis-

trator of the ordinance. It is time that usages so unsuited to our communion exercises should be abolished and forgotten. The table at which you commemorate your redemption, is not *yours*. It is not the table of a sect or of a party. It is the *Lord's*. It was the design, as it is the obvious tendency, of the ordinance of the Supper, to cherish unity of affection—to make us feel, while we outwardly recognise the ties which bind us to the christian brotherhood. We best fulfil the intentions of the divine Appointer of this service—we add equally to the pleasure and profit to be derived from it, when these brotherly feelings are indulged, when, dismissing every bigoted and sectarian sentiment from our hearts, we view it as “the communion of saints”—when our christian affection is as wide as the terms of acceptance—when we can say, with the same sincerity with which the words were originally uttered, “Grace be with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ.” You are insulting, instead of honouring your Redeemer, if you can approach the ordinance of love, without love in your hearts—if you can raise your walls of partition and separation in the very act of commemorating an event which was intended to break them down, and to introduce the faithful of every place and of every name, “through one Spirit unto the Father.”

4th. In the exercises of God's house, let us guard against a *slavish* spirit.”

In those who have no revelation to assure them of forgiveness, the spirit of terror and bondage is what we are led to expect. In some periods of their history, it was not surprising in the Jews themselves. When Sinai exhibited the awful appearances which bespoke a present Deity, when the cloud rested on it, and the thunders rolled, and the lightning played on its hoary summit, we do not wonder that the spectators should have trembled. When a similar manifestation was made to Elijah, in the cave on Horeb, it was natural that he should cover his face with his mantle. Equally natural was it, though it was only in vision, that when the Lord appeared to Isaiah on a throne high and lifted up, he should have exclaimed, “Wo is me, for I am un-

done ; for I am a man of unclean lips.” But this spirit ill becomes us who are called to “the adoption of sons”—who hear not the thunder of an introductory economy, but “the still small voice” of a sublimer dispensation. The trembling apprehensions which would be appropriate in approaching a throne of judgment, befit you not in approaching a throne of grace. Least of all do they befit you in exercises in which more than in any other they prevail—the exercises in which are displayed before you the symbols of your redemption, and the pledges of your forgiveness. It is joy, not terror, which on such an occasion becomes you—joy, that “the flaming sword” has been removed from the entry to the celestial paradise—that we have not “a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ;” who on earth suggested the apology for his disciples, “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,” and whom we can approach in the confidence that, at his Father's right hand, he is still making it for us.

Imagine not, my brethren, that the possession of this filial confidence is the property only of a privileged few of the children of God, and that there must be a long course of religious services before you can be entitled to appropriate the promises on which this confidence is founded. If we wait till we are entitled on the footing of merit to do this, we shall never enjoy the privilege. The exhibition of the divine mercy to sinners, and to backsliders, as well as others, will authorize you to appropriate them immediately, though it is in the spirit of penitence, and in the intention of obedience, that the appropriation is to be made, and though it is only in the practice of obedience that it can be scripturally maintained. Take then to yourselves the comfort which the invitations and promises of the Gospel are so well fitted to impart, and when, in the devotional exercises of this house, you draw near to the Great Object of worship, in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, let it be under the elevating and encouraging recollection that it is to “his Father and your Father, to *his* God and your God.”

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES HENDERSON, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. J. M'KINLAY, D.D., Kilmarnock.

GIVING MORE BLESSED THAN RECEIVING;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE REV. MR. GUNN'S CHAPEL, HOPE STREET, GLASGOW, ON
THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, 14TH APRIL, 1833: IN BEHALF OF THE GLASGOW LADIES'
SOCIETY FOR THE RELIEF OF DESTITUTE AND AGED FEMALES,

By the Rev. JAMES HENDERSON,

Minister of St. Enoch's Church, Glasgow.

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."—ACTS XX. 35.

NONE of us, it may be assumed, my brethren, need to be reasoned into an admission of the duty of bounty to the poor. There are some indeed who have represented it as a duty of imperfect obligation, and of discretionary performance, one which we are very much at liberty to do or leave undone, just as we may choose. But this sentiment can find place in the minds of such only as discard the authority of God's law, and substitute the practice of men as the standard of duty, and the power of men, as its great sanction, in place of God's holy requirements, and his high authority. It may, perhaps, with some truth be said, that as a social virtue it is a duty of imperfect obligation, inasmuch as the laws of society cannot enforce its exercise, as they can enforce the claims of justice. But as a Christian duty it must be owned to be as imperative in its obligation, and as determinate in its exercise, as the most express injunctions of God's word can make it. So reasonable is it withal, that, though the ideas which many entertain of the extent to which they are bound to practise it, seem low and limited, almost all are agreed as to the general principle, that such as have ought to give out of their abundance to such as want; and so much are mankind influenced by this principle, that no man on the one hand, is more the object of general affection and approval, than the liberal giver, and none, on the other hand, is more the object of pity and reproach, than he who appropriates his wealth to his own purposes of self-gratification and self-aggrandizement, and shuts his heart and his hands against the miseries and wants of the afflicted and needy of his brethren. But notwithstanding

ing of this general concurrence of the feelings of men, and acknowledgment of the duty of liberality, there is great reason to believe that the full force of its obligation is not duly felt, and that the high privilege of its exercise is not duly enjoyed. To what else can it be ascribed, that of the many who have the means, so few indulge to any extent in the luxury of doing good—that they hide and hoard all they have, or squander it upon vain, and ambitious, and self-pleasing schemes, while for every Christian or benevolent object they give sparingly, and much below any adequate proportion of their means, or grudgingly, as if every demand made on their bounty, were a more gentle species of extortion, which but for shame alone they would resist! While such are the frequent sentiments and conduct, even of the disciples of the Lord Jesus, it is but too manifest that they have forgotten these words which the Apostle here enjoins them to remember, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." And as this saying involves a principle which bears extensively on our social duty, and our individual enjoyment, it may by God's blessing be useful, and at the present time not unseasonable to be reminded of it, and of the influence which it should ever be allowed to exert on our dispositions and conduct.

Though these words, as most of you may be aware, are not recorded by any of the four Evangelists, it would yet seem, from the manner in which the Apostle has here introduced them, that they were become a familiar saying among the disciples of the Lord Jesus—and withal so important were they in the view of the Apostle, that they find

a place, and form the concluding sentence in his farewell address to the elders of the church of Ephesus. Now, as to us professing disciples of the Lord Jesus, it is to be presumed that none of us will venture to contradict the truth these words assert, and yet it may be feared it is, in regard to many of us, a saying that is professedly assented to, while in the inmost soul it is discredited, and in their life practically set at nought. In fact it were not charity but simplicity, that would lead us to believe after contemplating the general conduct of men, that in their practical opinion, "it is more blessed to give than to receive." It is only on this principle that we can account for the familiar fact that all seem so ready to receive, while so many are reluctant to give, that all rejoice at every accession to their wealth, that few welcome any demands made upon it, that they scheme and toil so assiduously to increase their possessions, but are not, by any means, liberal in devising how they may charitably dispose of them; and while they estimate their happiness by the abundance of good things they possess, they feel and act as if every demand upon them was a proportionate deduction in the amount and means of their personal enjoyment. Nay, not only do these things betray the prevailing sentiment in opposition to that of the Lord Jesus, but men seem to set the suggestions of a general experience in opposition to it, and it is not improbable that some who suppose themselves more shrewd than their neighbours may listen with self-complacent incredulity to this saying, as if experience had made them wiser than to believe the sentiment these words convey. But they must be told, that their experience is pleaded more at the expense of their own characters, than of the subversion of the words of Christ. No doubt these words stand in direct opposition to man's selfish experience—but what then? Our Lord did not accommodate his sayings to the dictates of corrupt and selfish nature. He knew well what was in man, and that every man in whom native selfishness is not subdued, is incapable of the more generous joy derived from the happiness of others, but then he says, according to the principles of eternal truth, that the man who makes self his god, the man to whose interests or gratification all charity must bend and other interests give place, cannot

even understand a principle which recognises interests other and higher than his own. Yet it is not less true that a more enlarged and liberal mind, in whom the power of selfishness has given place to the power of free, and pure, and generous feeling shall be able to appreciate its truth, and to plead his experience in confirmation of it. The comparison, on which the blessedness of giving and receiving is here pronounced, is made between a willing giver, such as our Lord requires, and a needy receiver which most men are, and on this ground the balanced principles of reason, and the results of fair and competent experience may be appealed to in vindication of it.

Let us first compare the dispositions called into exercise in the mind of the giver and receiver. In making this comparison, I would not insinuate any such idea, as that there is nothing but what is mean and unworthy in the mind of the receiver. It is, doubtless, true, that much that is mean and selfish, mingles with the reception of benefits, and that in the case of no small proportion of those who are dependent on the bounty of others, there has been much misconduct which has reduced them to this condition, and has produced a degraded state of feeling that renders them careless of recovering honest independence. Where this is the case the whole mind of the receiver is debased and corrupt. The man is not only lost to honest pride, but what is worse, he must be devoid of virtuous principle. He is in truth a robber of the poor, and one who preys on their portion, to relieve himself from the effects of dissipation or extravagance. But this consideration must not here enter into our comparison; because it is not by any means of necessity the feeling experienced by the receiver. If we are appointed to a dependent state without cause of our own, and in spite of our best means, or endeavour to avoid it, or rise above it, then there is nothing mean in our feeling of receiver. Dependence is indeed the condition of the creature. We have none of us that we have not received. Many of our purest feelings are those we derive, not as givers, but as receivers; but still, without disparaging these, we cannot hesitate to declare that the giver holds a higher place, and in the affections suitable to it must experience proportionally a higher and purer happiness. That compassion and generosity are feelings

of a higher order than those of selfish enjoyment, or even of grateful affection, must be readily admitted. To be insusceptible, to be incapable of gratitude is deemed monstrous; but tender compassion, and rich, and self-denying liberality are regarded as indications of a higher order of excellence which ordinary men are not expected eminently to exemplify. In the ordination of divine providence, the blissful tendency of any affection we cherish, bears a close proportion to the degree of moral excellence it involves. This superiority is not a mere matter of taste or fancy, but a real and essential superiority, independent of any varieties of human opinion, and fixed, and unchangeable as the perfections of God. Consider then the disposition to give, as an unfailing treasure of refined and lofty delight. This implies a sympathy in the feelings of others which produces in the possessor a participation in all their joys. Even though the power of giving be limited, yet the principle of benevolence prompting to a measure of beneficence equal to their means, is under no such limit, and being without envy of those who receive it, appropriates the bliss which is occasioned by all the liberality that the rich exercise, and by all the benefits the poor receive. If to this disposition again be added the power to give, the happiness connected with it is yet more increased. It is not now abridged by the tale of want which cannot be relieved—and who does not value above all selfish joys the pleasantness of making misery to vanish from the hearts and homes of his fellow-creatures, of raising up a heart sunk beneath a load of grief, of brightening the countenance clouded and overcast with care and sadness? Let the largest receiver be heard to describe his joy, and the liberal giver be heard to tell his, and let the contrast proclaim the truth of the Lord Jesus. Let the rich man in the Gospel whose ground brought forth plentifully, be brought to utter to us the experience of the former. “He thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods, and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.” Let Job, again, the friend of the poor, be brought to declare the experience of the latter. “When the ear heard me, then it

blessed me, and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.” Let unbiassed reason now decide, which of the two bespeaks the truest and purest blessedness—the indulged, yet unsatisfied favourite of fortune, as the world calls him—or the diligent and self-denying helper of the needy—the pamperer of his own overgrown appetites, or the supplier of the wants of his needy brethren—the self-congratulating possessor of increasing opulence, and, who, finding no present satisfaction, delusively promises himself future ease—or the generous disposer of wealth, who applies what was not needed for his personal comfort, to make by his bounty, feet to the lame, eyes to the blind, a father to the poor. Who does not despise the feelings of the one? Who does not envy the feelings of the other? The giver occupies in some degree the place of God. If the universe of beings is depending on his beneficence, in that he openeth his hand and satisfieth the desires of every living thing, so does the bountiful giver, giving willingly, and from the heart, and wisely for the good of others, become assimilated to the character and partaker even now of the joy of the Lord.

But I observe, in the second place, that it is more blessed to give than to receive, inasmuch as giving is productive of greater good. He who receives, in many instances benefits himself, and his family perhaps, too, may be partakers of the benefits. In the humility with which he submits to the condition of a pensioner, he may teach his fellow-men gratitude to his God. But the conduct and example of the giver is greatly more beneficial still. He first benefits the receiver; the timely ministration of his abundance has supplied the wants, and relieved the cares, and dried the tears, and soothed the sorrows of the recipient. Next he benefits himself; the Christian giver, who gives of his goods to feed the poor, doth in exchange for the corruptible treasure acquire of the true riches. By this he confirms in himself the grace of love—he strengthens in himself the habit of giving freely as he has received freely—and thus while he who receives has so many ties to earth, which bind down his affections to earth, and make him poor for all he receives, the man who

gives, improves his own soul and enriches it with most precious and indispensable treasure. Then, again, he does good, besides, to the world around. It is not so easy to estimate the effects of liberality upon the many who witness, as upon the few who experience it. When unconfined by considerations of local fame or personal desert, and extending diffusively to all within the sphere of its influence, it is like the love of God which extends to the evil and unthankful, as well as to the good, and to strangers and enemies, as well as to friends. When seen, I say in this lofty and self-denying and diffusive exercise, so amiable is the man, and so ornamental to his religion, that the effects are incalculably beneficial. He not seldom wins the heart and constrains the admiration of the enemies of God and his people. He provokes to emulation, and quickens to deeds of similar beneficence, the more reluctant and selfish professors of the Gospel, and hence thanksgivings abound in his behalf to God. And is it no happiness to acquire spiritual improvement, and become rich in good works—to relieve by our bounty the wants and sufferings of some, and by our example to provoke the zeal, and enlarge the beneficence of many? This will not, I think, be alleged—nor will it be denied that it is a happiness to which the mere blessing of receiving affords no parallel. It is the pleasure of well directed and profitable exertion. It is the delight of doing good to men and of bringing glory to God.

But not to enlarge, observe, in the third and last place, that it is more blessed to give than to receive, inasmuch as giving is sure of a higher reward. I do not suppose that any of you are in danger of taking up the idea of any thing meritorious in charity, as if any deed could entitle the doer of it to divine favour. When I speak of it as having a reward, I speak only of that kind which is the fruit of God's Spirit in the heart; and when I speak of it as laying up store for such as exercise it, I speak of a reward which is not of debt, but of grace, which no man may claim, but which in consideration of Christ's merit, and in honour of the Spirit of truth, God has promised to bestow upon all in whom this truth is found—and in this sense how blessed those who give, in comparison of those who receive! I may find much contentment in man's gifts and much delight in grateful meditation on his goodness, and after all, I

may be poor, and wretched, and miserable, and in need of every thing. While the wants of my animal nature are supplied to the full, my soul may be still famishing for want. While enjoying human kindness, I may be a stranger to the love and fear of God. But, blessed with a disposition to give and with the capacity, and taught of God so to love my brethren, as that I may find pleasure in ministering to their wants, I have in this a token of his distinguishing love, and of the promise of getting at the judgment-seat this transporting welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And is this no blessedness? or rather what blessedness is there that may be compared with it? Is not then the giver, in the hope of a sentence such as this, happy, full of glory, and in the realizing of it shall he not experience the joy which is unspeakable as it is infinite?

Thus evident is it, then, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Giving has associated with its exercise the purest and most elevated affections—it confers the most extensive and important benefits on its objects, and procures for those who exercise it, the most endearing and precious reward, and therefore the most beneficent must be the most blessed life. For, why compare the worldling with the generous, with the delight of resembling him who went about continually doing good, with the blessedness of being here the instruments of his beneficence, and hereafter the heirs of his everlasting joy? I have already observed how little this blessedness seems to be understood or tasted by the majority of men—how few have learned, that to *do* good is to *receive* good, and to live in love is to live in happiness—how many, on the other hand, have fallen into the mistake that their life consists in the abundance of their possessions, and therefore that their happiness is to be measured by their amount, is lessened by every sum they part with, and enlarged by every accession they make to it. It were easy to adduce facts in confirmation of these statements. Loudly as the world vaunts of its charity, the common language it employs, betrays the emptiness of its own boasting—the complaints so often heard, of the number of demands made upon their liberality—the resolution of withholding from all, because of the ingratitude and worthlessness of some—the plea so often urged for inability to give, while the means

are at hand for accomplishing every selfish indulgence—the tendency to measure our liberality by the bounty of others, rather than by our several abilities—and above all, the fact that the sums which some squander on their selfish amusements or ambition, are more than the collected bounty for national good, or objects of eternal importance—these facts are proof, that, however generally the duty of charity is acknowledged, the real force of it is not felt. If it were otherwise, these complaints of demands made upon their liberality, would take the form of regret that they were not able to meet them, these resolutions of withholding from all because of the ingratitude of some, would have no place except, perhaps, with respect to the worthless themselves, these pleas of inability would not be urged, unless where restricted self-indulgence could be appealed to, in confirmation of their necessity, that habit of following others as examples, would be changed into the habit of each giving to each, as the Lord had prospered him—and so long as means existed for purposes of vanity, ambition, or pleasure, there would not be wanting means for any plan of religion which contemplates the welfare, temporal or eternal, of our fellow-men. That things are much otherwise, that many suffer cold, and hunger, and nakedness, while others have enough and to spare, that plans of beneficence fail, while projects of idle ambition are carried into effect, is evidence that many who now name the name of the Lord Jesus, have forgotten these words of his, how he said “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” My brethren, let me hope that we will endeavour to apply this saying of his, with greater diligence to the formation of our principles, and the regulation of our practice. If God has given to us freely, let us not be satisfied to enjoy his gifts selfishly, but after his example give freely, conceiving that then we shall apply them to their proper use, and find in them the highest measure of enjoyment.

We are this evening called to give, out of that which we have received, in behalf of an interesting class of poor and needy. One hundred and forty females, whose destitute and afflicted circumstances, together with their reputable, and of many I may say, their very christian character, give them strong claims on christian sympathy and assistance. Their claim is at this time brought under our notice by a society instituted for their behalf, and entitled to peculiar countenance and support. The Glasgow Female Society, I believe, led the van in the career

of united social benevolence in this city. Its object is to give relief and comfort to poor, and helpless, and aged females. This object has been now carried on for upwards of thirty-three years, with that measure of prudence that has never allowed them to come before the world with the plea of debt. The number of their pensioners has varied from 200 to the present amount; and not only have they had the blessedness of diminishing the distressed and adding to the bodily comforts of so many of your fellow-sufferers and Christians, but they have relieved their loneliness, and animated their sunken spirits, and guided and comforted their disconsolate hearts, by the occasional visits prompted by christian affection, and dedicated to the objects of christian consolation. I need not urge its claim upon you. Assuming that you are persuaded the objects of this society are needed, and the directors of it worthy of your confidence, let me now, in calling on you for your support, invite you to confer blessedness, that so you may receive greater blessedness. If you enjoy comforts, surely you will not be without a desire that others should share with you of those blessings which you enjoy, and you will be ready to help those whom God has committed to your care, that you may have the honour of being his almoners, and be twice blessed in being bountiful to the poor. Let none say, I have nothing to spare—nothing but my own earnings. It argues great selfishness, when they who have but little, have nothing of that little to give away. Observe, that they were not the rich alone to whose remembrance the Apostle here recalls the words of the Lord Jesus. They were those who like himself, laboured for sustenance with their own hands, and to whom he set the example, that so labouring they should not only serve themselves, but also the weak among them—and to withhold our hands from giving till we have first secured more than we can use ourselves, is tantamount to resisting the claims of charity altogether. Here is no self-denial—nay, there is less of love in it, and, therefore, less of blessedness, than in the gift of the widow's mite which she cast into the treasury of God. I speak not, therefore, only for the poor, I speak for yourselves. I ask not merely for a diminution of their sorrow—I ask, also, for the security of your own bliss; therefore I say, give, and, by giving, receive a blessedness more enduring, more satisfying, more godlike than that which, by your largest bounty, you can confer—for let your

selfish hearts say what they will to the contrary, it is not a burden to give. What you give is not a privation that impoverishes you, it is a privilege that enriches you, and the demand of charity should, therefore, be welcomed as the opportunity of *doing* good, which if rightly estimated, is an opportunity of *gaining* good. Do not put away this privilege. Have you forgot that, as Christians, you are bound by law, and do you imagine, that because man may not compel you, you are free to neglect this solemn injunction of the Lord. Have you surrendered yourselves to selfishness? I hope better things of you, that you will show yourselves susceptible of duty, and susceptible of the

pleasure of giving, that now you will show yourselves disciples by imitating the grace of the Lord Jesus, who, though rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that you through his poverty might be made rich; that you will approve yourselves now children of your Father who is in heaven, who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works, and that by the liberality you exercise, you will show that you remember, and that you believe, and are ready to commit yourselves to the truth of the words of the Lord Jesus, when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." May God bless his word, and to his name be all the praise. Amen.

THE CHRISTIAN STRENGTHENED IN THE LORD ;

A THANKSGIVING SERMON, PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF EASE, ALBION STREET, GLASGOW, ON MONDAY, 7TH APRIL, 1833, AFTER THE DISPENSATION OF THE SACRAMENT,

By the Rev. J. M'KINLAY, D.D.,

Minister of the Low Church, Kilmarnock.

"And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord."—ZECH. x. 12.

THE promises of Scripture, my brethren, are great and precious, and admirably suited to the diversified circumstances of believers while they remain in this present world. They are exactly suited to their various conditions, for it is hardly possible to figure a situation in which a believer can be placed, but some promise may be found in Scripture exactly adapted to it, and calculated to afford him comfort and relief. If he is oppressed with darkness, the Lord has promised to be a light unto his people, to guide the blind by a way which they know not, to make darkness to be light before them, and crooked things to be straight. Are they oppressed with a sense of guilt, and do they desire pardoning mercy? The Lord promises to be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and iniquities to remember no more. Are they distressed with remaining heart depravity, which often seduces them from the path of duty, and interrupts their intercourse with God? The Lord promises to subdue their iniquity, and not to allow sin to have dominion over them. Are they distressed with a sense of their own wickedness, and desirous of heavenly aid? The Lord promises in the words of my text, that he "will strengthen them in the Lord," and that "they shall walk up and down in his name." These words, I readily admit, were originally addressed to God's ancient people on their dispersion,

and when living under the power and dominion of their enemies. In this state they were enfeebled and distressed, and totally unable by any effort of their own, to deliver themselves. But they were God's chosen people—his eye was ever upon them—he sympathized with them under all their sorrows and sufferings, and he was determined to stretch out his almighty power in their deliverance. Although these words primarily apply to the ancient people of God, they may with great propriety be addressed unto all the true Israel of God, when feeling their own weakness, and fervently praying for assistance at a throne of grace. Their kind Lord says of them "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord." These words may be considered as addressed unto every believing communicant who yesterday sat down at the table of his Lord—and how cheering the promise now before them—"I will strengthen them in the Lord." It is my purpose in dependence upon divine grace, in illustrating this passage, first, to consider the import of the promise, and the manner in which the operation of divine grace fulfils it to the people of God; and, secondly, to advert to the happy effect resulting from the fulfilment of this promise, They shall walk up and down in the name of the Lord their God.

I. I am, in the first place, then, to consider

the import of this promise, and the operation of divine grace in fulfilling it unto the people of God. But here it may not be improper to premise a single remark with a view to prevent mistakes, and I observe, therefore, that all the strength that is conveyed unto believers, is in consequence of their vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Until this union is happily effected, no spiritual strength can be conveyed unto them, for, as in nature, the branches must be connected with the stem before they can derive any nourishment from it, so in grace, it is perfectly evident that the believer must be embraced by, or united unto him, before he can be strengthened in the Lord.

Having made this remark, I observe, in the first place, that God fulfils this promise unto his own people by strengthening all the powers of their renovated natures—by strengthening their understandings, and giving them a capacity to discern both truth and duty. Our understandings in consequence of sin are darkened, and incapable of just spiritual discernment—nor is this the character of a few individuals, but the characteristic of our species; for we are all naturally ignorant of God, and of the truth, as it is in Jesus Christ. With whatever success some men may pursue by means of acute intellects, the cultivation of the arts and the sciences, in regard to their mental character, they are naturally ignorant of God, and of the glorious and everlasting Gospel. Nor can they remove this mental obscurity by any effort of their own. Darkness cannot produce light, blindness cannot produce natural vision, and our minds blinded by spiritual ignorance, are incapable, by any effort of their own, to remove this spiritual darkness. But God, by his word and Spirit, shines into the minds of his people. While they are employed in reading or consulting the Sacred Record; he opens their understandings to know the truths which that Record contains. That God who first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines into his people's minds to give them to see the light of the knowledge of his own glory shining in the person of Jesus Christ. They are all taught of God, and consequently are made wise unto salvation. Though they may not naturally be possessed of faculties of the first order, though their intellects may not naturally be very vigorous, yet, being humble and docile, their minds are open to the discernment of truth and duty, and they are fitted to walk in the light, and to live as children of the light and of the day; they perceive

distinctly not only the glory and excellence of the truths of the Gospel; but the path of duty in which they are to advance. And this knowledge of truth and duty imparts to them a firmness of principle, connected with a corresponding firmness of practice. We do not expect much strength of character from a man who is naturally of a weak and feeble mind, and a man of a vigorous intellect will exhibit, we expect, a corresponding strength of character. He may be distinguished, indeed, for certain peculiarities; but he will manifest a strength of character not to be expected from a man who is of a very weak mind, or ignorant of the truth. Now, when God strengthens the minds or understandings of his people, he inspires them with spiritual light. The Apostle prays for the Ephesians, that God would strengthen them with all might by his Spirit, in the inner man, that they might be able to comprehend with all Saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God.

This promise is fulfilled in the experience of the believer, by God strengthening his conscience, and giving it power to discern, and authority to enforce the practice of commanded duty. Though, if we listen attentively and candidly to our own consciences, they will, in general, dictate to us pretty distinctly the duties we owe to our brethren of mankind; yet our minds being blinded, they are not always to be followed, unless when favoured with Divine Revelation, as infallible guides. God strengthens the consciences of his people, first by enlightening them through his holy word, and, then, secondly, by sprinkling them with the blood of atonement, and thus rendering them good and powerful consciences, fit for the service of the living and true God. Paul, prior to his conversion, acted according to the dictates of his conscience, and yet under the guidance of this same conscience he persecuted the church of God. Paul was afterwards favoured with Divine Revelation, to know the truth, and then acknowledged his guilt, in acting, though conscientiously, in the manner in which he did, prior to his conversion to the Gospel. When God, therefore, strengthens man's conscience, he gives it power to discern, and authority to enforce, the practice of commanded duty. There is no evil of which a Christian should be more afraid, than a blind and ignorant conscience, a conscience silent and not reproving him. In society it is much better

for us to listen to the reproofs of a kind friend, than to enjoy the soothing of a deceitful enemy, and it is much better for us Christians to listen to the reproaches of our own consciences, than to have them silent, insensible, and seared as with a red-hot iron. Now God strengthens the consciences of his people, sometimes by teaching them by the silent influences of his Spirit, and arousing them from that security into which they have fallen, and sometimes by sending the servants of God to them with appropriate messages, as you remember he sent Nathan to David, till David's conscience was awakened, and he said, "I have sinned against the Lord my God." When our consciences are strengthened, we are called to appear, as it were, before their tribunal, and to listen to their sentence. If they, being under the guidance of God, approve us, the approval is connected with peace; but if they condemn us according to the light of Scripture, and we persevere in the sin with which our enlightened consciences condemn us, we shall at last be condemned by our Lord himself.

The Lord fulfils his promise to the believer, by strengthening all his affections, and detaching them from the vain perishing objects and pursuits of a present world, and raising them from earth to heaven and to glory. Prior to a believer's embracing the Gospel, his affections rested completely and solely on this present world. He was as incapable in his unconverted state of rising above the world, as the reptile, destitute of wings, is incapable of rising and flying in the air; but the moment he is inspired with true faith, which leads him from things seen and temporal, to things unseen and eternal, he discovers the vanity of this world, and the value of the world to come—he seems to desire something nobler and better than this world can present, and his affections enlightened by his faith of the Gospel, formerly set upon earth, are now detached from it, and begin to rise to heaven and to happiness. I readily allow that at first the believer's flight, like the first flight of a bird, is not very high or long continued; but, by repeated exercises, he gains strength, rises higher, takes a bolder and nobler flight, and sometimes soars even unto heaven, and entering in his heart, and affections, within the veil, his treasure being now in heaven, his heart is always there.

The Lord fulfils this promise, moreover, unto his people, by strengthening their memories, and enabling them to recollect the truths contained in the word of God,

and this even in circumstances which are calculated to encourage them in the path of commanded duty. This will naturally follow from what I have already stated; for, if the mind is once enlightened by the knowledge of the truth—if the conscience is once strengthened to discern and to enforce the practice of duty, and if the affections become spiritual, are detached from worldly objects and pursuits, it follows, that the memory must be strengthened, especially with regard to the recollection of divine and heavenly truths. The memory is strong or weak, according to the impression which the truth to be remembered, makes upon the mind, and to its frequency of repetition. Now God strengthens the memories of his people, by impressing divine truths more deeply on their minds, by leading them to think more closely of the truth, as it is in Jesus, and by giving them a relish for that truth; for we easily remember what we clearly understand, highly esteem, and greatly admire. Why do we remember so little of what we hear? Because we understand so little of it; because we admire it so little. If we understood the truth more distinctly, if we appreciated it more highly, if we relished the truth, it would be so deeply impressed upon our minds, that we would be unable almost to forget it. I allow, however, that the Spirit must come and strengthen the memory of the Christian. When the Spirit is come, says Christ, he will bring all things to your remembrance which I have said to you. And we know from historical facts, that after Christ had gone from his disciples, and the Spirit had descended upon them, they remembered, through the influence of the Spirit, many of the truths which he had announced, and which they had forgotten before he had left them.

But I remark, in the second place, that the promise is fulfilled to the believer, by God strengthening all the principles of the renewed nature, which he by his Spirit has produced in his heart in this present world. These principles are styled, in the New Testament Scriptures, the fruits of the Spirit, and are such, you know, as faith, hope, love, and holy joy. These holy principles are produced in the heart of every believer by the Spirit and Word of God, and they are strengthened, increased and carried forward to perfection, just by the same means by which they were originally produced. God then strengthens the faith of the believer, by leading him to perceive, not only more distinctly the evidences of revelation, but

how these truths are supported by the Bible testimony, by leading him to see them in their clear connexion and excellence, and more especially to live upon them, to apply them to his own ease and conscience, and feel their sanctifying and saving influence on his own heart and life. When a physician, for example, gives his prescription to remove a bodily malady, having confidence in his skill, we believe his prescription will produce its effect; but when we apply it and feel the disease mitigated or removed, then is our faith in the truth of the physician confirmed by our own happy experience. Now if we take spiritual medicine, or the truths of God, upon divine testimony, and apply them, and act on them, and find them enlightening our minds, and sanctifying our hearts, we have the evidence, as it were, in ourselves—we are convinced of their truth, and our faith, which was at first feeble, leading us to say, “Lord, we believe, help our unbelief,” makes us now adopt the language of confidence. “We know in whom we believe, and are persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The Christian’s faith being strengthened, must be proportionally invigorated. Hope is the expectation of some future good, and the foundation of the divine promises. Our hope will be weak or feeble in exact proportion to the vigour of our faith. If our faith is strong, our hope will be proportionally vigorous—our hope will not make us ashamed; it will be a lively hope, a hope strengthened by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; and as it is the great solace of the Christian while he remains in this brief world, it is of the last importance for a Christian to have his hope in God and Christ strengthened and confirmed. It is the anchor of the soul, firm and steadfast, and keeps him calm and tranquil amid all the storms and tempests of this world. The believer’s love is also strengthened by the influence of the Word and Spirit of God. At first, like a feeble spark, he can hardly feel it, or believe it is in his heart; but finding by divine influence, that from being a feeble spark, it is kindled into a mighty flame, thereby sanctifying the whole of his soul, his love becomes strong and vigorous, and the great principle of his conduct in this

world. As connected with his hope and love, his holy joy is also greatly invigorated. Whatever some may venture to say, we are assured that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Joy sometimes rises to ecstasy and transport. Sorrow is an enfeebling thing, weakening the mind, and paralyzing all its exertions; but joy is a strengthening principle, fitting the Christian for every good word and work. Hence it is said in Nehemiah, “The joy or the Lord is our strength.” The Christian’s joy being strengthened, he becomes strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. From what we have stated, you may easily conceive that all the other principles in the hearts of the people of God must be strengthened. Their humility, their temperance, their meekness, their self-denial, must be strengthened—all these and many other holy principles in a lovely train; and while these are strengthened, they gain great spiritual confirmation, and under their influence, the real believer is fitted for every good word and work.

II. But this leads me to the second thing to which I was to direct your attention; the happy effect arising from the fulfilment of this promise to believers. “They shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord.” Here a delightful field opens to our view; but I shall only be able to touch on a few points. And I remark, that when the believer is strengthened in the Lord, in the manner I have endeavoured to set before you, he is thereby led to a recognition of the authority of his Lord, and to a deep-felt sense of obligation to his love and service. The moment a believer is strengthened, he is led to a recognition of the Lord, as being his Sovereign and his Lord. He acknowledges his divine authority, and he feels a deep sense of obligation to duty. Reviewing all the bounties of divine providence, he acknowledges that he is not worthy of the least of all God’s mercies. Not only the bestowment of these blessings at first, but their continuance, their increase, increases the sense of obligation, and that sense becomes so deep, and permanent, and practical, that man naturally resolves to devote himself to the service and glory of his redeeming Lord. I know not how I can better illustrate this idea, than by calling your attention to a fact recorded in the Prophecies of Isaiah, in regard to himself and his own experience. He tells us, in the 6th chapter,

that he saw in a vision "the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." Conscious, however, of his own guilt, the display of the Redeemer's glory was likely to overwhelm him, and he fell down in abasement, saying, "Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." But we are told, that one of the Seraphim came with a live coal from the altar, and touched his lips, and removed his guilt, and pacified his conscience, and warmed his heart with a sense of obligation. Accordingly, when he heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" "Here am I," said he—weak and unworthy as I am, I feel such a sensible transition that I am willing to be sent on any errand, on any service however difficult—"send me."

But when the believer's mind is strengthened in the manner I have set before you, he not only acknowledges the authority of his Lord, and feels a deep sense of obligation to his service, but discovers a magnanimity and fortitude leading him to face every danger, to surmount every difficulty, and to resist and overcome every temptation. If the believer were left to himself and his own strength, the smallest danger would appal him, the least difficulty would discourage him, and the most inconsiderable temptation overcome him; but when strengthened in the Lord he discovers a noble fortitude, he can face every danger however appalling, he can surmount every difficulty how great soever it may be, and he can resist every temptation that may be apt to lead him from the path of duty, saying, in the language of Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

But the Christian is not stationary; he walks on in the name of the Lord. Walking is a progressive motion, and every Christian that is strengthened in the Lord walks on. Far from imagining that he is already perfect, he forgets the things that are behind, and presses forward to those that are before, till he attains to the measure and stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. The end of one duty is just the beginning of another—none of his talents are unoccupied. Entirely devoted to the Lord his God, he adds to his faith, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and universal benevolence, that these things being in him, and abounding, he may be

neither idle, nor unfruitful, in the good work of the Lord his God.

But when the believer is strengthened, he is determined, nay, he is prepared to meet the various dispensations of Providence with a corresponding temper and frame of mind. We know from observation, and many of us have learned from experience, that the life of a Christian is a varied life. In our progress through life, prosperity and adversity are our alternate companions. None of us can say "Our mountain stands strong, and we shall never be moved," for there is nothing certain in this world of change. Now our sky may be clear and serene, and without a cloud, and the sun of prosperity may shine upon us, but in a little our sky may be overcast, and our sun shrouded in darkness. Now our path may be smooth and plain, but in a little it may become rough and rugged. Now perhaps we are ascending the pleasing hills of prosperity, and are likely to rise to the very summit of wealth and grandeur, but anon we are called to descend, perhaps to bear a deep load of affliction. We may be visited with bodily disease, domestic trials, or grievous privations. Our friends may leave us; our enemies may persecute us; the little saved by sober industry may be taken from us; and in old age we may have nothing before us but the prospect of poverty and want. These are often trials of the faith and patience of a Christian. Worldly men meet with these reverses of fortune, as we style them, also; but how are they borne? When they are prosperous, they are generally proud and self-confident; when otherwise, sullen, morose and discontented to the highest degree. The true believer however, meets all these vicissitudes with suitable dispositions. In the day of prosperity he is never proud; in the day of adversity he considers, but does not murmur or complain. He is either quite silent, or if opening his mouth, it is not to arraign the way of Providence, but to say, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth good, for I know that all things shall work together for my good.

When a Christian is strengthened by the grace of God, the man determines to carry his religion with him into the world, into every department of duty, and all the ordinary transactions of this present life. The grace of God in the heart is not a local temporary principle. As the soul animates every member of the body, so religion animates the Christian in every commanded

duty. There are too many who look on religion as confined to time, place, and circumstances. They look on it as only fit for the closet, the Sabbath, and the sanctuary, but do not seem to regard it as the principle that should operate on the ordinary moralities of life. Now here is a radical error. I allow no man to be a pious man, if he does not worship God; but I firmly maintain, that if he attends to his duty to God, he will attend to all his other duties. He will carry his religion with him wherever he goes; it will follow him to the field, and go with him to the market, to his shop, to his work-shop; it will go with him into solitude, and attend him in company, and will excite him in every circumstance and situation to the practice of every known and commanded duty. If the man is a parent, it will make him an affectionate father; if he is a child, it will make him a dutiful son; if he is a husband, it will make him affectionate and dutiful to his wife; if he is a master, it will make him just and obliging, and if a servant, faithful and conscientious; if he is a magistrate, he will be just and upright, and if a subject, loyal and obedient; if he is a minister, he will be a faithful minister, giving himself to the work of the ministry, and declaring the whole counsel of God; and if a hearer, he will be a regular, an attentive, and a prayerful hearer, praying before he comes to the house of God, and praying also for a blessing on what he has heard by the ministry of his servant.

I have farther to add, that if you are strengthened in the Lord in the manner I have set before you, you will attend to all your duties with ease and gracefulness, with a moral dignity and propriety. When a man is in good health, young and vigorous, nothing is very burdensome to him. He has to labour, but he is youthful and strong, and his labour is healthful exercise. Now, if the Christian is strengthened in the Lord, his duties become easy to him; he becomes strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; he feels the yoke of Christ easy, and his burden light; he finds that Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are paths of peace. Every thing the Christian does, is performed in its proper place, in its proper time, and for its proper object; and hence he moves on in the path of duty with gracefulness, dignity, and propriety. I readily allow, that wicked and ungodly men will not see much of this beauty and dignity, but I maintain that it is so attractive that it gains the attention even of God himself. God looks down on

his children walking in this dignified graceful manner. Job was calumniated, but what does God say of his servant? "That man was perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil." The Christian attracts also the notice of angels; they, too, feel an interest in his walking with God. He attracts, moreover, the notice of his fellow-creatures, who all admire his beautiful dignified Christian mode of conduct. I have to add to this beauty a kind of majesty—yes, there is a kind of majesty that attends a faithful Christian. He is invested with something godlike; and this majesty excites fears even in the breasts of those who profess to despise him. Do you wish for an instance? It is quite at hand. Herod, Herod knew John, Herod the king knew him—and he feared him too. Why? Because he knew he was a just and a holy man. And there are many ungodly scoffers among us, pretending to laugh at religion, that have a conviction in their minds, at the very time they profess to despise it, that it is highly estimable, but they will not practise it.

I only add, that Christians who are strengthened in the Lord, act with a single view to the glory and honour of God. Whatever the Christian now does, is all done to the glory of God. The display of God's glory is the end which God himself had in view, and it is also the end which the Christian has in view. He keeps it constantly in his eye; and all he says, and thinks, and does, is with a view to promote it. It was for this purpose he was created, preserved, and redeemed. He was bought with a price, that he might glorify God in his body, and in his spirit, which are God's. We hear much of virtue, but this is the sublimest virtue, and it is impossible for a rational creature to aim at any thing higher. This is the conduct which every Christian has in view. He does all he does in obedience to the authority of God; he does all he does in dependence on the grace of God to enable him to perform it aright; and he does all he does not to gain the applause of men, not to lay a foundation for any meritorious reward, but ultimately with a view to the glory of God. And the glory of God and our happiness, are so inseparably connected, that wherever you have the one you secure the other. If you glorify God here, you are just preparing to enter the heavenly kingdom, where you will see his glory, and be happy through eternal ages.

I close with a very short practical appli

eration. And in the first place, I remark that privilege and duty are so inseparably connected, that the enjoyment of the one is necessary to the practice and performance of the other. We are all enemies to God, and we must be reconciled to him before we can love, serve and obey him. In nature, the fountain must be pure before the streams be pure; and in grace, the sinner must be created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works before he can do all that he does to the honour and glory of God. But be not discouraged—"Fear not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Therefore be waiting on the Lord—he shall renew your strength to mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint.* In the second place, from what I have stated, I would have you inquire what benefit you have derived from the solemn ordinance of yesterday. Ask if you have been upon this occasion strengthened of the Lord. Conduct this self-examination more from a regard to its practical effects on your hearts and lives than to your feelings. It may be that your feeble frames of mind were not alive as you could have wished; but judge by the practical effect—and if you can lay your hands upon your hearts and say, we hope that upon this occasion, God has been enlightening our minds, strengthening our feeble consciences, purifying and elevating our grovelling affections, strengthening our memories by giving us clearer views of divine truth—if you can say, we hope, that upon this occasion, we have been led to acknowledge the Lord as our God, and to feel a deep sense of obligation to his love and service—if your magnanimity and fortitude have been strengthened, and you feel more disposed to face danger, and to resist temptation—if you have been led to meet all the dispensations of Providence with a renewed frame of mind—if you feel more than ever inclined to carry your religion into active life, and to live more than ever to the glory of God—if you have faith, hope, and joy in the Lord—if you see more of the evil of sin,

and more of the excellence and amiableness of the Saviour—if you resolve, when you go from this place, to live more entirely to the Lord and to his glory, then you have reason to hope that the Lord has been strengthening you, and that you will walk up and down in his name during the remainder of your journey. But I cannot conclude without saying a word to those who do not wait upon the Lord; and if they have not been strengthened in the Lord, but are living in sin, I remark that the practice of sin, and vice, and wickedness, beclouds the mind, enfeebles conscience, increases our natural depravity, and renders us less and less disposed to any good word and work. I know that the unconverted sinner thinks he is quite sufficient of himself to repent and come to God, and that he is able by his own power and resolution to perform duty, and to meet even death without dismay; but I know also, that when his strength is brought to the trial, he will find it weak indeed; and that when death opens to his view, he may be surrounded with awful terror; and at last, I know, he dies in his sins, and the terror of the Lord shall meet him, and he will call in vain on the rocks and the mountains to fall upon him and conceal him in the great day of wrath, for who then shall stand? Oh! if there are any of this character here, let me tell them that their situation is most deplorable. But blessed be God it is not irretrievable. Long, long have you lived in sin, and in the practice of vice and wickedness, and sure I am, it is not now too soon with some of you to think seriously, and to turn unto the Lord. And blessed be God, it is not yet too late. To-day, to-day, if there is a single impenitent now hearing me—to-day hear his voice, and harden not your heart. Now, now is the accepted time—now, now is the day of salvation. Oh! then, listen to the advice of God himself—"Take hold of my strength that ye may make peace with me, and ye shall make peace with me." Then shall I be able to address you in the language of the Psalmist, with which I conclude, "Be of good courage, and he will strengthen your hearts. Oh! wait on the Lord, the Lord will give strength unto his people, the Lord will bless his people with peace." Amen.

* Isaiah xl. 31.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. MATTHEW LEISHMAN, Govan.
SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D., Glasgow.

A VOICE FROM THE GRAVE;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE GORBALS' CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON SUNDAY 5TH MAY, 1833
OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE REV. JAMES MACLEAN, D.D.,

By the Rev. MATTHEW LEISHMAN,
Minister of Govan.

"He being dead, yet speaketh."—HEB. xi. 4.

THE change produced on the body at death, my brethren, is mysterious and appalling. The spirit which animated it is gone; the silver cord is loosed; the golden bowl is broken; the loudest thunder produces no terror; our wailings awaken no sympathy; the eye that was wont to be lighted up with kindness at our approach is closed; the tongue is silent, from which dropt the words of wisdom and the lessons of age and experience, and nothing remains of the strongest bodily frame, but an inert mass of corruption, which becomes every day a more humbling spectacle, and which we hasten, as Abraham did, to bury out of our sight. "Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets." It is pleasing, however, to think that the Christian's power of doing good survives him. It stretches sometimes far into futurity, and extends to parts of the world where, perhaps, his name was formerly altogether unknown. If he was a Christian minister, his voice, like Abel's, cries from the earth; it issues from the tomb, instructing, and admonishing, and comforting those he may have left behind him, whose dust shall soon, like his, return to the dust as it was, and whose spirit shall go to him that gave it. "He being dead, yet speaketh."

In the first place, the faithful Christian minister "being dead, yet speaketh" in his writings. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, we find Abraham saying, in answer to the earnest supplication of the rich man, that he would send Lazarus to testify to his brethren, that they might repent and not be consigned to the place of torment, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." We are thus reminded that in the Scriptures Moses and the prophets speak to us, and as our Lord

declared, if men "hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." In the Sacred Writings likewise, the apostles of our Lord speak to us, but they "speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." They make known to us our fallen and guilty condition; they point out to us the way of salvation; they endeavour by warnings and threatenings, by entreaties and expostulations, to constrain the wicked and ungodly to give heed to their ways, and to flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. "Now then," say they, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." They explain and enforce our personal and relative duties; they condemn us for our manifold inconsistencies; they reproach us for our slothfulness and negligence; they furnish us with strong incitements to steadfastness and perseverance in the ways of righteousness, and when the hand of affliction is laid upon us, they teach us to comfort one another with the animating promises of the glorious gospel. In the epistle to the Romans, when putting a question respecting the righteousness of God, in the way of a supposition, the Apostle Paul says, to show his reverence for the divine majesty, "I speak as a man." In the second epistle to the Corinthians, he affectionately says, "I speak as unto my children." And in the first epistle to Timothy he says, "I speak the truth and lie not," making a strong asseveration of his integrity, and fidelity, when declaring that he was a preacher, and apostle, and teacher of the Gentiles.

Nor are we in many instances less powerfully affected, or less edified with the record-

ed thoughts of the dead, than we are with the eloquence of the living. "The preacher," says the man of God, "sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And further by these, my son, be admonished." When we read a book, our imagination places the author before us, though he may have long ceased to live; we regard him as personally addressing us—his sentiments are conveyed to us in the same form, and, in the very words, perhaps, which he would have employed, had he been present in the body. If he reasons justly, we feel the force of his arguments. Should his aim be our spiritual improvement, he may alternately humble and encourage, reprove and exhort us. Nay, what we read sometimes produces even a more solemn impression on our minds, than what we hear, when we consider that he who may be thus speaking to us has gone the way of all the earth, and consequently, that we are listening to a voice from the dead. "All Scripture," says the Apostle, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

But it is not through books alone that we become acquainted with the sentiments, or desire benefit from the teaching and admonitions of our departed instructors in Christ. There are many valuable writings which lie hid in the repositories, and which are known only to the family and friends of their authors. These are destined never to be given to the world, however well fitted they may be to enlighten mankind, or to edify the church of Christ. How much Christian knowledge and experience, on reviewing these with a feeling of melancholy interest, do we sometimes find even in the private diaries and epistolary correspondence of our departed friends? These call up many painful, yet pleasing recollections. They remind us of many acts of sincere kindness. They recall many seasons of profitable and pleasing fellowship, which we may have enjoyed with those who have gone the way of all the earth. When pondering over them, therefore, the expressions of regard we meet with, the affectionate counsels, the interesting reflections, sink deep into our hearts, and we feel that our Christian brother or

spiritual teacher "being dead, yet speaketh."

On calling on your late pastor during his last illness, I found him, on one occasion, employed in writing a letter to one of his sons who, being in a distant country, must still be ignorant of the loss which he has sustained, in common with the rest of the family. Can we doubt that this letter contains the salutary admonitions of paternal wisdom, and, perhaps, a solemn farewell? And can we doubt, that, moistened with the tears of filial regret, it will often be read, and that as often as it is read, an affectionate son will feel that his father "being dead, yet speaketh?"

In the second place, a christian minister "being dead, yet speaketh" by the mouth of those who have been born again under his ministry. In the 87th Psalm, the Psalmist contemplates the constant accession of numbers which the Church of Christ shall receive till the time of the restitution of all things. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, this and that man was born in her, and the highest himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there." And no man but a minister can know the heart of a minister, even as no man but a parent can know the heart of a parent, or form any idea of the interest he feels in his flock, or the pleasure he experiences, when he sees the work of the Lord prospering in his hand. His expectations, alas! are often disappointed. His labours are often counteracted. The fairest and most promising portion of his flock sometimes becomes the prey of the spoiler; and those over whom his heart has yearned with a parent's fondness, forsake sometimes their first love, and perish under the withering blight of infidelity. If, however, he has been instrumental in turning any from darkness to light, he rejoices over them, and he feels regarding them the affection of a father. "I write not those things to shame you," says the Apostle Paul, "but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." And, says his fellow-labourer and apostolic asso-

ciate, St. John, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." Nor does the minister of Christ rejoice in the spiritual prosperity of his flock, merely on their own account—he rejoices, as the angels rejoice over every sinner that repenteth, because, while he knows that they who repent and believe the Gospel shall be saved, he knows, also, that they may be the means of effecting the spiritual salvation of others. And if, my brethren, the labours of a minister have been blessed of God—if he has been to any a savour of life unto life, may it not be said that he speaks in and through those who, by the grace of God, have been indebted to him for their Christian character, their Christian privileges, and their Christian attainments? Parents may communicate to their children the very lessons they have received from the lips of their Pastor. In them, therefore, surely "he being dead, yet speaketh." If they train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—if they exhort them to remember their Creator in the days of their youth, instil into their minds those sacred truths which the Scriptures contain, speaking of them when they sit in the house, and when they walk by the way, when they lie down, and when they rise up, is it not because, under the faithful ministrations of a departed Pastor, they may have been filled with serious concern about their own eternal welfare, or that of their offspring, or because, like Ezekiel, who prophesied over the dry bones, he may have been instrumental in awakening them to newness of life? The minister of Christ may likewise speak, though dead, through the elders of the church. He may have sought out these Christian men to be his fellow-labourers in his arduous work—he may have ordained them to their sacred office—he may have laboured to render them fit for the performance of their important duties. If so, "he being dead, yet speaketh" in them, when in their visits of benevolence and mercy, they endeavour to reclaim the erring—to lead the unconcerned to serious reflection—to enlighten the minds of the ignorant—to impart consolation to the afflicted, and to confirm the hopes of the dying. From among his flock, have any gone forth to preach the everlasting Gospel? Has one risen up in his own house, whose holy ambition it is to labour in word and doctrine, to be approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing

the word of truth? It should be remembered at whose feet they have been brought up; and when they cry aloud and spare not, when they shun not to declare the whole counsel of God, when they are instant in season and out of season, when they rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and patience, it should be remembered that through them their spiritual father "being dead, yet speaketh."

In the third place, the faithful minister of Christ "being dead, yet speaketh" through his example. It was said of the virtuous and amiable Fenelon, that his life was even more eloquent than his discourses. And there can be no doubt whatever, that the consistent and holy life of a minister of the Gospel, forcibly recommends to his hearers the doctrines he teaches. It is a better proof of his sincerity than the strongest declarations. It is a living reproof of the ungodly and profane. It is a living exemplification of the precepts he inculcates. It is a living model for the imitation of those whom it is his duty to teach by his example as well as his lips. "Let your light," said our Saviour, "so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." But if the good effects which result from the pious conduct of a minister of Christ, while he goes out and in among his people, are often seen, and felt, and acknowledged, it is no less certain that the beneficial influence of his example sometimes extends even to the most remote generations. The Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus himself, left us an example that we might follow his steps. "The Spirit of the Lord was upon him—he was anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek—he was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." And in the execution of the trust committed to him, in the performance of the duties of his holy calling, he was faithful to him that appointed him. "I must work," said he, "the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." In all the situations of life, did our Saviour conform his conduct to

his own precepts. As a son he was dutiful and affectionate. After he had excited the astonishment of the Jewish Doctors in the temple by his premature wisdom, he went down with his parents to Nazareth, and was subject to them. He was generous and compassionate. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. When his disciples wished him to command fire to come down from heaven to destroy the inhospitable inhabitants of a Samaritan village, what was his magnanimous reply? "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives but to save them." He could confidently appeal to his enemies for evidence to the purity of his life. "Which of you convicteth me of sin," said he. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In the annals of the world, no one can be found whose character is worthy of being compared with that of the man Christ Jesus. It, therefore, calls loudly for our admiration. When we turn from contemplating it, to look upon ourselves, we are humbled and ashamed, while we are animated with a holy desire to walk even as he walked. The conduct of the Apostles of our Lord, also furnishes us with many useful and important lessons. These soldiers of Christ were not perfect, neither did they pretend to be so. They fell into many errors which they admitted—they were chargeable with many inconsistencies which they neither palliated nor concealed, nevertheless in them we behold men whom neither the contumely of the world, nor the dread of suffering, nor the fear of death, could persuade to abjure their principles, or abandon the cause of their crucified Master. Here is a description of them which is given by one of themselves. "We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men—we are despised, even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and have no certain dwelling place, and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." These men may justly be said to have been "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." They were living epistles of Christ—they were living sermons. And though it is so long a time since they finished their course, we have still them "for an ensample." They inspire us with holy emulation. They in-

cite us to imitate their zeal, their intrepidity, their forbearance, their contentment, their spirituality, and to be followers of them, as they also were of Christ. We might mention the names of many men of God who, in these latter days, have likewise been "an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." The memory of such men is revered by us. And when we read the history of their lives, or hear of their virtues, or remember those acts of piety and benevolence we may ourselves have witnessed, are we not filled with a strong desire to be followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises? Does not the zeal of our forefathers reproach us for our spurious liberality? Does not their boldness in the cause of God, make us blush for our criminal reserve and timidity? Does not their patience, under hardships and amid sufferings of every kind, recommend to us humble acquiescence in the appointments of Divine Providence, even under the severest afflictions with which it may please him to visit us? And if a minister has been enabled to adorn, by his walk and conversation, the doctrine of God our Saviour, long after he is dead and gone, is not his mode of living and acting when in the world, frequently referred to by those who loved him when alive, and who lament him, now that he is no more, as being a vindication of what in particular instances they may have done, or as furnishing a pattern for their own use, or the direction of the conduct of others? "He being dead, yet speaketh."

In the fourth place, a faithful minister "being dead, yet speaketh," through the memory and conscience of them that heard him. Affectionate and pious children delight to recall the sayings of their deceased parents. They often speak of these to one another, adopt them as good maxims, and prize them as memorials of the love and piety of their earliest and kindest instructors. Those who have been deprived of a valued pastor, please themselves likewise with thinking and speaking of many things which, in his ministerial character, he may have said to them or to others.—"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you," says St. Peter, "in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour." Peo-

sometimes remember particular sermons, or particular parts of the sermons, of the pastor, who may have fed them with knowledge and understanding. Important or striking observations of theirs are treasured up in their minds, or brought to their recollection, long after they may have been forgotten. And while they meditate on these, it seems to them as if they were still hearing a voice which they may have often listened to with pleasure, and seldom without improvement. The important and sublime doctrines which their spiritual guide never failed to preach, the rule of life which he explained and enforced, the encouragements and cautions he addressed to the young, his honest indignation at wickedness, his consolatory language to the poor and afflicted, may all suggest themselves to them at the proper season, and be productive of the happiest results.

It is well known, too, that the seed, which is the word of God, when sown by a parent in the heart of a child, sometimes remains long dormant; and, afterwards, being quickened by the Spirit, brings forth fruit unto eternal life. In many cases, the sacred truths which a minister is commissioned to deliver, are, in like manner, heard with apparent indifference. The gainsayer is not convinced. The backslider is not reclaimed. The careless are not roused. The servant of the Lord appears to run in vain, and to spend his strength for nought. In all ages of the church, therefore, has the preacher of righteousness had reason to complain of the want of success which attended his ministry. "Who," said Isaiah, "hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" "Whereunto," said our Saviour, "shall I liken the men of this generation, and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another, and saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept." The appeals, however, which a minister addresses to the hearts and consciences of his people, sometimes produce their effect, when he who uttered them is numbered with the dead. In the hour of affliction, or on the bed of death, the most callous have sometimes their thoughts turned back to the time when their minister reasoned with them, when he pled with them, when he besought them to seek the

Lord while he was near, to call upon him while he was to be found, and to accept of the gracious invitations of their Lord and Saviour; and, peradventure, they who turn a deaf ear to his most solemn, and affectionate warnings, "their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another," are at last, by the grace of God, led to give heed to the things which belong to their peace, before they are for ever hid from their eyes. "He being dead, yet speaketh."

On this day of mourning, I am sure you must have anticipated me in applying to your present circumstances much of what has now been said to you. Dr. M'Lean, your late pastor, whose loss, I know, many of you deeply deplore, was born at Anderston,* on the 4th of October, 1761. The greater part of his early life, however, was spent with his parents, at Little Govan, near the scene of his future labours. He was educated at the University of Glasgow; and was licensed, on his birthday, to preach the Gospel, in the year 1786. In 1788, he went to Kirkoswald, as assistant to the Rev. Mr. Biggar, and officiated there for nearly five years. He was then appointed assistant to the Rev. Mr. Anderson, the former minister of Gorbals; and this servant of God dying soon afterwards, Dr. M'Lean, who continued to preach to the congregation during the vacancy, having received a presentation in his favour from the Heritors and Kirk Session, was ordained minister of the parish, on the 30th of April, 1793.

Soon after he came to Gorbals, and previous to his ordination, Mr. Boswell, of Auchinleck, the friend and biographer of Dr. Samuel Johnson, was very desirous that Dr. M'Lean would accept of a presentation for the parish of Auchinleck. This mark of respect, from so competent a judge of literary and professional merit, was owing entirely to his celebrity as a preacher, his accomplishments as a scholar, and his worth as a Christian. But Dr. M'Lean preferred remaining in Gorbals, where he laboured among you, you know how faithfully and zealously, for a period of forty years.

At the commencement of Dr. M'Lean's incumbency, the population of the parish was 5,000. It has since increased to 35,000. A charge like this is obviously far beyond

* One of the Suburbs of Glasgow.

the capabilities of human strength. For many years, however, Dr. M'Lean persevered in visiting his parish. And when he found he could no longer perform this useful but laborious part of his duty, in consequence of the increasing extent of his cure, and his advanced period of life, he devoted more of his time to the sick and the afflicted. And, dividing the children of his congregation into different classes, he publicly examined them once every year till the last of his life, as to their knowledge of the principles of our holy religion; and gave them, in his own simple and affectionate way, pastoral instruction and admonition, suited to their capacities and years. The moral and religious instruction of the young, indeed, was a matter about which he was always very solicitous. You are aware, that it was chiefly through his exertions that a school has been established and upheld among you, for the gratuitous education of poor children. You are likewise aware, that, as a trustee of the late Mrs. Waddel, but a short time before his death, he caused a school-house to be built for the education of young and destitute females. This school, a female teacher properly qualified having been appointed to it, is just on the eve of being opened. It will, I trust, prove an inestimable privilege to no small portion of the young and rising generation. One of the last acts of your minister's life, was to prepare regulations for it. Few of you know, however, that the funds for the erection of this school-house, were provided by Dr. M'Lean himself. It was an object upon which he had set his heart. Often did he speak to me regarding it, with the liveliest interest. He had endeavoured, without success, to obtain, for the purpose he had in view, a grant of ground in a suitable situation. At length, disappointed in his expectations, he gave orders for the building to be reared on ground of his own, undertaking to pay the contractor, in the first instance, with his own funds, as the legacy left by the fondress, having been lent out by her husband at an advantageous rate of interest, could not be uplifted till the expiration of the period specified in the bond.

In the pulpit, Dr. M'Lean displayed a mind richly fraught with theological knowledge. Possessing a masculine intellect, he was particularly skilful in elucidating Scripture. In his devotional exercises, there was a pathos and an unctio which could

hardly fail to excite in the bosom of the worshipper a corresponding glow of pious feeling. But it was in the house of mourning that Dr. M'Lean particularly endeared himself to his people. His was truly a warm heart. He would weep with those who wept, as well as rejoice with those who rejoiced. There can be little doubt that his constitutional tendency to be ruffled by opposition was, in part, owing to his very great sensibility. But no man's displeasure was ever more easily removed, and no person could more sincerely forgive.

The piety of Dr. M'Lean was rational and practical. He felt a virtuous horror at hypocrisy; and his breast was filled with holy indignation, by conduct that was mean or base. During his illness, though he did not despair of his recovery, he expressed his firm trust in the mediation of his Saviour, and his anxious desire to submit to the will of his Heavenly Father.

In the intercourse of present life, he was cheerful, and ever ready to do an act of kindness to those whom he had it in his power to oblige. He was a sincere and faithful friend, and a safe and most valuable counsellor. In his own family, he was beloved and revered. The eye which saw him, shall see him no more. The place which knew him, shall know him no more. But may we not confidently believe, that as to him to live, was Christ; to him to die, was gain?

It now remains with you, my brethren, while you mourn the loss of one who watched for your souls, "to comfort one another," and to give earnest heed to him who "being dead, yet speaketh." Often has he, from this place, reminded you of the great change which was awaiting him, and is still awaiting you. He has gone from this world, we trust, into a better. He has passed through the dark valley and shadow of death, and soon we shall be called upon to follow him. Let me entreat you, therefore, to remember all that he said while he was yet with you. Listen to him while he now cries to you from the dark recesses of the tomb, and says, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." He did not prophesy smooth things. He did not say peace, peace, when there was no peace. That ye might clothe yourselves with humility, and be led to repentance; he spoke to you often of your sinful and fallen condition. That ye might not place your confidence

in your own strength, he set before you the evidences of your spiritual weakness and corruption. That you might not delay the performance of the work given you to do, he reminded you of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the doubtful character of a late repentance. He assured you that though God is not willing that any should perish, he is, nevertheless, of purer eyes than to look upon iniquity. He declared again and again, in your hearing, that other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. And according to the injunction of the Apostle, "These things he affirmed constantly, that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Oh, do not, then, as you value your spiritual and eternal welfare, ever forget or disregard the words of one who was "affectionately desirous of you." Call to mind his expostulations, his counsels, his reproofs, his solemn warnings, his earnest prayers in your behalf. Meditate upon these things. Peter slighted the warning of his divine Master, but he afterwards remembered his words and wept.

Finally, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not as others which have no hope." There is much in death which, to a person whose views are

bounded by the grave, it is fearful to contemplate. There is much in this momentous change, which even the best of men cannot always look upon without pain. Death breaks up the oldest connexions, and dissolves the tenderest unions. It everywhere breeds dismay and terror. It makes mothers widows, and children orphans. It separates friends. It scatters families. It changes the face of congregations. It removes pastors from their people, and people from their pastors. It scatters our bones at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. But "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." How grateful ought we to be to that Saviour who has abolished death, and brought to light life and immortality. He has taken away the sting of death. He has thus delivered us from that fear of death, through which many are all their lifetime subject to bondage. The Christian, therefore, can exclaim, when the time of his departure is at hand, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

COMFORT UNDER BEREAVEMENT;

A FUNERAL SERMON ON THE LATE REV. JAMES MACLEAN, D.D., PREACHED IN GORBALS, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, 5TH MAY, 1833,

By the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D.,

Minister of St. John's Church, Glasgow.

"Therefore be also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."—
MATTH. xxiv. 44.

IN this chapter our Lord foretells the destruction of Jerusalem, and the consequent miseries that should befall its devoted inhabitants. He assures his disciples that its downfall was inevitable, that no created wisdom or power could avert the threatened calamity. "Heaven and earth," says he, "shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." Though the event was certain, he tells them that the period of its arrival was unknown, that human foresight could not anticipate the issue of the divine counsels, and draw aside the veil that concealed futurity from mortal view. "Of that day and hour," says he, "knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Though the contents of this chapter primarily regard the overthrow of the sacred city, yet they have generally been

considered as having a reference also to the consummation of all things, to that great and awful day of the Lord, when Christ shall appear the second time to execute judgment on all the inhabitants of the earth, that day when those great tribulations, and those terrible convulsions of nature which are here so strikingly depicted, shall take place. The first of these events has taken place agreeably to the prediction, in all its circumstances. Jerusalem has been laid in ashes—the ill-fated inhabitants of Israel have been doomed to suffer the righteous judgment of God. The second is that which we are directed to look for and hasten unto—and to the inhabitants of this world, come when it will, it will be still more awful, and it will be equally sudden and unlooked for. But, although our Lord's

discourse to his disciples may especially refer to this grand and awfully solemn event, yet there are a variety of hints contained in it which come home to the hearts of individuals, and which every man, in every age and in every situation, is required particularly to apply to himself. I consider these words of the text, therefore, as containing not merely a solemn warning to the Jews and to the primitive disciples of Christ to prepare for the second coming of the Lord; but as a rousing call to us individually to prepare for that fatal day when our connexion with the world shall be dissolved, and when we shall be summoned into the presence of our God. The event of death is to each one of us, as if the last trumpet had sounded, and the Son of Man had appeared in all his glory, to judge the quick and the dead. To us all it is the most momentous that can possibly take place, introducing each one either into a state of bliss and glory without end, or into a state of recondemned and everlasting woe—and yet, my friends, melancholy to tell, generally speaking, there is, perhaps, no future event which through life excites so little of our interest, or occupies so few of our thoughts. The truth is beyond all denial, that the living must die, and that they must die to live in bliss or woe eternal, and yet the connexion appears so feeble, that judging from the conduct of mankind, we might conclude that they did not believe they should ever die. Indeed a practical and experimental conviction of it, men have not. They are eating, and they are drinking, they are marrying, and are given in marriage, and they think not, they know not, till the overwhelming tide sweeps them away. Oh, that men were wise, that they knew this, that they considered their latter end! The words which have been read are at all times striking, and at all times monitory, and at no time unseasonable; but the great calamity that has befallen this congregation and parish, marks the admonition with peculiar force, and makes the language of the text significant to every hearer. On this day when our laughter has been turned into mourning, and our joy into heaviness, when the sound of weeping is heard in many places, and when a congregation has been bereaved of their spiritual guide, Oh! what is the improvement that we should make of the striking and melancholy event? What, but that while we sympathize with the immediate sufferers, and pray God for their conso-

lation; we should lay the heavy and sudden stroke seriously to heart, and prepare in good earnest for our own departure. The calamity in loud and solemn accents addresses each one of us this day; "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." These words contain two topics, deserving at this time of attention. In the first place, they contain a serious admonition, "Be ye also ready;" and in the second place, they contain a powerful argument for impressing the admonition, "for in such an hour as ye know not the Son of Man cometh." These I shall endeavour by God's will, shortly to illustrate.

Let us attend, in the first place, to the admonition, "Be ye also ready." To be ready for the second coming of Christ, his coming to us at death, is or ought to be our grand object through life, and unless we are prepared for it, we have lived in vain; we have lived, let me tell you, for worse than no purpose—it had been better for us that we had never been born. When surrounded with our friends and companions, and blessed with health, and undisturbed with life's vexations and troubles, and tasting all the sweets, and all the comforts, and the every-day pleasures of life, we may, indeed, have different ideas of the end of existence; but when death and judgment arise to our view, when the dread unexplored hereafter and eternity appear fully before us, Oh, how will the bitterness of this scene strike our minds! or how insignificant will the whole world appear, and the general pursuits of life, and how manifest to the understanding, that no lesson in life was of such moment as to learn how to die, and to triumph over the last enemy! But what is it, it may be asked, to be ready for death? Various opinions will be entertained on this point, although it is surely one where no diversity of opinion should exist—where all should be one. There are, indeed, ten thousand ways of quitting the world; but there is, and there can be but one solid foundation of hope to all who depart out of it, to all who exchange time for eternity, and such as build on any other basis than that which God has himself laid and revealed in the everlasting gospel, must ultimately meet with a sad disappointment. Let us then inquire seriously what Scripture teaches us on this point, for it is by its sacred decisions alone that our sentiments must be guided, and our opinions must be established

I observe then, in the first place, that to be ready for death, is to have obtained the pardon of all our sins. That there is no man who liveth and doth not commit sin, and that every sin is subject to the divine displeasure, are truths to which every one from his own feelings must consent. If there are any who do not admit the scriptural declarations of this chapter so agreeable to fact and experience, I conceive that they are yet strangers in their hearts to, and are ignorant of, the divine character, unacquainted with the spirit of God's holy law, and know not what Christianity is. We hourly offend and insult the glory of God. Our hearts are corrupted and our lives unholy, and unless we secure, or have secured, the divine forgiveness for our many repeated and aggravated offences, there remains nothing for us but coming wrath. To die without pardon is to die without hope. No state can be so distressing, and no thought so heart-rending, as that of an immortal being passing out of time into eternity, entering the unexplored world of spirits with a heart alienated from the love of God, with a load of guilt unrepented of. No forgiveness befalls such, and in the divine justice there is nothing to hope—his iniquities must prove his ruin—his sins must weigh him down to the abyss of woe: whether a person in such a state can be ready to die, judge ye. To live with guilt unforgiven is dreadful, but oh, how dreadful is guilt unforgiven at the hour of death! But they who have their iniquities blotted out and their sins forgiven, who like the prodigal, are received into the arms of affection, whose first wanderings are forgotten, and over whose numerous deviations, and secret offences, and presumptuous sins, the Lord has drawn a veil, are ready—against such there is no condemnation, from the stroke of death they need forebode no evil, into the arms of the king of terrors they may fall without dismay. But still the question recurs, who are in such a case, to whom is this pardon extended, whose iniquities are blotted out? I answer, they, and they only, who have an interest in Christ—they, and they only, who have fled for refuge to the Lamb of God—they who have laid hold on the hope set before them in the gospel—they who, seeing their lost state and feeling sin's oppressive load, have humbled themselves in the divine presence—they who have broken hearts, who have mourned over their transgressions, who have laid

hold of the covenant of peace. Read the Gospel from end to end, you will find no other foundation of hope but this, no other terms of acceptance to the sinner but this. But is it not to be feared that there are many who consider themselves in a state of safety, who have no such foundation to build on for eternity; many who, because they are not chargeable with gross offences, and perhaps are not the very chief of sinners, suppose that they are in little danger? Thinking lightly of sin and its malignity they see little amiss in themselves, and conceiving that they have done much good in the world and little evil, they flatter themselves that they are always ready. Alas! I tremble for such individuals, they are proclaiming peace and safety to their souls when sudden destruction is ready to overtake them—they are building on a sandy foundation—they are resting on false hopes. If any such are hearing me, I must inform them, that there is no sin of a venial nature, that the smallest transgression bears the impress of hell and has the sentence of wrath written over it, that the smallest deviation needs remission, and that what may be regarded the most trifling error needs the Saviour's atoning blood. For the very least and the greatest offenders are all saved in one way—the youthful delinquent and the hoary-headed sinner, the once persecuting but afterwards zealous Paul, and the multitude whom no man can number, must all flee to the same atoning sacrifice, and have recourse to the same mediation. There is no peace with God but through Christ—there is no living, no dying in safety, but under the shield of Him who is the resurrection and the life. Thinking otherwise, either you or Christ must be mistaken, who has said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "He that believeth on the Son shall not perish, but have everlasting life, but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Either you or Paul must be in the wrong, for he says, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." They that are in Christ are those against whom there is no condemnation—they that die in the Lord are those who are blessed—they from whom Christ has removed the sting of death, are those who

are ready for death and to obtain the victory over it. Examine then yourselves and know that of all sinners you are the least ready for the second coming of Christ, if you are trusting to yourselves, if you see no sins, or few sins to pardon, and have never betaken yourselves to the blood of atonement. No—if you would have your sins blotted out, believe me, you must be washed in the blood of sprinkling—if you would be ready to die you must flee to the city of refuge—you must flee to the propitiation. Never rest, then, till you have found Christ. All the prospects of death and eternity, all the views of God and heavenly bliss, can bring no comfort near to the soul, till they are seen through the medium of, and in connection with, the author and finisher of our faith.

But, I observe, in the second place, that to be ready for death is to possess renewed natures, to be like Christ; and being like Christ, to be meet for heaven. This is also an important branch of our preparation for death. The meeting between God and us cannot be comfortable, unless we are assimilated to God's image. When Christ appears the second time, without sin unto salvation, they that are for him, and shall see him as he is, must be like him. We never can be prepared for death unless we are prepared for heaven, for beyond the grave there is no preparation, no farther instrumentality of the word, no farther sanctification of the Spirit. As we are at death, so must we be through eternity, either vessels of wrath, or vessels of mercy. He that is righteous then shall be righteous still, he that is filthy then shall be filthy still. If there was no guilt for preventing the sinner getting into heaven, there is enough in the dispositions, and unhallowed temper, and unrenewed heart, to render him miserable there. The mouth of the Lord hath declared, that no impenitent, no unregenerate sinner, can enter the kingdom of heaven; that nothing that is an abomination, or that maketh a lie, can find a place in his presence. Granting, if possible, that he could get into heaven, what enjoyment could he find there? A sinner may flatter himself with heaven, but it cannot be the place of his rest; it cannot be the place of his enjoyment. If it were merely no place of torment, no hell, this might be the case; but in its nature, situation, employment, felicities, it is just as widely different from what a sinner would fancy heaven to

be, as God is different from the sinner himself. To relish any thing we must have taste and capacity for it. What gratification does all the harmony of sound yield to the deaf, or the beauties of nature to the blind? Would all the luxuries of the table be relished by the sick? Would all the society and conversation of the learned, be relished by the coarse and the illiterate? Now to apply this. What would the unsanctified do in that city, where, to use scriptural language, the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, are the temple thereof? What a weariness would it be to serve God day and night, where there are so much reluctance and aversion to a few minutes' religious exercise in life? What a gloomy abode would heaven be, and what a sad eternity to those whose inclinations run counter to every thing like communion with the saints, who detest their society, and run out of it, as they would from a tempest, did they meet with no other company in the Jerusalem above, and were they condemned to hear thousands on mount Zion hymning that very song which was their aversion on earth, I leave ungodly men themselves to judge. Will their consciences bless when the Almighty has cursed? Shall your hearts have peace and delight, when God, in his anger, declares, and reason proclaims, that there can be no peace? And let me tell you, that the enjoyments of a saint on earth, and a saint in heaven, differ not so much in kind as in degree. Glory above is only a higher degree of the graces that the Christian has attained below. Fellowship with God on earth is just a lower stage of the communion that a saint enjoys with God in heaven; and the vision of God, which is now dark, and as through a glass, is exchanged into rapture, on beholding the same God face to face, and rejoicing in the vision. Christians, are you transformed into the image of Christ? Are you fitted for the immediate presence of God? Are you prepared to unite with the spirits of just men made perfect; and for joining the general assembly of the Church of the first born? And, moreover, are you ready for judgment? Then, let me tell you, and then only are you ready for death. It is not for me to say what portion of Christ's temper and Spirit are essential to qualify us for Heaven. There are different degrees of this resemblance, no doubt, among the heirs of glory. But we have seen enough to know, that

the image of our Father must be repaired, and we know that it is one of the characteristics of a renewed soul, to be growing; and that with regard to attainments, the soul of a Christian is animated with unbounded aspirations, and influenced by insatiable desires. I ask, then, can you trace in yourselves a resemblance to Christ; and feeling your growing meetness for heaven; say you are ready for heaven? The sinner is daily ripening for hell. His sensuality, his carnality, his love of sin, and of the world, are daily preparing him for eternal death. Can you say, then, that your conformity to the image of Christ, that your spirituality of heart, and heavenly mindedness, and hatred of sin, and love of holiness, and attachment to the Redeemer, and growing deadness to the world, and love of the truth, are all strengthening and gaining ground? that they are fitting you for life everlasting? If so, I hope that come death when it may, it will be to you the harbinger of joy; and that the grave will be to you the harbinger of glory. I should remind you, that this preparation for death, and meetness for heaven, you can expect only through Christ. There is no salvation in any other. Salvation, however you explain the term, as a title by which salvation is claimed, deliverance from the consequences or power of sin, pardon or purity, is the same. Christ is all and in all, wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and eternal redemption. In the Lord there is righteousness to secure our acceptance with God, and to purchase our title to bliss. In the Lord there is strength to bear us up, and carry us through the toils, and dangers, and doubts, between us and our home. In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified now, and in him shall they glory hereafter. Faith and repentance are essential to our acceptance with God; but neither can wipe away the stain of guilt, or secure our pardon. This is effected by the blood of atonement. Prayer and ordinances are for fitting us for heaven, but the Spirit of God must work in us by these means, and render us fit for the everlasting inheritance. Ye are washed, ye are justified, ye are sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Again, in the third and last place, upon this branch of our subject, to be ready for death, is to have all the graces of the Spirit in vigorous exercise. There is an habitual,

and there is an active preparation for death. There is what may be called a *state*, and there is also what may be termed a *frame* of mind, suited for Christ's coming. Of the first of these, I have spoken in the former parts of the discourse. In the first of these conditions the Christian is, when he is washed, and justified, and sanctified. In the first of these, he is, when his guilt is cancelled, when his iniquities are pardoned, when his nature is renewed, when his dispositions are sanctified, when his heart is purified; but there is a temper of mind, a disposition of soul, peculiarly befitting the approach of death, which we would denominate the Christian's actual readiness; and, in this state he is, when the graces of the Holy Spirit are in lively exercise. This is, perhaps, what St. Paul means, when he speaks of "finishing his course with joy." This is, perhaps, what he means, when he says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day." He felt himself to be in this blessed frame, when he longed to depart, and to be with Christ. It was the frame of mind that Simeon was brought to, when he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." It was the frame of mind in which Stephen was, when he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." My friends, it is not merely being in a state of safety, but it is the being in a state of humble and holy confidence; it is not merely being animated with a spirit of hope, but in being possessed of the assurance of hope. Perhaps the Apostle Peter alludes to the attainment of this, when he exhorts, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." Not sure in the purpose of God, but sure to your own minds; "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." A Christian would not merely wish to go off the stage of life with resignation, with some faint glimmerings of hope. He would wish to make his exit out of this world with all the marks of conquest, and all the signals of triumph, to show the enemies of God, and the world, how a Christian can die; to demonstrate, by visible proof, what Christianity can effect; to show to all, and to tell what the Lord has done for his soul, and

what the Lord can accomplish, and has accomplished to him. He would wish to depart with faith unmingled with doubt, with hope unsubdued by fear, with his assurance full, with his joy triumphant. In these respects, the righteous, the Christian, is not always ready. He has sometimes his doubts and his forebodings; he sometimes cannot behold his title to glory so clearly as he could wish. His hope cannot always rise above the mists and shadows that obscure the land of promise. And why, oh! why is it so? Why, just because while the bridegroom tarries, the wise as well as the foolish virgins, are slumbering and sleeping. The christian warrior is not always girt with his full armour, or able, at all times, to enter the lists. The best of men may sometimes be in such a frame that shame would cover them; and, with respect to many, even terror and dismay would fill their hearts, were the cry raised, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him." With great propriety, then, is the warning addressed to all, to the friends, as well as foes, of the Redeemer. Be ye also ready. Have your loins girded, and your lamps burning; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh. Perhaps I may speak to the experience of some who now hear me, when I say, there have been certain blessed seasons, certain golden hours, when they have been waiting for their change; when they have been willing, and have felt an inclination, and even a desire, to depart, and to be with Christ; when God has been pleased to establish their faith, and draw aside the veil; when, with strength of vision, they have surveyed the promised land; when they have felt their fears dispelled, their doubts removed, and confidence in the Lord established; when holy serenity possessed their souls, and holy fortitude nerved their hearts; and when, under the influence of the powers of the world to come, they could say with some, "Now, now, let thy servant depart; come, yea, come quickly, Lord Jesus!" Now, it is in such a frame as this, that we are ready to meet death. This is the actual preparation of which I am speaking; and, if you

attend to such seasons, when such a frame of mind, and such an elevation of soul have existed, you will perceive what are the means which the Spirit of God has employed to effect it, and what ought to be your duty and constant exercise, in order to obtain it, and perpetuate it. Has it not been when you have gone to God by prayer, or when you have been listening, with the household of faith, to what God reveals in his word? Has it not been when you have been waiting on God in his ordinances, and been refreshed with the waters of life, or when in the exercise of holy meditation, your souls have soared above the world? Has it not been when you have been exercising watchfulness in your hearts, and contrasting the enjoyments of the world with the glory to be revealed, you have perceived its vanity, extinguished the thirst after its pleasures, and resisted, with effect, its temptations? Has it not been when exercising habitual dependence on Christ, you have walked in the ways of the righteous; or when, with the afflicting hand of God upon you, the world has been shut out, eternity has been brought nearer to view, and the veil has been drawn aside from futurity? Oh! then see that you do nothing to forfeit it, that you keep the halloved flame alive, and that it be the constant business of your life to be brought into this state, and to be kept in this state, till the day dawn, till the swellings of Jordan subside, till the transient and imperfect glimpse of divine glory is lost in full vision, and perfect enjoyment. Thus fortified, you shall be enabled to say, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" Thus unmoved, you shall be enabled to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Thus cheered, you shall be enabled to say, "Come, yea, come quickly, Lord Jesus." In such a state as this, have multitudes, now around the throne, closed their earthly career, and left this world of doubts and darkness, of fears, and of perplexities. God grant this may be our state, when the Lord puts into our hands the sentence, "Thou must depart."

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D., Glasgow.

SERMON by the Rev. DAVID WELSH, D.D., Edinburgh.

COMFORT UNDER BEREAVEMENT ;

Preached by the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D.—Continued.

I AM now brought to the second topic in the text, the motive and argument employed for enforcing the admonition, "For in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." There is something peculiarly striking and awakening in these words. In the 42d verse, the uncertainty of the event in question is pointed out, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." But here we are informed, that as we do not know when our Lord may come, that hour may come upon us by surprise. Christ's arrival may take place in an hour when we least of all wish for it, when we are least of all on our guard, and least of all prepared for it. I will not attempt to prove this. I will not send you abroad into the world for examples and illustrations of it. I will only show in what sense it may surprise us, as an argument for us always to be ready. In the first place, death may come when our thoughts are least turned to it. This is most likely to be the case in what we are led to call sudden deaths, when the individual is cut down without the smallest anticipation, on his part or ours, of the change—our thoughts are turned to other objects, and we never dream that the gloomy hour is so near at hand, and that the arm of God is lifted up to lay us low. I might advert to many cases of this kind, but I forbear. Nay, how often, when we have been waiting for, and watching, the extinction of the dying spark, has it expired without our being aware of it? The coming of death is like the lightning that darts throughout the sky, without any previous warning. Though, of old, the warning voice of Noah was lifted up, men never once allowed themselves to think of the truth, or of the possibility of the truth, till the flood came and

swept them all away. Instances of the sudden approach of death are of daily occurrence. The sun may rise without a cloud, and yet soon the earth may be shrouded in darkness. The day may commence joyfully, and may close in sadness ; so little do we know what an hour may bring forth. It is possible that death may surprise us in the pleasures of easy, gay, good nature. This was the case with the sons of Job. They were eating, and drinking wine ; we say not in sinful indulgence, we would rather presume the reverse, and in one moment their dwelling was converted into a common grave. Little did the rich man, when he said to his soul, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," know that the decree had already gone forth, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." God can cause the sun to go down at noon, and darken the earth ; he can turn our peace into mourning, and our song into lamentation. Oh ! let not our thoughts wander far from God, but let us be habitually looking forward to the coming of the Lord, and always on the watch, that we may be always prepared to meet our Judge. Oh ! let us not engage in any thing that is sinful, in any thing that is even of a doubtful nature, in any thing but that on which we can supplicate the divine blessing.

In the 2d place, death may come when, according to human calculation, there is the least prospect of it. There is a period in human life, beyond which few pass. Comparatively few, indeed, reach the fourscore years of human existence ; and when their aged trunks are cut down, we are not astonished. To human view, they have lived their day ; their strength has become weakness ; their place in society is ready to be filled by others ; and perhaps they

have outlived their faculties and their usefulness ; and their grey hairs, and tottering frames—all bespeak their speedy departure. And when the sickly falls we are not surprised. His feeble frame promised at first but few days ; it appeared but ill fitted to resist life's stormy blast. In these situations, Death appears to keep, and to range in, his natural possessions ; and when he levels such, he seems to cut down those that were ripened for his scythe. Yet even these are often unexpectedly cut off, and the most aged are frequently vainly imagining that they are too young to die. But such as are in youth and strength, you would say, may flatter themselves that they shall yet see many years. Humanly speaking, appearances are in their favour ; and, you would say, it is natural that their hopes should be realized. But in all the ways of God there is variety. The strong and the vigorous fall, while the weak and sickly stand. The sturdy oak has been overthrown and shattered by the raging elements, while the slender twig, and leafless trunk, have escaped. "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet, while his breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow ; and another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure." While this is the case, we are astonished and appalled, as if something extraordinary and unprecedented had taken place ; while, alas ! it is an occurrence, than which nothing is more frequent ; it is an occurrence of almost every day. Providence thus tells us, that all flesh is as grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field ; that all mankind are at his disposal, and all events ; that the vigorous are at his control, and that the warning to the youngest and least expecting it, is, "Be ye also ready." Were we to select from this congregation, such as are most likely to set at defiance the ravages of disease and death, we would certainly go to the young and the vigorous, and on them we would fix our highest expectations ; and yet we might just select those upon whom the king of terrors has already fixed his eye ; so little does man know the number of his days. It is a presumption too prevalent among the young and middle-aged, that because the characters of age are not impressed upon them, that because no severe disease preys upon them, they need have no cares about their latter end. Oh ! remember that there

is no security to him whose breath is in his nostrils. You are as unable to contend with death, as the puny infant, and can no more resist the ravages of disease, than those who are on the very brink of the grave ; and though you cannot think it, there may be nothing but a step between you and an eternal world. Oh ! look around you, and mark what a few weeks, or months, have effected. Thousands as young, as gay, and as unsuspecting of death, as you, and with hopes as flattering, are now corrupting in the grave, and shall not open their eyes till the morning of the resurrection dawn, and Christ appear in all his glory. And what art thou, to presume that thy fate shall be different from theirs ? Oh ! then, I entreat you, be instructed, be wise, boast not of to-morrow ; the event of a single hour may surprise you. Beware of sinking into a slumber that benumbs the soul, and unfits for duty. Know that death will come as a thief in the night ; gird up your loins ; flee instantly to Christ ; the more young and vigorous thou art, exercise the greater vigour, activity, zeal, and fidelity, in the work of preparation. Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, at his coming, shall find so doing.

I observe, again, that death may call us when our earthly concerns may make it most inconvenient for us to depart. The Lord in forming his purposes, and carrying them into effect, is not regulated by the judgments or the opinions of men. "There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord." The Lord taketh away, and who can hinder him. Were we not persuaded, that perfect wisdom and unbounded goodness directs all the plans of heaven, we should sometimes be apt to question the expediency of certain occurrences, and to conclude, that breaches in society are sometimes unseasonable ; and when we are especially and personally interested, there is not unfrequently a secret murmuring, and a rebellion, in charging the Almighty rashly, and a questioning the equity of divine procedure, and a disposition to wrest the reins of government, as it were, out of the hands of the Most High. When one valuable member of society is taken, and another less valuable is left, we are prone to say, Why was it so ? Why was it not otherwise ? Such occurrences are not infrequent. There, perhaps, we see a parent cut off just at the period when the family needed most his support and coun-

sel, before age had matured them for the enterprises of life, or for the arrangement of their affairs. Here we see the servant of the Lord, to whose exertions the cause of religion was indebted, who manfully and successfully fought the battles of the Lord, hurried off. The warrior who stood on the breach, and to whom the eyes of the country were turned in the day of danger, is often in the hottest of the battle cut off. The statesman who rode on the waves of anarchy and confusion, and whose voice silenced the tumults of the people, is summoned hence at a most critical moment. The sovereign, with all the splendour of royalty, lays down his sceptre at the divine command, and yields at the order of a greater sovereign than he. These are dark and mysterious providences, beyond our searching, but they are the doings of the Lord, and this should lead us to lowly prostration. We should say, How unsearchable are thy judgments! while we rejoice that the Lord reigns, and that justice and judgment are the supports of his throne. God plainly tells us, that though we are dependent on instruments, He is not. He would thereby lead us to invisible agency; he would thereby teach us, that though man is crushed before the moth, the residue of his spirit is with Him that can control all, and overrule all; and that from the feeblest instruments he could effect the greatest results. Moses thought to get to the land of promise, but it was reserved for other hands; and he slept with his fathers before he crossed the Jordan. David's greatest ambition is to raise the temple, but his aim is frustrated, and he is gathered to his fathers, and leaves it to others to execute his purpose. And, thus, the god-like purposes of many are suddenly thwarted. I do not speak here of those who give away their souls for the sake of a particular matter; not of those who are saying, we will go into such a city, and there continue for a year, and buy and sell, and make gain; not of those who speak of worldly plans, the care of which unfits them for duty, and banishes God, and the Saviour's work of religion from their hearts, and who are hurried off the stage of earth long before their projects are mature; not of him who says, I will pull down my barns and build greater, while this is the decision of heaven, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee;" but of those whose purposes and plans are good, who may have

formed them in subserviency to the divine will, executing them in reliance on the divine blessing; who, in what they did, were a blessing to others, and yet they are taken away, and by surprise, and in an hour when they think not of it. Oh! how salutary, then, the Apostle's admonition: "The time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world, as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." Ob! then, my friends, set your houses and your hearts in order, and prepare to meet your God, and be ready for the sentence of death.

In the last place, death may come when we are least ready for its approach. This is the most melancholy consideration of the whole; because, as the tree falls, so it must lie. Our state at death is fixed for ever; it is fixed irrevocably; it is fixed for eternity. Although death may come upon a good man by surprise, it may startle him, but it cannot destroy him; it may occasion a momentary trepidation, but it cannot rob him of his rest. His soul is secure against every assault, for his name is written in the Book of Life, and his everlasting inheritance cannot be lost. But, oh! how different is it with the sinner who is hurried out of time into eternity, without the time, and without the desire, to call on God for mercy. It is impossible for language to describe, and for the heart to conceive, the state of such a soul. He is hurried into the immediate presence of his God, with his heart unchanged; full of envy against God, he enters the world of spirits, holding in his hands the weapons of rebellion, daring the justice of the Almighty, and despising the ordinances of divine grace. Lamentable instances have been brought to our knowledge of such awful exits of the sinner, sufficient to make the very blood run cold. Conceive, if you can, what must be the feeling of that soul which is hurried from the haunts of wickedness into the presence of the God of purity; who, it may be, with the language of blasphemy dying on his lips, is summoned to the tribunal, and to God; who passes from the scene of dissipation, to that of trembling wrath; who, from the summit of substantial bliss, is plunged into the lowest abyss of woe; who, without understanding and consideration,

is called to give in his account to that God whose power he has despised, whose mercy he has condemned, whose grace he has opposed, whose blood he has trampled under foot, whose denunciations he has ridiculed, and whose promises he has treated with derision. Oh! I tremble for the fate, the awful fate, of the impenitent sinner. He is every moment standing on the brink of eternal perdition, on the very suburbs of hell; his eyes are opened, and with his heart obstinately bent on his everlasting ruin. Oh! why, we beg of you, will you trifle with your immortal spirit? If it were merely the bodily dissolution and the bodily corruption, let it go, it is the food of worms; but will you lose, will you tamper with, your immortal soul? Why will you continue in your impenitent state? Why, for one moment, will you give yourself to sin, when that moment may be your last? Would you die in this state? If neither the groans of Gethsemane, nor the blood of Calvary melt your hearts, and induce you to flee from coming wrath, oh! let the groans from yonder pit of woe, and the terribly awful situation of those that have entered that bottomless pit of destruction, rouse you, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth; there is not, nor cannot be, any deliverance from this wrath on which they have entered. Let these considerations lead you to flee from the wrath to come, to lay hold on the hope that is set before you in the Gospel, to come to Christ and he saved.

Many particular lessons may be drawn from this subject, on which I cannot enter; and, my friends, the late melancholy event that has taken place in this parish, and has brought us together on this day, in the garb of woe, has naturally suggested the foregoing reflections. Striking occurrences in Divine Providence are designed for lessons of warning, and instruction for the children of mortality; and such ought to be laid hold on by the watchmen of Zion, and improved for the spiritual benefit of immortal souls. And if, on any occasion, surely on the present, when the strong ties by which the pastor and people were united, are cut asunder, we have an event which loudly calls for improvement; when he who was placed on this watchtower, has been hurried from the scene of his labours, into the presence of his God; when, from his cares and toils, and duties on earth, he has been called to give an account of his

sacred trust. And, surely, if ever a congregation can feel a warning, if ever a warning voice can reach the ear to prepare for the second coming of Christ, for death, and for eternity, it must be on such a day as this, when, from the scarcely closed tomb of a spiritual guide, the warning comes, Be ye also ready; prepare to meet your God.

In conformity with ordinary custom, I have been appointed, in connexion with my respected brother who addressed you in the forenoon, to the painful, but honourable duty, of addressing you this day. The task ought to have fallen into other hands than mine; but the partiality of surviving and dear relatives, has selected me for the performance of it; and, in accordance with my brother, I can say, that, however unequal to the task, I have too much esteem for the dead, and sympathy for the living, and respect for feelings and wishes which, at such a season, are sacred, for one moment to hesitate as to what is given me. And, in undertaking this duty, I would not forget its nature. I come not here to panegyricize your venerable and excellent pastor, who has left this land of darkness and shadows. The eulogy of a creature of a day, however exalted, is not the language of the pulpit. He is beyond the reach of all praise. He has erected over himself, I am persuaded, in the hearts and affections of many of his people, a monument higher and more imperishable far than any I could raise, and which will, with many, I trust, remain unshaken, when my eyes shall be for ever closed in this world. I come here to improve the solemn event for your spiritual weal. I come here to call on you to be ready, and to remind you that, when the cedar yields to the desolating storm, the slender shrub may well shake; that when it strikes on the temple, the clay-built cottage may well tremble; to remind you, that when the fathers are asleep, and the prophets live not for ever, it is your duty, and mine, to lay the matter seriously to heart. Though eulogy is unbecoming, the language of truth ought to be uttered; the graces and virtues of eminent characters should not be overlooked, that survivors may be led to transcribe into their lives, what was christian and becoming in them, and be led to follow them, who, through faith and patience, have trod the journey of life, and gone to inherit the promises. Respect, and gratitude, and submission to divine authority—all require of us to remember those who have had rule in the church,

who have spoken to their fellow sinners the Word of life—and to pass over in silence one who, for forty long years, went out and in before this people, as their spiritual guide, distinguished by so much excellence of a private and public nature, would be highly culpable. I enter not with minuteness of detail into your pastor's character. Had this been my intention, I have, I doubt not, been anticipated by my brother, whose long and intimate acquaintance with him, has enabled him to do more ample justice to his character than I could have done. For though his name and character were known to me, as indeed to the whole church, yet it was only of late that I had the happiness of being associated with him, and of enjoying his acquaintance. And to tell you what you every day experienced—his merits as a private citizen, his character as a Christian, his qualifications as a minister—is almost a needless duty. But I feel it a privilege gratifying to my own feelings, to be allowed to stand up here, in my place, and before this people, and the world, to bear testimony to his great personal worth as a private individual, and his high character and attainments as a minister of religion, as a herald of salvation. He was not an every-day character, or one you meet with at every turn of life. Far from it. He was a man of great vigour of understanding, strength of judgment, clearness of apprehension, and mental attainments. His mind was richly stored with general and useful knowledge, especially with that literature and science which are essential to one whose office it is to expound the words of eternal life to others. Theological learning he justly regarded as the leading object of a minister's pursuit. It was his fixed opinion, that all other literature and science should be made subservient to this, and act as handmaids to it; especially by those, the business of whose life is to obtain a knowledge of the sacred truth themselves, and to unfold and recommend it to others. He was, indeed, a scribe well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God. His mind was stored with biblical knowledge, by which he sought to edify and instruct his people. His quiver was filled with arrows drawn from the armoury of God. His discourses were always marked by strong sense, and good sentiment, adorned with scriptural illustrations, and in strict accordance with the truth as it is in Jesus. His own mind, imbued with the spirit of the

everlasting Gospel; his own hope resting on the Rock of ages; his constant aim, and his undeviating object, in his discourses, were to bring sinners to Christ. He spoke, because he believed. Every sentiment he uttered from this place met, I am persuaded, the deep conviction of his own mind, and was designed to promote your eternal interests. He had too great a regard for the house of God, too great love to the souls of perishing sinners, too deep an impression of the sacredness and awful responsibility of his trust, to handle the Word of God deceitfully, or to advance any thing not fitted to promote God's glory and the good of souls. Because he believed, he proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation; because he believed, he warned transgressors to flee from coming wrath; because he believed, he recommended the yoke of Christ as easy and cheerful. In his devotional exercises, there was a depth of thought, a sublimity of sentiment, a richness of expression, a sacredness of feeling, a pathos, and a fervour of soul, that I have seldom seen equalled, never surpassed. He prayed under much feeling, and others were made to feel that God was present; that it is with God we have to do.

For many years, he took an active share in the business of our ecclesiastical courts; not only in our inferior church judicatories, but also, I understand, in our supreme ecclesiastical assemblies. And he had a right to advise; for few were better versed in church laws, few more signalized by extent of information. He went boldly forward in maintaining and defending, fearing no man, and calling no man master. Long will his loss be felt by us in matters involving difficulty, and where a knowledge of the laws and practice of the church is required. There was, doubtless, a sternness, and sometimes severity, and impatience of opposition, characterizing his appearance in some of our church courts; and yet withal, I question whether a more tender, affectionate, feeling, and sympathizing heart, animated an earthly tenement of clay. I need not tell his family what he was in the domestic circle. In their hearts he lives, and will for ever live. I need not tell you, the people of this congregation, what he was in his professional capacity; but you will second me, when I say, that you found him always at his post; ever ready to tender you his best counsel and advice, to advise and admonish the young, and comfort

the aged and infirm, sitting by the bedside of the afflicted, with a tenderness and sympathy seldom equalled; administering the balm of consolation to the wounded spirit, and mingling his tears with those who wept. And although, like every faithful servant of the Lord, on many occasions he met with an ungracious return, yet he was ever alive to your best interests. I forbear to say more; and surely I shall have the concurrence of most of this audience, of all who knew him best, in what I have said.

I would not, with all my partiality for him, wish to represent him as a perfect character. Were I to do so, I would be offering an insult to your understandings, and to the memory of him who is gone. I would be prostituting my sacred office; eulogizing man at the expense of truth; and I would be doing this, in this hallowed sanctuary, consecrated to God and truth. Ministers are not angels; the sacred concern of the Gospel is committed to earthen vessels; they have their constitutional, their besetting sins, their temptations to forsake God, like other men. Where is the character so spotless? where is the life so perfect, to which we would not wish to see something added, and from which we would not wish to see something withdrawn? He breathes not, he lives not. But, surely, I may venture to affirm, that as few have been more distinguished for talent, so few have lived in this corrupted and corrupting world, possessed of a character more upright, faithful, and independent, or left it with a more spotless fame, than your lamented pastor. The weaknesses of pastors, of men in public and in private life, ought to teach all, that there is none who liveth, and sinneth not; that we must look for perfection to one higher than man; and that it is by the grace of God that any of us can stand. Your pastor was one who, we might have naturally thought, from the strength and vigour of his constitution, might have continued with us for many years longer; but he had lived his day—he had finished his work; and if suitably improved, he has read you a more impressive lesson at death, than he ever did all his life long. It is a loud call to us all. To us who are left to minister in holy things, whether sinking in the vale of years, or rejoicing in the vigour of our days, it is a call to greater activity and zeal, to inquire of ourselves who shall next be called on to give an account of his steward-

ship. And the question with us, and with you, and with all, should be, Lord, is it I; Lord, is it I, that shall first be numbered with the dead? Your pastor is gone; his countenance you shall not again behold on earth; his warning voice you shall not again hear in this vale of tears; but the Word of the Gospel preached to you liveth and abideth for ever. I call, therefore, on this congregation, to retain in their minds an affectionate remembrance and practical consideration of his doctrine and life. "Remember them," says the apostle, "that have the rule over you; who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

I call on those who are sinking into the vale of years to inquire, if your pastor, who, according to human calculation, might have been expected to brave the storms of life for some time longer—can any thing else be hoped from your snowy locks, than a speedy departure? Cheered by those doctrines, and animated by those promises and hopes, and comforted by those consolations he unfolded, wait with patience, and in a watchful posture, till your change shall come, and live in the hope of joining in those exalted strains that gladden the city of God. I call on the young to cherish an affectionate remembrance for him who performed the first offices of religion to many of you, admitted you to the visible church, and spoke to you the words of eternal life. Recollect, he has often reminded you that religion was the first business of life, that he has often reminded you of the value of the soul, and of your need of an interest in Christ; that he has often reminded you of the enticements of pleasure, and of the deceitfulness of the heart. Live mindful of his admonitions, and consider him as addressing you from yonder invisible world, in words which he has often addressed to you before, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth; while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." I call on those who have profited by his labours, to remember him as the instrument of good to their souls. Although God must give the increase, yet Paul must plant. I am persuaded, that though often forced in bitterness of heart to exclaim, who hath believed our report? yet he did not always labour in vain. His words were not always like water that cannot be gathered up.

Some sinners were awakened and arrested, some desponding hearts cheered, and some weary travellers refreshed. If you have felt this, give God the praise, but overlook not the instrument. Your pastor is gone; but Jesus is the same, and liveth for ever. The stream is dried up, but the fountain still flows. Oh! remember his words, and impress them on your hearts. Be followers of him, as he was of Christ. Promote the interests of religion in the world. Live habitually as Christians. Look forward to that day with holy ardour, when you and your spiritual teacher shall meet again.

I call upon the careless and the profane, to consider him who has fallen asleep. He has addressed you in public in vain; and in private, but to no purpose. He has prayed for you, but you are still hardened. If, by his instructions, you would not be taught, if, by his warnings, you would not be turned, be admonished by his death. To-day, on this solemn occasion, he is still speaking to you from the grave. He will never again remonstrate with you; he will never rouse you from your slumber by his call: but remember that sooner or later, you shall know that a prophet has been in the midst of you; yea, let me tell you, that if you will not now be roused, he will, on a future day, be a swift witness against you. Conceive him this day addressing you. Turn ye, turn ye, oh! why will you die? Remain no longer stout-hearted—flee to Christ that your souls may live.

I call on the grieving relatives this day to consider him, and dry up their tears; not to sorrow like those who have no hope, for the same hand that depresses, knows how to uphold. It was not at the call of man that he departed, but at the summons of God. His work was finished—his race was run, his labours were ended. Repine not—

rebel not, it is the doing of the Lord; he would not have wished to live always; and God's time is the most seasonable. The time and manner of our exit are appointed with him. If the Christian's death is unexpected and sudden, he is delivered from many an agony and fear, and many a sin to which others are still subject. Try, then, to centre your whole affections in God, and with most entire submission, upon the awfullest occasions, on the sovereign goodness of heaven, try to learn and experience the force of the word, "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed is the name of the Lord." Your pastor is gone to make up *his* account. I exhort all of you to bear in mind, and to lay seriously to heart, that *you* must one day meet in a more numerous assembly, and in more solemn and awful circumstances than the present, to give an account how you have received the gracious messages that have been brought to you by him who is gone. God's word shall not be lost. Pray, that when the Lord has removed, in his sovereignty, one of his servants, he may send a labourer to his own vineyard, who will care for your souls; feed you with wholesome nourishment, and sound doctrine; rightly divide among you the word of eternal truth. And may God influence us to mind the things connected with our eternal peace, before they be forever hid from our eyes; and may pastor and people meet together in a better world, where they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. And God "make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever." Amen.

ON THE PREJUDICES OF PROFESSING CHRISTIANS;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH,

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"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."
—JAMES ii. 10.

It was a doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees, that if they were strict in the observance of any one particular command, they might violate the other parts of the divine law with impunity. And some of the

ancient Jewish teachers gave it as a rule, that men should single out some one precept, and therein specially exercise themselves, that so they might make God their friend by it, lest in others they should too

much displease him. In opposition to these dangerous maxims, our Saviour made the declaration, that whosoever should offend in any one point of whatsoever is written in the book of the law, should be called least in the kingdom of heaven, that is, that no one who acted on the principle, that any part of the divine law might be infringed, with innocence and safety, could belong to the kingdom of heaven; the grounds of which declaration are contained in the words of the text, that "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." Our obedience must be uniform and universal, extending to all the laws of God, and to every part of our duty, if we would obtain the reward of obedience. Every precept, as appears from the context, is comprehended in one royal law of love. They all have the sanction of the same authority; and if we break any one of them, though we observe all the other commands, we are guilty in regard to the whole, because we do dishonour to that authority upon which they all rest. If we offend in one point, it is not said that we are actually guilty of offending in all, nor even that we contract a degree of guilt, as if we had offended in every point; but we subject ourselves to the punishment, as surely as if every command had been broken—as in human law he that had committed one capital crime, would as surely suffer death, as if he committed all. And, besides, there is a certain species of guilt we contract in our resisting that will of which they are all the expression, and breaking that very authority by which they are all sanctioned. We only observe, farther, that when we habitually neglect any one injunction of the law of God, we show that our outward observance of his other commands, cannot proceed from a principle of obedience to the divine will; and we cannot, therefore, be said to fulfil any part of his will, and, therefore, are guilty in regard to it all. Such is the doctrine brought forward in the Sacred Volume, in regard to the degree of guilt that attaches to every violation of the holy law of God. The prejudice to which our attention is in this passage directed, though exhibited by the Scribes and Pharisees, was not confined to them. It is in fact, involved in the principles of our fallen nature, and in greater or less degree its influence has been felt in every age and country. This is not to be wondered at, for it furnishes an easy way for acquitting the conscience of past

offences, and opens up a door for future delinquency; affords a pretext for sins of every description, and accommodates to sinners of every character. There are few who would turn themselves to the commission of every crime; and if once it is imagined, that the observance of one class of duties can make up for the neglect of another, there are scarcely any who will not delude themselves into the idea that they may find acceptance with God. There are two classes into which all who act with this delusion may be divided. The first consists of those who conceive that the discharge of the social and relative duties, makes up for the neglect of those higher duties we owe to the Author of existence; while the second is composed of those who satisfy themselves with the warmth of their zeal, and the scrupulousness of their religious services, while they are without meekness, humility, and charity. Each of these, however, exhibits in the individuals of whom they are formed, the influence of special delusions. In farther discoursing from these words, we propose to bring the doctrine of our text to bear upon some of these prejudices.

The first of the prejudices to which we shall direct your attention, is that of those who conceive that if our good deeds overbalance our evil deeds, the Almighty will, in consideration of what is excellent in our conduct, overlook what is defective. Now, to prove that this is altogether inconsistent with the views of the terms of acceptance which God gives us in the Scriptures, we may observe, that the man who conceives that his sins are outnumbered by his virtues, overrates his own merits. Such an individual may find that his life has been distinguished by many useful services to others, by many deeds, it may be, of humanity and generosity, and stained by no flagrant violations of the sacred law of justice and mercy; but though this may be correct, so far as it goes, it is far from proving that his good deeds preponderate. Let him turn his eye to the catalogue of transgressions that stand against him—let him look to the mispent time he has to account for; to the hours, and days, and weeks, and months, that have been lost in sloth, in utter negligence or levity, to the thoughts, and words, and deeds, that stand recorded against him—let him consider the many advantages for improving himself in knowledge and goodness, which have been lost upon him, how

many opportunities of doing good to others he has neglected or shunned—let him remember how often he has been misled by the errors of the wicked, and how often he has caused his brother to offend—let him look to his sordid and selfish feelings and pursuits, his open sins and secret thoughts; and if to this alarming catalogue he adds his forgetfulness of God, his neglect of his word and ordinances, his drawing near to him with his lips, while his heart was far from him, looking to all these things, and comparing them with his supposed deeds of integrity or beneficence, will he still maintain that he can claim the divine acceptance? But even admitting that any could aver that his virtues outnumbered his vices, it were erroneous to suppose that his sins must, therefore, be cancelled. His virtues are certainly deserving of the approbation of men, but never can atone for the habitual violation of any command of God. This is agreeable to those principles upon which we form our judgments of those around us. How completely our confidence in any person is destroyed, if a single unfair or dishonourable action is detected! How must any such feeling lessen our estimation of any of our obligations to him. Or if excellence in him, in other respects, have engaged our affections, we strive to forget wherein he has offended—how quick and eager are we in inventing palliations! We impute them to our own want of consideration, to mistaken views. But if clearly made out that the individual is aware of his infirmities, makes no attempt to improve, and still urges his other merits as an excuse for indulging in the sin that besets him, then we have to recollect, that this single feeling tarnishes the lustre of all his excellences. We have alluded to the illustration of this principle in human laws. Capital offences subject the transgressor to the penalty of death. It is thus, also, with the law of God, of which we have many proofs in the Sacred Volume, but none more striking than that afforded in the first violation of the divine command; for, by one sin, death entered into the world, and passed upon all. Our Saviour, in many of his discourses, illustrates the insufficiency of our good deeds, to atone for what is faulty in our character. "If you love those," says he, "that love you, what reward have you? Do not even the publicans so?" It cannot be supposed, that it was our Lord's intention to depreciate the duty of loving our friends. His meaning obviously is,

that the exercise of kindly feelings towards those who show an attachment to us, does not make up for an unforgiving temper. To love them that love us only, is no proof in itself of the great christian law of charity. It is, indeed, an essential part, and whosoever fulfils it, is in so far deserving of praise; still it is no proof taken by itself, and, therefore, those whose virtue falls short of the great christian law of charity, can claim no reward. Even a single action has more weight on the judgments we form of the views and principles of one, than all the other actions of his life. We may have lived for years with one who has never been living in the common service of love, and whose friendship we never called in question; but if, on any emergency, he refuses to sacrifice his own convenience for our essential service, this single act weighs more in the estimation we form of the strength of his friendship, than all before. The case of the young man in the Gospel, will at once illustrate the insufficiency of our good deeds to atone for our deficiencies. He had observed the whole law from his youth upwards; but our Saviour put him to the test, and all his other good deeds were outweighed by his refusing to comply with one request made by the Lord. There are, who have led lives as blameless as this young man. His case is not an uncommon one. There are many who, endued with kind dispositions, and, indeed, abounding in good example, without being exposed to any great outward temptation, are chargeable with no sins, but such as are inseparable from the depravity of our nature. With their principles of conduct, it is not our province to judge. When our Saviour saw the young man, he loved him, and surely we are bound to love all who resemble him; but it were well if they would inquire into the principles of their conduct, whether it was owing to the strength or weakness of the soul, and whether, when the time of trial comes, their show of good deeds having no root in them, will wither all away. We trust, then, it appears, that those who conceive their virtues outnumber their vices, form too favourable an estimate of their characters; and that they who, however perfect they may be in regard to outward actions, indulge in the habitual violation of any one command, show that the principle of obedience is wanting, and that no claim have they on the mercy of God.

The next prejudice is nearly akin to what

we have been considering, and indeed takes its rise from it. There are, who maintain that their lives are chargeable with as few faults as the lives of those who make a profession of religion, and thence infer, that their prospects must be equally favourable. It may even happen that they boast of their superiority, as the Pharisee of old, and thank God that they are not as other men, nor even as this publican. If they are without religion, they comfort themselves by supposing that they are without the weakness, pride, carelessness, and worldly-mindedness, so often found to accompany the professors of religion, and that there are many who have more reason to fear than they, on the final day of account. It will appear, from the observations already made, that the estimate they form of their own character, and of that of others, is founded on false views. They work on the outward act, regardless of the principles and motives upon which the blameableness or worthiness of a character depends. They look at the outward act, and see imperfection cleaving to the very best, from which they themselves may happen to be free; but they see nothing at all that takes place in the inner man—nothing of the strength of temptation, of the struggles between principle and passion, between grace and nature, and still less of the force of contrition, of self-abasement, of fixed purposes of amendment, of that carefulness and vehement desire, and of those secret approaches at a throne of grace, which are marked only by that God who seeth in secret. Here, then, is the difference between the two. The one sins, and hardens his heart to continue in sin; the other, when he sins, humbles himself in the dust before his God, and resolves, through his grace, to go no more astray. He may, indeed, still fail, but his failure is that of one whose most anxious wish it was to be delivered from evil; and it is obvious that a sincere wish to obey, is better than the outward act, without any principle of reverence or affection. Whether have we most regard for a servant devoted to our interest, and consulting our well-being, though, in many cases, he may not succeed well, or for one who, when his own inclinations prompted him, disregarded our injunctions, and sacrificed all our interests, whenever they were incompatible with his own selfish purposes? And it is thus also with the servants of God. We see, then, the danger of satisfying ourselves with the idea, that our lives are as irreproachable as those of

others. The habit of measuring ourselves by others is, indeed, pernicious in another respect. It fosters a sensorious disposition, a tendency to underrate the good qualities of others. It creates a suspicion of the purity of their motives, a wish to bring down all that we admire in them to the level of our own attainments, and to say, that if we are not so good as others, others are no better than we. But the habit must fail, when we come to be tried, according to the deeds done in our own bodies. Let none of you then, measuring yourselves among yourselves, deceive yourselves. It is easy to cast a shade of doubt over the most disinterested and generous action, to turn into ridicule the most conscientious characters. But it is a little thing to be judged of men's judgment. He that judgeth us, is the Lord, who will bring to light the counsels of the heart, and then will every good man have praise of God. Let none of you, therefore, allow a beam to remain in your own eye, because a mote is in your brother's, or satisfy yourselves in idea, that others are no better than you. This is a subject upon which you must, in a great measure, necessarily be ignorant; and whether or no, it is a matter in which you have no concern. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? Let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall. In examining yourselves, look to the law by which you are to be tried. Look to the manner in which Christ fulfilled the whole of it. Avail yourselves of all the means of grace to do as he did.

There are other prejudices to be found, to which we can only make a general allusion. Some have imagined, that what is revealed in Scripture, does not apply to their peculiar case, and that the punishment will therefore not be inflicted. They judge of sin by its perceived consequences, and not by its own nature. One man violates the truth, but then this injures no one. Another indulges in sinful pleasure, but his excesses are hurtful to none but himself. But we are not thus to judge of sin. Every violation of the law of God is followed by consequences of evil to ourselves, and others, of which we can form no idea—but independently of these consequences, God has declared from on high against all unrighteousness. To conceive that any part of the law is unnecessary or unreasonable, is to impugn the wisdom of God; and to suppose that the punishment he has threatened will not be put in execution, is to doubt his veracity and faithfulness.

We ought now to proceed to consider some of the prejudices which prevail among the second class of individuals, formerly referred to, those who, by the outward observance of the first table of the law, quiet their consciences for the violation of the second, and who, dashing the one table against the other, break the whole. The other mistake is, that of those who conceive that the law is altogether superseded by the Gospel, and that faith in Christ exempts from the performance of good works. The force of the reasoning of the Apostle is allowed in reference to those who have not been admitted within the bounds of the covenant of grace, but conceived to be inapplicable to the case of the individuals who have. We only remark, that the believers are exempted from the curse of the law—they are not free from the obligation to obey God, as the rule of life. Nay, by the new motives Christ has given to obedience, the obligations to obedience are increased instead of diminished. The grace of God bringing salvation, teaches us, that “denying ungodliness, and all worldly affections, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Christ appeared as our representative—he satisfied the law, and made it honourable—he fulfilled all its requirements—he suffered all that it could inflict; but it was not that we might enjoy immunity, while we continued to transgress that law, but that we should be received into the favour of God, and received into his favour, that we might derive strength to war against sin. We cannot obtain an interest in Christ but by faith, and the evidence of faith is, that it works by love. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Every Christian will make it his aim to render to the whole law a uniform and universal obedience. If through the frailty of our nature, or the strength of temptation, or the force of education, he at any time errs from the straight path, he repents in sincerity of the evil; he considers himself as frustrating the great end for which Christ came into the world, as crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame. The transgression he falls into will lead him to make supplication for help in the time of need, and to watch lest he enter into temptation, that he may be blameless, acting in every situation as one who is to be guided by the perfect law of liberty. Without entering on special law, we remark, that if any per-

son professes religion, while yet he cherishes a notoriously wilful and selfish spirit, he may be assured that he is deceiving his own soul. Such persons are more injurious to the cause of religion, than the open and avowed enemies of Christ. They are the Judases of his followers, betraying him with a kiss.

There are one or two snares into which even sincere believers are in danger of falling, which I merely mention. One is, that the readiness they have experienced on the part of the Almighty to pardon them, is employed by Satan, as an encouragement to sin, in the prospect of certain forgiveness. Another is, that the power of indwelling sin, is never wholly overcome in the world, from which indolence takes occasion to flatter itself, as to the folly of its endeavours, as to the hopelessness of success, and the mercy of God, which is passively relied on, is made thus to increase our willingness to offend.

We trust, then, it appears, that no one who lives in the habitual violation of any one command can be in a state of peace with God. It is possible that we may continue to be in a state of affection with our fellow-men, while we transgress the divine commands; but it is impossible that we can truly love God. When we do not love a being, we shun his company, we strive not to think of him, or seek something in his conduct to which we may affix blame, that we may have a pretext for what we have done. Thus it is with the wicked. Like Adam, he shuns, after having disobeyed, the presence of the Lord God; like Adam, he spurns at the Most High; like him, he strives to vindicate his conduct, by ascribing it to the providence of God. But let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God tempteth no man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticements. The effects of sin habitually indulged in, cannot be unknown to any. Wickedness makes the unrighteous unwilling to lift their souls to the Most High. They cannot deny their dependence upon him—they cannot deny their obligation to him, and conscience tells them immediately to render to him the homage of their hearts; but their evil desires they cannot eradicate, and they feel that it were offering an insult to the Majesty on high, to draw near to him with their lips, while in their hearts they are ready to disobey. The voice of nature tells, that

if they regard sin in their hearts, the Lord will not hear their prayer. On the heart of a righteous man, its effects are not less pernicious. It first makes him less regular and attentive in the duties of devotion, and by degrees he neglects them altogether. A regard to his character may still make him join in the assemblies of the good, but his heart goes not with him, and by degrees he withdraws himself from their society altogether, and shuns the counsel of those who were once his delight—or if he still maintain his former profession and acquaintance, his outward show serves to discover all his faults; as a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, so if the work of deterioration is once begun, it ceases not till the whole man becomes corrupted. Such are the consequences of iniquity. In every shape it is an abomination to the Lord. Every time that the wicked yield to the power of the transgressor, their souls become more debased, and they become more the children of wrath than before. It may not be altogether a subject unworthy of their consideration, whether they are not paying far too great a price for the pleasures of time, and of the world, in subjecting themselves to the enmity of God and the yoke of eternity. They are losing their own souls. Oh! be constrained, then, to make a stand against the tyranny of corruption. The only way in which you can do this effectually, is by enlisting yourselves under the banners of Him who has vanquished the power of sin. By coming to Christ, you must resolve to wage war against every

iniquity. God will admit of no rival in your affections, of no reservation of your devotedness to him. The law of God is exceeding broad, and if any offend in one point, he is guilty of breaking the whole.

The views that have been presented, should make men doubly on their guard against every false and evil way. It is impossible for any one to transgress, without making a temporary breach of soul and body; whatsoever soul transgresseth, the Lord abhorreth; abstain, then, from all appearance of evil; touch not that which defileth. You are bound by a double tie. Consider, that you have prospects, and beware lest a promise being made of entering into rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Remember, you have a character. You are called of the Lord. Be ye therefore holy, as he who has called you is holy. Bear in mind the danger of relapse. If any man draw back, my soul has no pleasure in him. To all the temptations of the great adversary of souls, let your voice be, How can I do this great sin against the Lord? and with the Patriarch of old, I may die, but I will not give up mine integrity. Watch, lest you fall into temptation. Pray to be kept from evil. Avail yourselves of every mean of grace, that the whole law of God may be written on your hearts—and repose the most undoubted confidence in Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Amen, and may God bless his Word.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT STIRLING, Galston.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES SMITH, Alva.

ON THE CHARACTER, PRIVILEGES AND HAPPINESS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD ;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, 19TH MAY, 1833, IN THE HIGH
CHURCH, EDINBURGH, BEFORE HIS MAJESTY'S COMMISSIONER FOR THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

By the Rev. ROBERT STIRLING, .

Minister of Galston, Ayrshire.

" Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him : I will set him on high ; because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him : I will be with him in trouble ; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation."—PSALM xci. 14, 15, 16.

THERE are, who imagine that they cannot sufficiently exercise their own faith, or exalt the glory of their Saviour, unless they discern a type or prophecy relative to him, in every event however common, in every precept however general, in every promise however exclusively adapted to the weakness of fallen humanity. It is not surprising that readers of this kind should have attempted to have applied in its first and primary sense this psalm to our Lord and Saviour, and should have eagerly availed themselves of the apparent support given to this opinion by the history of our Lord's afflictions, which you find quoted from the 11th and 12th verses. I apprehend, however, that the enlightened and intelligent reader of the Scriptures will show his respect for the Gospel in a different manner, and that he will not be forward to trace or recognise any thing as a prophecy or type of Christ, which has not been expressly so recognised by the inspired writers. Certain it is that he will not give loose reins to his imagination on this subject, by which many have given great offence to the faithful followers of Christ, and excited the ridicule of the profane. Above all, he will show no tendency to that indiscriminate rage for typifying, under whose transforming influence, the dictates of divine inspiration have been often made the ground of unworthy cavilling, and by which the spirit of truth

itself has come to be suspected. He will not be forward to ascribe the primary application of not a few psalms, and, in particular, of this to our blessed Lord, if he be not supported in this by some better argument than that to which I have just alluded. I think it impossible to read the passage, without seeing that, upon very remarkable occasions, the Scriptures were quoted both as promises and precepts, and as universally applicable to all the people of God. In a word, we cannot conceive it possible that any man not deeply infected with the typical or prophetic mania, or who has not his mind pre-occupied, should read with attention the psalm I have now read in your hearing, without perceiving that its grand and primary object is to give glory to God, for his faithfulness in protecting his people, and to give encouragement to every pious man, to hold fast his confidence in his best friend and benefactor. For this purpose, Scripture employs a variety of striking images to represent the character and privileges of the people of God, every one of which might afford ample scope for pleasing and instructive contemplation. Limited as we are upon this subject, our great object must be, to extract the comfort and instruction which the psalm affords in the most simple and direct manner; and, accordingly, what I propose, in humble dependence on divine grace, for this purpose, is to con-

fine your attention to the last three verses, in which you find such instruction and comfort set before us, in a form the best suited to our comprehension, because most conformable to our ordinary modes of thinking and our common forms of expression. "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him : I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him : I will be with him in trouble ; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation."

I shall, in endeavouring to illustrate this passage, take the liberty of not adhering strictly to the exact order observed in the sacred text, but endeavour to illustrate the several clauses of this interesting passage ; as they relate, in the first place, to the character, and, in the second place, to the privileges and happiness of the people of God. Now, with respect to the former of these, the first clause which deserves our attention, although it is not the first in order, is that which teaches us, that it is a distinguishing character of the Christian, that he knows the Lord, or, as it is expressed in the Hebrew idiom, "Because he hath known my name." You must at once perceive that this is the very foundation of the Christian's character, for it is impossible for him to love or serve a God whom he does not know—and it was because the heathen did not know God, and did not give him glory, that they were given over to a reprobate mind. The Christian finds in the knowledge of God a complete and effectual check on all his evil propensities, and a ready introduction into the love and service of his heavenly Master. He has not derived this knowledge from the light of nature alone. No. It were certainly unjust to suspect that the Christian is either ignorant of, or insensible to, the traces of wisdom, and power, and goodness, that abound in every part of nature. So far from this, he rejoices to know and acknowledge, that "the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." He sees that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork, that day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge" concerning him. But observing that these intimations are obscure and imperfect, he turns with

delight to the clear and steady light of the Gospel, and he contemplates with joy the glorious perfections of his heavenly Father, as they shine forth in Jesus Christ, his Son, who is the image of the invisible God. Beholding the invisible Father in this manner, he no longer sees as through a glass darkly, but beholds as it were face to face. He does not see the various attributes of God set in irreconcilable opposition to each other, and enveloped in inextricable obscurity. On the contrary, he beholds that, in this character, mercy and truth have met together, that righteousness and peace have embraced each other, that God is and can be just, while the justifier of all that believe in Jesus. When the servant of God is enlightened by the Gospel, he no longer sees the power of God constantly exercised in the production of a confused mixture of good and evil—he no longer sees it displayed in a manner equally formidable to friends and foes. On the contrary, he acknowledges that it is placed under the direction of infinite goodness, and that "all things are made to work together for good to them that love him, and are the called according to his purpose." The Christian does not see the goodness of God to be limited by imperfection, or his mercy to be unabated, seldom exercised, or of doubtful existence, but both goodness and mercy subjected to restraint for a time, in order to exalt universal justice, and finally to triumph in accomplishing the complete and eternal deliverance of God's people. The Christian no longer sees the wisdom of God struggling against physical impossibility, and striving in vain to overcome the intractability of matter, in ensuring the happiness of his people. On the contrary, he sees the wisdom, the power, and the beneficence of God, marked by the production of moral evil, and the sentence of death passed on man, as even a curse intended to promote his glory. But especially the Christian seeing God in Christ as a reconciled Father, as not imputing unto men their trespasses, all fear, anxiety, jealousy, and apprehension, are dismissed from his mind, and he is constrained to acknowledge that he is the universal object of approbation, of gratitude, and of love.

This naturally leads me to take notice of another feature of the Christian character, that he loves the Lord his God—"because," says the Psalmist, "he hath set his love upon me." Now, the love of God is not

derived merely from a conviction of its being proper or even beneficial. It is not according to its divine object to be entertained with backwardness or reluctance, but, on the contrary, from a thorough conviction of the excellence and amiableness of the divine character. It is love which far surpasses every affection that can exist in our breasts towards any other object. It is free from that mere human fervour with which we sometimes express our attachment to earthly objects. It spurns and despises the expressions of natural love, which is often an impure affection. It is exalted, and refined, and pervaded by a sense of our own inferiority. Its highest aspirations, its most ardent expressions, are tempered with reverence and awe. Yet the love of the Christian is not a mere imaginary feeling. It is a real, a genuine, regard to the great object of eternal love. The Christian loves his God with all his soul, and mind, and strength. Such being the case, it is absurd to suppose, that this love should consist in mere empty profession, that the Christian should draw near to God with his lips, while his heart is far from him. It is absurd to imagine, that he should profess love to his heavenly Father, and, at the same time, trample on his laws, profess a regard to his supreme authority, and, at the same time, rebel against his supreme government. The love of the Christian is more frequently expressed by deeds than by words. It is an effect which propagates itself throughout his whole being, extending its influence throughout every part of his thoughts, words, and actions. He not merely loves the Lord, but his delight is in all that is pleasing in his sight, and he is delighted in the conformity of his own conduct, and in that of his brethren around him, to the perfect example of his Father in heaven. He strives to cultivate and cherish in his mind those dispositions and affections which enable him to resemble the divine nature, and to become partaker of it, and he is continually employed in imitating God in all his imitable perfections. Knowing that he is under infinite obligation from benefits he has received at the hands of his heavenly Father, and especially feeling that he is not his own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, he feels the constraining influence in his heart, and that he must live no longer to himself, but to Him that died and rose again; and instead of engaging in any of the wicked works in which

the men of the world are employed, he is endeavouring to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with his God. It is impossible to love his God, and to practise injustice to his fellow-creatures; to admire the goodness of God, and, at the same time, not to do good to all as he hath opportunity; to see the purity of the Divine Being, without purifying himself, even as he is pure. It is only to be observed further, in regard to this love, that it is as permanent as the object of it itself. As it is impossible that there can be any change in the perfections of the Deity, any change in the divine character—so it is impossible that the love of the true Christian should degenerate into coldness or indifference, or that it should be ever extinguished. On the contrary, as he daily experiences new proofs of the goodness of his Creator, he is daily exercising greater ardour to God, feeling higher gratitude towards him, and using more fervent expressions of praise; and even throughout the ages of eternity itself, as he will be discovering daily new proofs of excellence, and receiving new proofs of his love, so this exalted affection must continue to glow in his breast in the heavenly world.

I should now proceed to direct your attention to the other clauses of this passage, in which you find the blessings and privileges belonging to the Christian set forth. I find it impossible, however, to do justice to this at the present time, and therefore let us pause for a little in praise and prayer to God.

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I have already endeavoured to show you, that the great object and design of this psalm, particularly of the passage I have now read in your hearing, is to set forth the glory of God, in the protection of his people, and to give encouragement to every pious person to hold fast his confidence in this almighty friend and benefactor; and in endeavouring to set forth to you the import of the various clauses in which this important instruction is conveyed to man. I have already shown that the Christian is characterized by two circumstances—first, that he loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength—that he loves with an affection which pervades his whole character, and exerts a most powerful influence on every part of his conduct, and that this love is founded on another quality here described—that he is acquainted with God—that he has learned

his character clearly from his outward works, and, more especially, from the declarations he has made in his own Son, Jesus Christ.

Permit me now to direct your attention to the several particulars here mentioned, descriptive of the care of God in providing for the Christian's security and happiness. The first thing I mention is, that God has said, he will deliver him—"I will deliver him and honour him." And in order to show the great importance of this Christian privilege, and, at the same time, to give us the greatest assurance of its reality, you will find this particular expressed three times in this last passage. For when God says, I will be with him in trouble, this alone implies a promise of protection—and to remove all doubt, he immediately adds, "I will deliver him." The Christian often stands in need of this protection from his God. He has no exclusive privilege in being exempted from the troubles and trials of this world. On the contrary, he has not merely his share in all the troubles of humanity, but is often subjected, for the sake of Christ and of his service, to troubles from which the rest of the world are altogether free. But he serves not an unkind and ungenerous master—as his trials, so shall his strength be. "God is faithful, who will not suffer him to be tempted above that he is able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape that he may be able to bear it." As we find God with the three Hebrew youths that were cast into the furnace of fire, so God walks with his people in the furnace of affliction, and brings them forth, so that not so much as a hair of their heads is scorched or destroyed. How often have we heard of the resignation of the Psalmist, when stretched on a bed of distress, in circumstances under which others would have sickened and repined! How often have we heard him acknowledge, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." While the Christian is thus enabled to enjoy even in the midst of trouble, a degree of inward peace and tranquillity which no earthly advantage is able to convey, he is often enabled, by the consciousness of God's favour, to rejoice in the midst of affliction, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. But besides the support and comfort under affliction, which may truly be considered a fulfilment of the promise that God will deliver his people, he often delivers them

in the common acceptance of the term, and without any departure from the ordinary course of his divine providence; for the qualities of heart and mind with which he endows them are such as to carry in themselves an effectual protection against many of the evils of life, a shield against malice, and envy, and violence—for "who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" And it has often been acknowledged by those acquainted with the human frame, and with the manner in which the mind operates upon the body, that a calm and composed and contented mind, is of more service to deliver man from the power of disease than all the medicines of the physician.

But besides this protection which God promises to extend to his people, he also informs them that he will "set them on high;" that is, that he will bestow high honours upon them. And this privilege is repeated a second time at the end of the 15th verse. And is it necessary that we should appeal to the omnipotent power of God, to the power of controlling and reversing the order of nature for the salvation and happiness of his people? We need not go farther than the established course of nature for a proof that God fulfils his promise, for is there any principle in a Christian's faith, in the conduct of a true Christian, that will serve as an obstacle to him in any path in which true honour is enjoyed? Is it not found, on the contrary, that his dispositions and character are such as naturally to procure him universal respect and esteem, and is it not clearly manifest that those even who hate him outwardly are compelled in their heart to yield him the tribute of admiration? What are all the arts of the deceiver and of the hypocrite, but so many tests of the excellence of virtue, and of the estimation in which God's people are held, and therefore is it not natural to expect that they should universally be held in high admiration? Yes, the truly good man, one that has the knowledge of God in his mind, and the love of God in his heart, this man is sure to be set on high. Whatever may be his outward situation in life, whatever his sphere in the world in which he is placed, the stamp of the divine nature is set upon him, the divine complacency is consequently testified towards him—and God does not merely bestow upon him the inward comfort which arises from believing in his truth, but confers upon him the

clearest testimony of the approbation of his fellow-men. Is it possible that him whom God is delighted to honour, that him whom he has called his own Son, an heir of a crown of glory that shall never fade away, God will suffer to be neglected or despised, to be the object of contempt or even of indifference to intelligent creatures? it is impossible that the true Christian, if faithful to his own principles, can possibly but be held in honour.

But it is still farther declared in the words I have read, that the Christian "shall call upon God and he will answer him"—in other words, you will find in this passage a solemn declaration that God will answer his prayers. It is the peculiar character of our Almighty Father, that he is the hearer of prayer. He has expressly distinguished himself by this feature of his character, from the imaginary deities of the Heathen. He frequently gives the most express promises to this effect, and nothing is more clear and express, than the manner in which he assures us of it in the passage I am considering. If so, is it possible that the Christian can regard his prayers as mere experiments upon the goodness of God, which are very likely to be successful; on the contrary, must he not look on them as the authorized expedient, the appointed means, in which he shall get that which is truly good? And if we ask of God, we shall receive whatsoever is necessary to life and to godliness. I do not assert that the Christian asks, or will obtain as good, every thing which the vain imagination of men might desire. This is not what God promises to bestow on his people when he promises to hear their prayers, on the contrary he only says that he will give things that are truly good. And whatever the Christian asks to his everlasting welfare, such as the favour of God, the sanctifying influence of his Spirit, and his loving-kindness which is better than life, he may ask confidently, and the oftener he asks, the more confidently he expects to obtain them from his heavenly Father. But with regard to his outward condition in the world, with regard to the number of his friends, and the extent of his possessions, these and other such things he leaves in the hands of his heavenly Father, relying with the most perfect confidence on his intention to save, and bless, and do him good; or if he expresses a desire of this kindness, it is always in the most implicit subjection

to the will of his Father in heaven; and in this manner the Christian discovers the heavenly inheritance with which he has been endowed from on high. Is it not evident that he could not safely act in any other manner? for what could be more absurd than for the child to point out to his teacher, what are the lessons most necessary for him to learn? Will the earthly affectionate parent bestow on his infant child, every thing that may be the object of his desire? will he hear his supplications or answer his requests, when he asks for fire to handle, or for poison to drink? Equally absurd were it to suppose, that our heavenly Father, who is more kind and affectionate than any father in this world, would bestow on his children of mankind what they think blessings, but which he knows absolutely inconsistent with their welfare. How often does he effectually provide for his children's interests, when he refuses to grant the object of their present petitions? How often has the Christian cause to acknowledge, that his interest and happiness are in the hands of one who is better acquainted than he is with the most effectual means of promoting them? At any rate, when the shades of imperfection in which this world is enveloped, shall be entirely removed, it will no longer be a doubtful matter that God has in reality heard the prayers of his people, even when he seems to disappoint their present hopes, and it will be clearly seen that he has watched over them with most anxious care, and that he has fulfilled their desires according to the spirit, and not according to the letter. In a word, all things shall be seen to have been made to work together for good to them that love God and are the called according to his purpose.

But another branch of the Christian's privileges described in the passage, is, that God promises to bestow upon his people "long life." The period of life, in the case of the Christian, is not prematurely shortened by intemperance or dissipation—it is not cut asunder by the murderous weapons of violence or contention. On the contrary, his inward tranquillity, and the peaceableness of his whole conduct, naturally tend to secure to him the full enjoyment of life, enabling him to run the full career of his existence. But whatever may be the extent of life that is allotted to the people of God in this world, one thing is certain, that the divine promise in the text is

fulfilled to them; for, whatever be the extent of their life, it is always such as to satisfy their desires, because in their case the great end and purpose of life has been completely answered, and they can have no motive to desire continuance in a country in which they know and are assured, that to be present in the body is to be absent from the Lord. It is not surprising, therefore, that they should join with the Apostle and say, "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." They find, in fact, that "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are paths of peace." They find that "in her right hand are riches and honour."

But whatever be the extent of their outward prosperity, or happiness, or long life, in this world, certain it is, that in the world to come the promises of God shall be realized in their fullest extent, and, accordingly, in the conclusion of the Psalm, he says, "I will show him my salvation." The Christian, though he has the promise and actual enjoyment of life, and health, and prosperity in this world, and though his principles enable him to enjoy these blessings in greatest perfection, yet never looks forward with fear, aversion, or reluctance, to the conclusion of life. On the contrary, he knows that when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, "eternal in the heavens." He rejoices that there is reserved for him, by the grace of God, in a future state of being, a degree of joy and felicity which all earthly possessions, honours, comforts, and enjoyments, can never possibly bestow. The Sacred Writers, indeed, have exhausted the powers of analogy, in making us acquainted with this part of the Christian's blessedness. To bring down the glories of the heavenly world to the level of our comprehension, they have employed the most exalted figures and glowing language. To excite our admiration and warm our hearts with love, they tell us that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," and that then shall be brought to pass "death swallowed up in victory." They tell us that the inheritance of the Christian is one that is "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all

them also that love his appearing." Indeed, the saints of God are expressly represented in the heavenly world as standing before the throne, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands, and as expressing the exquisite felicity of their condition in endless songs and praises to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. But it is vain for language to explain the great and exalted things which God hath provided for them; they are declared to be such as "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive."

If then these and greater than these are the blessings which belong to the true Christian, permit me now to take advantage of the map I have set before you, and to address to the true Christian the words of heavenly comfort and encouragement. Perhaps you will think it unnecessary to take here such pains to describe to you that character which is your own, and that happiness which is the subject of your experience. Certain I am, that your feelings have often responded to the description I have been giving, and that your own experience must have attested to you from time to time its truth. Instead of dwelling on things familiar to your own minds, permit me to call your attention to the intimate and inseparable connexion, here declared to subsist between your character and your comforts. I have endeavoured to show you the natural tendency of the character and principles of the Christian to ensure to him many of the privileges and blessings which are here promised. I might have shown, that, so long as the world remains, this connexion between holiness and happiness must continue to exist. It is solemnly certified in this place, on the truth of Him who cannot lie, that it must continue till the end of time that holiness is indispensable to the enjoyment of happiness. "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him, I will set him on high, because he hath known my name." Oh think, think of the invaluable security thus furnished to you to receive the promises of God—that he who continueth to know and to love him, shall ever experience his favour and kindness. "He is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent." "Heaven and earth shall pass away," saith God, "but my word shall not pass away." Let me entreat you, then, to cherish, to maintain that character upon which your pre-

sent and eternal happiness are here represented to depend, and especially not to remain contented with any attainments you may have already made; on the contrary, imitate the example of the inspired Apostle of the Gentiles, and let me exhort you, like him, "forgetting the things that are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." "Keep yourselves in

the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." "And may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

BENEFITS OF CHRIST'S DEATH;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE HIGH CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, 19TH MAY, BEFORE HIS GRACE THE LORD HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

By the Rev. JAMES SMITH,
Minister of Alva.

' Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'—JOHN xii. 24.

THESE words were uttered by our blessed Lord when he was about to leave this world. Hitherto his personal ministry on earth had been attended with but little success. The magnificent predictions contained in the Old Testament, respecting the extent of his kingdom, and the number of his subjects, had received as yet but little or no fulfilment. He exclaimed, by the mouth of the prophet, "I have laboured in vain—I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain." The prospect, however, begins to brighten, as the solemn hour approached when he was to see of the travail of his soul, and enjoy complete satisfaction. Various indications were about that time given, that the fields were now white unto the harvest, and that he that sowed, and they that reaped, should, ere long, rejoice together. Among these, the incident on account of which the words before us were uttered, was not the least remarkable. Notwithstanding the contempt and neglect with which our Lord was treated by mankind in general, it would appear that there were certain Greeks attending the celebration of the passover at Jerusalem, who manifested a different spirit. These strangers desired to see Jesus, and with so much earnestness, that, instead of waiting till a favourable opportunity might occur, they solicited Philip to procure for them a direct and immediate introduction. This disciple, however, had heard our Lord declare, that

he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and, therefore, before venturing to comply with their request, he finds it necessary to consult with Andrew, one of the twelve. When the circumstance was reported by Philip and Andrew to Jesus, he held it as a presage of that bright and auspicious day, when the middle wall of partition that separated Jews and Gentiles should be broken down, and, in the language of prophecy, "all nations should flow unto him." "The hour is come," said he, "that the Son of Man should be glorified." From the very first connexion of the disciples to whom these words were addressed with our Lord, they had been at a loss to account for the lowly circumstances in which he appeared, in utter absence of all those secular attractions which the rest of their countrymen associated with his advent. They would now naturally conclude, that his humiliation was at an end. But they were mistaken. With a solemnity which he never employed but when he would enforce a truth of peculiar importance, he informs them, that low as he had already stooped, in consistency with the end for which he came into the world he must stoop still lower. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It is impossible, then, to mistake the general import of these words. They are ob-

viously intended to point out the intimate, or rather inseparable, connexion between the last and solemn crisis of the Redeemer's sufferings, and the exaltation and glory which was to follow. This is their obvious intention; but while this, their general import, is sufficiently obvious, it is of importance to recollect, that there is also a peculiar propriety in the metaphorical language of Scripture. It is never employed, but to throw additional and clearer light on the point to which it refers. Under this idea, I shall attempt, in illustrating the truths in the passage before us, to take them up in the order in which they are suggested by the beautiful figure under which they are connected.

These words intimate, that it was not in a private or individual capacity that the Lord of Glory appeared in our land, but as a seed of spiritual and immortal life to multitudes. That this was his primary idea, must be obvious at the first glance. It is true, that the Son of God in his incarnate nature, when viewed alone, presents the most glorious object in the universe. The mingled excellences, divine and human, which meet in his mysterious person, form an assemblage of perfections, before which all created glory dwindles into insignificance, and constrain us to exclaim, How great thy beauty—"Thou art fairer than the children of men." But, still, as a grain of wheat is chiefly valuable in our estimation, on account of the germ of life contained in it, in virtue of which it is capable of being multiplied to an indefinite extent, and issuing at last in an abundant harvest; so it is not in his personal glory, abstractly considered, that he is here presented to our believing and admiring contemplation, but as the chosen one, in whom life spiritual and immortal was treasured up, and from whom it was to proceed to myriads out of every tongue, and people, and nation. Indeed, that perfect conformity to the divine will and uninterrupted participation in the divine favour, in which the life of an intelligent being consists, having been lost by apostasy, it pleased God to put in possession of life a vast, though fixed, number of that apostate family. This is that new creation, less conspicuous to the eye of sense, but far more estimable, the necessity of which the whole volume of inspiration goes to declare, of which the Son of God, as incarnate, was to become the head. Whatever was necessary for its preservation,

was treasured up in Him. He was styled the first-born among many brethren. The thoughts of God were engaged about this marvellous event from eternity. In consequence of this, it was said, "a body hast thou prepared me." In his consenting to undergo this vast humiliation, it was promised he should see his seed, that they should continue through all successive generations of men and should be numerous as the grains of sand on the sea-shore, or as the drops of dew from the womb of the morning. Long then was that body that he consented to assume in preparation, and numerous and august were the institutions under which it was shadowed forth; but at last, all things being ready, the eternal Son entered it. Behold, then, in him Emmanuel, God with us—God in our nature—God manifest in the flesh. Think not that He came into the world to remain alone. He came as the long promised and long expected seed, in which, though it sprung up at first only in Judea, all families of the earth were ultimately to be blessed, and from which a spiritual and immortal harvest was to spring over which God himself should rejoice with joy, over which heaven would rejoice with singing.

But to the attainment of this end, it was necessary he should die. We have seen there is lodged in a grain of wheat a principle of vitality, in virtue of which it may be multiplied a thousandfold; but let us know that before this can be accomplished, it must be sent to a place which seems to threaten it with inevitable destruction. Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground, be buried out of sight, and apparently lost and useless, nay, unless it actually die, it abideth, we are told, alone. So here is a perfect parallel. The Lord Jesus Christ, in virtue of his mysteriously constituted person, was fitted for procuring and communicating life to myriads, but he must for ever have remained destitute even of one to illustrate his exuberant fulness, had he not, upon the cross, bowed the head, given up the Ghost, gone down to the grave, and disappeared from this world apparently for ever. He had received the promise of a numerous and flourishing progeny. He was to say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back, to bring his sons from afar, and his daughters from the ends of the earth, but all this was on express condition of his submitting not merely to the assumption of our nature, but to

death itself. When he had poured out his soul unto death, it was promised he should see his seed; and because he had made his soul an offering for sin, it was declared, "a portion I will divide him with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." The death of Christ was necessary, therefore, and however low he had already stooped, had he not gone still lower, he must have remained for ever destitute of that issue, for upon this depended the fulfilment of the promise, "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be." There was a moral necessity for this. "It became Him, for whom and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons and daughters to glory, to be made perfect through suffering." They were doomed to die. The stability, therefore, of the divine throne, and the unsullied lustre and purity of the divine character, made it necessary, if the sentence of death was reversed, that full honour should be done to the divine law. It was necessary that an atonement should be made; and no created being was equal to the task of offering it, because, as in every case of atonement, the same end must be answered, as if the guilty principal had suffered. Had there been no atonement, mercy would have triumphed, but it would have been at the expense of justice. Now, no created being, by substituting himself in our place for a time, could, by his suffering or obedience, render such an atonement—but looking to the glorious person we have been contemplating, every difficulty vanishes. Being man, he had a nature capable of suffering—being God, he had a nature capable of stamping his sufferings with infinite value. His sufferings, therefore, were a complete satisfaction. To the cross, therefore, it was needful he should go. He had descended low, assumed our nature, allied himself to man that is a worm, and to the son of man that is a worm. He had become poor beyond the common lot of poverty, not having where to lay his head. He was reproached of men. Reproach, says he, has broken my heart. To the cross, however, it was needful he should go. Every step of his way is to be viewed as preparing for it. For this command have I received of my Father, that I should lay down my life.

I remark, in the third place, that by the death of Christ, life spiritual and eternal, was actually procured for a multitude that no man can number. When a grain of wheat has been cast into the ground, we

know that after the revolution of a certain period it rises again fresh and verdant, and with an amazing increase, to which it is impossible for us to assign any limits. Here, again, we are called to remark the analogy. The Lord Jesus Christ did die, did go down to the grave, did disappear from this world; but he rose again, and he rose in possession of life for all who should believe on his name. Every obstacle having been removed, full satisfaction having been made to the demands of the divine law, and ample atonement having been offered, he rose with the possession of life for all who believed hereafter on his name. He did not go down in a private capacity, it was as the surety of all who should believe in him; and, therefore, when he came forth out of the prison, it was evidence of what he had done and suffered. In the capacity of our surety he had been accepted, and God was well pleased with him, and was pleased with him for what he had done for righteousness' sake. The justice and truth of God were now pledged to all who should believe. Such was the value of the death of Christ, and such its native dignity. It was capable of procuring life for all who had consented to accept it. This seems the foundation of the innumerable invitations and commands contained in the Scriptures, to believe on him that we may have life. Nevertheless, as we know that there are multitudes to whom these invitations never came, and who, for aught we see, die in their sins and perish for ever, and multitudes to whom they have come, and by whom they are despised and rejected; we must conclude that it was the design, whatever might be the native value of the life of Christ, to give life only to those whom he represented. For them, in the strictest sense, he died, and for them he rose again. This is the much fruit spoken of in the text. And is this a reason why we should fear that there may be a stunted and niggard harvest? Or is it not a reason, that we can now calculate with certainty on much fruit? Had it been left to man, he would have marred the creation, but the glories of the second creation are put beyond his power. The virtues of Christ's mediation are procured beyond all possibility of risk or failure. This is the reason why the little handful of grain cast on the tops of mountains—a most unpromising soil—may now be seen waving in every land. This is the reason why the Greeks, and

Medians, and Parthians, and all nations, in every tongue under heaven, heard and were quickened unto life in the days of the Apostles. This is the reason why the little flock of the Lord shall go on increasing, till at last the kingdoms of this world shall become entirely those of God and of his Christ.

These words still farther show us that they who partake of the life we have been contemplating, do so in consequence of the mysterious diffusion of the same Spirit that was in Christ. Much fruit springs from a grain cast into the ground, but now the question occurs, how has this been effected from such a germ of life? The principle of vitality that is in the rudimental seed has escaped, and having been in a very mysterious way communicated and transfused, is the source of all that now delights and astonishes the eyes—myriads have lived in ages past, myriads still live and still will have spiritual and eternal life from him. When we ask the reason, the reason is, that the Spirit of Christ is taken from him. There is no other way of accounting for it. But we know that the Spirit was given to him without measure, and the oil of gladness was poured upon him far above all his fellows—all his garments smelled of myrrh and aloes, and cassia, but all that he might impart it to those for whom he died in order that they might live. The Holy Spirit was not given till the death of Christ, at least not with the same liberal hand, nor were his effusions dealt out in the same copious measure; for this reason, that the source whence they flowed might be unequivocally declared, and the whole work of the Spirit done so as to give glory to the Messiah. But he having endured the curse, being made a curse in our stead, we receive the promise of the Spirit, and the Spirit now given quickens unto life, engenders in the soul that principle of faith and virtue of which we take hold in taking hold of Christ—and being united to Him there is to us no condemnation, having passed from death unto life. And by taking of this we voluntarily keep in union with Christ, so that we adopt the language, "We are crucified with Christ: nevertheless we live; yet not we, but Christ liveth in us. and the life which we now live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us."

I remark, in the last place, that, in re-

spect of as many as thus participate in this life, they are, through the energy and operation of this Spirit, gradually assimilated to the image of Christ. Hitherto our attention has been directed to the abundance of increase, rather than to the quality or description. But now we ask, what kind of fruit springs from the grain which has been cast into the earth, and become dead. The answer is, every grain produces its own; but there is not only much fruit from a grain of wheat cast into the ground, it is precisely resembling the rudimental seed. Here we see a perfect parallel. We see that the Lord Jesus Christ died, that myriads might live; and now the question is, what kind of fruit is that produced from his having gone down to the grave? We know that they are perfectly to be conformed to the image of this precious and incorruptible grain, that was originally cast into the ground, both in mind and body. The same mind that was in Christ will also be found in them. They have borne the image of the earthy, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly—they shall be renewed in spirit, partakers of a divine nature. A change has taken place in all who are quickened unto life. Great, indeed, and marvellous is the change, which is altogether and essentially distinct from and never can, indeed, be put in comparison with, any change effected by the efforts of man. A wonderful transformation takes place, not immediately, however, when the grain is thrown into the ground, the transformation goes on so gradually, that at times we may think it shall never reach maturity. For a time, indeed, every thing seems to go backward, instead of forward. The maturity is reached gradually—there is first the blade—then the flower—and, at last, the full grain. So, in regard to Christians, their conformity to Christ is not brought about instantaneously, but gradually. They rise gradually to higher degrees of hope and love—they grow and become liker this great pattern and glorious model—at last they are changed from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord, and they are presented in their minds without spot or blemish, and now, like the Great Original, are completely separated from sinners.

But it is in respect of the body also, that there is to be such a conformity; for if the Spirit of Christ dwell in your mortal bodies, that same Spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mor-

tal bodies, that they shall be also raised from the dead. Now, what a thought is this! "Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs;" and when that sound is heard, "the earth shall cast out the dead"—our vile bodies shall then be changed, and made like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. How wonderful the thought that, instead of encumbering the movements of the heaven-born soul, they shall then hasten them onward! that we, being then like angels from heaven, move onward in our course, unsullied in our brightness! that these bodies, sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption—sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory—sown in weakness, shall be raised in power—sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body! Then will the great mystery of God be perceived; then will the redemption of man be complete; and then shall he appear bearing his sheaves with him, and he shall gather his wheat into the garner, while the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.

Thus have I attempted shortly to illustrate the truths contained in the passage before us, and in this attempt we have been led to travel together in a wide and extensive field. Two or three reflections are naturally suggested, with which I close the subject. How glorious does the person of Christ appear in the light in which we have been contemplating him! Glorious things are everywhere spoken of him throughout the Scriptures. To declare his glory is the great end of Scripture, from beginning to end; to illuminate his person, that all men may behold his glory, is the great end of what is written from the first shadowy promise in this volume, to the meridian light of the New Testament page. But of all views, none show so much his glory, as when we are called to behold this new creation as originating in him, depending upon him, having from him and in him all its continuance, permanency, beauty and order. This is the view given of Christ's person, throughout the whole of the blessed volume. He is compared at one time to a foundation-stone, on which all the other stones of the spiritual temple are laid. Again, to a nail fastened in a sure place, in which all the vessels of his father's house are hanging from it—vessels of gold and of silver. He is described as the vine, a figure ana-

logous to what is before us, in which his people live, and without which they can do nothing. Well, then, might God himself exclaim, "Behold my servant, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth!" and well may Christ restore the language, Behold me, behold me. So we shall do well to make this improvement, to turn our sight and eyes from every other object, that we may look with steadfast eye towards Christ. Looking unto him, we shall, indeed, be changed; looking unto him, the heart shall be improved; looking unto him, the power of sin shall be destroyed; looking unto him, the pageantry of this passing world shall be utterly eclipsed; looking unto him, we shall be changed from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Further, we learn from this subject, wherein the grand and essential difference between Christians and all other men mainly and essentially consists. We read of a difference that no tongue can utter, no heart conceive, for the attempt is vain. What means the language of this book, if there is not a distinction beyond what all language can fully express? We read of the children of the light and of the darkness, of God, and of the Wicked One. We read of these things; of those on whom there are blessings continually hanging; of those on whom there rests the curse of death eternal. It tells us, that after all the adventitious distinctions of men, there are essentially but two great classes of mankind in this world. If any man doubt the difference, it will be made tangible at last, when the great gulf is seen fixed by the immutable and eternal decree of the immutable and eternal God, and it will be made audible, when these accents are heard, "Come, ye blessed," and "depart, ye cursed." O, then, if there be this unutterable difference between the two great classes, is it not our wisdom, as intelligent beings?—ought it not to be our first and last waking thoughts, to ascertain wherein this distinction consists? It does not consist in knowledge, in profession, mere feeling, or outward reformation of character, but in vital union to Christ. United to him by that faith which is of divine operation, all is right; and away from him, all is wrong. In him the sentence of death is reversed, and the Spirit of eternal life has now seized on the soul. Therefore we now cease to wonder about the vast importance of what is said about faith, and at the language of the Apostle,

"O that I might win Christ, and be found in him."

Again, wherein consists the real community that is to be found among the people of God? All who are real Christians feel for one another, rejoice when they rejoice, and weep when they weep. Who is found weak, and I am not weak? If any member suffer,

all the members of the mystic body suffer with it. And why? Because they have the same faith—the same hope—the same Lord—the same baptism—the same sense of their pilgrimage here, and they are all travelling on to the same place. Behold, then, how good a thing it is when brethren are found dwelling together in unity. Amen.

ON Sunday, the 21st April, 1833, the Rev. MATTHEW BARCLAY was introduced to the Church and Parish of Old Kilpatrick, by the Rev. Dr. Stewart of Erskine, who took for his text, Gal. vi. 14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He proceeded to consider a few of the reasons which determined Paul to glory in the Cross of Christ, and began by observing, that he gloried in the Cross of Christ, or in his sufferings and death, because he saw in them an all-sufficient atonement for sin, and, of course, the only effectual mean of being delivered from wrath. Again, Paul gloried in the Cross of Christ, or in his sufferings and death, because he saw in them the most wonderful display of the attributes of God, and particularly of his moral attributes. The sufferings of Christ afford an awful lesson of the evil of sin, and Paul gloried in them, because he saw in them the only effectual mean of mortifying every sinful and corrupt affection. In the last place, Paul gloried in the sufferings and death of Christ, because he saw in them the only sufficient and effectual motive to practical holiness and virtue. The doctrine I have now been setting before you is the doctrine that has been taught with ability and eloquence, by your late Minister. And now that his successor is about to enter into the office of the Ministry, I can safely introduce him to you as a gentleman, not less disposed to advocate the same all-important truths, and who, I trust, will be found to be a workman not needing to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. He comes recommended not only by talent and knowledge, and a great deal of experi-

ence, but particularly by this, that his heart is in his work. It will be his aim, I doubt not, to do the work of an Evangelist with zeal and fidelity, labouring to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the wandering, to support the weak, to comfort the feeble-minded, and to solace the mourner in Zion. And I am certain, that the longer he lives among you, the more will he be an object of your esteem and affection. Listen to his discourses with tender affection. That scheme of preaching which confines itself to the being and attributes of God, the doctrine of a future state of reward and punishment, and to the explanation of duty, may be acceptable to some; and, of course, those sermons which treat of faith, the necessity of divine influence, salvation through free grace, and the atoning blood of him who died on the Cross, are apt to be listened to by them with indifference. The time has been in my memory, when men who treated of these things were considered weak and fanciful, if not worse. These days I hope are gone by. Even the great apostle Paul was accused of preaching foolishness when he preached Christ crucified—still he did his duty, determined to know nothing but Christ. Profit by his ministry, and let that profiting be known unto all men. Remember, you enjoy the benefit of his labour under a solemn responsibility; for the word he speaks must either be a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Be not deceived—"God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption. He that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. W. M. WADE, Paisley.
SERMON by the Rev. GEORGE MILLIGAN, Elie.
SERMON by the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, Edinburgh.

THE FAVOUR OF GOD TOWARDS MAN, INSEPARABLY CONNECTED WITH MAN'S OWN FAITH AND OBEDIENCE;

A SERMON PREACHED AT PAISLEY ON SABBATH THE 19TH MAY, 1833, AT THE OPENING
OF TRINITY CHAPEL THERE,

By the Rev. W. M. WADE,
Clergyman of the Chapel

"The Lord God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us; that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers."—1 KINGS viii. 57, 58.

THE dedication of the first Jewish temple was a peculiarly grand and solemn event. And the prayer which Solomon then poured forth, is among the most noble compositions of the kind that even the Bible contains. While it virtually celebrates, in a very sublime strain, the attributes and the providence of God, owning the latter to have been most benevolently exerted on behalf of Israel, from the time of the people's departure out of Egypt to that at which Solomon thus publicly invoked the Lord on their behalf, it implores from him, in a prophetic spirit, pardoning mercy for transgressors of various descriptions: for even Gentile proselytes, and for the people at large, when in calamitous circumstances of peculiar and specified descriptions.

The general tenor of this most impressive prayer shows how well aware Solomon was of these two things; first, that the evils and afflictions of mankind, whether national or personal, spring from transgressions—are their natural and very fitting consequence; and, secondly, that deliverance, whether for states or for individuals, must be sought in faith, penitence, and prayer. Having ended his *direct* supplications, Solomon, in a form of benediction, gave glory to God for his goodness to the people; expressed his wish and hope that God would continue to be with them as a protector and

bestower of grace; and concluded with this very suitable exhortation: "Let your heart, therefore, be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments."

The words of my own text on the present occasion are part of Solomon's conclusion to his benedictory address: "The Lord God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us, that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers." My brethren, each of us should, in an especial earnest manner, pour forth, *on this, to us, very interesting day*, a similar prayer: viz., that the Lord God would "be with us, as he was with our fathers," that he would never "leave nor forsake us," but would "incline our hearts unto him," and to his service. That He has already been with us in much goodness, we at once and thankfully acknowledge. I now speak more particularly of those of us who form a congregation connected with the Protestant Episcopal Church of these realms; and refer, especially, to the good providence of God, in so ordering circumstances and events, as that we have at length the privilege and happiness of assembling for public christian worship in a building of our own, adequate,

or that may be made adequate to our exigencies, as respects church accommodation. Nor will the enlightened and liberal of other christian denominations who may now be present, blame the preacher, if, before entering on a particular consideration of his text, (and *such* consideration must be very brief,) he sketch the history of this particular congregation. Fifteen years and a half have now elapsed since his appointment to labour here. That appointment took place in conformity with a request preferred to our late ecclesiastical superior, chiefly by a number of titled and wealthy people, then resident in and around the town. I say *chiefly*, because, *in* that request, at least four liberal-minded gentlemen of the Established Church concurred;—concurred, on account of their thinking it very likely that, in so populous a place and neighbourhood, the introduction of a ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church would prove, under God, beneficial. I use the word “*then*,” because, of those who signed the call in question, several have exchanged time for eternity. May they also have exchanged earth for Paradise!

At first, a school-room was used as our place of worship; and in that school-room, on the 23d of November, 1817, public worship, according to the forms of our Church, was, for, it is believed, the first time since the Revolution of 1688, celebrated in this town. My associate on the occasion was a clergyman who will this afternoon, if God permit, occupy the place that I now do; and address you on the important interests of your spiritual and immortal part—the soul. Not more than twelve or fourteen Episcopalians attended our first day’s services in the school-room; but, by the middle of the following year, it had become manifest that there was great occasion for something being done towards securing a continuance of the ministry that had, in humble dependence on God, for Christ’s sake, begun to be exercised. The congregation had increased to about 80, or perhaps 100. Building was, however, out of the question. The work was of too recent a date—of, as some imagined, too uncertain a character—to warrant even the thought of such a step. Besides, although it must be acknowledged that our little society did then comprehend not a few wealthy persons; still, the expense of providing even a small chapel would have fallen, especially at a time when materials and wages were high, heavily upon them.

And farther, it must be recollected, that all proprietors amongst *us* have to contribute their full proportion of the cost of upholding the Churches, and maintaining the ministry of the Established Church; towards which no enlightened and Gospel-principled Episcopalian does, or can, entertain hostile sentiments; how conscientiously soever he may, on what he feels to be sufficient grounds, prefer his own. When it had thus become obvious that something like a regular place of worship for the Protestant Episcopalians of Paisley was requisite, and yet equally plain that no prospect existed of one being as yet built for them; they, and the friends to their cause, were in no small perplexity. But Providence so ordered things, that, in the month of August, 1819, the congregation were enabled to assemble in a building sufficient, and indeed more than sufficient, for their accommodation, held on a fourteen years’ lease. Nearly nine of these years had rolled away, when a member of the congregation, one who has been very useful among us, one whom we both respect and value, proposed, and set on foot, a subscription towards building a cottage, or small manse, for the existing and future Episcopalian clergymen of this populous and increasing place. But the period at which the lease of our late place of worship would terminate drew nigh; the necessity of providing us with future church accommodation was growing urgent; the manse fund was converted into a chapel fund; exertions were made; and here, thanks to the help and good providence of God, we behold the result. The Lord God *has* been with us as he was with our fathers; oh! “let him not leave us, nor forsake us.”

Thus brought once more to my text, I would, brethren, offer a few words expressly upon it. After Solomon’s pious breathing forth of the devout wish, and virtual prayer, that the Lord God would be with the people of Israel, as he had been with their fathers—that he would never leave them, never forsake them—he adds this sentence, “that he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers.” Here Solomon markedly exhibits that wisdom with which he had been so largely endowed by Him from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. While he evinces a deep anxiety that himself and

people may have God's favour, blessing, and protection, abiding with them, he plainly shows his conviction, that to walk in the ways of God, keeping his commandments, statutes, and judgments, as He has himself ordained, is indispensable on the part of all who would have the favourable light of God's countenance beam upon them. And, farther still, in the following words of the same passage, Solomon shows himself fully acquainted with the humbling truths of man's depravity and moral weakness through the fall, inability of *himself* to serve God acceptably, and need of God's own prevention, as well as assisting grace: "that *he* may incline our *hearts* unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers." While, then, brethren, we with truly thankful heart praise God for having permitted us to raise and occupy this place of worship—a place surpassing in size, accommodation and appearance, aught that we could even have ventured to hope for at the outset of our efforts, let us recollect that it is our duty here to offer God a holy worship. Our lot is cast in a period when novel modes of belief, or of professed belief, are boldly introduced; and, by too many, readily adopted. We live at a time in which unsteadiness of character with respect to things religious, is, unhappily, very prevalent; we live at a time in which excitement in the political, has led to a corresponding excitement in the religious world; in which the peaceful kingdom of Christ is disturbed by the *cry of war*; and agitation, universal agitation is the order of the day. But let not all this (God, for Christ's sake, grant that nothing of all this may!) move us; but kept from wavering, unmoved by those winds of *varying* doctrine that blow around, may our great wish, and anxious care be, to "finish our course with" humble "joy," in the simple, quiet, and peaceful path of the gospel of salvation by Christ Jesus; in repentance, that is, faith, and newness of life. But let us never forget where our strength lies—even in heaven, where God especially is; where, at his right hand, Christ ever maketh intercession for us, pleading the infinite merits of his shed blood. And *may* the God of our fathers *be* with us, inclining, by his Spirit, "our *hearts* unto himself, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments." His divine and eternal Son has, by dying on the cross for

mankind, atoned for transgression, and reconciled man to God. He is therefore the Saviour—the *only* Saviour. And to Him be fully, cheerfully ascribed, the whole glory of saving us. As our Saviour, he claims our love—the sincere affection of a grateful heart; and in proof of such affection dwelling in the heart of *any* one, he requires *from that one*, obedience. "*If ye love me,*" (these are his own words, brethren,) "*if ye love me, keep my commandments.*" Now, *his* commandments are God's commandments; for he has declared his Father and himself to be *one*. While, therefore, deeply, on account of our multiplied offences, our heavy guilt, sensible of our *need* of Christ as a Saviour, to make atonement for sin, we bless God that we *have* him as our advocate with the Father, let us be as deeply sensible that he requires from us, not only repentance and faith, but obedience to his kingly authority in the way of righteousness. May He, therefore, bless effectually our use of the means of grace; renewing us by his own Spirit in the spirit of our minds; infusing into us the same mind that was in him. Then shall we become, as a portion of his peculiar people, zealous of good works; without which faith itself is dead. On the indispensable necessity of faith in Christ to our *justification* before God, *i. e.* to our acquittal of condemning guilt in his sight for Christ's sake, every one who understands the Gospel, and preaches it faithfully, will insist; but so will he on the practical use and importance of the same great principle—its use and importance, *i. e.* to man in the concerns of this life. St. Paul, you know, observed that "Faith" is, to those who really have it, "the evidence," and as it were "substance, of things not seen." It realizes, in short, to man the great truths of the gospel; rendering them habitually and powerfully operating principles of support and direction, as well as of comfort. This is what is meant when it is affirmed of the just that they *live* by faith. The true Christian walks with God in the exercise of faith; mortifying, through the power of the Divine Spirit, the whole body of sin; gaining a growing victory over the world and self; increasing in internal holiness; advancing steadily "in" that "way of righteousness," which, says Solomon, "is life and *in* the path-way thereof there is no death."

Unite with me, brethren, in fervent prayer, that the service of God within these walls

may be, through his blessing for our gracious Redeemer's sake, a means of forming multitudes of *such* Christians, and of ripening them for glory!

Upon a detail of the *particular* parts of christian character, I cannot now, for obvious reasons, enter. But I must, even now, speak of *one* distinguishing feature of that character. It is, benevolence. This is a necessary evidence of man's having the new heart and the right spirit within him. Let not *professors* of Christianity flatter themselves with the notion of being real Christians, if they be not benevolent. It is peculiarly benevolence, (*i. e.* the spirit of Christian charity, or love, so admirably described by St. Paul, in the 13th chapter of his 1st Epistle to the Corinthians,) that *qualifies* us to share in and enjoy the blessedness of heaven; that makes us, while here, a blessing to our fellow creatures; that perfumes with fragrance our homage to God; that fits us for glorifying him now and eternally. "It is," as a modern writer on theology well, indeed beautifully, observes, "to the intelligent world, what attraction is to the material one; the power which holds the parts together, and unites them in one immense and incomprehensible system.—Each member of this great kingdom it attaches to each, and all to God."*

And, brethren, the benevolence which Christianity enjoins, is not a mere feeling; not a passive, but an active principle. It will lead those in whom it really exists, to *deeds* of beneficence; and this, in every mode in which such acts may be called for. Far from spending itself in thoughts or words—far from evaporating in sighs, or flowing off in tears, it will incite to cheerful contribution; it will be seen employed in solid and useful acts of kindness and service to mankind.

These remarks naturally lead to the introduction of another subject connected with the pulpit ministrations of this day; viz., that of the collections by which they are to be accompanied. Though our place of worship is provided, it is not yet finished. *Towards* finishing it, as well as towards defraying much of the expense already incurred, we still require considerable aid. And we call on *you*, brethren and sisters beloved in the Lord, for some of this aid. We earnestly entreat you to be liberal in

bestowing of your substance, as a help to us in completing the good and necessary work that we have undertaken; and have, to the extent that you now behold, brought to a conclusion. You will thus become means of great good to a body now consisting of at least 1200 people, men, women, and children; of whom certainly not fewer than 500 are united under pastoral care. Had not the kind providence of God, directing and seconding human exertions, enabled us to provide this place of worship, the people referred to would, in the event of the death or removal of their present clergyman, have been, there can be little doubt, from the peculiar circumstances of the case, deprived of a ministry of their own, after having had one among them for many years. And this would surely have been to them a calamity. Besides, brethren of other christian denominations who may be present, we feel that, in entreating your kind assistance, we entreat it for a branch of Christ's true church. We *feel* that we can claim it on these following grounds:—that our church is pure in doctrine, apostolical in constitution, scriptural and edifying in her forms, mild and tolerant in character; assuming, therefore, a noble and beautiful, as well as, we doubt not, a firm position in the christianized world.

No doubt, the claims put forth upon your charity in bestowing are very numerous, as well as often very urgent. But is not a blessedness attendant on giving? Has not an Apostle caught up, and an Evangelist recorded, this one declaration of our blessed Lord, not found in any of the Gospels:—"It is more blessed to give, than to receive?" Is it not also written, "whosoever seeth his brother have need," (need of whatever kind—need, with respect to things spiritual, as well as with respect to things temporal)—"whosoever *seeth* his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in that man?" This passage confirms the assertion already made, that benevolence is an essential part of truly christian character.

At the church door, on entering, some, nay most of you have, doubtless, already contributed; but, while there may be persons present who have not yet had an opportunity of so doing, an important question is, have the actual donors met by their benevolences the urgency of the case, due regard having been, at the same time, had to

the *means* of giving, which He from whom we receive every thing, has bestowed? Have not *some* here given less than they could;—less than, all circumstances considered, they ought to have given? I know not that this is the case, but let parties concerned in the question, propose it fairly to themselves. And where the reply from within is, I might have offered, or I *should* have offered unto God a larger gift, let the deficiency be made up on the individual's leaving, for a time, the house of prayer. God loveth a liberal as well as a cheerful giver. You may, indeed, as before remarked, be often called on to give—and may give much. So much the better, if God has graciously bestowed on you ability. Give on a christian principle what you *do* give, and you will be enriched by your own liberality. He who gave himself for your sins, will not let you go without your reward. No truly—"Be not weary," ye Christians, "in well-doing," and if you do not faint, "you shall reap in due season." Even in this world you will not be unrecompensed, because the *thanks* of numbers will be yours. And while, for you, prayer shall ascend from the grateful heart of many an humble sharer in the opportunities and advantages which this sacred edifice will, we trust, under God, afford—*who* shall say that to you, on earth, there

shall not be granted additional temporal prosperity, as a return for your liberality? You recollect the case of Job. He, in the course of providence, lost his earthly all. But he had largely ministered to others of his wealth, while yet 'twas his;—so largely—so widely—that, "when the ear heard him, then it blessed him—when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him;" and, in the end, "the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

Contributing to the supply of a people's spiritual necessities, is a peculiarly noble and important exercise of the divine principle of charity. And 'tis to *that* you are now called. Let not, then, the cold, and calculating, and selfish principle of mere worldly prudence, deaden within you the glowing and heavenly one of Christian love. Does not Christ himself say, "A *new* commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another?" "Seek not, then, your own, but every one another's wealth." And on this occasion, it is the well-being of the soul that is the high and ultimate object in view. Let your bounty, bestowed for Christ's sake, with a wish for *our* prosperity "in the name of the Lord," prove the sincerity of your affection for the Lord's cause, and for the Lord's people. And now to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

ON THE OBLIGATIONS TO FERVOUR OF SPIRIT;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE HIGH CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, 26TH MAY, 1833, BEFORE HIS MAJESTY'S COMMISSIONER, FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

By the Rev. GEORGE MILLIGAN,
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"*Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*"—Rom. xii. 11.

FERVOUR of spirit is, in general, opposed to lukewarmness and indifference. It denotes an uncommon application of mind in the performance of any thing, and a warmth of zeal, bordering on transport, that moves every faculty of the soul, and carries all before it in the pursuit of what we highly value and desire. That fervour of spirit which the text recommends, has the service of God, or religion for its object, is an anxious desire to love the Lord, to worship him in sincerity and in truth, and to obey his commands with all our hearts, with all our mind, and with all our strength. It does not consist merely in a few emotions of natural piety, when we have been brought to know, that all the help of man would be in vain—neither is it a sudden blaze of religious fervour, which flashes for a moment like a meteor of the night, and as quickly

disappears. It is a permanent and abiding principle of action—it is a beam from the sun of righteousness, that illumines the whole path—it is a ray from the sun which, bright at the outset, shineth more and more, till it reaches the fulness of its meridian splendour. When this is displayed in its fullest extent, it is one of the noblest ornaments of the Christian. Entering into the heart, and engaging the whole soul in the service of God, it gives a double share of activity and ardour to that religion, which before was sincere. In a word, it is to the spiritual life what health is to the natural. It renders that active and spirited, which, without it, were dull and almost lifeless. Aware that religion is the one thing needful, the Christian is ever striving to answer those great purposes for which he was made and redeemed. All the powers of his mind

are employed in searching out the will of God, in as far as regards the conduct of his creatures. He is resolved to do whatever he knows to be his duty, and devoting to the noblest purposes those affections which God has given him, he advances with cheerfulness in the paths of the divine commands. In a word, the whole man is engaged in the service of God. Religion becomes his constant and most delightful occupation. He is never at ease till he has performed all his work of faith, and labour of love, counting nothing to be compared with that "robe of righteousness," which is precious in the sight of heaven. In his heart he feels all those holy desires, which are so beautifully described by the psalmist. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for the living God; when shall I come, and appear before him?" "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

Having thus made a few remarks on that fervour of spirit, which is enjoined in the text, we now proceed, in humble dependence on the divine blessing, to the principal object of the discourse, which is to set before you a few of those obligations, which you are laid under, to cultivate this spirit. In the first place, then, one obligation which binds you to be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, arises from the circumstance, that it is enjoined by God's positive command. The Scriptures abound not merely in exhortations to serve the Lord—of itself this would not be enough—we are enjoined to do so with fervency and zeal, to work while it is day, for the long night of darkness and despair cometh, when no man can work. Many are the precepts which require us to be up and doing—to be zealous in good works—to contend zealously for the faith—to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus—and to give all diligence, to make our calling and election sure. Such admonitions speak to us in a language that cannot be mistaken. They call for an entire dedication of the heart to God, and may well put to shame the conduct of many a professing Christian. There are thousands who are outwardly joining in the service of God, and yet are altogether without the necessary alacrity and ardour. Coming up to the house of God, they take a part in the solemnities of worship, but their hearts are wandering in the fields of vanity, and all their thoughts are of the

earth earthy—their affections, instead of soaring after the unseen world, are entangled among the pleasures of this fleeting scene; and while they have a name to live, they are spiritually dead. They have a form of godliness, but are destitute of its power. Of all characters, this is that which is least acceptable in the sight of heaven. There is nothing so offensive to God, as such lukewarmness and indifference. You recollect the threatenings which he denounced against the Laodiceans. In a great measure, their state was that which has just been described. They had not thrown off all appearances of regard for religion. Among the first that had embraced the Christian faith, they still adhered to the Gospel, and maintained a seeming respect for the institutions by which it was distinguished. By this means, they had contrived to persuade themselves that they were rich, and increased in goods, and had need of nothing. Very different was the light, however, in which they were viewed by that Master, in whose service they professed to be engaged. In his eye, they were poor and miserable, and blind and naked, and the threatenings he poured forth against them, are more severe than those he uttered against the openly wicked and profane. "These things, saith the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot; so then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." "Be not," then, my brethren, "deceived. God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Do not suppose that you may go on to sin, because grace is abounding. If any one imagine, that Christ Jesus came into the world to lessen the obligations to a holy life, he will find himself greatly mistaken at the last. The apostle Paul was a stranger to all such indulgence, when he wrote, that "the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world. As little did the Saviour countenance the opinion, when he commanded his disciples to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and assured them, in plain and awful terms, that unless their righteousness should exceed the righteous-

ness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. The uniform language of Scripture is to the same effect. Nothing can be more decisive than the words of the text ; and what deserves particularly to be remarked, as adding considerably to their weight, is, that they form part of an epistle, in which the grace of the new covenant is most accurately described. The lukewarm professor then, does what in him lies to defeat the design of the gospel. Its great object was, not merely to deliver us from the guilt of sin, but to ransom us from its power, and to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It was to reconcile us to God that Jesus suffered and died. His unmerited condescension was intended to overcome the wickedness of the evil heart of unbelief, and making us ashamed of our ingratitude, to lead us to live no longer to ourselves, but unto Him that died and rose again. What, then, is the lukewarm Christian but a traitor in the camp of the Redeemer? and if he continue in his rebellion, his doom will be at last to be driven from the presence of that God, whom he has offended and cut off from all share in the merits of that Saviour, whose grace he has despised.

In the second place, God not only commands our homage, but has a just title to the best service which we can render. All that we have is His ; He gave us our being at the first ; by His providence our lives are daily sustained ; the air that we breathe, the food that we eat, and the raiment wherewith we are clothed, are all the result of his bounty. "Every good and every perfect gift cometh from above, from the Father of light, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning ;" at his command all nature yields to us her hidden stores—the whole creation throughout its wide extent, ministers in one way or other to our gratification and delight—heaven and earth seem to vie with each other which of them shall be most liberal to us in favours. Formed after the image of God, we have been made but a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory, and with honour. Of all the inhabitants of the earth we alone have been made spectators of that glory which the divine hand has scattered over all his works. Is it possible to render unto God, more than his goodness gives him a right to claim? Is he your Creator? Was it he that breathed into your nostrils the breath of

life, and made you a living soul? Are all the endowments of mind, the memory, the understanding, and the affections, the result of his bounty? Does his merciful visitation preserve your souls every moment from the place of darkness and despair? Has he afforded you many deliverances and unnumbered tokens of his loving-kindness, and can you then employ too much zeal for his honour? As your Supreme Benefactor, is he not entitled to the best services of your lives, and all the fervour of your spirits? All this, however, is but a small part of the obligation which his mercy has laid you under. Think only on the wonders of redeeming love. While you were yet enemies to him by wicked works, aliens from his favour, and unworthy of his regard, he saw your misery, and being moved with compassion, sent his own Son into the world, to die for your sins, and by expiating your guilt, to finish the work of your redemption. Life and immortality have been clearly brought to light, and are promised to all who sincerely obey and believe his Gospel, so that we may now rejoice with the Psalmist of Israel, "As the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards them that fear him." Can you then exceed in gratitude to such a friend? Can you render unto him more than his goodness gives him a right to claim? Can you serve him with too much zeal? When we receive a benefit from a fellow creature, does not the generous heart delight in making a return. If the favour was bestowed unasked, and we have reason to trust in a continuance of his good offices, do we not seek for opportunities of serving him as for hidden treasure? What thanks, then, and what service are due to our heavenly Father, who hath delivered us out of darkness unto his marvellous light, and hath sent his Son into the world to die for our sins, that he might with him freely give us all things.

In the third place, another consideration that should induce us to cultivate that fervour of spirit which the text recommends, arises from the difficulties with which the service of God is attended. Religion is not a matter of easy acquirement. Is it possible, think you, for any one to become invested with all its character, animated by all its spirit, and put in possession of all its blessings, although he gave himself no concern about it? Will it come to him in all its benefits, and excellence, and power, with-

out any anxious desires on his part, without any vigorous struggle, and without any sincere and persevering endeavours? If there is nothing in the state of the world without, or in that of the heart within, which urges the impossibility of complying with its demands, and of obtaining its rewards if we indulge in sloth? On the contrary, the warfare in which we are engaged requires most strenuous effort. The enemies we have to encounter, are numerous and powerful, and through them, we must fight our way to the ground which shall be our reward. Within our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; then we have depraved appetites to restrain, and passions fed by indulgence to subdue. The right eye must be cut out—the right hand must be cut off—every sin of every kind must be resigned. Has any of you made the attempt, and do you find it an easy matter? No doubt, you think it was a hard command that was given to Abraham when God ordered him to slay his son, his only son Isaac, on mount Moriah; but is it not equally hard to cause you to renounce your pleasures, from which you promised yourselves so much gratification? Will you be brought tamely to submit, as Abraham, when he laid his son upon the altar, or will you not rather try every art by which you may hope to avert or delay the stroke? Yes—and while you thus stand hesitating and ready to be overcome, the enemy from without will begin the attack, sin and the Devil are continually placing before you their various allurements. Watching their favourable opportunity, they make their approach when you least expect it, and secure their victory before you feel the unseen danger; the world also has its snares; every state and condition of life has snares peculiar to itself. Besides, all who would love God and Christ Jesus must expect to meet with persecution. The sword indeed is sheathed, but the weapons of ridicule are still bright and glittering for the combat; the sneer and the scoff of the infidel, and the profane, are yet ready for the slaughter, and drunk with the blood of the ten thousand victims whom they have already slain. Amid so many perils what need is there of fervour? Amid such obstacles, what but a zeal that knows no bounds would enable us to resist and overcome the enemies of our salvation! See then that you be possessed of his Spirit; without it you will make no pro-

gress in the graces and virtues of the divine life here, nor will you be prepared for those rewards which await the faithful in the world which is to come.

Lastly, let the example of those saints whose names the Scripture records with honour, animate you to cultivate this spirit. In the character of Moses, the fervour which the text recommends was a distinguishing feature. The service of Jehovah was the great object of his life, and to it he gave himself up with an alacrity and ardour which nothing could exceed. It was the zeal by which he was animated, that led him to refuse being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and to suffer affliction rather with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. The same temper was displayed in David, when his soul longed and thirsted for the courts of God's house, when rivers of water ran down his eyes, because men kept not the law of God. Equally remarkable was the fervour of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. He scrupled not to make every sacrifice of ease and comfort, that he might be partaker of Christ's salvation. He preached the unsearchable riches of Christ in the face of the mightiest opposition, and counted not even his life dear unto him, so that he might "finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." What was the distinguishing characteristic of the preachers of righteousness, of Abraham, of Elijah, of Samuel, of Daniel, and of the other eminent saints whose names the Scripture records with special tokens of divine approbation? It was zeal for the Lord—zeal manifesting itself by obedience, holy, fervid, and strenuous exertion to promote the glory of God. In none, however, did this spirit more immediately display itself than in our blessed Lord and Saviour. When Isaiah poetically pictures the Son of God advancing as the destroyer of the enemy, and the Redeemer of his people, do we not find that it forms one of the most conspicuous parts of the representation that he was "clad with zeal as with a cloak?" Of him another prophet says, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." And his life corresponded, for he went about continually doing good. Ever employed in his heavenly Father's service, he lost no opportunity of preaching the Gospel to the poor, of binding up the broken-hearted, of proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to

them that are bound. The course of his obedience was unerring and uniform; no danger could terrify him; no opposition could turn him from doing the will of his heavenly Father, and forwarding that undertaking which it was the great object of his life and death to accomplish. How ardent his love of goodness, how intense his hatred of sin, and with what earnestness did he exert himself to destroy the kingdom of Satan, and establish the kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Let, then, the same mind be in us which was also in him. Animated by the spirit of these sainted characters, let us also learn from their example to be equally ardent in the service of our Master—from their hallowed fire let us light the torch which will enlighten our minds with holy ardour, and enable us to run with patience the race that is set before us. Above all, let us make the life of our blessed Lord and Saviour the great pattern of our imitation. Like him, let us endure the cross, and despise the shame that may still be our portion in the race we have yet to run. The same joys are set before us which he was so anxious to obtain, and if we, like him, be faithful unto death, we too shall be set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Let us then be “steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.” Whatever opposition we have yet to encounter, let it only kindle our ardour into a brighter flame; and let us through good report and through bad report follow Jesus, even if it should be necessary into the depth of ignominy and the sufferings of death.

Such are a few of the obligations which we are laid under to cultivate that fervour

of spirit which the text recommends. It is enjoined by the positive command of God, who has a right to impose on us whatever duties he pleases, and to prescribe the manner in which they ought to be performed. Every sentiment of gratitude should lead us to devote to his glory those powers and privileges for which we are indebted to the bounty of our heavenly Father. The difficulties that lie before us, call on us to cultivate this spirit, for without it they cannot be overcome, while, at the same time, it is recommended by the example of those eminent saints whose names Scripture records with honour, and above all by that of our blessed Lord and Saviour. See then, that these considerations have their due influence on your minds. Be it your care not to do the work of the Lord deceitfully. While so many engage in the service of the Lord merely to comply with prevailing custom, or to lull their own consciences into a dangerous calm, let higher and nobler motives be the spring of your actions. In your various duties avoid every thing like lukewarmness and indifference. Setting before your eyes the glory of God, the salvation of your own souls, and the everlasting well-being of mankind, engage in the service of God with all the earnestness that such considerations are fitted to awaken. Show yourselves disciples of the Lord Jesus, not in name only, but in deed and in truth, that you may be prepared to serve him for ever in the temple alone. Let such then, be your conduct, and may the great Shepherd of the sheep, who appeared again from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ, establish, strengthen, and confirm you in every good word and work, to the praise of his glory. Amen.

THE CONDUCT OF NOAH, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES;

A SERMON, PREACHED IN THE HIGH CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, 26TH MAY, 1833, BEFORE HIS MAJESTY'S COMMISSIONER, FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

By the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL,

Minister of the New Church, St. Giles, Edinburgh.

“By faith Noe, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world.”—HEB. xi. 7.

It is not my intention to occupy your time, by any attempt to prove to you, that the events to which these words refer, are to be regarded by us as bearing a high typical character—that the ark which Noah built, is to be considered by us as typical—that the salvation he and his family enjoyed,

by means of the ark, is to be considered by us as typical—that the destruction which came upon all the world besides, is likewise to be regarded as bearing a high typical character. But taking all this for granted, I propose, in a dependence on the grace and strength of God, in the first place, to direct

your attention to the narrative that is here given us of Noah's conduct, and to consider this as illustrative and typical of the line of conduct we ought to pursue, in the circumstances in which we are placed. In the second place, we shall attend to the blessed consequences that resulted from the conduct of Noah upon this occasion, and consider these consequences as illustrative of the results which we may expect to follow from like faith and like obedience on our part.

The first thing, then, that we are here informed of respecting Noah is, that, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, he believed in these things. He was warned by God of things not seen as yet, of things that were soon to happen—of a totally different nature and character from any thing that had previously occurred—of a nature and character so distinct from any thing that as yet had happened, as to make it in a high degree difficult to believe in the certainty and reality of their occurrence. Previous to this, all things had continued as they were from the beginning of the creation. Day had succeeded day, and night had succeeded night, in regular and uninterrupted succession. Rain had forcibly fallen upon the earth, but if so, it had done this only to bless and fructify it, or if, at any time, it fell in torrents that were more overpowering, yet these could occasion no more alarm to the inhabitants of the antediluvian world, than the occurrence of the same thing occasions in the midst of us. Then, too, as well as now, every brook, and every river, would carry its waters to the ocean, still that ocean was not by these waters at all increased. The place where its proud waves were stayed, still remained the same, and hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, would be regarded as one of those laws of nature, which even now we are apt to speak about as having such a degree of permanency stamped upon them, that even the God who made them, could not interfere with their operation. The declaration of Jehovah to Noah then, "Behold even I do bring a flood upon the earth, to destroy the inhabitants of the earth," would at once awaken a great variety of doubts, and difficulties, and cares, in the minds of those who listened to it. How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come, were the objections which the apostle Paul was met with, when he preached to the Gentiles the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. How can such an event take place? By what operation of causes can such a flood be

poured upon the earth? These questions, and such as these, would, no doubt, be proposed to Noah, when he declared to his fellow-sinners the message with which he had been intrusted by the God that made him. Noah himself, however, my friends, heard God's declaration upon this point, and he implicitly believed it. Every suggestion of unbelief he put away from him—every surmise of difficulty or of doubt he banished from his mind, and he just as firmly believed in the doctrine of a coming flood, as in any of those circumstances or events, by which his conduct in ordinary life was regulated.

This is the first thing, then, that we are here informed of respecting Noah. Let us inquire now what his conduct was in this respect in thus believing God—and the declaration that he made to him should teach us respecting the way in which we ought to act in the circumstances in which we are each of us placed. We too, my brethren, are told by God of things not seen as yet, of things that are by and by to happen, of a totally distinct nature and character from any thing that has as yet occurred. Since we have known this world, it has always presented to us the same general aspect. That sun which rose, and which set, on the day when we first drew the breath of life, continues to rise and to set just as it did then. That sky which then presented the varying aspects of summer, and winter, and spring and harvest, continues to present to us those very aspects still. The scenery of our neighbourhood continues to present all the features of beauty, and variety, and grandeur, which it wore when we first beheld it; and perhaps, too, even the little brook with which we first formed our acquaintance, when sporting with childish playfulness upon its banks, may yet be flowing in the same current in which we then saw it meandering; and though a great change may have taken place with respect to some of the more frail and fragile things with which we here are surrounded, though the tree, for example, which we once saw waving in all the stateliness of luxuriance, may be withered and cut down; though death may have occasioned a sad change in the neighbourhood where we reside, in the congregation of which we are members, in the family circle of which we form a part, yet this is only as it has been always, and therefore presents no exception whatever to the general unvarying character of those things that are around us. But there is a day coming, when this unvarying order of things

is to be interrupted. There is a day coming, when these heavens are to present to us a spectacle different from any we have ever witnessed there, and when on this earth, too, we are to be the spectators of a scene very, very different from any that we have ever as yet here beheld. There is a day coming, when in the sky a great white throne is to be erected, and the Ancient of Days is to sit upon that throne, and is to gather around him all the inhabitants of this earth—all the inhabitants of that universe that he has been pleased to spread around him—and in that day, too, the world which we inhabit, is to become the scene of one vast conflagration—its rocks, and its oceans, and its mountains, and its valleys, are to become the victims of the dread element of fire. And we, my brethren, are to behold the solemnities of that day—we are to be separated on earth, but on that day we shall all be gathered together—we shall all behold the throne of the God of the universe established in the sky—a company of attendant angels—the opening of the books of judgment—the gathering of all creatures from all places of God's dominions, to that grand and last assize, when every thing is to be determined with regard to us, and irrevocably fixed for eternity. As Noah then believed in the doctrine of a coming flood, so ought we to believe in the doctrine of a coming judgment. As Noah banished every surmise of unbelief with respect to what was unfolded to him, so ought we to seek to banish all unbelief with respect to what has been made known unto us. As Noah not merely received the doctrine of a coming flood into his creed, but received it as a truth, which exercised a powerful practical influence upon his conduct, so ought we to seek in a manner equally vivid, to realize the fact calmly, and in its usual order, as every thing may be going on around us on this earth; and though these heavens have presented to us to-day the same aspect we have seen them wear before, yet, in a little while, there is not an eye in this assembly that is not to be fixed on a Judge sitting there—there is not an ear in this assembly that is not to listen to the summons of a Judge—into his presence there is not a soul in this assembly that is not to be exposed to his scrutinizing glance.

But in the second place, we are here informed not merely of what Noah believed, but of what he did. We are informed not only of his faith but of the influence which his faith produced upon his conduct. "Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet,

moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." The command which at the period we are considering was addressed to him, you will find recorded in the 6th chapter of the book of Genesis, at the 14th verse, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood: rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof: with lower, second, and third stories, shalt thou make it." This was the injunction that was addressed to Noah, and it is abundantly evident that it was an injunction that required a very high degree of the exercise of faith to carry into execution. In the first place, the rearing of such a fabric must have been attended with immense labour and expense. In the next place, it must have been abundantly obvious to Noah, that so immense a vessel constructed in the way in which he was commanded to rear it, and manned only by himself and his three sons, could not withstand the tumult into which he was led to expect that the elements were to be cast, without the special guidance and interposition of God; and then too in addition to all this, Noah having stood single and alone among the men of his generation, in believing the doctrine of a coming flood, and the necessity of making preparation for it, when going on with the ark, there can be no doubt, but that he would be frequently exposed to the ridicule of his fellow-creatures; and that such epithets as enthusiast, and fanatic, and madman, would again and again be sounded in his ears. Notwithstanding all these things, however, Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house. He began the undertaking, laborious, and expensive, and ungracious as it was, and persevered in it. Notwithstanding all the difficulties he had to encounter and all the obloquy that was heaped upon him, we do not find that he once thought of desisting from his undertaking till the ark was completed, in the way in which God had been pleased to appoint. This is the next thing we are informed of respecting Noah. What does his conduct, in this respect, teach us, regarding the way in which we ought to act? We have already found that a day of judgment is approaching, as certainly as a

flood came upon the antediluvian world. We have already found, that it will be a day of trial—a day of awful, inconceivable vengeance to myriads. Is there any preparation, then, that we are called upon to make against that day, and of which Noah's conduct upon this occasion may be regarded as typical? Yes. There is a preparation. We are not commanded to build an ark. No; but we are required to repair to an ark that God has already prepared, the Lord Jesus Christ—he it is who was typified by the ark of Noah—to him it is that we are directed by the Bible as our ark of refuge and of safety—to him we are invited to go for the pardon of our sins, for deliverance from all the consequences of transgression, and for the uprooting of every corrupt tendency within our breasts; and just as Noah persevered in the midst of his work, notwithstanding of difficulty, ridicule, and obloquy, so are we called to count every thing but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and to be willing to suffer the loss of all things, and to count them but dung, that we may win him, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

In the last place, we are informed here that Noah by his conduct upon this occasion, condemned the world. He prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world. And in what way the conduct of Noah, upon this occasion, condemned the unbelieving world by whom he was surrounded, I conceive that every one now hearing me may be able, without difficulty, to comprehend. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and there can be no doubt but that in the exercise of his official character he often warned his fellow-sinners around him of God's threatened indignation, and of the necessity of making preparation against the day of his wrath. But, my brethren, irrespective altogether of Noah's conduct as a preacher of righteousness, we have not the least hesitation in saying, that simply by building the ark, this is evidently the idea which the Apostle, in the words of my text, has particularly in view; he condemned the

unbelievers and the impenitent by whom he was surrounded. By doing this, by going on from day to day in the work he had undertaken, he proclaimed to those sinners what was coming, the approach of a day of indignation, his conviction of the necessity of making preparation for that day; and each time that those surrounding beheld the stately vessel that was rearing in the midst of them—each time they listened to the sound of those implements employed in its construction—each time they saw it advancing from one stage of progress to another—each time that those living at a distance heard of what Noah was doing—each time such may be regarded as having received a message of making preparation for the coming day; and so are unbelievers still condemned even by the conduct of those who serve God, and who put their trust in the Saviour. We have preachers of righteousness among us still, who warn sinners of the errors of their ways, and of the consequences to which sin surely exposes. But independently of these warnings altogether, we have not the least hesitation in saying to you who are living in impenitence, unbelief, and sin, that every time, in the course of God's providence, you happen to come into contact with one who you know is acting otherwise, who is making preparation for eternity, at each such time are you condemned in the line of conduct you are pursuing. That man by what he does tells you of the necessity of acting otherwise, and in the great and final day, if you persevere in your impenitence, then rest assured that this will be one among many other grounds of condemnation, that you saw individuals beside you who acted otherwise, who looked beyond this present scene to that world that is coming; but that notwithstanding the warnings then given, you persevered in a different and in an opposite line of conduct. Oh! then, let us flee to Him who is our ark—let us seek of him forgiveness—let us seek sanctification—let us seek to be of those respecting whom it is said in the Bible, “There is, therefore, no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit

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THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, A.M. Edinburgh.

SERMON by the Rev. P. M'FARLAN, D.D., Greenock.

SERMON by the Rev. T. BROWN, D.D., Glasgow.

THE CONDUCT OF NOAH, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, A.M.—Continued.

HAVING considered the narrative that is here given us of Noah's conduct, and the important lesson which this narrative is calculated and intended to teach us, I now go on, as proposed, in the second place, to direct your thoughts to the blessed consequences which resulted from Noah's conduct upon this occasion, and to consider these as illustrative and typical of the results we may expect to follow from like faith and obedience on our part. A very considerable period elapsed between the time when God commanded Noah to build the Ark, and the period when the flood actually was brought upon the earth; and there can be no question whatsoever, that the circumstance of sentence against their evil works not having been executed speedily, tended very much to confirm the inhabitants of the world in these days, in their impenitence and unbelief. The man of God went on to tell them of what Jehovah was about to do, but there was not the slightest indication of his predictions being about to be fulfilled. The sun continued to rise and set in the hemisphere just as he was wont to do. Summer succeeded spring, and autumn succeeded summer, and winter succeeded autumn, as these seasons had been accustomed to revolve from the creation of the world. The watery element, too, with which they were threatened, made no advances upon them whatsoever, but continued fast locked within the limits by which it had originally been bounded. All this too had gone on for more than a century; so at length when the flood actually came, we have the Saviour's own authority for asserting, that the people of the world were as completely indifferent upon the subject, as if no warning had ever been addressed to them. "They did eat," says the Saviour, "they did drink, they

married, they were given in marriage." But although the day of the Lord advanced thus slowly, it did not on that account advance the less surely; and at last that day did come, and for aught we know, the sun on that day, rose as unclouded as on any that had preceded it—that day did come in which the command was addressed to Noah, "Get thou and thy family into the Ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me, in this generation." And, my brethren, when Noah had yielded obedience to this command, when he had gone, he and his family, into the Ark which he had constructed, we are informed of an exceedingly impressive incident that then took place—we are told that the Lord shut him in. This was no doubt an act of kindness to Noah and his family, for, in all probability, they were incapable of so securing the entrance to the Ark, as to make it impenetrable amid the confusion of the elements that they were led to expect. But this act, which was one of kindness to Noah and his family, oh, what an aspect of retributive justice did it wear to all the world besides! Previous to this the door of the Ark had remained quite open. Any one who chose might have found an asylum within it, and by most accurate calculations it has been ascertained, that it was capable of containing a considerable number more than were actually saved in it; but when the Lord shut in Noah, the fate of the unbelieving world became sealed. He shut in Noah, and by the very same act he shut out all the world besides. And what a scene must the whole inhabited surface of this world have presented, when Noah and his family had gone within the Ark, when the Lord had shut them in, and when the fountains of the deep were unloosed, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the

rain began to fall in most unusual and appalling torrents! Many a mother must then have looked upon her infant child with the consciousness that the cold wave was soon to benumb its every feature and every limb. Many a parent must have looked upon the children whom he had reared from infancy to maturity, and who, by imparting to him the sweets of companionship, had become doubly dear to him, with the consciousness that he was about to be separated from them, and separated for ever; and many a child must on that day have risen up in judgment against its parents. You should have told us of this coming judgment; you should have warned us to make preparation for it; you should have counselled us to listen to the tidings of God's messenger; you should have been the very last to have encouraged us in our iniquity. The very gradual manner in which the waters prevailed, must have tended to increase the awfulness of the scene, giving to a person time to look back on the life he had lived, and on the death before him. And the horror of the scene must have been increased, by the consciousness that that death with which these inhabitants of the world were then threatened, was only to usher them into the presence of that God, whose indignation had already begun to be manifested towards them. But the Ark, my friends, that day was quite safe. It rose majestically above those floods which overwhelmed all the world besides, weathered the tumult into which the elements were cast, and protected its inhabitants, not merely from all danger, but even from all alarm. The waters rose higher and higher, but they rose progressively along with it. The highest hills and the highest mountains became covered, but the Ark still remained the only one speck of solid matter in the mighty world of waters. The waters remained for a considerable time on the earth, but the Ark was still preserved, and at last it landed its inhabitants quite safely on the mountains of Ararat.

These were the blessed consequences that resulted from the faith and obedience of Noah, but of what are these consequences to be regarded by us as typical? We have found that a day of judgment and of trial is coming. Before that day we may be all mouldering in the dust; ere that day arrives, it is possible that our bones, the harder materials of which our bodies are composed, may have returned to their original elements; before that day, even the tombstone, that

for a time may mark the place where we lie, may have mouldered away, but, however long and however deep the sleep of death may prove, it shall not prove so deep but that the Archangel's trumpet shall be heard. We shall all hear it, and, hearing it, shall rise from our graves, and be witnesses of the scene then exhibited, more terrible still than that we have been endeavouring to place before you. Parents shall be seen on the left hand of the judge mourning for lost children, and children rising up against their parents. You should have told us of the way of salvation; you should have counselled us to repair to the Saviour; you should have impressed upon our minds the importance of providing for eternity. All, all on that side of the throne, without exception, shall be ready to call on the rocks to fall on them, and on the mountains to cover them from the presence and from the wrath of the Lord; and the anticipation of a last final irrevocable sentence, and of the dread execution of it, will fill all on this side with more alarm, than when the flood came with its all-destroying waters. But there is an Ark on that day also, and all who are in that Ark shall be secure. The Lord Jesus Christ, our Ark, hath gone forth for our safety upon the seas of Jehovah's vengeance, that so rise up against us in mighty floods. He did cry—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But he was not overwhelmed; he rose and is exalted now far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion. And on the day judgment is fixed, all who are in him shall be secure; no terrors of that day will alarm them; amid its thunderings and its lightnings they will be at peace in the Ark. In the Ark they shall be cheered and blessed with the smiles of the great Captain of Salvation, and in the Ark they shall at length land on the shores of that peaceful and happy country wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Are you within this Ark? are you seeking to be saved? have you gone to Christ? have you gone to him for all the purposes which he is revealed in the Bible as willing to accomplish? have you gone to him not only for salvation from hell, but for redemption from all iniquity, for the clean heart and the right spirit which he is able to establish within you? are you seeking to be made subject to his yoke? and are you, like Noah, willing to encounter obloquy and ridicule on his side? Then we do

congratulate you. You are now where tempests and troubles you may expect to find, but in your Ark you may rest assured of protection and safety. You are by and by to pass the Jordan, but you have the promise, "I will be with thee," and beyond it you have the prospect of peace as lasting as that immortal existence which God has bestowed upon you. But are you not within it?—are you not seeking from the Saviour the blessings that we have been specifying? Are you living in sin and in thoughtlessness upon this most important of all subjects? Then, rest assured, there are no beings on the surface of the earth, that are the objects of such pity and such sympathy as you are. You are here exposed to trouble, but without the friend who can soothe and bless you. You must by and by enter the dark valley and shadow of death, and beyond it, if you be impenitent and unbelieving, is the scene of divine vengeance, a sea where there are no calms, where there is not a moment's respite from the most agitating tempest. Oh! listen to us, then, we beseech you, while we make the proclamation that the door of the Ark is yet open, that it is open, just that such sinners as you are, may repair to it for safety. But listen to us, also, when we remind you that no one can tell how soon that door may be shut. It is even possible ere darkness may again overspread our land, ere the sun sink again beneath our horizon, that you may be called to death,

and know what it is to be in God's presence. I address to you, then, the words that were spoken to Lot, Arise, escape for thy life—look not behind thee—escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed; and I add, my brethren, if thou hast any in the city, sons, or sons-in-law, or daughters, bring them out hence along with thee. Noah prepared the Ark not only for himself, but for the saving of his house. You are, by and by, to see your children in one of two affecting situations. Either you are to be called on, to close their eyes in death, or to see them surrounding you on a deathbed, when you are about to pass into the world of spirits, and Oh! how comfortable to be able to say, These are my children, I instructed them in the way of salvation, I counselled them to walk in that way, I have reason to believe, that they have listened to my injunctions, and though we are to be separated, it may be, for a little while, we may meet in far better and happier circumstances. How sad again the reflection, There is my child, I did not act towards him in the way in which Noah acted to his family, on the contrary, by my example I encouraged him in his wickedness! How awful to be at the tribunal of God, where I have to answer not only for my disregard of my own soul, but my indifference about the souls of those who had such strong and tender claims upon me! May God bless his word. Amen.

THE DESCRIPTION AND BLESSEDNESS OF DYING BELIEVERS;

A FUNERAL SERMON PREACHED ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, 9TH JUNE, 1833,
OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE REV. JOHN GEDDES, LATE MINISTER OF
ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, GLASGOW,

By the Rev. PATRICK M'FARLAN, D.D.,

Minister of the West Parish Church, Greenock.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."—REV. xiv. 13.

It is a general truth, to which, apart from the power of divine grace, and the sustaining and animating influence of the hopes of the Gospel, there are few exceptions, that through fear of death, men are all there life-time subject to bondage. Death is regarded not only as an evil, but as the greatest of all evils, and is dreaded accordingly by men of all degrees of mental fortitude and resolu-

tion. It is terrible, it is said, in itself, and it is no less terrible in its consequences. We cannot look forward without awe to the last struggle of dissolving nature, and to the hour in which our disembodied spirits shall stand in the presence of God, and our bodies shall become masses of inanimate matter. We cannot contemplate, without awe, the judgment which is after death, the hour of

final retribution, and the corruption of the silent tomb. He must be lost to all the apprehensions and feelings of intelligent, and social, and immortal beings, who can sport with so solemn a subject as this, or who, without hope of happiness beyond the grave, can anticipate, with indifference, his final separation from all the sources of earthly enjoyment. The judgment or opinion which men form or express respecting the death of others, affords a plain indication of the light in which they regard it, as approaching to themselves. There may be comparatively little distress, on account of the death of the infant, or of the diseased, or of the very aged, or imperfect; but when the young, the healthy, and the prosperous, are cut down, as if the voice of our commiseration could reach the ear of their departed spirits, there is one universal cry of sorrow, for what we are pleased to call their untimely death. We mourn, not merely for widows, children, and friends, who have been bereaved of the support and consolation they enjoyed, nor for society, nor for the Church, who have been deprived of talents, wisdom, activity, and distinguished usefulness—that were a rational sorrow, and a sorrow which could not be condemned—but we mourn for the individuals themselves, for the blasting of their fair prospects of happiness and distinction, for the period of life suddenly cut short, for the enjoyments from which they have been severed. We speak as if we looked on death as to them an evil of the greatest possible magnitude, as if it terminated their existence, or at least put a final period to their present enjoyments, and all their prospects of future happiness. If those, whose death we lament, have died in the Lord—if they have laid up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, laying hold on eternal life, our language is the language of a sinful and extremely reprehensible unbelief. It is a voice from the earth, from this low grovelling world, the great majority of whose inhabitants walk by sight, and not by faith, looking to things seen and temporal, not to those that are unseen and eternal. The apostle John tells us in the words of the text, that he heard a voice from heaven speaking to him in a very different language, speaking to him of the death of believers, and calling from men expressions of mingled joy and gratitude—a voice from heaven, whether they die in youth, or in maturer years, or in extreme old

age, expressly commanding him to write, and thus to record this beatitude, for the instruction of men, especially of the saints of God, in all succeeding generations: “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” This is the judgment of heaven, respecting the dead who are the followers of Christ; this is the judgment of the God of heaven, of the Spirit of truth, and of angels, and of the glorified saints, the inhabitants of heaven. It is not pronounced for the purpose of cherishing a stoical indifference in surviving friends and relatives, or of inspiring a strange and artificial joyfulness, when the heart should be rent with the agonies of unavailing sorrow; it implies not that good men have no joys on earth, and no cause of sorrow in parting with friends on earth, and present enjoyments, but it impresses on us this undeniable truth, that it is far more blessed for a good man to die, than to live; for whatever the amount of his present enjoyments, they are not for one moment to be compared with the happiness to be hereafter revealed, and it teaches him to be earnest for the blessedness beyond the present state, looking on the solemn awful hour of death, as the commencement of a new existence—the day of his approach to an eternity of unmingled blessedness; while surrounding friends are taught by it to assuage the bitterness of their grief, and give thanks to God that, though to human appearance, it would have been more profitable to them that their departed friends should have remained in the flesh, it were far better for them to depart and to be with Christ in his kingdom in glory. With a view to the present application of these words, I propose, first, to consider and illustrate the description here given of the state of dying believers: They die “in the Lord;” and, secondly, their blessedness, “They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”

I am, first of all, to consider and illustrate the description here given of dying believers: They die “in the Lord.” It cannot have escaped the notice of the attentive reader of the holy Scriptures, that there is a marked difference in the language of the inspired writers, in describing the character of true Christians, and in describing their state in that character, or their state and character united. When it refers to their

character wholly and chiefly, they are called 'the righteous, or the good believers, or the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. When, on the other hand, it refers to their state and character before God, or to their state and character united, they are spoken of as *in the Lord, in Christ Jesus*, or, as if for explanation, as *members of Christ, the brethren of Christ, sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, living stones of the spiritual temple, fellow-Christians*, and of the *household of God*—all which are intended to convey to us the idea of an intimate union with Christ, and God the Father in him, and an interest in all the blessings flowing from his mediation in our behalf. Confining ourselves to our expression in the text, "in the Lord," let us consider its meaning and import.

The Apostle in addressing the Athenians, and speaking of the true God, who made the world, and all things therein, who giveth to all things life and breath, says of Him, that He is not far off from us; for *in Him* we live, and move, and have our being. The words *in Him*, express the relation in which man and all creatures stand to God as their Creator and Preserver. We live, and move, and have our being in God. He made us, and continually sustains and upholds us. Without Him, or without Him as our preserver, we cease to exist—life would no longer animate our mortal frames—our bodies and our souls would cease to be—they would be annihilated. Without Him we cannot move—our bodily organs could not perform the functions assigned them, and the powers of our minds would be equally weak and imbecile. It is because we are in Him, or in union with Him, that it is said, "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Christ is the Redeemer of his people, and to be in Him, is to be united to Him, in that character, capacity, or relation. He is our righteousness and strength, and to be *in Him*, or to be *in the Lord*, is to have in Him that which we have not in ourselves, righteousness and strength. It is to be united to Him as our spiritual head, as the surety of his people, who, for us, and for our salvation, brought in everlasting righteousness. It is to be crucified with Christ, to be justified in him, to be accepted and accounted righteous before God, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. To be in Christ,

is to be united to him for our salvation—to be risen together with him—to be living stones connected with him, as the chief corner-stone of his Church. To be in him, is to have, in some measure, that spiritual life and energy which dwell in him inexhaustible and eternal, and, in virtue of which, to bring to him the fruits of righteousness, to the praise of our heavenly Father—it is to be rooted, and fitted up in Christ, and strengthened with all might in the inner man, by the might of his Spirit dwelling within us, and to have his spiritual life in our souls, as the beginning of life eternal.

That what we have now stated is the meaning of the words *in Christ*, is evident not only from the observations already made, but from the analogy which the Apostle Paul so often draws between Adam as the representative and covenant-head of his posterity, and Christ as the representative and covenant-head of his people. Adam sinned, his posterity sinned along with him, and fell with him in his first transgression. Had he remained steadfast in his obedience, they would have inherited his reward. He sinned against God—they sinned in him and fell with him. In him they became children of wrath, and by their descent from him they are the children of the reward. "Now," says Paul, "as by the offence of one came death, even so by the righteousness of one came the free gift of eternal life." And again "as in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Our relation to Adam as our fountain-head, has issued in condemnation and death. The relation of believers to Christ in that capacity issues in justification, acceptance, and eternal life, and happiness. The curse of the law and spiritual death are the consequences of the one; acceptance and reconciliation to God, and the possession of eternal life, are the consequences of the other. To be *in the Lord* is to be in a state of final union with Jesus Christ, to be united to him by lively faith, and to be partakers with him in all the blessings he has purchased. The words are descriptive of real Christians as contrasted with avowed unbelievers, or with men who are Christians in name and in profession, and not in deed and truth. To be *in the Lord* is to be in a state not of apparent and professed, but of vital union with him, and, consequently, to be the subjects of a real vital Christianity. This must necessarily be a life of devout holy obedi-

ence. A man cannot be in Christ, in this state of vital union and fellowship with him, without walking as he also walked, and showing himself by his works to be in a state of vital union.

But the words are descriptive rather of the state than of the character of believers, of the justification of believers, and of their meetness to inherit the kingdom of heaven. The union of believers is represented, accordingly, as consisting in exercises unaffected and unaltered by the awful change which dissolves all the relations of man here below. While Christians live, the life they lead in the flesh they live by the faith of the Son of God, and when they die they die in the Lord, they fall asleep in Jesus, and continue to be asleep till the resurrection; and when the resurrection day shall come, every believer shall be recognised as dead in Christ, and shall rise first. Living or dead they are all members of Christ's mystical body, their souls shall never cease to be united to him, and even their sleeping dust shall be acknowledged as part of the fruit of his atoning blood; for, says the apostle Paul, even them also, them that sleep in Jesus, shall God bring together with him at that day. From these statements, it appears that to die in the Lord is to die in a state of vital union with Christ, or to die in fellowship with him, the subjects of real vital Christianity. That union may have been established in early or more advanced life, and the death of believers may have been in the infancy of spiritual existence, or when they have just become men or fathers in Christ. This circumstance affects not the future state or happiness of departed believers. All of them were in Christ, and have died in the Lord, and though the circumstance of the dying Christian having been in Christ before youth, must have prevented many sins, and saved from much misery, and produced much happiness, and made him more fit for heaven, yet the salvation of all who have died in the Lord is made sure. Small and great shall stand before the Lord. The babe in Christ and the aged father shall enter together into his rest, and the least eminent and the most advanced of the saints in God shall alike have their mansion in their Father's house.

Let us now consider, as was proposed in the second place, the blessedness of those who die in the Lord. That blessedness is described in the text, when the Apostle

says, "they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." This is not intended as a complete description of the blessedness of departed saints, or of the happiness of heaven. It has a reference to the persecution predicted in the preceding chapter, and the blessedness of departed believers in dying and thus escaping forever from those troubles and sorrows which interrupted their happiness here, and from those fallacies and misrepresentations which in this world prevented their real characters from being fully known and duly appreciated. The real and what may be called the positive blessedness of the true Christian, consists in his being in close union with Christ, in his fellowship with him, in his being enabled to serve him in that spiritual life with which he has been endued and possessed. Even here, heaven and its joys have been begun in the soul of every true believer. The first-fruits of the Spirit are the foretaste and anticipation of heaven and its happiness. The beatific vision of God, the clearer views and larger comprehension of God in a future and better state will, no doubt, add inconceivably to the joy of saints; but, if that blessedness is begun on earth in union with Jesus, in heaven it shall own its continuance to the existence of the same heavenly relation. In the heavenly state the nature of its blessedness shall be distinguished chiefly in its being free from those troubles, and imperfections, and sorrows, which more or less adhere to its present condition. The saints are blessed here because they are in Christ—blessed even when men say all manner of evil against them for Christ's sake; but they shall be still more blessed, for, "they shall rest from their labours, and their works shall follow them."

In the first place, departed believers "rest from their labours." The word *labours* must not be understood in the sense of active persevering exertions in the service of God, for from these the saints shall not cease when they enter into heaven. Heaven is not a state of inaction. If it were, it would not be a happy state, but one of pure and unmingled misery. The happiness of heaven is described when our Lord represented his faithful servant who had diligently cultivated the talents he had received on earth, as receiving from him five talents, and adding to them five talents more, that is, double the opportunities of glorifying God, by actively and happily serving him; and also by

John, in Rev. xii. 3, "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall *serve* him;" and vii. 15, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and *serve* him day and night in his temple." In the same way we are informed, they shall serve God joyfully, and without ceasing, with understandings and affections enlightened and pure, and with bodies spiritual and incorruptible. All their powers and faculties will be consecrated to the service of God and of Christ, and the chief part of the happiness of heaven will consist in the confidence and alacrity of mind with which they shall devote themselves to the service of their divine Redeemer. When he speaks, then, of christian believers in dying, resting from their labours, obviously he refers to the toil and fatigue, the hardships and labours of their christian calling, and their ceasing for ever from these, when they have entered the kingdom of heaven. The repose of the Christian when his spiritual work is finished on earth, is the repose of the wrestler when he has conquered his antagonist; of the racer when he has finished his course and won the prize; of the warrior when he has fought the good fight and obtained the victory; of the persecuted and tormented when he has found a sure and impregnable refuge, from the assaults and insolence of wicked men, in the city of God. It is the full enjoyment by the true believer of the blessings of an eternal salvation, of blessings sought with the earnestness of an unquenchable desire, and struggled for with unceasing diligence to obtain, but which are never fully enjoyed till his labours have ceased, and he has entered into the joy of his Lord. One characteristic of true Christians is, that their life is a life of continued watchfulness. In working out their own salvation, in promoting the glory of God and the interests of his kingdom, they labour for the meat that endureth to everlasting life, they strive to enter in at the strait gate, they seek for the kingdom of God and of his Christ, they confess Christ before men, and say one to another, Know the Lord. If they are parents, they train up their children in the way they should go; if they are masters, they teach their servants to walk in the way of the Lord; if they are pastors, they watch over souls, as those who must give an account. The fervent and constant prayer of Christians is, May God's kingdom come, and his will be done on earth as it is in

heaven. In the accomplishment of the great and arduous work in which the faithful servants of Christ are engaged, they have to contend with much opposition, to strive against enemies within and around them to contend with the corruption of their own hearts, and the sinfulness of the world in which they live, with the devil going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, with the world and its allurements, and with the hardness, and wickedness, and impenitence of wicked men. Never in this world do they fully attain their end at any period of their christian warfare, and not till they enter into heaven do they rest from their labours. Then their struggles cease, then their warfare is finished, there they sin no more; sin cannot tempt them, the world cannot deceive them, wicked men cannot terrify them. Thus believers are called from an active, and sometimes unavailing service here, to serve God for ever. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord—they rest from their labours."

In the second place, the blessedness of the saints in dying, consists in this, that when dead their works do follow them. It is an important and just observation frequently made on this part of the text, that the good works of true believers do not go before them, but follow them into heaven. The saints obtain admission, not because of their good works, but because they die in the Lord, because they were interested in him as their Saviour, and were in a state of vital union and fellowship with him—and their good works follow in their train, entering after them or along with them, into that holy and blessed place. There is the strongest encouragement to diligence in this declaration of the Spirit. That the Christian himself should be admitted into heaven, is what might be expected under the Gospel dispensation, for his sins have been washed away by the blood of atonement. He, clothed in the spotless righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, has been made meet for the inheritance of the saints. But what shall his works do? His best, shall they find a place in heaven, and be worthy of being presented before the throne of an infinitely holy and just God? Yes, not one of them shall be forgotten—the least of them shall be remembered and acknowledged before God; they are all prevailing sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ; the sins that cleave to them are taken away by the

sprinkling of the blood of atonement, and while the seemingly virtuous deeds of unregenerated men shall be disowned, the least of those of the spiritual man shall be acknowledged and rewarded—they shall follow him into heaven.

In another point of view, it may be said, that the works of true believers follow them into heaven—the fruits of their good works remain on earth, and are afterwards presented unto God in heaven. The influence of their faith and character, and of the instructions they communicated, or of the impressions made by them, does not cease when they leave this present world, but is felt long, very long, after; yea, extends from one generation to another. In this way their power shall be manifested to the end of the world in the souls saved directly through their instrumentality. Men think then of their blessed guides that have gone before them, of the pastors who have taught them, and unite with the Spirit in saying, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.” This is blessedness indeed. Living, their principles and conduct may not be understood, and their goodness not duly appreciated; they may, like their divine Master, be despised, ridiculed, persecuted and slain; but the day of the Lord shall declare every man’s work of what kind it is, and while the proud, and the scornful, and the self-righteous character shall be shut out of the kingdom, his people shall be acknowledged and accepted—they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for evermore.

You must all have anticipated the application of the subject on which I have been discoursing this day, to the mournful event which is the occasion of my now addressing you, an event mournful to the family of our dear departed brother, to his flock, to his christian friends, to his brethren in the Church of Christ, but joyful, unceasingly joyful, to himself, prepared as he was for departing and abiding with Christ in glory. I think I may say with truth, that of no person can we affirm with more unflinching confidence that he died in the Lord. He feared the Lord from his youth. His piety, at first the result of paternal instruction, grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, and was matured with his affliction, till he became meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Devout-

ness of spirit was the distinguishing feature of his character; while he had all the cheerfulness of a true Christian, he had all his devoutness also. There was no levity about him, no appearance of earthly-mindedness or sensuality. He seemed to be habitually under impressions of the fear and love of God, and to have his affections set on things above. He took great delight in the Psalms. They were the subject of his frequent meditation, and he succeeded in an eminent degree in attaining the spiritual devotion they express. He was eminently humble, superior to many of his brethren in talents and scholarship, and especially in the literature of his profession; yet not on this account, in his christian character and attainments did he ever manifest any arrogance or pride, but strikingly illustrated the scripture rule of esteeming others better than ourselves. He felt, indeed, that he had nothing that he had not received. No man felt more strongly, or spoke or acted more decidedly than he, when called to oppose himself to error, or to condemn or reprove unrighteousness; and to some it might appear as if he had exceeded in this respect, but the fervour of his christian zeal was always under the government of christian meekness. He never gave way to hasty resentment, and never to the vindictiveness of passion. He had the charity which hopeth all things, endureth all things. Kind affection was another of the distinguishing features of his character. He loved his family, his friends, his christian brethren, with a warmth of affection they can never forget. With a gladness which beamed in his countenance he rejoiced in their prospects, and with a melting tenderness sympathized with them in their distresses. To the young in particular his kind affection was expressed. He took the deepest interest in all that concerned them, and more particularly in their spiritual concerns, to which his discourses, one or more of which were afterwards published, bore ample testimony. His calling was the holy ministry, and what he was in that, I need not inform his hearers and the members of his congregation. This only will I say, that I never knew an instance in which the private character of the man was more fully brought out in the public and private ministry of the pastor. There was no attempt at an exhibition of himself, or the display of his own talents or eloquence. In the pulpit, his only object

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seemed to be to present his mind to his hearers, so as to produce impressions on their hearts. Solemnity, pathos, devout emotion, faithful discrimination of character, and affectionate expostulation, were his most remarkable characteristics, and I believe I might say no less of his private ministrations, in which he was indefatigable. Undismayed by the extent of the two parishes* in which he laboured successively, he devoted himself with unwearied ardour and diligence to their spiritual improvement, and by the establishment of Parish Schools, in his own usual and unostentatious manner he has laid the foundation of much spiritual improvement and happiness. It is now only about 16 months since I had the pleasing task of

introducing him to his flock in this the flower of his age and in the enjoyment of perfect health and strength, and there was reason to hope that he might have had many days of usefulness and comfort in his new sphere of duty. Little did I think that in so short a space of time I should be called to perform the mournful duty of paying the last tribute to his memory. But so it is. It is the will of God, and our duty is to say, "Thy will be done." Though it is to us mysterious and incomprehensible, we may rest assured that it is wise, and righteous, and good. He died in the Lord. He now rests from his labours, and his works do follow him. Let us, then, be followers of him as he was of Christ. Amen.

DEATH, THE BELIEVER'S GAIN ;

A FUNERAL SERMON, PREACHED ON THE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY, 9TH JUNE, 1833,
OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE REV. JOHN GEDDES, LATE MINISTER
OF ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, GLASGOW,

By the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D.,

Minister of St. John's Church, Glasgow.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."—PHIL. i. 21.

It is the latter part of the text I mean to turn your attention to at present, that the death of a child of God is gain. But it may be asked, How is death gain to any one? Is not the king of terrors callous to all? Is he not a foe that is always avoided? Is not the hope of life a principle that is universally cherished? Does not every one wish to take up his abode of rest on this side the Jordan? I answer, No! The king of terrors is disarmed of his sting by the Christian. This last enemy is to the Christian the messenger of peace. The eager love of life is weakened in every child of God. The believer in Christ would not live always. However much a Christian might once have wished to remain on this side the boisterous surge, the fruit of the promised land awakens a wish to embark and reach its blessed shore. Death is what all must encounter—the grave is the house appointed for all living, but death is the harbinger of peace, and the grave is the threshold of glory to every child of God. Standing on the brink of eternity, surveying

the realities of the new unveiled world, he can say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" But it is when these tenelements of clay have fallen in ruins, when death has finished his work and let the immortal inmate go free from these prison walls by which it is confined, and when the spirit has winged its flight into the immediate presence of God, that the believer's death is gain. And this will appear true, if we consider that by death is the Christian freed from all temptation to sin, that by death he is delivered from the very existence of sin, that death has rescued him from all the temporary ills of his condition, and that at death he is admitted into a state of pure and never-ending felicity. Having considered this, we shall see that death is indeed gain to a child of God.

Death, then, I observe, in the first place, is gain to the Christian, because he is delivered from all temptation to sin. So long as man is an inhabitant of this globe he has various excitements to sin, many

* High Church Parish, Paisley, and St. Andrew's, Glasgow

enemies, external and internal, both plotting his ruin and instigating him to throw up his allegiance, and step aside from the living God. There is indeed no temptation which ought to prevail upon or seduce us, every sin carrying its own sting along with it, every transgression being the harbinger of misery in time, as well as the certain forerunner of eternal woe, for however sweet sin is in the commencement, it is bitterness in the end. But, alas! a body of sin and death still encompassing us, an evil heart of unbelief still animating us, we are led to forsake the living God without reflecting on the deadly consequences of departing from him. Even the most upright of men, through the force of temptation, are sometimes led into the same delusion, open their eyes to behold vanity, and their ears to listen to the song of sinful pleasures, and do not think of the error of their way, the evil of their disease, and the danger of the path they are treading, till conviction stumbles on their hearts, and the stings of remorse render them conscious of the height from which they have fallen. And there is no situation in life that has not excitements to sin peculiar to itself, youth and age, wealth and poverty, health and sickness, Am I stationed in society? The world when it smiles is dangerous, and when it frowns it has its snares. Good examples are to be found, but evil preponderate. Let a man go where he will, let him frequent the busy haunts of men, let him shut himself up in the solitary cell, let him go to the crowded city or the sequestered dale, let him repair to the noisy market-place or ascend the hill of God, the fire within will gather fuel; for all circumstances, and the sin that more easily besets him, and the corruption that cleaves to him, will find something wherein to make him offend. How much need, then, have all men to watch continually, and to pray incessantly, that they enter not into temptation? Paul had a thorn in the flesh and a messenger of Satan to buffet him; Paul had a thorn in the flesh to make him lowly and gentle, and to bring him near to his God, and convince him that his rest was not to be found here. And there never was an individual who had not his element of sin in one form or another. Every saint, whose name stands in the page of history, sacred or profane, has found the law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin. Every

the most renewed son of Adam has been forced to confess that when he would do good, evil was present with him. How dangerous, then, to a child of God that he is constantly inhaling infected air—that he is habitually living in an atmosphere impregnated with death—that he can scarcely take a step in life where he does not find some hidden snare! No sooner does he embark to the land of his Father in heaven, than his frail bark is in danger of going against some hidden quicksand, or some hidden rock, where he has reason to say, “Oh! that I had the wings of a dove, I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.”

Now death delivers the Christian from all these sources of unhappiness and distress. In that better world into which it introduces him, there are no more incitements to sin, no more snares set for his fall, no more painful trials for his virtue, no more evil examples to lead him astray from God. There the eye shall no longer behold, and the ear no longer hear, vanity; the tongue shall no longer deceive, and the heart no longer misgive. No longer shall the aged seduce the inexperienced, nor the oppressor bear down the weak. Poverty shall not tempt into injustice, nor wealth lead the possessor to forget God. Nothing shall exist there to excite sinful passions, nothing to awaken unhallowed desires. The atmosphere of that region is salubrious, the language of that country pure, the conduct of its inhabitants righteous. There is nothing to hurt or offend in all that holy mountain of God. Blessed change! where everything is calculated, instead of leading the heart astray from God, to draw nearer to God, to beget a nearer resemblance of his image. Well, then, may the Christian, knowing in whom he is in respect of the power to steer to that habitation, as he travels through this corrupting and corrupted world, and notwithstanding all his watchfulness, and all his prayers, feeling his corruption still remaining, the flesh still warring against the spirit, his heart still prone to deceive, his resolution still ready to give way—well may he long to depart and to be with Christ, to inherit that region where the contagion of sin is completely checked, where the wiles of Satan no more tempt, and where he is delivered from all those soul misgivings, those unhappy suggestions, those unholy desires, those sinful fears that constantly agitate

his soul. With this view of the subject, it may surely be said that death is gain to the child of God.

But I observe, in the second place, that death is gain to the child of God, because the very existence of sin is destroyed. What is it that leads man into temptation? His indwelling sin. Were there no evil heart of unbelief, man would not depart from the living God. Did the spark not exist within, you might heap fagot upon fagot without kindling a flame. Were we completely renewed and sanctified, and Christ fully formed within us, all the strength that Satan could put forth, and all the influence the world could exert, would not have power to lead the Christian a single step from the narrow path of duty. What was it that led Jesus to resist the temptations of Satan with such effect, and to pass through the various scenes of life without the slightest condemnation, but that he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners? In him there was nothing of kindred element to what was without—no new appetites to sin—all was liberty in the heart—and nothing external could by possibility corrupt him or injure his conduct. And just in proportion as a Christian is assimilated to Christ, does he resist temptation with effect. His righteous soul was dried up by vexation, and his heart was pierced through with sorrows, because of abounding iniquity; but Christ had his experience well tried, and there remained no lamenting on account of personal delinquency, or forgetfulness, or forsaking of God. This is, however, the experience of no man on earth. Now that perfection is not made here below—the old leaven still remains. Even in the best state, there is a proneness to what is evil as well as to what is good. Man's affections are at best divided between earth and heaven. Perhaps this conscious feeling affects the mind of a Christian more than any one else, and leads him to hang his harp upon the willows and go mourning all the day. I cannot indeed conceive any thing more distressing to a heaven-born soul that has just views of God and of his own soul, than that propensity to sin which exists in every heart, which renders emotion of the soul inactive, and love cold, which is apt to take fire at every temptation, and to operate as a barrier to all pleasing communication between his soul and his God. Oh! how frequent the supplication of such a one, that the Lord would completely take away

the hard and stony heart—that he would mould his will into a conformity with the divine—that he would restrain the lawless propensities that exist inwardly—that he would eradicate the noxious weeds that were implanted within, and are ready to bear pernicious fruit—that the Lord would keep the whole soul, and again permit nothing that would prove a controversy between him and his God. Sin is the grand source of misery and distress. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." Now this loathing is peculiar to the Christian. It is one of the evidences of a renovation, it is one of the tests of grace being formed within him; and till such time as the inward and effectual abhorrence of sin is felt in a man, we may presume he is still in the gall of bitterness. But this source of painful uneasiness is completely dried up at last. When the celestial inmate is set free from its prisonhouse of clay, and delivered from its painful shackles, it is restored to the light, and liberty, and purity of a son of God. The spirits of just men are made perfect when they reach mount Zion. Angelic natures may possess more enlarged and more exalted faculties, but not purer natures, than the redeemed of the Lord, who have winged their flight thitherward. All the remains of sin, and the dregs of corruption, are left far and for ever behind. No condemning conscience is found there; no unhallowed appetites are found there; no disordered affections exist there; no appearance or vestige of evil is found there: every child of God is pure, as Christ is pure—is perfect, as his Father in heaven is perfect. Child of mortality, heir of corruption, what are thy feelings, and what are thy flights, when they leave such a world of darkness and sin, and wander into regions of light and purity! If thou hast felt the apologies of thine own heart, the depravity and deep-rooted corruption of thy nature, the virulence of that disease under which thou art labouring, the violence of that sin that more easily besets thee; if thou hast felt the warnings and struggles, and contractings of the flesh and spirit; if thou art alive to the wanderings of the soul, in the pursuit of thy devotional exercises, to the dimness of divine attraction, when the most interesting objects were brought before thee; if thou hast had sensible experience of thy comparative lukewarmness, and indiffer

ence, and insensibility, when thy soul's weal has been urged upon thy notice, and the horrors of eternity have been unfolded to thy view ; if thou hast reflected on thy backslidings and short-comings, the intelligence that there is a region of purity before thee, will, indeed, refresh thy heart, and awaken longing desires, to have in God's family an inheritance among them that are sanctified, and produce that desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

But, again, for the Christian to die, is gain, because death sets him free from the temporal ills of his mortal condition. This world has been emphatically called a valley of tears, because man, as the Scripture informs us, is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. It is perfectly unnecessary to spend your time in attempting to prove, that the life of man is a chequered scene, and that so long as he inhabits this globe, he is liable to ills that are numberless. Every one that breathes has cause to bless God for the many sweet drops that God has been pleased to pour into his mingled cup. The unmerited goodness of God is new to us every morning and evening ; still, every one knows, that our purest delights are not without their alloy, that man's rejoicing ought to be accompanied with trembling, and that he should never expect his cup to be unmingled in time. How many are the distressing cares, and the harassing disappointments of life, which weigh down the wandering pilgrim ! How many personal distresses, and domestic trials, and severe bereavements, does he experience between the cradle and the grave ! The most prosperous and happy of our race never depart out of life, without drinking more or less deeply of the waters of affliction and sorrow. I do not say that these ills are not by a gracious providence converted into blessings.

I do not say that such afflictions are not necessary to prepare us for a new world. Still, although they may be a needful, they are a painful discipline, a discipline suited to our preparatory state, and invariably unpleasant to flesh and blood. But, however severe and protracted the distresses of our condition may be, they are not without their use to the Christian. If he has been sharply tried and long kept in the furnace, the gold shines with brighter lustre in the regions above. Death is the last foe the Christian has to encounter. The weary are at rest when they have fallen under the stroke of this all-conquering foe. All the ills of mortality are only, in yonder upper world, as waters that are poured out, or as the dreams of a winter night. A cold countenance, a diseased frame, a sorrowful heart, are not seen within the gates of the holy city. There, there are no wearisome nights ; there, there are no restless days of pain ; there, there are no anxious cares and heavy disappointments, to interrupt the tranquillity that prevails ; there, there are no persecutions for conscience' sake ; there, there are no treacherous friendships ; there, there are no painful separations that wound and agonize the heart—no bitter lamentations over the loss of relatives dear to the soul—no parents bewailing the death of their offspring, and what is worse than their death, their sinful departure from God. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, they rest from their labours." In the new Jerusalem, "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ; for the former things are passed away."

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. T. BROWN, D.D., Glasgow.
LECTURE by the Rev. J. A. WYLIE, Dollar.

DEATH, THE BELIEVER'S GAIN;

A Funeral Sermon, preached by the Rev. T. BROWN, D.D.—Concluded.

LET the afflicted and the tossed with tempest on the ocean of human life then take comfort—your tears do not now flow unobserved—your toils and bereavements do not overtake you unnoticed. The Lord has been, I am persuaded, with you in the whirlwind and the tempest, but the time is not far distant when all this shall be brought to a close. Many a lowering sky have you seen, many a dark and tempestuous night have you experienced. The lightnings have glared, and the thunders have rolled around your head, and the storms, and tempests, and hurricanes of life have assailed you, and the shafts of death have been falling thick around you, and the friends you valued most have been swept away, but reserved for you is that brighter world where the sun never goes down, where the sky is ever serene, where bright and eternal day ever reigns, and where the tempests of life are for ever hushed. Let me urge you, then, to forget your sorrows—learn in patience to possess your souls, and, rest assured, that whenever you leave this world, this waste and howling wilderness in which there is little to entice you to pitch your tent, or to prolong your stay, your warfare is accomplished; your difficulties, and trials, and sorrows, are all terminated in the land of promise to which your steps are now tending. There are no distresses, no troubles to harass, toil, or alarm; when you put on the vestments of immortality, you will be illumined by the presence of the Redeemer, and enter into that peace and rest that remain for the people of God.

This brings me to the last particular, that to die to the Christian is gain, because it is by death he is admitted into a state of pure, and perfect, and never-ending felicity. In this world there is no need of bliss. It is incompatible with this state of discipline and trial. The sweetest cup of enjoyment

has always more or less of the drops of the ocean of bitterness mingled with it, and the brightest day of joy is invariably succeeded by the dark night of sorrow. The wilderness contains not the fruit of the garden of Eden, nor the milk and honey of the land of promise. If so, Jesus might surely have laid claim to it, yet, throughout life, we know that he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. If worth could have ensured an uninterrupted felicity, surely it would have entered into the lot of the patriarchs and saints of former days, yet we know this was by no means the portion of their cup. If worth could yield happiness, surely Paul enjoyed it, yet who had such persecutions and trials as he? And the children of God must lay their account to enter the kingdom of heaven, not merely after washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb, but after much tribulation. Thus this gracious arrangement of heaven, while it tends to promote the graces and virtues, weakens our attachment to this world, and induces us to look forward to and prepare for a better. The patriarchs had their eyes invariably directed to a city that had foundations, and regarded this life as but of little value. And Paul, though he regarded his life of the utmost importance and utility to the Church, and though he was willing to submit to anything for the sake of Christ and the advancement of his kingdom, yet comparatively disregarded existence here. And why? Because to depart and to be with Christ is far better. To die is gain—and all the communications in the divine life, and all the foretaste of future enjoyment and participation of grace and purity he had experienced here, were not to be compared with the glory that was to be revealed. If rest is sweet to the wearied traveller, if peace is sweet to the war-worn soldier, if

land is sweet to the storm-beaten mariner, if liberty is sweet to the forlorn captive, and hope to the pining exile, and pardon to the condemned criminal, oh! what an object of satisfaction and delight must heaven, the state of bliss, be to the redeemed! To die is gain to the Christian. The very night he departs he is with Christ in Paradise. As soon as he leaves the wilderness, he comes to Mount Zion—as soon as he forsakes the sorrows of life, he enters on the joys of God, and unites with the spirits of the just made perfect. And here there is not merely what is termed negative felicity, not merely cessation from toil, and deliverance from pain, and redemption from corruption, but in that better world, in that region of purity the cup of bliss is pure, perfect, enlarged; humility is exchanged for an exceeding weight of glory; corruption yields to incorruption; sorrow yields to joy, and all the sufferings, privations, and trials of this mortal state are only found to enhance our felicity. Christians shall neither hunger nor thirst any more. The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. In His presence, who is the uncreated Jehovah, there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. Having reached the sanctuary of rest in the new Jerusalem, they are for ever united to the spirits of the just made perfect; they come to an innumerable company of angels, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, to God the Judge of all. With holy admiration they contemplate the wonders of creation and the plan of God's government, and may penetrate as far as is permitted them the unfathomable depths of redeeming love. Then with exalted, and invigorated, and renewed faculties shall they raise the song of triumph, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

It is impossible for the most lofty imagination to have any conception of what is to be revealed. We cannot on earth speak

the language of heaven—we cannot describe the glories of our spiritual state, but surely when we are made like God, when we are made perfect, unalloyed felicity must be the portion of every redeemed child of God. And it enhances this felicity that it is to be everlasting in its endurance as it is perfect in its nature. The fullest cup of bliss we are permitted to drink here is very soon exhausted, and this very circumstance, besides its mingled and unsatisfactory nature, lessens our enjoyment. But the cup of heavenly bliss is inexhaustible, and the happiness of the redeemed never comes to a close, and is never diminished, advancing in degree as ages roll away. And as eternity never can be measured by time, as the boundless never can be fathomed, the happiness of the redeemed soul is for ever and ever.

I need scarcely inform you, my friends, what it is that has led me to address you this day on the subject on which I have been discoursing. The circumstance that has brought us to the house of prayer in this dark hour is too well known to need explanation—the bereavement which the congregation and parish of St. Andrew's have sustained by the unlooked for and premature death of our much-loved brother. The shafts of death are, indeed, falling thick around us, and the prophets and the servants of the Lord do not escape. It is but a few short weeks since I was called to address a neighbouring congregation on a similar mournful occasion, and little did I then think that I should be called to perform the painful duty to which I am now summoned. Judging from the appearance of my much respected friend, and of myself, permitted to sojourn in this vale of tears, it is natural for me to have expected that my race should have been first run, and that he might have been required to do for me what I am privileged to do for him. But the issues of divine providence fall not out according to human calculation. It is not the oldest, the feeblest, and least efficient, that are the first summoned hence. The stately turreted fabric falls, while the clay-built tottering cottage stands. Those appearing most useful, most needed in the Church and society, are carried away, while those who seem to have fulfilled their day, and outlived their usefulness, are allowed for a time to remain. These are the purposes and doings of that God who gives no account of his proceedings, but of the rectitude and

wisdom of whose procedure we are fully persuaded. The Lord has been pleased to hereave two flocks of their pastors in this quarter, and to take to himself, from the field of their labours, two eminently faithful, and eminently useful, ministers of the New Testament; and what impressive admonitions should not such afflictive events awaken in the breasts of us all? My brethren in the Presbytery have, at the request of sorrowing relatives, assigned to me the honourable but painful task of addressing you this day, and improving the afflicting dispensation, to the benefit of your own souls; and while a sense of duty and affection prompt me to pay my small tribute of respect to the memory of the departed, yet I would not forget that my duty still lies with you; and in speaking of the excellences of your deceased pastor, I am, above all, solicitous that you should remember him, so that you follow his steps. Your late pastor was of eminently godly parents, who longed and prayed that, in due time, he might be fitted for and consecrated to the work of the ministry: and their prayers were heard—their wishes were granted; for soon the work of grace appeared in him, and early his views were turned to the sacred office. The benefits of that bias of mind, received through the instrumentality of parental tuition, he lived fully to enjoy. Having passed through the course of study, required of those who aspire to the clerical office, he was at an early age licensed to preach the Gospel by his native Presbytery. A young man of his eminence and piety, was not likely to remain long unnoticed, and he was soon called to labour, in a very wide sphere, in a neighbouring town. For upwards of twelve years, he devoted himself unremittingly to the arduous duties of that immense parish, faithfully administering the word and the ordinances. Seventeen months have scarcely fled since he was separated from his first charge, and, by the choice of the magistrates of this city, he was led to take upon himself the spiritual care of the congregation and parish of St. Andrew's.

Although fitted to be respectable in any profession, his mind was early directed to the sacred office. His faculties were good, and were cultivated with a view to promote the spiritual benefit of his countrymen. Among his contemporaries, many of whom are sleeping in the dust, and some of whom are in different situations of life, treading its

busy stage with ability and honour, he was distinguished and held in universal respect. In his intellectual powers, there was a strength and combination not frequently to be met with. He possessed a grasp of understanding, a soundness of perception, an accuracy in the arrangement of his thoughts, and a readiness and facility in expressing them, truly enviable. Whenever he expressed himself on any subject, the man of information and understanding appeared. He had read much, and studied hard, and little was effaced from his recollection that had once come under his review; yet the studies connected with the sacred profession were those in which he took delight. He was an excellent scholar, a good historian, and had paid considerable attention to our ecclesiastical laws; and what was of greatest importance, he was mighty in the Scriptures. He had, in this respect, in my estimation, very few equals. He was a scribe, well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom. He kept nothing back that was for the spiritual edification of his flock, but declared to them the whole counsel of God—doctrine and precept, promise and threatening. His subjects were never chosen for the display of his own learning or ingenuity, but for the edification of souls. He had too deep a sense of the awful importance of divine truth, of the glory of that God in whose cause he was engaged, and of the dread reckoning he had to give how he handled the words of eternal life, to preach any thing but the pure unadulterated grace of God, or to enforce and illustrate any thing that was not fitted to enlighten, establish, animate, and comfort. With an extensive knowledge of theology, a profound acquaintance with scripture truths, a memory stored with scripture language, with a deep knowledge of human nature and of the mazes of the human heart, with a heart inflamed with zeal for the honour of his master, and with love for the precious souls of perishing sinners, and withal, with a manner full of dignity, I knew few men better fitted than our invaluable friend for at once arresting attention, impressing the understanding, rousing the supine, and melting the hard heart—few better fitted as an instrument for convincing sinners and edifying and comforting saints, always labouring when called to plead the cause of his Master, always at home when at his Master's work, when displaying to perishing

sinners the cross, and when beseeching, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God. I can say for myself that I never heard this holy man of God but with peculiar delight and high admiration. Never did he address his people from the pulpit, but the word of truth flowed from his lips. In the sentiments he uttered he discovered the man of sound understanding and correct thinking, the man of solid learning and profound piety. He felt himself the power of truth, and was desirous to convey the same feeling to others. He had written much, and with great attention and care, and would not, by negligence, and without meditation and prayer, handle the word of life—he would not serve God and instruct his people with that which cost him nought. His discourses were delivered with great readiness, composed with great taste, and written with much care; and he had too much respect for the sacredness of that office with which he was invested, and the awful consequences of the preaching and hearing of the word, to advance what was not the fruit of much study and deep thought. He sought to know the mind of the Lord, and studied to convey it to others, thus rightly dividing the word of truth. His professional duties were not confined to those to which we have alluded. The great magnitude of his labours, although, I believe, it undermined his strength and constitution, overwhelmed not his spirit and daunted not his courage. That in all the varieties of the pastoral duties, he undertook and accomplished more than most men, I need not tell his former congregation, some of whom are here before me, nor his late flock who enjoyed his labours; they know enough to make the tear start from the eye and the bosom to heave, when they reflect that they have for ever lost the labours of such a zealous, worthy, and indefatigable watchman over their souls. Continually engaged in his Master's work, he was the model of a Christian pastor. His professional duties, so far from being a drudgery to him, were his delight; and wherever, and whenever he was called to the discharge of his duty he was ready to obey, and felt a pleasure in obeying the summons. He lived not long, was not destined to live long among us, but he lived well his short time. In a few short years he not only meditated and attempted much, but did much. How much, indeed, was crowded into these short years in which it was permitted him to be in the Lord's

vineyard!—And as he preached, so he practised. While a bold and intrepid defender of the faith, he was a meek and lowly disciple of the holy Jesus. He was ever active and zealous, yet took no glory to himself, but gave all to his master. While he shone conspicuous in the church, a more unassuming and unpretending spirit never breathed. Humility, condescension, meekness, shone distinctly in his character. In all the relations of life his christian principles were ever conspicuous. When the ear heard him, it might well be said it blessed him, and while the eye saw him, it gave witness to him. Our much respected and ever to be lamented friend and brother had doubtless his failings, and none would perceive them better than he, or bewail them more deeply; but these faults I never observed, and were I called on to say wherein, in his public or private life, the fault lay, I could not tell. To many he appeared to approach as near to the standard of christian excellence and perfection as is given to humanity in this sinful world. We shall not, indeed, soon see his like again. What number of souls were given to him as the seals of his ministry we cannot tell; the day of Christ only shall reveal it. Of this, however, I am persuaded that many souls have, through his instrumentality, been brought to Christ, that many are rejoicing now who, through his labours and prayers, were arrested and plucked as brands from the burning, and that many yet living are blessing God that they were permitted to listen to his instructions. Though doubtless forced with many to say, "All the day long have I stretched forth my hand to a wicked and gainsaying people;" yet to many, I know, of various descriptions, he was honoured of God to be the instrument of much good.

It were gratifying to my own feelings, and not disagreeable to many, to linger on this subject, and to dilate on the many excellences of this good man, but I must have done. He is gone, and his persuasive voice we shall hear no more—his lips are sealed in death—the countenance that gladdened thousands is laid in the dust, and that heart that burned with christian zeal and philanthropy is cold as the ice. He is removed far from mortal view—his pure spirit has winged its flight into the world of cloudless day—he has finished his course, and sooner than many. We fondly hoped that many years of active service awaited

him. Long before, and even after he was seized with that fatal malady that brought him to the dust of the earth, we flattered ourselves that he might still be restored to his family and his flock, to water the heritage of the Lord. But the Lord decreed it otherwise; he was cut down, and suddenly too. "But blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." He felt "that to him to live was Christ," and surely "to him to die is gain." But although cut down in the vigour of life and in the height of usefulness, he has not died before his time; the bounds of his habitation were fixed. This dispensation may appear dark and mysterious, and even discouraging. But God, in raising him up, had his own designs, and he has the same in calling him hence. What we know not now we shall know hereafter, and we are assured that every thing is ordered in perfect wisdom, and equity, and love. We will not pretend to fathom the inscrutable purposes of God. Our will will be to listen to Him who has said, "Be still, and know that I am God." Our secret longing will be, "Lord, thy will be done," and our earnest prayer will also be "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men." Your pastor is gone, and shall such a one die unlamented? No, no! That cannot be. A blank is seen. But the lamentation is not for him. No! there is joy and there is triumph on his account. We have satisfaction in hailing the entrance of such a one into life, but is it not greater satisfaction when we see his labours closed, and himself going to receive his reward? But there are for whom we ought to feel; and these are the widow and the young fatherless children. The loss to the flock, to the Church, may be born; others may be raised who shall enter upon his labours and occupy his place. But who shall repair the earthly breach to them? Theirs is a loss that cannot be repaired by any earthly power. Of his support, consolation, in-

struction, guidance, prayers, they are forever bereaved. Let them have an interest in our sympathy, and in our prayers, and in our efforts to comfort them. I know no way in which respect for the dead can so truly be shown as by an interest for those who are left behind. There is no way in which we can cherish his remembrance so effectually as by the remembrance of those dearest to him, and whom he had placed under the providence and protection of his heavenly Father. Pray that He who has made their burden heavy may *lighten* it, and enable them to bear it, that he would be the Judge of the widow, and the Father of the fatherless; that he may habitually visit and draw near to them in their low solitary dwelling, and prove their support and stay. Oh! may they be the objects of his protecting care—the subjects of his redeeming grace and love!

Let the congregation improve this painful bereavement by remembering his words, by treasuring up his instructions, by imbibing his spirit, by following his faith, by imitating his example, that thus, though dead, he may still speak to them with effect. Oh! never forget what he said to you, and did before you; mind it well. He has gone to render *his* account to his great Master. Soon, soon must you appear before God to render *yours*; soon to give account how you have improved his ministry. This event ought to lead us, his brethren, to exercise greater fidelity during our short pilgrimage, to pray that we may be enabled to cause our lights to burn, although with a feebler flame, that thus we may be carried through our difficulties and trials with more success, and may perform our work faithfully, and finish our course with joy, and finally to pray that the Lord would send forth other labourers into his vineyard. And this dispensation should lead us all to think of the shortness of time, and of the inheritance of eternity, to raise our thoughts above those mists, and clouds, and shadows, that now hang over us, and exalt our affections to what is unseen and eternal.

* * * From the intense interest excited by the publication of the above Funeral Discourses, and the high and deserved estimation in which the late Rev. Mr. Geddes was held as a Minister of the Gospel of Christ, the proprietors of the Scottish Pulpit have determined on publishing one of his discourses in their next number.

ON THE DUTY OF RULERS TO PROMOTE THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE SABBATH;

A LECTURE DELIVERED ON THE FORENOON OF SABBATH, 19TH MAY, 1833, IN PROFESSOR PAXTON'S MEETING-HOUSE, INFIRMARY STREET, EDINBURGH, FROM NEH. xiii. 15—22,

By the Rev. J. A. WYLIE,

Minister of the Secession Congregation, Dollar.

THE narrative we have read contains an account of the efforts made by Nehemiah, the patriotic governor of Jerusalem and the zealous reformer of his nation, to promote the better observance of the Sabbath. We cannot doubt that the motives by which Nehemiah was actuated herein, as well as in all he did for the welfare of his people, were such as were worthy to guide the conduct of a good man; that a deep feeling of the responsibility of his office, an ardent desire for the glory of God, a sincere regard for the temporal and spiritual welfare of his people, and no paltry wish for a temporary applause, induced him to encounter opposition and incur personal hatred in endeavouring to heighten the national regard for this divine institution. Nehemiah enjoyed an easy, an honourable, and an influential office at the court of Babylon, and had he not possessed the feelings of a sincere Christian and a true patriot, he would have continued to spend his days in honour and affluence in Chaldea, and forgot, amid the pleasures of a court, the troubles of his brethren in the land of Israel; but his desire for the welfare of Jerusalem, was too strong to permit him to enjoy ease while matters continued in so unsettled a state among the returned captives. Tidings, which had been brought to him by some who had lately come from Jerusalem, regarding the troubles of his brethren there, threw him into deep sorrow, and his grief was so overwhelming that it showed itself even in the royal presence, and did not escape the notice of his master. "Why is thy countenance sad," said the monarch to him, one day as he stood before him with the wine cup, "seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart." "Why should not my countenance be sad," was the reply of Nehemiah, "when the city, the place of my fathers'

sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire." Leave was soon granted to Nehemiah to return for a short space to Judea; and having received from the king a commission to set in order the civil and the ecclesiastical polity of the Jews, he set out for Jerusalem, and arriving there found matters in a very unsettled state. The building of the wall had not yet been concluded, and notwithstanding the zealous efforts of Ezra the scribe, divisions had broken out among the returned captives, and many gross abuses and glaring immoralities, which needed correction, existed among them. Nehemiah soon entered on the good work of reformation, and, under the blessing of Heaven, prospered; and as an evidence of what may be accomplished when the authority of the State is exerted on the side of religion, and the civil powers unite their efforts with those of the ministers of religion in removing abuses—as an evidence we say of what may be expected when this happy union is formed, the evils which Ezra the priest had been unable to remove, were, by the aid of Nehemiah, a civil ruler, speedily corrected. But notwithstanding the extent to which this reformation had been carried, there was one evil which still abounded among the Jews, and which we here find exciting the deep grief of Nehemiah—I mean the profanation of the Sabbath by public trading and public amusement. Nehemiah was too sincere a Christian, he had too high a regard for the temporal and the spiritual welfare of his people, and knew too well the ruinous influence which Sabbath profanation exerts on both, to tolerate an evil of such magnitude; and, therefore, he zealously employed his whole power and force in putting it down. In the first place, he informed himself as to the extent to which Sabbath desecration had been carried.

Verse 15, "In those days, saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day, and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals." The account which is here given of the state of matters among the Jews in reference to the observance of the Sabbath, is truly melancholy; the evil had been carried to an alarming extent, and no wonder that it excited the grief, the indignation, and the fears of this patriotic ruler. The law in reference to the observance of the Sabbath among the Jews, was exceedingly strict—under the New Testament dispensation it is stricter, because to all the injunctions and penalties which bound the observance of that day upon the ancient Israelites, we have superadded the whole weight of that obligation which the death of Christ brings us under to observe that day, as a day which commemorates his resurrection. But we shall speak of the law as it existed among the Jews, and as we have said Israel were bound to observe the Sabbath, by strict injunctions and under severe penalties; and not without reason. Was not the whole of their time God's? Had he not a right to challenge whatever portion of it he pleased? If he had challenged the third part, or the half, or even if he had required the whole of their time, and commanded them to spend it as one long and uninterrupted Sabbath-day, could they have refused it? He had asked only the seventh part; but that portion of man's time he had sanctified and blessed, and commanded man, in compliance with his own example, to rest during it. And provided they should encroach on that sacred season by business or amusement, would they not be guilty of sacrilege? would they not directly impugn the wisdom and the justice of God, in challenging more than a due portion of man's time? and would they not be chargeable with base ingratitude to him who had given to them the seventh day, as a day of rest from labour to recruit their bodies, and to enable them to turn their attention to the interests of their souls. If there is one divine institution the due observance of which is essential to the existence of every other divine institution, yea, essential to the existence of religion itself, it is the Sabbath. Were it

not for that day on which the shop is shut, and the desk locked, a sense of religion and of the fear of God would soon be worn off the minds of men. If there is one divine institution, which unites in it the welfare of man's body with that of his soul, and which is an evidence of our great Creator's care over our bodies as well as our spirits, a care which extends even to the beasts which perish—for God has placed the oxen of the field under the shelter of this divine institution, by including them with man in the immunity which all are on that day to enjoy from labour, and from toil—knowing the avariciousness of man's nature, and the ceaseless and intolerable drudgery to which he would have doomed the beasts of burden, as well as his own menial servants, he has interposed this command for their protection, "Thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle." If there is one divine institution more essential than another to the commercial prosperity, and to the temporal renown, as well as to the spiritual interests of a country; if there is one, the violation of which will peculiarly incense the anger of Him who has commanded us to "hallow his Sabbaths," and will speedily bring down his judgments upon us, it is the Sabbath. The Sabbath we may pronounce the guardian of every other divine institution; where it is profaned, religion cannot flourish, and the curse of Heaven will descend even on the temporal interests of that people. This sin stamps on the individual, the family, or the nation, which is guilty of it, the character of irreligious, and speedily ripens them for the judgments of God. This is the danger of being any way concerned in this iniquity, we are furthering an evil which would ultimately destroy religion itself, and which will assuredly prove as ruinous to the temporal renown, as the spiritual interests of our country. "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law"—and the command to remember the Sabbath is one of its precepts—"the Lord thy God will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even sore plagues, and of long continuance." But let us call your attention to the manner in which the Sabbath was profaned by the returned captives, "I saw in Judah." No doubt such practices were common in Chaldea, and Nehemiah had often witnessed them there, but he expected

to have seen that day kept in a different manner in that city which was called "holy," and among that people to whom God had "given his Sabbath for a sign." It may not surprise us to find the Sabbath profaned on the Continent, or in France, but we expect that a somewhat higher regard should be shown to that divine institution in England, the land of which, like Judah of old, it may be said, "there God is known." "I saw in Judah some treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves." We must suppose that it was in harvest that they did so, and they might think that their conduct was justified by the necessity of watching over the fruits of the earth, forgetting that an express command had been given in their law, prohibiting them from labouring on the Sabbath, in seedtime and in harvest, and this command was not to be infringed, unless in a case of such extreme necessity, as to warrant them to dispense with the precept, Exod. xxxiv. 21. They also encroached upon the liberty which God has given to the beasts of labour on that day; they robbed them of their just right by compelling them to bear their burdens; "lading asses" on the Sabbath is another evil specified by Nehemiah. God has given the beasts of the field to man as his servants, but he has taken them from under his dominion on the Sabbath, and if on that day he compels them to labour, unless in works of necessity or mercy, he is guilty of exercising tyranny on those who are unable to open their mouth in their own defence.

There were at that time foreigners, merchantmen of Tyre, residing in Jerusalem. They also are chargeable with the general profanation of the Sabbath. Verse 16, "There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, who brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem." Tyre was the most renowned commercial city of the ancient world. She was built on the seaside, and sent her goods over the waves to the most distant regions of the then discovered globe; her merchants were the great men of the earth, and they might be found in almost every city of note in Asia, and in other quarters. The love of this world is inconsistent with the love of God, and those who abandon themselves to the eager prosecution of it, do not long retain their reverence for divine institutions; these

Tyrian merchants took advantage of the lax observance of the Sabbath among the Jews, to expose their goods in the Sabbath market in Jerusalem, and the Jews were graceless enough to buy them. The fourth commandment bound "the stranger within their gate," as well as the native Israelite, to keep the Sabbath. Strangers were released from many of the ceremonial rites, yea, some of them they durst not practise, but the observance of the Sabbath being a moral and not a ceremonial duty, God enjoined it on the stranger, as well as upon the nation of Israel; but the consequence of the neglect of this duty by the Jews, was that "the stranger within their gates" was encouraged to despise it also. Well might the Tyrian merchants expose their goods in the Sabbath market, when Israel bought them. May not France and the Infidel nations of the Continent consider themselves justified in profaning the Sabbath, by trading, by travelling, and by public amusements—may not they consider themselves justified in spending that time which God has challenged as his own, and commanded man to hallow by the whole weight of his authority as the Lord his God, and under the penalty of the heaviest judgments—may not they spend that time in the shop, in the fields, in the ball-room, or in the theatre, when England spends it, in too many instances, in a similar manner?

Being now informed as to the extent to which the evil had been carried, Nehemiah did not long remain in suspense as to the part it became him to act. He had come from Babylon for the very purpose of correcting the evils which he knew abounded among the Jews; and he had obtained a commission from his master for that very end. But then Nehemiah might have reflected that he was a civil ruler, and that it did not become him to interfere in a religious matter; I will leave this matter to the ministers of religion; it is properly their business. Besides he might have reasoned, This is a matter which does not immediately affect the temporal prosperity of Jerusalem, and, therefore, I will do nothing in it. But for what purpose had a commission for the removal of abuses been given to him by the king of Babylon, or rather by his God, if it did not empower him to correct this great, this parent abuse? Nehemiah had not learned the wise sentiment of modern times, that civil authority ought never to be em-

ployed in those matters which regard the glory of God, and that civil rulers have not the power to protect the fourth commandment from violation: and he was too well instructed, and he was too discerning not to perceive, that although this matter did not immediately affect the temporal welfare of his country, yet no nation could thrive without the blessing of Heaven, and if they by this sin should provoke God to withhold his blessing and to deprive them of the favourable influence he had exerted in their behalf at the court of Babylon, neither their prosperity nor their peace would be of long duration, and as a man who loved his people, and who loved his God, he resolved instantly to put down the evil.

Accordingly he assembled the nobles of Israel and sharply remonstrated with them for permitting the evil to grow to such a head. Yea, he charged them with the guilt of this sin, verse 17, "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do and profane the Sabbath-day."

We are not to suppose that the nobles had exposed wares in the Sabbath market in Jerusalem, or had carried in burdens on the Sabbath—their pride, if not their piety, would have prevented them from being guilty of this. And yet Nehemiah charges them with the sin of Sabbath profanation, "What evil thing is this that ye do and profane the Sabbath?" and for this reason that they had not used their official influence in correcting the evil at an earlier period. This teaches an important lesson both to ministers and to magistrates—that evils which are known to them, which they have it in their power to correct, but which are knowingly tolerated by them, are chargeable against them, and their punishment will come down on their own heads. But if the nobles of Israel did not profane the Sabbath by trading, it is not unlikely that they profaned it by indulging in amusement; they paid idle visits to their acquaintances on that day, instead of spending it in religious meditation in their own closets and families; and if the nobles prosecuted their amusement on the Sabbath, might not the traders say that they were not less justified in pursuing their business? Thus they had become the patrons and the promoters of this evil. The conduct of Nehemiah, in thus sharply reproving the nobles of Israel, because they had not interfered by their authority in

putting down this evil, teaches us an important lesson in reference to present sentiments and to present measures. It is the sentiment of a party, numerous both in the Church and State, that the power of the civil magistrate ought to be confined to secular matters, and that he is not required, nor permitted by the word of God, to use that power in reference to religious concerns. Now, passing by the infidelity contained in this sentiment, we may ask whether the conduct of Nehemiah in chiding the nobles of Israel for this very thing—for neglecting to employ their civil power in the removal of a religious abuse—gives any countenance to this doctrine, whether it is not directly opposed to it, and whether it does not completely disprove its truth? But it may be said that this took place under the Old Testament dispensation, and that this example is not to be followed by rulers under the New. This we must regard as a pitiful evasion. Before any validity can be attributed to this objection, it must first be proved, that the observance of the Sabbath, and the exercise of civil power in reference to it, belonged to those parts of that economy which have now been abrogated. This is a position which few will regard as tenable. The observance of the Sabbath is a moral duty, and the exercise of civil power in reference to it is a moral act, and while the observance of that divine institution is incumbent on the subject, its protection must be equally the duty of the ruler. Nehemiah calls to the remembrance of the assembled nobles the fearful judgments which this sin had already brought upon their nation, and he convicts them of something like stupidity in furthering an evil from which they had already suffered so much. Verse 18, "Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us and upon the city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." Look around you, as if he had said, on these ruined buildings, on this broken wall which you are labouring to repair, you see your fields and your cities slowly recovering from the sackings and the burnings of the Chaldeans. Think of your position this day among surrounding nations. Are you not tributaries to the king of Babylon? Are you not encompassed by powerful enemies, which have done their utmost to deprive you of the favour of that monarch, and to repress

your rising city? What is it which has sunk you so long among your neighbours, and brought upon you those calamities, from which, at the distance of now nearly eight years, you have not yet recovered? Why, it was this very sin which I am reproving. "Did not your fathers thus, and did not your God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city, yet ye bring more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath?" Oh! with more than brutish folly were these nobles chargeable. Those are certainly infatuated who will never learn by experience. For this very sin God had scattered them among the heathen, and made their land to enjoy her Sabbaths in silence; and now that God has shown them favour in the eyes of the king of Babylon, and in the most surprising manner wrought their deliverance, they again rush into this iniquity. This highly aggravated the sin of the returned captives, and it would have been an aggravation of the sin of any people. But yesterday they were bondmen in Egypt; none were so poor as to do them reverence; in the richest mercy and grace had God interposed and accomplished their deliverance, their captivity had been recalled like "streams of water in the south"—so sudden, so unexpected, so refreshing as autumnal streams. Yet with that deliverance fresh in their memories did they act in this profane manner; had not Nehemiah good reason to say with Ezra, on a similar occasion, "If we again break thy commandments, wilt thou not be angry with us, till thou hast consumed us?"

Nehemiah did not think it sufficient to remonstrate with the nobles; he took effectual measures for putting down the evil he reprobated; had he not done so, he would have been as culpable as the nobles he chode; and in the 19th verse we are informed what were the measures he adopted for accomplishing this important object. "And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates that there should no burden be brought in on the Sabbath-day." Nehemiah, no doubt, commanded that no article should be exposed for sale in Jerusalem on the Sabbath; but further, to prevent the unseemly sight of burdens being carried in, or of men employed in

business on that day, he ordered the gates of the city to be closed on the evening preceeding the Sabbath, and put them in charge of his own servants in whose honesty and courage he could fully confide. The Jews observed their Sabbath from evening to evening, and therefore Nehemiah ordered that "when the gates of Jerusalem *began* to be dark before the Sabbath," that is, when it began to be dusk in the streets, marking the near approach of that sacred season, the gates should be shut. It is our duty, by the timely arrangement of our worldly business, by spiritual and heavenly meditation, to prepare for the approach of the Sabbath. The gates of Jerusalem were closed before the Sabbath had actually commenced. "When it began to be dark towards the Sabbath," Nehemiah commanded that they should be shut, and the stillness that now reigned over the city, was well calculated to disengage the mind from the cares and anxieties of the week, and dispose it for reflection on those solemn events which the Sabbath commemorates, and on that "*everlasting rest*" which it prefigures as awaiting the people of God. The merchantmen and traders who had been accustomed to bring their goods to the Sabbath market in Jerusalem, now finding the gates shut, were obliged to encamp without the walls of the city, ridiculing, no doubt, the bigotry of that ruler by whose orders this had taken place, and saying, "When will the Sabbath be over that we may sell corn?" But this was an unseemly sight so near the walls of Jerusalem, and, therefore, Nehemiah resolved on the removal of this also. After they had indecorously assembled in this manner once or twice, Nehemiah threatened them with the effects of his displeasure, should they persist in the practice, and the good effect of this wise interposition of his power was that they came no more, and thus was the evil effectually cured. A great deal of good is often lost from the want of proper resolution and firmness in those who set about the correction of abuses. Had Nehemiah been intimidated by the threats or sneers of those who lodged without the walls, and not have prohibited their future meetings, the removal of the evil might have been only temporary; their continuing to assemble there would have had the most injurious effect upon the Jews, and after Nehemiah's departure might have led them into their former sin, but we have

reason to believe that by the blessing of God upon the efforts of Nehemiah, the evil was completely removed, for we find the Jews in after-times, particularly in our Saviour's day, falling into the other extreme, and over scrupulous in the ceremonial part of the sanctification of the Sabbath. Vice, patronised by those in high places, soon becomes daring, but if it is frowned upon by those who have civil or ecclesiastical power in their hands, it becomes abashed, for evil doers are at bottom cowardly, and utter strangers to that feeling of fearless confidence with which a good man encounters opposition.

Nehemiah had done his part in this good work, and now he called on the ministers of religion to do their part. Verse 22, "And I commanded the Levites, that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath-day." Here is a beautiful example of the proper union of civil and ecclesiastical power: each acting within his own sphere, and yet both acting harmoniously together in the accomplishment of a great object. The ecclesiastical power, without the aid of the civil, would not have been able to put down the open profanation of the Sabbath. This is evident from the fact, that Ezra, however anxious for the reformation of his people, had not been able, previous to the arrival of Nehemiah, to accomplish the removal, or to prevent the increase of this evil; and as the ecclesiastical, without the aid of the civil, power, would have been insufficient for the removal of this abuse, so the civil, without the aid of the ecclesiastical, could not have taught the people to sanctify the Sabbath-day. Nehemiah had gone as far as he judged, from the nature of the power he wielded, it was proper in him to go, then he stopped, and called on the priests to come forward, and perform what properly belonged to them in this work. The strong arm of the civil power removed the open evil, "*closed the gate,*" and effected the external observance of the Sabbath; but it remained for the less visible, but more influential, arm of the ecclesiastical power to accomplish the thorough removal of the evil, by instructing the people in the duty of sanctifying the Sabbath. He called on the priests to cleanse themselves, and committed to them the keeping of the gate; he was in a little to return to Babylon; and unless he committed

the closing of the gate on Sabbath to *trusty* guardians, their former practices, which he had happily succeeded in removing, might soon revive; to the priests, therefore, he committed the sanctifying of the Sabbath, and charged them, that when he was absent they should not permit the people to relapse into their former sins.

Nehemiah concludes the narrative of his exertions in this good cause with a prayer, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy." The best services done for the public have sometimes, have oftentimes, been forgotten. If those who labour for the benefit, or the reformation, of mankind, look to the remembrance or gratitude of man for their reward, they will soon discover their mistake, and perhaps desist from their efforts in disgust. Those who have earned most, both from contemporary ages and from posterity, have sometimes been rewarded by the halter or the fagot. Every age has reared its monuments to those whom it has pronounced "*great,*" and accounted lovers of their race; but it is in rare instances only that such tokens of regard have been given to those who had the highest claims on their remembrance and esteem. The best and the greatest of men have been aware of this, and therefore whatever they have looked for as the reward of their services, they have looked for from the remembrance of their God. They have known that their bodies would soon be dust, their actions forgotten, and their tombs unknown; but they have also remembered that their actions were written down by God in his book, and that he would read them out, when the achievements of heroes, which have cheated the world into admiration, have been forgotten. The trumpet of this world's fame will soon cease to be heard; the archangel's voice will silence it for ever; nor is it till the final trump has blown its blast, that true fame will begin; whatever does not survive that period is a shadow. "Remember me, O my God," was the prayer of Nehemiah; he knew that what he had done for the reformation of his people might be ill requited or forgotten by them. If we live in God's remembrance, it is enough; we may be forgotten, we may be hated by man, but the consciousness that we are remembered by him, will support us under all, and we will have reason to say, "How

precious are thy thoughts towards us;" and, "Spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy." He does not advance the plea of his own services, especially of what he had done at this time for the reformation of his people. He felt his sin in the presence of God, and he could only plead on the ground of the divine mercy; and if it should be the will of God to permit the returned captives to relapse into this sin, and to continue in it, till he brought upon them a second and a heavier captivity, Nehemiah prays, that in the great goodness of God, what he had done in testifying against this evil, and in seeking its removal, might be remembered by him, and that God in his mercy might exempt him from the doom of his people.

In conclusion, the courage, and zeal, and prudence, displayed by Nehemiah in this matter, is recorded for our imitation, and for the imitation of those who, like him, fill public offices. They are bound not only to study the fear of God themselves, but to lend the whole weight of their authority, as well as the sanction of their example, to protect and uphold those divine institutions which are essential to the temporal and eternal welfare of those over whom they rule. It is an infidel sentiment that rulers, as such, have nothing to do with religion, and ought not to use their official influence for the promotion of her interests. It does violence at once to the dictates of nature's light, to the conclusions of sound reason, and to the approved examples of the Word of God. Does not the open and increasing violation of the Sabbath throughout our land, call as loudly for the interference of the civil and ecclesiastical powers, as the same sin did for the efforts of Nehemiah of old? Its deep importance to the temporal as well as spiritual interests of our coun-

try, the obligation of the moral law, and our character as a christian nation, ought to secure for every measure having for its end the better observance of the Sabbath, the candid attention both of people, and of ruler. When will we learn wisdom? When will we learn from the judgments God has inflicted on other nations for this sin, the severe punishment to which we expose ourselves, by profaning the Sabbath? May we not, in the commotions among our people, in the embarrassments of our government, in the chilling blasts which, from time to time, blow across the world of our commerce, behold the hand of God troubling us for our profanity? Let the priests, the ministers of religion, come, "and cleanse themselves, and keep the gate, to sanctify the Sabbath-day." Let them labour in their spheres, for promoting this good work. Why should they be deterred from bearing testimony against prevailing sins, or espousing the good cause of reformation, by the efforts of an infidel press, or the sneers of would-be-statesmen. If truth should be banished from our Senate, still let her voice be heard, where it has been heard so often before—in the pulpits of our land. Let the Scottish ministry show, that they are not unworthy of that fame which was earned by their fathers, and which has been transmitted to them as its conservators. They have the authority of God to support them, and they have all the threatenings of the Word of God, to give force to their warnings and their exhortations. "But if ye will not hearken unto me, to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day, then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched."

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the late Rev. JOHN GEDDES, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. JAMES HENDERSON, Glasgow.

THE JOY OF HEAVEN OVER A REPENTANT SINNER ;

A SERMON,

By the late Rev. JOHN GEDDES,
Minister of St. Andrew's Church, Glasgow.

"Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—LUKE xv. 10.

AN event may be deemed remarkable, either on its own account, or on account of the circumstances which invariably accompany it. In both these respects, the event mentioned in the text merits attention. It is, in the first place, remarkable on its own account, a sinner saved, a soul converted, a child of disobedience becoming an heir of God. To the sinner himself, it is the one thing that is needful, not essential to any title that he may have for heaven, but essential to his meetness for heaven and that change of character, without which it is impossible that he can ever stand before God in judgment or be admitted into his presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to a place at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore. And in regard, again, to the circumstances which are invariably combined with it, we find that the interest produced by it, is not confined to earth. It gladdens saints, but it also gladdens angels. It is glad tidings on earth, but it is good news also in heaven. Among angels even, who know how precious the soul is, and who form far higher estimates regarding both the glory of God, and the happiness of man, than we do, we read, that there is joy over one sinner that repenteth. Nor are we fancying now an interest in our welfare which is never felt. Our faith here is not passive nor dependent on the saying of man. It is upon the authority of Jesus Christ, who, while upon earth, knew what was transacted and felt in heaven, who knows the feelings and the joys of angels, for he is their Lord, that we receive the declaration, "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." In discoursing from these words, it is intended, in humble dependence on the divine aid and

blessing, to consider, in the first place, the event itself, and to consider, in the second place, the joy which this event produces.

In the first place, attend to the event itself thus expressed, "a sinner that repenteth." In the first part of this statement, we are all included, being all sinners. From the second part, we may be excluded, for we may not be all penitents. It may, with regard to many present, be the melancholy fact, that up to this hour they are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, still children of disobedience, and heirs of wrath, still far from God, still at enmity with him, and still rolling sin as a sweet morsel in their mouths. There are notorious profligate presumptuous sinners, whose necks are as iron, and whose brows are as brass—who glory in their shame—who work all manner of iniquity with greediness—who declare too plainly for us to be mistaken, that they are the slaves of Satan—who gratify their own inclinations, and evil lusts, and sinful propensities—who set their mouths continually against God—who cast off fear and restrain prayer—who say, With our tongues will we prevail, with our lips will we prevail, who is Lord over us? There are secret disguised, concealed, sinners, who endeavour to maintain a fair show before men, who study to keep an outward decency, but whose hearts are inwardly corrupt, awfully depraved and polluted, and in regard to whom, there will be some fearful disclosures on the day of judgment, when the books will be opened, and when the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart. There are Pharisaical sinners who vainly fancy that they have no need for repentance, who attend to small matters but neglect the weightier, who

tithe as it were mint, and anise, and cummin, but who neglect judgment and mercy, and do not walk humbly with God, who are going about to establish a righteousness of their own, justifying themselves in their own eyes, who are a generation that are even pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness; and in regard to whom it will be proved, that in going about to establish a righteousness of their own, they have neglected the righteousness of God, which is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and which, while it attends to small matters, and does not leave them undone, attends also to the weighty matters, having received the doctrine that is according to godliness, and being clothed with humility, and rooted in faith, and established in love. There are also stupid unconcerned sinners, who look no farther than the body and time, who put no other questions than, What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?—who know not God in whom they live, and move, and have their being, so as to pray before him, who do not live under the power of the world to come, and who know less of God, than the ox knows of its owner, or the ass of his master's crib. There are light-minded careless sinners, whom sorrow never clouds, to whom pleasure in every form is welcome, and into whose hearts no serious thought, even on the Sabbath, ever enters to restrain them, or awaken them, or bring them to serious concern, and who are saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die," and are presumptuously saying, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." And there are worldly-minded sinners, who have no time, no inclination, and no leisure, for religion. They are careful about many things; they are concerned about this world; they are wholly occupied and engrossed by it; their hearts are overcharged with the cares of this life, though it be not with drunkenness and with gluttony; and many things are continually rising up to choke the word, and to render it unfruitful; and their hearts are inclined unto covetousness, and not unto God's testimonies; and money is to them the root of all evil; and they are pierced through with many sorrows, and are making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. There are also procrastinating sinners, who admit the necessity, but delay the duty, of repentance, who fancy that to-morrow will be a more convenient season than to-day, who stifle present conviction, who put away

from them present serious impressions, who pave life with good intentions, and at last die as they live—still far from God. Nay, there are even, in some measure, convinced and awakened sinners, whose convictions have not terminated in conversion. Like Cain, they complain, and they wander, and they reckon somehow, that God is hard, and that they are suffering more than they can bear. Like Esau, they weep, but it is for an earthly portion, and because they succeed not according to what they reckon due to their talents, their skill, or their industry. They think themselves wise, or they think themselves warranted, in not setting their desires and their affections on things above, but in desiring earnestly those other gifts that perish with the using; or, like Pharaoh, though they be softened beneath the immediate pressure and pain of the rod, yet the moment that judgment is withdrawn, they return again to their folly, and to their wickedness, and say, Who is the Lord that we should obey him: we will not listen to his voice. Or, like Ahab, they may clothe themselves in sackcloth, and sit in ashes, and walk steadily for a season, but still their hearts are not right with God. They are turned from many sins outwardly, and yet they retain the love of sin inwardly; and when an opportunity presents itself, and when former temptations return, they harden themselves against God, and act wickedly; or, like Herod, they approve of much, and they may even practise much, but they retain their darling and their besetting sins. At one breach, the enemy continually enters, and the citadel of the heart is taken; at one leak the water continually enters, and the soul is sunk in ruin. And they are like Herod at last with the daughter of Herodias, under the dominion still of iniquity, led on to commit evil, which they once abhorred; and like Hazael, though they may have been astonished at their former state, and reckon themselves dogs, to do such wicked things, yet these and such things they do, and are swallowed down at last in utter perdition. There was a Judas who repented, but, in despair, he thrust himself into God's presence. There was a Dives, of whom we read as having repented, but it was too late, and he lifted up his eyes in hell, and was in torment. None of all these can be the repentance spoken of in the text. The repentance that we have now been speaking of is mere local repentance, mere formal or superstitious repentance—the repentance of

the world, which worketh death—not the repentance of the Gospel, which is through faith in Jesus, and through looking to the cross unto eternal life. These convictions mentioned, are consistent with the heart in which conversion has never taken place; but the repentance now supposed, is repentance unto life, a change of heart as well as a change of state, a reigning in the heart over sin, and a breaking off of the life from it, a relative change as to God—we are justified—and a real change as to his law—we are made to delight in it. We have a true sense of sin—we have apprehensions of the mercy of God in Christ—we have grief on account of sin, and hatred to it, and we turn from it unto God with full purpose of heart, and endeavours after new obedience. The repentance supposed is not a seeming but a real repentance, and is in complete harmony with the law and the Gospel. The law is honoured by the terror which it produces: the Gospel is honoured by the peace which it maintains. The law is magnified by the alarm that has been excited, and the Gospel is magnified by the communication of that purifying hope which maketh not ashamed. The sinner is humbled, the Saviour is exalted, God is obeyed, and the penitent himself praises God, and says, He hath delivered mine eyes from tears, my feet from falling, and my soul from hell.

These remarks explain, in the first place, the kind of event that is here mentioned, and I have been the more particular in explaining the nature of repentance unto life, inasmuch as we are ready to flatter ourselves in our own eyes, to think that we are penitents when we are not, to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, to be satisfied with a partial and a seeming, instead of a full and real repentance, and to suppose, simply because we are better outwardly than we once were, that we are therefore all that we ought to be, and that we may say unto ourselves, Peace, when there is no real and lasting foundation for our peace. It is pleasing to think of the privileges of the penitent and of the interest taken in him—that even angels rejoice over him. But let none conclude that they are penitent, unless they have received that grace which has really created the clean heart, which has really renewed the right spirit, and which is really serving God in newness of life; for if any man be in Christ, or a true penitent, he is renewed, old things have passed away, and all things

have become new. There is a change of heart that will delight in heaven, along with a title that will secure our admission into heaven, and the same righteousness that is wrought out for us by the Redeemer is in connexion with the righteousness that is also wrought in us, and by us, and for us, by the Spirit, the Sanctifier, and the Comforter making us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Let us seek, therefore, for the real thorough change that repentance necessarily imparts, and let us not go away in our thoughts or in our imagination, to think of the happiness of the saints, without also meditating on what is equally essential to be really a saint—that we may be made holy, in all manner of life and conversation, and that we bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

Let us proceed now, then, to meditate on the joyfulness of the event mentioned in the text. "There is joy," says our Lord, "in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Think, then, in the first place, of the high character, of the high rank of the order of beings now spoken of as rejoicing—Angels, who occupy a higher place in the scale of creation than men, who are pure spirits not having bodies as we have—who are distinguished, it would appear, into different orders themselves, as marked by their different names in the Bible, Seraphim or Cherubim, thrones or dominions, principalities or powers, lights or burning lights—who are spoken of as excelling in wisdom and in strength, who hearken unto God's voice and do what he commands—who are represented as the morning stars who sang together for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the heavens were stretched out by his power, when the firmament was established in his wisdom, and when the earth was founded in his discretion. These angels look not only into the scheme of creation, but also into the scheme of redemption, and they are permitted not only to know its general character, but also the history of its individual success among the children of men, to whom it is addressed and for whom it is provided. They can describe it generally, as in their song of praise, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men;" but they have also a particular information regarding its effectual application, for when a sinner repents there is a change that is communicated to them, and there is a joy among them respecting him. Now, with regard to the manner in which they receive

the information, we can enter into no explanation. Upon this, as upon many other points, we must be satisfied with ascertaining the ultimate fact, though we cannot understand nor reason respecting the immediate means. This one thing simply, we are informed, that they do know, and that when they know it they rejoice. And it is to us, though of them we know so little, a pleasing testimony of benevolent interest, of affectionate regard, and of exalted and endearing sympathy. It introduces us already to the hopes above. It makes us, even now, in some measure acquainted with the angels that are before the throne. They can enter into our feelings, and we may in some measure enter into theirs. And when the veil of sense shall be withdrawn, it may, for aught we know, be one of the first discoveries in the celestial state to be introduced to, and to be made acquainted with, that angel, or with those angels, who have more especially received commission respecting ourselves, who have encamped about us, who have been ministering spirits to us as the heirs of immortality, who have had continual charge over us, who, when we were but little ones, but babes in Christ, saw the Father's face in heaven, and have been watching over us continually, really though unseen, and are our guardians till we sit down with them in our Father's house and are admitted into the presence of God, their Lord and ours; and we know surely enough of the character of angels, and of the scheme of redemption, to find reason upon reason why at such an event they should rejoice. God displayed some of his glory in the wonders of creation, but he displayed the same glory and glories of another character, and all combined, in higher measure, in the scheme of redemption. And if it was their exercise to behold nature in all its primeval purity, and to celebrate God's praise as its Creator, much more may we see how they will rejoice in God when they behold the unfolding and application of that scheme according to which mercy and justice, righteousness and peace, have been united, according to which grace is reigning through righteousness, and God just even in justifying the ungodly who believe in Christ. These angels have no pleasure in our fall, and the way of our restoration must awaken every benevolent sympathy within them; so that their rejoicing is both for the glory of God and the happiness of men, for communion restored between God and them, and between themselves and men, and for

the prospect now set before them of having the children of disobedience and the heirs of wrath sanctified and glorified, and made companions and associates with themselves in the heavenly state, so that they may again call them brethren. Thus it is that beings of high rank, in the order of intelligent creation, rejoice over sinners' repentance.

In the second place, we may consider the intensity, the universality of the feeling that is produced. It might be true to say of the angels in heaven, that they rejoice, though the joy was but slight or transient, although it pervaded only a part of the heavenly host. The idea, however, conveyed to us here is the idea, not of a slight or of a transient, but of a deep and of a permanent impression, and it is the idea, moreover, not of joy only among a few, but of joy among all, of but one feeling and one expression of feeling, through all the innumerable company of angels. Heaven in its every-day or ordinary course, if I may be allowed so to speak, is the place of joy, and, therefore, when any event is spoken of here as producing joy, the very mention of it supposes joy to an extraordinary extent—something beyond the ordinary measure of joy, something fit for being marked as a change, and a change from happiness to still greater happiness among the abodes of the blessed. Men smile or weep for trifles, they are deeply affected with matters of no great moment, and there is often a universal sensation either of joy or of grief, when there is no great reason either for the one or for the other, but mistaken these angels cannot be in the theme which they choose for transport. Their own clear understandings, their own pure wills, and their own elevated affections, raise them far above other unseasonable and unstable joys. They are, moreover, continually in the presence of God, who directs all their feelings, and who guides them still by the intimations of his own will, and by the revelations of his own glory. And therefore, whether we consider what they in themselves would do, or what God in his providence would allow them to do—either in the one case or in the other, we may well argue an intensity of feeling when angels, always happy, are said to rejoice, when not a few but all are spoken of as joining in the triumph, and when that triumph is, moreover, mentioned as taking place in the presence of God—a season of *horeanna*, a day of jubilee, a loud hallelujah unto God,

animating all the saints, pervading the innumerable company of angels, gladdening Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, approved of by God the judge of all, and all centring in this—the Redeemer seeing of the travail of his soul and satisfied. Thus the angels administered to Jesus when he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, when he was in an agony, and the sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground; and were it no other scene in heaven than Jesus seeing of the fruit of his travail and satisfied, we can easily suppose how all is true that is here expressed, how much more is true that cannot be expressed, and that cannot be conceived, but is known in heaven. Joy there is there over one sinner that repenteth.

Again we may think, in the third place, of the season at which such joy is stated as commencing, not when the sinner enters heaven, not when his repentance issues in eternal life—the joy will then follow of course—but when his title to heaven has been received, when his meetness for it is but beginning, and when he is still to make progress in the way to Zion with his face thitherward—when he is to wage war with Satan, and with the world, and with the flesh, and when there is a long course lying before him, a race which he has to run, a warfare to which he has to expose himself, and a fight which he has to endure, and painful exercise through which he has to pass, before he is made perfect through suffering. It is a pleasing proof of the promptitude with which the intelligence is conveyed to heaven, that it is so soon known. It is a pleasing proof also of the character of the joy produced, that even though it be but beginning as to its ultimate issue, yet there is an immediate feeling of joy respecting it. But especially this joy is presented to us in an interesting light, when we behold these blessed spirits looking down with interest upon what is just taking place, when the penitent is shedding tears, when he is making his confessions, when he is feeling most his unworthiness, when he can do nothing more than cry out “Lord be merciful to me a sinner!” “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” “Speak, Lord, for I thy servant hear.” “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” “O Lord! if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” To them it is a pleasing thought that another engrafting is taking place to the living tree, that another stone is preparing

for the heavenly building, that another member is adding to the body that constitutes the fulness of Him who filleth all in all, and that another heir is born in the redeemed family. For, dead though he be to the world, yet in Christ he can anticipate the time when his infant powers shall reach their manhood, when receiving the sincere milk of the word he shall grow thereby, when he shall be fit for strong meat, when he shall be strong through the word of God abiding in him, when in old age he shall bring forth fruit, when he shall be beautiful as the lily, and strong as the cedars of Lebanon, and when, no longer a hoping penitent, he shall be a sanctified and glorified saint, and be for ever associated with saints and angels, hearkening unto God's voice and doing whatsoever he commands. To us there seems a long, a dark, and doubtful interval between, long days, and nights, and years, in the world of tribulation—but to angels, who do not unite time as we do, and over whose blessed abodes a thousand years pass away even as a single day, the transition seems but short between the trials of the sinner and the triumphs of the saint. And though many a dark frowning providence is now lowering on the penitent who is sowing in tears, yet they know who is behind the cloud, who smiles for ever over those who are the objects of his care and the subjects of his love. They know how behind the frowning providence he hides a smiling face, and that they will ere long reap in joy. Though they have sympathy with the saint when he bows his head, and can think of his gray hairs going down with sorrow to the grave, they have such experience of the providence of God, as to know before the saints know that their tears will finally be wiped away, and that the same heart that seemed at one time ready to burst with grief, will at another time also be ready to burst with joy, even as Jacob's did when not thinking to see Joseph himself, he exclaimed. “Lo! I have seen even Joseph's seed, his sons, and his sons' sons.” Such bliss attends those who wait for the salvation of God. Angels so long observing providence, are not cast down, nor are their prospects clouded as ours, when God is pleased to make us go forth and sow in tears under the promise that we shall reap in joy. They see how the Lord Jesus Christ has done—how he has guarded over his own—how he is the companion, and the comforter, and the friend

of all his people. They know that we are the objects of his heavenly care—they know that we are under His protection, who feeds his flock like a shepherd, who gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries them in his bosom, who will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. They know that we who are believers are for ever rising up beneath this great Redeemer's hand to be the heirs of many promises, that we are coming out from great tribulation to a great inheritance, that we are tried in the furnace, heated seven times, in order that Christ's own image may be formed in us, and that the trial of our faith is therefore exceeding precious.

I have only to state, in the last place, that each case of conversion is supposed here to be of sufficient magnitude to produce this joy. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth. Numbers are not necessary in order to convey to us the idea of value or importance. There are many subjects in regard to which number, and number chiefly, constitutes the claim to consideration, and here the number does not decrease, but on the contrary, augments the interest, and yet still though there be but one, yet each one is of sufficient value. No doubt there was great joy on the day of Pentecost; and when thousands were converted, no doubt there was great joy afterwards, when 5000 were added to the Church; no doubt there was great joy again, when a multitude of the priests and of the people believed; but still each individual as marked in Heaven's book, may be considered as a fit occasion for praising God, and as serving to minister to the delight of angels. Or we shall even take it in another light—You may suppose that one soul converted may, in special circumstances, or at particular seasons, or because of the individual character, be of great importance, even as the conversion of Paul included within itself the conversion of thousands—even as Paul was a chosen vessel, and took many from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. And we can almost conceive in heaven a kind of joy like to the day of Pentecost itself, when the news reached heaven that souls were approaching, and approaching from the earth to the Father, and that the Church was multiplied, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. But neither is a case of this kind put down as the only case fitted to excite

joy. On the contrary, nowever few may be the conversions that are taking place, or however obscure, unknown, or unimportant may be the individual converted, though there be included in his conversion no more than his own soul's salvation, though he be removed from the world and leave no other proof behind him than such a proof as the penitent malefactor on the cross may be supposed to have left; though we think simply on what one immortal soul necessarily receives, we think of something that outweighs in value all the happiness merely temporal of all the myriads that have ever inhabited the world, even down to the present moment. All the joys of all that have dwelt upon the earth, and who are now laid in the dust, have passed away as if they had never been; but the soul of righteous Abel has been always in heaven, and always delighting—ever since our Lord died upon the cross. The single penitent malefactor has received within his own individual existence happiness more real, and happiness more lasting, than the happiness merely temporal of all the millions that have been upon our globe during the continuance of the Christian era. And when days, and nights, and years, shall have passed away, with the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, when the pleasures of sin shall all have departed, the joys of the penitent shall still remain, and the triumphs of angels over them shall still be considered as affording them suitable joy, even though connected with the history of but one immortal soul brought out of a state of sin and misery into a state of salvation through the Redeemer. The soul dies not with the body—it dies not though it be unclothed—it passes into another world and still exists. Before it all is eternity and immutability. It fears or it hopes, it grieves or it rejoices, it loves or it hates, it swells with ceaseless transport, or it shrinks with ceaseless horror at the constant opening of eternity. Soon my body shall have the clouds of the valley to cover it, and my memory shall perish from the earth; but shall memory itself die—shall the soul that now lives, and moves, and sees, and hears, and speaks within me die? No. When the years which I have lived have passed away like the years before the flood, my soul will still be in the eternal world. And, oh! how solemn the question, shall it have gone up to heaven, or shall it have gone down to hell? Shall it be trembling with devils,

or shall it be rejoicing with saints and angels? Shall it be weeping and wailing, or shall it be holy, singing the song of Moses, the servant of God and the Lamb? Shall it be filthy still, or shall it be holy still? Damnation—men speak the word. Do they know the meaning of it? Could you breathe it to your fiercest enemy? Oh! how could you endure the everlasting burning! Were it uttered as with a voice from heaven, there were for you no remaining hope. Would it not be an awful voice to any one individual here? Wonder not, then, if angels rejoice, if they are as gods, having no pleasure in our death, but willing rather that we would turn from our wickedness and live. And let me now say with regard to any, if any such there be, still far from God, that if it were given to that one even now to repent and to live, rest assured that angels, even as they have rejoiced before, will be at no loss to rejoice again—that they will utter still their notes of triumph if over you the Spirit shall pause, making you to surrender to Jesus, and to exclaim, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? What shall I do to be saved, and suggesting to you the answer, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and inherit eternal life.”

We have considered then, in the first place, the event of the text. We have considered, secondly, the joy produced by it. Let me press both these upon your attention, and let me warn you against treating with indifference a subject which angels view with interest, not as it were for their own sakes, but for yours. Angels know our danger—they see the awful misery that sin produces—they know the dreadful state of the impenitent in hell, and because they have no pleasure in our death, they desire to see us seeking and loving God. Therefore I pray you to give heed to Jesus. He came into the world to seek and to save the lost. He loved us, and gave himself for us, and he now says, “Come now and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall he white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall

be as wool.” God has given his providence to warn, and he has given his word to direct and encourage us. God is now, in his providence, speaking to us by awful judgments in the midst of us, by disease in different forms carrying us away, so that many die as it were in a moment suddenly.* Now as the tree falls so it must lie. As death finds us, so will death also fix us. There are no pardons offered, there are no pardons sealed in the grave. The way to heaven is open from earth, but it is not open from hell. The offers of mercy are free, and full, and unrestricted here, and we say, therefore, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” What is a man that is not a penitent? What does our Lord say he is like? He is like a piece of lost silver to its owner, like a lost sheep, like a prodigal son—and we are all in Heaven’s sight as prodigal children, till we become penitent children, till we arise and come to our Father, till we say, Father we have sinned, and are no more worthy to be called thy children. We have departed from the chief end of our being. We are not glorifying God, and not enjoying him while we remain impenitent; and the lamp of life is only allowed to burn to give us time and space for repentance. To-day, therefore, if we will hear God’s voice, it becomes us not to harden our hearts against him. Wherefore, I pray you to search the Scriptures, that you may understand the privilege, that you may know the duty, and that you may desire after the graces of true penitents. And I pray God that your sins may be pardoned, that your souls may be sanctified, that you may be enabled to delight in the Lord God after the inward man, and that losing one kind of pleasure, the pleasure of sin, you may find another and a greater, the love of his Son, and the righteousness and the gladness that will ever arise in the upright in heart. May the Lord bless his word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

* Preached in the Tron Church, Glasgow, on the Evening of Sunday, 9th July, 1832.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO YOUNG CHILDREN;

THE ANNUAL SERMON PREACHED ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, 16TH JUNE, IN BEHALF
OF THE CHILDREN ATTENDING THE SABBATH SCHOOLS OF THE PARISH OF
ST. ENOCH'S,

By the Rev. JAMES HENDERSON,

Minister of St. Enoch's Church, Glasgow.

"I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me."—PROV. viii. 17.

As many of you as have attended to these words, must at once perceive that they are words of kindness and encouragement. The person who utters them assures us, that if we love him, our love shall not be thrown away upon one who does not requite it; and he promises that though we should not have sought him until now, if now we will seek him, our search after him shall not be lost labour. Who then is it that gives us this kind assurance, and this encouraging promise? Is it a man like ourselves? If so, it is possible he might deceive or disappoint us; for painful as the thought is, it is very common for men to profess and promise fair, and yet prove false; to pretend to love which they do not feel; and to make promises which often prove unfaithful, and which often, through weakness, they are not able to fulfil. But it is not a man like ourselves who addresses us in the words of the text. It is the same, who in the New Testament is called the Word of God; and who in this part of the Old Testament styles himself the Wisdom of God. And you all know who the Word and the Wisdom of God means. You all know him by the other and familiar name of Jesus Christ. There is not one of you so young as not to be able to know that he is the True and Faithful Witness who cannot lie, who never professes aught that he does not feel, who never fails to accomplish every word that he has promised, and who is, therefore, worthy, my young friends, of all trust and confidence, when he here says, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." This language, my young friends, he addresses more particularly to you: and I desire very earnestly to have your attention while I try to discourse to you for a little, in the first place about what Christ says of them that love him, and in the second

place about what he promises to those that seek him.

Attend, then, while I try to explain to you shortly, what Christ says here concerning those that love him, "I love them that love me." I hope that some of you know in part at least, how sweet and precious the love of Christ is. Sweet is the love of friends and companions—sweet is the love of brothers and of sisters—sweet is the love of a father and of a mother; but sweeter and more precious, by far, than all, is the love of Jesus Christ. He is as a father to protect you, and as a mother to comfort and cherish you. Yea, he styles himself a friend who sticketh closer than a brother, and has said, that though a father and a mother may forsake their offspring, he will never forsake those on whom he hath set his mind. In short, there is no love like the love of Christ. It is strong love, stronger even than death, for in love he died. It is tender love, for it is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, and by all the afflictions of his people he is afflicted. It is faithful and generous love; for he does not promise more than he will perform; and his promise is to load us plenteously with his benefits, and to do exceedingly abundant above what we can either ask or think. And it is lasting love: having loved his own he loves them even to the end. He gives unto them eternal life. Neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever separate us from his love. Now surely love like this it is most desirable that we should all enjoy, and yet all men do not enjoy it. Perhaps some of you, my young friends, have reason to fear that you do not enjoy it. In one sense, indeed, or after one manner, Christ hath loved us all. He loves us with a love of good will, and tenderest compassion, which willeth not that any should perish, but is willing that

we should all come to the knowledge of the truth, whereby we shall be saved. And if he were now going out and in among us as once he did, you might still see him showing his love for sinners, even for sinful children, who love not him and his way, by weeping over their aggravated guilt and misery as he wept over Jerusalem, when her children were about to put him to an unjust and cruel death, saying, "If thou hadst known, even in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, ere yet they are hid from thine eyes."

But those who are loved by him in this way, may after all perish in their sins, just as Jerusalem and her children perished, over whom he once wept those bitter tears. There is a particular love which Christ bears to his own people and his own children, which is different from that general love he bears to all. It is called a saving love. And who are they to whom he bears it? I love them that love me. They indeed do not love him before he loves them. If you are of those who have loved him, you will feel that he loved you first before you loved him, but when he sets his love upon you, then he teaches you to requite in return all his affections he makes known to you through the Bible, which testifies of him, how great and good, and full of power, and rich in mercy, he is to your perishing souls. He sends his Spirit to take of the things that are his, and to show them unto you, to set him before you as it were in the glories of his person, as the beloved Son of God, in whom God is ever well pleased, as the beloved Son of God in all the graciousness of his work and character, as the Saviour of sinners, the friend of men, the favourer of little children; who, when they were brought to him in the days of his flesh, took them in his arms and laid his hands upon them and blessed them. Now, when the Spirit of God shows him thus to you, as thus lovely in himself, so lovely that even that God in whose sight the very heavens are not clean, loves him with a perfect love, and so lovely and so affectionate that he took your nature and died for your sins, and is so tender to young children in particular, that he said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,"—when you get all these allusions respecting the character and work of Christ, by the teaching of the Spirit, through the Bible which you are taught and privileged to read in the schools you

attend, then you begin to love Him who first loved you—you are led to wonder at his kindness in regarding sinners at all, and at his great condescension in looking with such peculiar and tender favour upon children, even though they are sinners in the sight of God. Your hearts now kindle with gratitude, and you say, What shall I render to God for all his benefits?—and you begin to think of him who thought upon you when you was lost. You are led to seek diligently what is the will of your kind and generous benefactor, that you may do it, and to inquire the way in which he walked, that you may follow his steps, and grow up in his likeness.

Now, in the first place, tell me truly, do your hearts thus love Christ? If they do, then have I good news from him to tell you; but you must not give me a false answer nor yourselves either, in order that you may hear this good news; and before you answer, let me put a few questions that will help you to answer with understanding and with truth. Well, then, answer truly and honestly when I ask you, if you think much about Christ on week days, as well as on the Sabbath-day—when you are alone by yourself, as well as when others speak to you about him? Then, do your hearts like to think of him? Do you find pleasure in all he did, said, and suffered, in order to become your Saviour? Then, do you fear to offend him—are you desirous to please him—are you sorry when you have said or done any thing he has forbidden—and are you happy in doing those things which you know he has commanded? Do you love his day, do you love his word, do you love his house, do you love his bible, do you love prayer? My young friends, however young you are, you will do this always, if you love Christ. Now, do you so love him? Do you all, are there any, is there one that thus loves him? Then let me say to that happy child, The Saviour loves you. Not only has he pity for you—he has this for all—but he has pleasure in you. If you could now see his face, where he sits in the highest heavens, you might see him smiling upon you, and his very eyes beaming with love and delight towards you; and though he is now far away in the heavens, where he is received out of our sight, yet know you that his love is just as valuable, as precious, and as powerful, to do you good, as if he were now sitting in the midst of you and walking up and down among you, as when he tabernacled still in

the flesh. You may remember of old, how he healed the son of the Jewish nobleman, when he was twenty miles away from him; how he cast the devil out of the daughter of the Canaanitish woman, at probably a greater distance away. He but spoke the word, and his power overcame all the distance, and completed the cure. Just so now his power reaches from heaven to earth; and just under the direction of those that love him, is it still put forth to bless them, and to do them good. I wish I could tell you a few of the great, and kind, and precious things which Christ has in his riches prepared for them that love him. He rejoices to do them good; he gives them every thing—not, indeed, that their hearts desire, for their desires are often foolish and wicked, so that if they were granted they would do them hurt; but he gives them all things that are really for good to them. He considers them as jewels, he keeps them as his treasure, and you may well understand, therefore, how much he makes them his peculiar and tender care. He gives them his Spirit, an almighty and ever present friend, to counsel and guide them amid the perplexities of the journeys of life. He himself pleads for them day and night before God, that they may be justified by his righteousness, sanctified or made holy through his name, kept from all the evil that is in the world, and all the corruption abounding in it; and, at the last, received where he is to behold his glory. Even while they are yet young, he may take them out of this world of sin, suffering, and danger, and set them down with himself at the right hand of the Father in the heavens; or though he may allow them to live here till old age, yet his own right hand is the place to which he shall exalt them at the last. Here he shall love them at the last; he shall love them with a perfect love; and those that love him there, rejoice with a full and endless joy.

But now do you also love him, and, therefore, have you reason to believe that Christ loves you? Alas! I fear that many of you may not love him, and, therefore, may not enjoy, and not even care or seek to enjoy his love. And why is it that I should think thus of you? If the wise man says that even a child is known by his doings, what, let me ask you, are your doings? Are they such as in all circumstances show you to be the children of God? May it not be that your parents complain of some of you as

disobedient, that your kind teachers complain of you as idle and unruly? Do not many of you neglect the bible or read it just as a task? Do not many of you live almost without prayer, or observe it only as a lifeless and unmeaning form? Have not some of you a heart sometimes fired with hatred, sometimes full of cursing, lips filled with lies, and stained with iniquity; and could these things, think you, be, if you loved Christ? No. It is impossible, for he saith, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me," and therefore they who do not keep his commandments, though they have them and are taught them from week to week, do not love him, and, therefore, are not beloved by him. And, oh! how sad is their state, and if they remain in it, how sad they must be finally, for "all that hate me," saith Christ, "love death."

May I hope that if this may well instruct us, how happy they are whom Christ loves, and how wretched they are whom he does not love, some among you who may not have loved him as you ought hitherto, and have never been loved by him hitherto, may now be anxious to enjoy his love? If so, I have pleasure in directing you to the consideration of his own kind promise in the text. He says, "those that seek me early shall find me." The promise given here is to them that seek Christ, and them especially that seek him early. The worst of sinners and the oldest of sinners may find him if they seek him; but we know that with regard to some Christ may be and will, alas! be sought in vain, so that though they seek to enter into his love, they shall not be able; but while, notwithstanding of this awful exception with regard to those who seek him too late, the promise is general to all in the text—it is especially to young people—it is given to you, my young friends, and to such as you. Some around you are older than you, and they cannot now seek Christ early; but you are yet young—most of you in the early morning of your days—and if you will now seek Christ, if now while the world smiles upon you and seems full of promise to you, you believe the world, he has said that it is after all a vain and deceitful world, it never did and never will make any one happy who set his heart upon it but if Christ and his character are more lovely, and if his love, and favour, and blessing be a better portion to the soul than any portion the world has to give, and if un-

der this belief you will now seek him and his favour, then he will in no wise cast you out.

No, he loves the living sacrifice which especially you the young present to him. If, in his mercy, he receive with favour those who, after giving the flower of their lives to the devil, do, as it were at their dying hour, offer themselves with the mere dregs of their existence to his service, shall he not much more receive an offering from those of you who with the strength and flower of your years, fresh and entire, go to him and seek his love, and surrender yourselves to his service? Yes, while kind and gracious to all the sheep of his fold, he is especially kind and tender to the lambs of his flock—he says, “Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” And when he sees them around him, setting themselves down at his feet to hear his word, casting themselves as it were in his way to receive his blessing, he will not pass them unnoticed or unblessed.

You cannot then, seek him too soon. I can easily believe, or conceive, some child among you to say, “I am too young and too little for him to take any notice of me;” or some other child to say, “I have so many bad thoughts, and I cherish so much bad temper, and utter so many bad words, and do so many bad deeds, that I cannot believe that he who is holy will show any favour to such a child as I am.” But I tell you, you do not honour Christ when you think thus of him, nor are you reflecting how condescending he is, how he regards the lowly, and does not despise the least of the little ones. He is just too, the more ready to bless you because you think the less of yourselves; for he giveth grace to the humble. And if you seek him early and with your whole heart, if you now love him, may I ask you whether you are resolved to seek him when and where he may be found, to seek him in his word where he may speak to you of eternal life, to seek him at his footstool, where he invites you to all the grace and mercy which you require, to seek him on his day and in his sanctuary, where he promises to meet with his people who gather together in his name, and where you get a sight of his glory, such as is not given to the world. I trust you are all resolved to do this, and that as good children who have sought and found Christ, you will learn from this day to put a difference between God’s name and other names, between his book and other books, and

between his will in all things and your own.

But, now, perhaps some one says, “I would like to seek Christ and enjoy his love, and I will seek him, but not yet; I will wait first till I am older, I will take first what pleasure I can find in the world, or in sin, without Christ, and afterwards, some time before I die, will begin to love, and seek, and serve him. And so, then, you propose to do without him in the mean time! Oh! how base and wicked is this thought! Though you know that you cannot do without him always, though you are persuaded that your only hope of salvation comes from him who came in the name of the Lord to save, yet, oh! ungrateful heart, you are resolved to have nothing to do with him as long as you can find happiness without him. How unwise is this as well as wicked! Do not you know that when you are young you are exposed to even more than perhaps when you are old, and therefore need Christ for the guide of your youth? Do you not know that the farther you go from Christ, and the greater your distance from him, you make the walk by which you must return the longer, the harder, and the more difficult; and, therefore, that you ought never, for one day, a step to depart from him! And, oh! have you never thought that if you put off now seeking and loving Christ, it is very uncertain if you ever have time to seek him at all, or though you will seek, that you will find grace given you to find him. I need not say to you how young as well as old must die. Not one of us knows but we may die before to-morrow, or before the time comes when we propose to seek Christ. I have read of a little girl who on hearing a minister speak of the righteousness of Christ as a pure and spotless robe, heard of it with great interest and attention. Calling on her family next day she said she wished to be clothed in that robe of righteousness talked of, that so she might see God in peace. Her conversation was altogether such as to convince him that she was impressed with the importance of seeking God, and the need of seeking Christ’s righteousness to her being found of him. He left her to speak to her next day, but scarcely reached home before a messenger arrived to tell that this good child had been found, by her parents, dead in the garden. There is reason to think that she had received the robe that she had desired. But

if she had said, I will seek this robe when I am old, or next year, or at any future time, what must have become of her soul thus suddenly snatched away. And, oh! think what must become of you who are not seeking Christ till a future day. You may die without having time given you to seek him at all, or you may live and become so wicked, as to lose all desire, and even to lay aside all intention of seeking, loving, and serving Christ. And if you wander farther and farther away from him, what must be your ultimate state? "They that are afar from me," said he, "shall perish." Oh! then, my young friends, do not, I entreat you, do not, for the sake of that Saviour who loves you, do not, for the

sake of your own souls, which are precious to him, and ought surely to be precious to you, do not delay to seek the Saviour. Seek him while he may be found; call upon him while he is near. "If you seek him," as David said to Solomon, "with a perfect heart and with a willing mind, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will cast you out." Oh! let me once more say, that there is nothing you ought so much to desire as to receive and to enjoy his love. "I love them," said he, "that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me, and he that findeth me findeth life, even life eternal, with the favour of the Lord." May God bless what has been said, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

•• In this number we have deviated somewhat from our usual procedure. In the first place we have presented our readers with a posthumous discourse, one of the unpublished sermons of the late Rev. Mr. Geddes, and our reasons for so doing are stated in a note in the preceding number. In the next place we have given a sermon not addressed to adults, or youths, as all the previous discourses of the Pulpit have been, but to very young children. Not to mention that the sermon itself, though addressed to very young children, was heard, and may, therefore, be read by adults, we hope and believe, with advantage; we do not see why we should not occasionally insert in the Pulpit a sermon expressly for the sake of those who are just commencing a religious course. It is written in a style of great simplicity, the first merit in a discourse addressed to children. The St. Enoch's Sabbath School Society is organized on the strictly local plan, and with the exception of two districts at present vacant, pervades the whole parish. It consists of 16 schools, 17 male, and 2 female teachers, and upwards of 350 scholars. It has a carefully selected Library of nearly 500 volumes, embracing juvenile biographies and histories, and other little works, illustrating with simplicity and interest the doctrines and duties of christianity. The secular business of the Society is conducted by a committee of the whole male members, and the minister of the parish as president, and its pecuniary wants are supplied by an annual collection from the congregation of St. Enoch's.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ARCHIBALD BENNIE, Stirling.
CHARGE by the Rev. JOHN M'GREGOR, Stranraer.
SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D., Edinburgh.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN LADY GLENORCHY'S CHAPEL, EDINBURGH, ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, 19TH MAY, 1833, BEING THE SECOND OF THE ANNUAL SERMONS THIS YEAR ON BEHALF OF THE SCOTTISH MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

By the Rev. ARCHIBALD BENNIE,
Minister of the West Church, Stirling.

"Thy kingdom come."—MATTHEW vi. 10.

IN one sense it is incorrect to speak of God's kingdom as coming. All space is his empire. The sun, the stars, the earth, are his kingdom, and these are already come. As the uncreated God he reigns supreme, his will being the law, and his glory the end of all creation. Angels and men are his subjects, and throughout the wide extent of the universe no event can take place, not even the fall of a sparrow, without his decree. The economy of the Gospel, however, in its saving application to the hearts of men, is sometimes metaphorically spoken of in Scripture as the kingdom of God. Thus, "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation;" again, "the kingdom of God is within you;" and again, "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." The reason of this seems to be, that the term *kingdom* implies not merely territory, but subjects, and consequently the possession of claims on the part of the Being to whom the obeying is to be yielded. The territory is merely the scene of obedience; thus, though all nature be the kingdom of God, yet in this peculiar sense the soul of man is more properly so, because in it are the will which consents to obedience, and the powers which qualify for obeying. Now, the soul in its natural state does not obey. Our heart refuses to be subject to God, in short, is revolted from his authority, and though God's kingdom by right, yet it is not by possession. On the contrary, it is usurped, possessed by a rival power, even by the arch spirit of evil. The economy of grace as designed to establish the divine authority in the soul—that is, so to renew the will that it may consent to the divine law, and so to sanctify it, that it may become capable of being in us the great instrument

under the spirit in securing final success—is frequently, by a common license of speech, termed the kingdom of God. You see, then, what is meant by "the kingdom of God." The soul is God's by inalienable right, but it has rebelled against him and is subject to the will of a usurper; and the reclaiming of the soul from its sins, the subjecting of it to the rightful and lawful sovereign, the averting of the curse of the law from it, the building it up in holiness, and thus qualifying it for becoming a member of that pure spiritual empire over which infinite perfection presides, are God's kingdom come or renewed in the soul. The Gospel preached is the kingdom of God announced, a soul converted is the kingdom of God begun, a soul sanctified is the kingdom of God advancing, a true church planted is the kingdom of God enlarged, and the redeemed assembled in heaven is the kingdom of God glorified and supreme. The petition in the text expresses a desire for the re-establishment of this empire of God in the soul; but, as the state of every soul is one of guilt before God, and as the happiness of each individual is nearest to his own heart, we may consider the words of the text as expressing a prayer, in the first place for ourselves, and in the second place for others. When we say "Thy kingdom come," we pray that we ourselves may become the willing and obedient sons of God; and, secondly, that all men may become so.

In the first place, then, when we use the words of the text, we pray that we ourselves may become the willing and obedient sons of God. Personal religion is the first concern of every man. The Gospel is not sent to a few individuals or nations only, it is not a boon to be conferred on the heathen alone, but is offered to, and is enjoyed by

all. Every human being has revolted from God, and requires to be made subject to his authority, and qualified to obey. Religion is not a luxury which men may want, though they might be the better for having; but it is indispensably necessary, as it is incomparable in value; nor will men care to communicate it to others, unless they first enjoy it themselves. No man will pray heartily that God's kingdom may come, who does not feel that that kingdom is come to him, who does not seek to become one of its subjects and to enjoy its blessings. In this divine record, these blessings are stated as the most precious gifts of God to his race. There are some who regard religion as merely polishing the manners of mankind, and as tempering the severity of political institutions. With this view of it, they would wish to see it established on the banks of the Ganges or in the wilds of Africa, as it would be desirable to see the heathen brought to a state of greater civilization. Did the Gospel propose no aim beyond this—were Christianity merely the visible though imposing formality which these views imply, this were all well; but, since it is designed to renew every will and sanctify every heart, then the kingdom of God does not come till these effects are produced, and no man can utter the prayer of the text to whom that kingdom is not in some measure thus come. Though man share in the general benefits which the Christian religion has conferred on society, yet if there be nothing more than this, the kingdom of God has not come to that man. It is not, and cannot be come till his nature be changed—he must be a new creature in Christ, in his heart disposed to love and obey God. There must be a work of sanctification going on, the peace and joy of faith, and the sublime hope of heaven. He knows nothing of this kingdom till these effects in some measure appear. He has no interest in it, and can have no real concern for it. The petition, then, is not the petition of unregenerate men; there is an utter blindness on their part to the spiritual condition of their nature, and instead of desiring that God's kingdom may come, they violate its laws and oppose its progress; they are in a perpetual tumult of passion, and are full of schemes of pleasure, and are ever forming for themselves plausible theories of duty; it may be, there is no open contempt of God, still there is no thought of God in their

minds, no reverence for his law, and no submission to his claims. God's scheme is disliked; for, is not the doctrine of grace offensive to the natural man? Why? Because the current of the heart runs to sin, the kingdom of the heart is usurped: men disguise this state of things from themselves, but it is not upon that account the less true. Hence the calumnies that the world heaps on true piety, hence its indifference to divine truth, hence its hatred to pure principle, its ridicule of holy zeal. These unquestionably prove that the heart is opposed to God and rebels against him: and though man may profess a religion, yet that religion is a mere device of the corrupt nature, gives no proper homage to God, and enjoins no obedience to his will. The world is thus an usurped empire, Satan is king, sin is the law, immortal souls are the slaves, and error is the current coin; and throughout its wide extent God's kingdom excites no interest, and his law commands no respect. Men, then, must be reclaimed from a state of impenitence and unbelief, before they can heartily and with understanding utter the prayer. Of those, however, who are thus happily reclaimed, some are just awakened out of the stupor of an unenlightened state, while others are more advanced in the life of faith, but as soon as the soul is relieved from guilt, and raised to seek for safety, the prayer may be uttered. The sinner in this state is humbled and ashamed, bewails his estrangement from God, and confesses his sins, and though not yet full of the peace and joy of faith, and not yet resting on Christ with an unflinching trust, yet to him the kingdom of God possesses an awful interest. Sin is felt to be slavery and galling to the soul; he would be freed from its power—he would be made subject to God—he would enjoy his favour and be regulated by his law—he would think of him in the exercise of all his affections, and would transfer to him the government of all his thoughts, purposes, and desires—he would be moulded into his likeness, and made meet for his presence—and therefore says, "Thy kingdom come." As yet he knows little of this kingdom, but enough to give interest to the prayer of the text. Blind as he yet is, he cannot discern the excellence, and glory, and wisdom of God, but he is a conscious slave, and would break his chains; he is a penitent, and would be reconciled; the victim of wretch-

edness and fear, and would be filled with peace and hope, and therefore he says, Thy kingdom come, break this chain with which I am burdened and bound, forgive the rebellion I have dared to maintain, and let Christ be reconciled to me, establish thy kingdom in my heart, subdue sin in its ascendancy there, sanctify estranged affections, unworthy desires, grovelling thoughts, and make me an obedient child of thy own, thy glory my aim, and thy favour my end. This may be reckoned as the first occasion in the life of man, when the prayer of the text is uttered. In all the stages of the believer's progress that prayer continues to be appropriate. The case to which I have referred, exhibits the transition of a soul from an enslaved and corrupt, to a free and spiritual state. When faith has been implanted, when the sinner brought to Christ rests upon him, and is revealed then to him, that kingdom is come—not fully, but in a measure. He is no longer a conscious slave, but perfectly free. The kingdom of God is a sanctification which the Spirit of God begins, continues, and consummates. Though subject to God he desires to be yet more entirely so, sin is hated and turned off, but yet not entirely destroyed, and though the obedience he yields comes from the heart, yet it is occasionally interrupted, and is always deficient in that fulness of affection and devotedness of purpose which the divine law requires. Thus the true believer advances in the divine life. When he thinks of God as a being of infinite purity, when he calls to mind his transcendent goodness, he feels how cold his gratitude, how poor his obedience, how superficial and fluctuating his love. When he reflects on the great mystery of godliness—Jesus dying to redeem—the tenderness of his sympathy, the glory of his work, the completeness of his triumph, he feels how reluctant is his attachment. When he considers the end of the Spirit, the blessedness he bestows, and the great issue for which he prepares, he feels how irregular his prayers are, how unsteady is his trust in the promises of the everlasting covenant, and how feeble his discharge of duty. And then when he thinks of the law so spiritual, of holiness so unspotted, of heaven so glorious, and the soul so vast in capacity, he feels how miserably deficient he is, how sordid in desire and divided in affection, how loose in self-examination, how easily taken up by the interests

and pleasures of this fleeting life—he is humbled and ashamed—regards his obedience but as rags—would have his whole heart flow out in one full continuous fervid stream towards God—would have his soul beautified through all its powers and affections with the bright image of the Creator; and as a temple hallowed by the indwelling of the Spirit night and day, he would be in the company of angels, and a possessor of heaven's worshipful inheritance. Nor all this, merely at the outset of his career, but even to the very close. Thy kingdom come, is the burthen of his prayer from day to day. Sanctify this corrupt heart, illumine this benighted judgment, give fervour to these cold affections and spirituality to these sordid desires—increase, strengthen, and animate faith. Let thy kingdom come—in more pure love, in more purity, in more peace, in more heavenly-mindedness, in more stability, in more hope. O God, thy kingdom come! God's people, then, alone feel interested in the prosperity of his kingdom—they know it, feel it, enjoy it. Their present happiness is involved in it, their hopes are built upon it, they are nothing without it and apart from it. This very life we are so soon to loose derives its value from it. Whatever is connected with this kingdom, interests them—whatever tends to promote it, is encouraged—whatever is hostile and unfavourable to it, is deplored. The coming of the kingdom is their main interest; its coming to their own hearts, has been their greatest privilege, and therefore they desire that it may come to all men. Men who view Christianity superficially, say, Introduce commerce, literature, and the arts, and then religion. No, say I, believer, the soul is better than the body—make religion not last, but first. Among ourselves, the institutions formed for encouraging it have been chiefly encouraged by believers. Though many, not believers, have given their money for this cause, they have done it from blindness, and from motives which the cause itself condemns. Many give their money for the diffusion of the religion of Christ, who know not, and care not for, its sanctifying powers. And as it may not be prudent to discourage such contribution, is it not better to see Christianity encouraged, as politically useful, than rejected? Much better. We are apt to say, that such men act from improper motives; and though the world makes light of motives, yet the Gos-

pel does not; but, on the contrary, affirms, that as motives give to actions their real moral character, wherever the former are sinful, so are the latter. Does not the worldling say, Here is a little money for establishing Christianity in Africa. It will not do what some people imagine, but it will do a little good. It will refine their manners. I will translate this language. The Bible is, on the whole, a useful book. It reveals some strange doctrines. It pretends to make men holy who never will be so, but it contains many wholesome lessons. Now, are not such views insulting to God? Do they not degrade to the rank of a political institution that which God has revealed as a scheme to soothe, and sanctify, and prepare for heaven? And is not all this, though merely implied, enough to make a pious mind shudder? Can we encourage such ideas? O! my friends, we must tell the worldling that his gold is polluted—that he approaches the altar with unhallowed fire; we must say to him, Learn what true holiness is—seek to feel the Gospel in its power—be not satisfied with a cold profession and a lifeless form, but know the confidence of faith, the peace and joy of holy affection. Then you will view the kingdom of God in its true character, then will you give your gold, hallowed and increased unspeakably in value by your prayers, and then will you seek for the poor heathen—not to polish him, but that he may have the satisfaction of trusting in Christ, and all that joy which springs from the belief of pardon and the hope of heaven.

The next view of the text was as a prayer put up in behalf of our fellow-creatures. It is put up, first for ourselves, and, secondly, for others. From the personal experience of the power of religion springs the desire to spread it over the earth. There are many things which men may have without being anxious to communicate to others. They may not be necessary to their fellow-creatures, they may be very happy without them, they may be merely local, or they may not have the power to communicate them. But when men possess what is truly useful, it is their duty to communicate. The joy is in this respect different from every kind of enjoyment. In the case of religion, in proportion as it is enjoyed, men are the more anxious to communicate their enjoyment to their perishing fellow-creatures; and hence it is that believers, in loving God, love also their brethren of mankind. They

would feed, clothe, and shelter them; they regard them as part of the same family with themselves, as endowed with the same precious nature, and called by the same true and sovereign grace. Whatever they possess, then, they would impart—in particular, as religion is their most precious possession, they would communicate it. No religious man hides his religion in his heart for his own use, as a miser hoards up his money. Religion expands, while it purifies, and makes the heart a rich treasury of kind and benevolent sentiments. It delivers from so terrible a danger, it restores to such exalted privileges, it introduces to so many sources of pure enjoyment, and crowns this life with so vast a hope, that believers prize it above all earthly things. And it has the same virtue to every soul of mankind; it is the lost piece of silver; it cannot be expressed in words; it is broader than the sea, and longer than the earth. To impart it, then, is the noblest charity—to proclaim it from every mountain top—to leave no city unvisited, and no desert unapproached by its call—to send forth on the wings of the wind to every perishing outcast, Be reclaimed! All this is the scheme of its mighty objects. Whatever of vague enthusiasm some may apply to it, we are assured of it by the Word of God. We would not enter into detail on a subject of which the Bible speaks in summary language; but it seems clear from the pages of Scripture, that the knowledge of the truth of salvation will cover the face of the whole habitable globe. Isaiah lavishes on this theme the sublimity of his heaven-strung harp. John, from the lonely Patmos, sends forth dark presages of allegory, intimating, amid much shadowy grandeur, the glory of the latter day. It may be deemed extravagant to say, that all men may be Christians; but it is within the strict letter of prophecy to affirm, that the truth of salvation will be communicated to every people, and its benign influence enjoyed in every land. Let not men speak of hindrances. Can there be any to God? See the miracles of the past!—the sea dried up, the sun stayed in its course, the hot sands of the desert cooled by a cloud and illuminated by a pillar of fire, the rocks pouring forth water, and manna falling in showers! See empires raised up and suddenly east down, heathen kings made instruments of prophecy, and the great stream of time flowing over vast empires, and yet bearing

up the little ark. He who wrought these changes in time past, can work changes equally strange in time to come; and though temples of idolatry are built on every shore, God can open the eye of the nations, can suggest means of improvement, and crown these means with ampler success than believers have yet dared to hope for. See what is now doing—hymns sung to Christ on the plains of a far distant land—negroes dying with Paul's words on their lips—Sabbaths in the islands of the South Sea—and churches beyond the burning sun of the Cape. New languages are acquired in the process of Christianizing the earth, a holy, and heaven-directed zeal is abroad, ten thousand praises arise from cottage and temple to God, the trumpet of the Gospel has been blown, and nations are mustering to its call, the kingdom of our Gospel is advancing, and the time shall be, when all the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of our God and his Christ.

The petition in the text then expresses a deep interest in the advancement of this great work thus progressing to its final issue. The believer regards the events connected with that work, as the most important that can occur; and though he does not always see how the revolutions of nature, and the changes of the earth effect this, yet when events occur that are favourable, he is joyful. The believer contemplates the earth as the theatre of God's purposes, and while the children of men are engaged in their limited speculations, occupied with rumours of wars, and watching the restless play of human passions, the believer sees the eye of God, hears his voice in the storm, and sees his footsteps in the deep. The silent work of grace in his own neighbourhood occasions more joy than the success of worldly schemes. Not that the true Christian is regardless of his temporal interests, or indifferent to political improvements, oh! no—he is alive to these in their proper place, but then the soul has a value above all else to him—its conversion to God is the most valuable change for which no sacrifice is too great. A school and a church in a lonely island, a faithful minister in a dark parish, a zeal for religion among influential men, any proof of the success of the truth, however small, interests and delights his heart, and gives to the history of human affairs a charm far above the charms of eloquence. The interest, however, that the believer feels in the prosperity of God's

kingdom is lively and active; there is nothing in it merely speculative; his interest ends and centres in facts. In our favoured age and country, the means which are in operation for extending the kingdom of God are very many. Christian philanthropy has extended its care to almost every field. Holy institutions have been formed embracing every variety of men. These, then, to the extent of his belief of their excellence, the believer supports. We do not say his support is indiscriminate. Having sought out the best means to secure the end of religion, he goes and examines for himself. He gives his support not casually or reluctantly, as if a hard service, but steadily as a matter of solemn duty. How many are there who appear in the Lord's house from Sabbath to Sabbath, and yet give no support to religious institutions. These they say are the formalities of hypocrisy. But who are the hypocrites?—they who pray and act up to the prayer, or they who pray and do not act up to it? The latter surely. We would say, pray not, or if you do, act up to its spirit. Do they indeed desire that God's kingdom may come, and yet stand listlessly by grasping their gold, while others are busy with their money and labours in forwarding the cause? Will they leave off Bible Societies and Missionary labours, and rest merely with an expression of prayer? No. A prayer is the expression of action, and where it is not followed by action it is hollow and false.

In shortly applying this discourse, I would call your attention, in the first place, to the supreme importance of a personal interest in the kingdom of God. Are we by nature rebels, outcasts, enemies, transgressors of the law, strangers to the privileges, and destitute of an interest in the happiness of this kingdom? Then as this kingdom is of the kingdom of God, it is of infinite importance to us from rebels to become subjects, from outcasts to become citizens, and from enemies, to become children, as by doing so, not only all present enjoyment is increased, but eternal redemption in Christ is secured. Let none imagine, however, that the kingdom comes to any one in meats or in drinks. We may be outwardly members of the church, regular hearers of the word, and yet the kingdom of God may not have come to us. No. Whenever it comes to any man, it comes in power, in a changed nature, in a renovated will, in purified affection, in steadfastness of faith,

and in holiness of life. Let us seek then that this kingdom may come to us; and as when it is come it is still beset with opposition, let us seek that it may come with ampler sway and more richness of privilege. In short, let us pray fervently, importunately, unweariedly, that this sublime, peaceable, everlasting kingdom, may come in all its grandeur and purity into our hearts.

In the second place, let me entreat you to feel and cherish a lively, an ardent, and a holy concern for the establishment of this spiritual kingdom on the earth. As it is of infinite moment to us, so it is of infinite moment to all men; and, therefore, by schools at home and abroad, by the circulation of the Bible, by Missionary Societies, let us be concerned to extend the knowledge and widen the limits of this holy, this happy kingdom. It is well to diffuse the blessings of commerce, that the barbarism of savage tribes may be smoothed away, and the graceful polish of civilization may lend its charms to the intercourse of social life; it is well that the useful arts be encouraged, that the waste soil of our nature be broken up and cultivated, and that smiling diligence be planted on the bleak bosom of the desert; it is well to break the chain of the slave, and to seek to live far and wide on the deep and broad foundations of science—the science of national wealth. But it is far better to scatter the seed of heaven, far better to emancipate the soul from the kingdom of iniquity, to bring down salvation from the cross, and to form the character to the holiness of the Bible. This alone will make the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose; this will open up springs in the wilderness, and fountains in the parched land.

I appear before you this evening in behalf of the Scottish Missionary Society. That Institution has twelve Missionary

Stations—two in the Russian empire, four in the East, and six in the West Indies. All these are important, the last two particularly so. The Missionaries under their care are all, without exception, men of fervent piety, unwearied diligence, and great devotedness in their holy and sublime work. Their success has been considerable. While, according to recent accounts, they appear increasing in influence; while you have these Missionaries of your own Society, and sent from your own country, come to the help of the work in which they are engaged. Listen to the cry, “Come over and help us”—listen to that heart-touching cry. I am particularly earnest in making this appeal at present, because the Directors of the Society have been reduced by deficiency in its funds to the necessity of proposing to abridge the means of its operation. And is it come to this? Are Missionary Societies to be crippled and restricted in their means of operation in this land in which so much money is daily squandered on objects of luxury and vanity? Is the poor missionary—who has gone forth in the single-heartedness of faith, sacrificing the endearments of home, and the privileges of civilized society, and exposing himself to numberless privations—to be recalled from the scene of his holy labours, or left to struggle with poverty in a foreign land? Is his soul to be chilled with the thought that his brethren at home refuse to give of their abundance to help his need, and that they will not give a little from their pleasures, their luxuries, and comforts, that the standard of the cross may continue to be borne among the perishing tribes of earth. Let it not be so; give freely, then, of what you have only received, that this Society may prosper, that its missionaries may be encouraged, and its means of usefulness increased. I add no more.

CHARGE

DELIVERED AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REV. GEORGE WALKER, PORT-WILLIAM,

By the Rev. JOHN M'GREGOR,

Minister of the Relief Church, Stranraer.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—By a solemn and scriptural act, you have now been set apart to discharge the duties of a profession, the most honourable and important in which man can be occupied here below. Most sincerely do I congratulate you on the honour this day conferred upon you; for, although your office as an ordained minister of the Gospel, does not confer upon you

that external pomp which the world covets and admires, it yet invests you with power to preach the Gospel to your fellow-men, and thus honours you with an employment more blessed and sublime, even than that in which the angels of God are engaged. Yonder celestial hosts are sent forth to minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation; but you are sent forth not only

• See Note at the end of No. 65, p. 300.

to aid and comfort saints, but also to convey the Almighty's message of mercy to lost and ruined souls. But, Sir, if yours be an honourable and important profession, it is, at the same time, a weighty and responsible one. Permit me, then, to fulfil the appointment of Presbytery, by addressing you in the language of exhortation; and humbly relying upon divine aid, I will, as the representative of these, my respected Fathers and Brethren, address you with all becoming freedom and fidelity.

I. First, then, I have to remind you of the many and momentous duties which you are now called to perform.

Doubtless the most important of these are the duties you owe the flock over which the Head of the Church hath appointed you overseer.

As the pastor of this people, the most important work which devolves upon you, is the preaching of the word. Engage earnestly in this work, that the cause of general knowledge may be advanced among your people; and, above all, that they may be made acquainted with those things which are conducive to the best interests of their immortal souls. Let your pulpit instructions be sound and evangelical. Never let a thirst for specious novelties, or a desire for intellectual distinction, estrange you from the simplicity of the Gospel, or lead you away from the grand theme of a Christian pastor's ministrations, "Christ and him crucified." Let not the fear of doing injury to the cause of morality prevent you from dwelling on the doctrines of the Cross; for no moral obligation is so powerful as that which springs from the death of Jesus. The love to God, which is excited by the faithful exhibition of this event, has produced in the hearts and lives of believers in every age, such a moral purity and loveliness, as has never been equalled in the character or conduct of the most violent admirers of those moral systems which the wisdom of man has contrived and applauded. Be it your object, then, constantly to explain and recommend to your hearers, in all its grandeur and unity, that scheme of mercy which alone can make them wise unto salvation.

In your public ministrations, too, be faithful in defending the truth from the assaults of its enemies, and especially from the delusions and heresies by which it is assailed in the present day. These call for your sincere and strenuous opposition. In warring with them, be wise and prudent;

but, at the same time, be bold and uncompromising, otherwise you will provoke the displeasure of Him who calls upon you to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." And as preaching the word of truth in its purity, is one of the best modes of arresting the progress of error, I beseech you, my brother, steadfastly to maintain, and firmly to declare, the whole counsel of God. Conceal no doctrine which he has unfolded, hide no precept which he has revealed, but by a full and a plain "manifestation of the truth, commend yourself to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

But think not that your duty to your flock is confined to the mere preaching of the Gospel, or to the preparation necessary for the pulpit. The pastor *watches* for souls, and hence he ministers to his people in private, as well as in public, on the week day, as well as on the Sabbath. Be in this respect a faithful labourer in the Lord's vineyard. Your weekly meeting with your people in the house of God is of vast importance; but I venture to say, that if you hold no official intercourse with them out of the pulpit, you will not retain their affections long, nor will you be able to keep alive that mutual sympathy between yourself and them, which is so necessary to render your preaching advantageous to their souls. Be faithful, then, in calling your people before you at convenient seasons for catechetical instruction. The proper and conscientious discharge of this duty will enable you to appreciate exactly the measure of Scriptural knowledge which they possess, and the progress which they are making under your ministrations. You are pledged, too, by your office, to teach 'from house to house;' and every round of official visitation, if wisely conducted, will, with the blessing of God, tend much to the edification of your people. In your domiciliary visits, you will be able to admonish the careless, to encourage the timid, to rebuke the proud, and to soothe the scornful, in such forcible and personal terms, as you could not with propriety employ in the pulpit. On such occasions, you may be directed to speak a word of comfort, which may afford support to some bruised reed, or which may gently fan into a steadier ardour some smoking flax—or you may be directed to speak a word of warning, which may bend into submission some stubborn heart, or which may extinguish, in some rebellious soul, the

flame of hatred against God and godliness. "A word spoken in due season, how good it is."

Devote much of your time to the sick and the distressed. The hearts of men are usually most susceptible of religious impressions, when they are softened by sickness or sorrow. Many unregenerate men who have hated counsel, and despised reproof in the hour of health and of happiness, have readily listened to the voice of warning, when their couches have become beds of languishing, or their dwellings houses of mourning. The hour of trouble is often, too, a favourable time for the Christian's growth in grace. Many of the children of God have been made to rejoice in the doctrines and promises of the Gospel, when in the furnace of affliction, who refused to be comforted on the mount of ordinances. Be ever ready, then, to attend the call of those who mourn. Like Barnabas, be "a son of consolation." A word may escape from your lips, as you weep with those that weep, which, like the good Samaritan's wine and oil, may heal a wounded spirit, or which may revive a fainting heart, or which may elevate a worldlying's thoughts to the things which are unseen and eternal. To be honoured thus, as an instrument for making your people's light affliction, which is but for a moment, work out for them an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, will surely be a sufficient recompense for whatever toil or privation you may have to undergo in the discharge of this duty.

Moreover, the young of your flock have a peculiar claim upon your care and attention—a claim which, I trust, you will never slight or disregard. Call to mind the injunction of the Chief Shepherd, "Feed my lambs." Call to mind his example. Long before his advent, it was predicted of him, that he would "gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." And the prediction was fulfilled. He suffered little children to come unto him—he took them in his arms, and blessed them. Warned by his command, and elicited by his example, watch over the interests of the young of your congregation. Form classes for their religious instruction, and strive to impress their minds, and to affect their hearts, by such plain and practical lessons as are suited to their age and capacities; and rest assured, that the labour thus bestowed upon the rising race, will not be labour in vain; it will train for the sanctuary a race of pious

and well-informed communicants; and it will raise up in this place a seed to serve God, when you and the present generation shall have entered into your rest.

Hitherto I have dwelt on the duties which you owe the people of your charge, who certainly have the first and principal claim on your efforts and energies; but I would not be discharging my duty, if I did not remind you, that you must not limit your efforts to do good by the boundaries of your congregation. Your exertions for the spread of the cause of God, must have a wider range. Strenuously exert yourself for the advancement of the interests of that denomination of Christians, with which you stand most closely connected. On every proper occasion, defend and advocate those scriptural views of the nature of Christ's kingdom, which distinguish us as a religious body. For your brethren and companions' sake, labour and pray for the peace and the prosperity of our Zion. But beware of imbibing a sectarian spirit. Let your heart and life at all times be influenced by the liberal and catholic principles which you profess, and bestow your unfeigned love and respect on all those who love the Lord Jesus. Lose no opportunity of doing good. Take a lively interest in every plan for the extension and establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom, either at home or abroad; and never refuse your countenance, nor your advocacy, nor your prayers, nor your pecuniary support, to those charitable and religious institutions, which have for their object the furtherance of the temporal or eternal interests of our race.

II. Having reminded you of a few of the duties which devolve upon you as a minister of Christ, let me now call your attention to the qualifications necessary for the right discharge of these duties.

Diligence in study is an important qualification for the work of the ministry.

The times in which we live are distinguished by the progress which the public mind is making in knowledge of every description. Of late years the march of intellect has been rapid, and a public instructor must now be diligent if he would maintain a superiority over his disciples. Be unwearied, then, in the pursuit of knowledge. Neglect not those classical studies in which you have been engaged during your late academical career, and, at the same time, cultivate a growing acquaintance with the general literature of the present

day. But, oh! let all your literary and scientific researches be made subservient to those studies which are infinitely more sublime in their nature and more glorious in their end. Read carefully those works of Theology and Church History, and Biblical Criticism, which pious men have penned and left as a legacy to the Church of Christ. Above all, study with attention the sacred volume—the Word of the living God. This is the pure and inexhaustible well of salvation, out of which you are to draw the water of life for the refreshment of your own soul, and for the purification and nourishment of the souls of your people. The human authors you consult may bless you with a clear and deep insight into the things of God; but if you trust to their wisdom you lean on an arm of flesh, and you may be grievously misled. Appeal, then, at all times “to the law and to the testimony;” there you will be certain to learn the mind of God; there you will have the guidance of divine light and divine truth. Further, beware of giving way to carelessness or sloth in your preparations for the pulpit. Never serve God with that which costs you nothing, but exercise such habits of diligence in study as will approve you to be “a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of God,” and able to bring forth “things new and old.”

A *prayerful spirit* is another qualification essential for the work of the ministry.

As a scholar and a man of talent you stand high in the estimation of all who know you, but I beseech you place no confidence in the mere strength of your intellect. Talents and mental acquirements, without the divine blessing, will never render you a useful or successful minister of the Cross. What can the most moving, the most eloquent, the most laboured pulpit address do of itself, to remove darkness from the understanding, or terror from the conscience, or distress from the heart? Why, nothing! God only can make your ministrations be attended with a saving effect. You may sow, and plant, and water, in the vineyard of the Lord, but to the Lord of the vineyard you must look for the increase. Apply, then, frequently and fervently at a throne of grace. Pray for a blessing on every sermon which you preach, and on every labour of love in which you engage, and you will achieve wonders in the work to which you are called. It is the man of prayer, and the man of prayer

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only, who can expect to turn many to righteousness, and finally to give in his account with joy and not with grief.

Another necessary qualification for the work of the ministry is *holiness of heart and life*.

You must strive not only to preach well and to pray well, but also to live well, so that God may not have reason to say of you, “My people shall be fed even by thee, but thou shalt be hungry.” Surely, if courage be necessary for the soldier, and learning for the scholar, and skill for the artificer, still more must holiness be necessary for the minister of religion. Attention to their own vineyard, as well as those of others, is the imperious duty of all who serve God at his altar. Indeed, without purity of character and circumspection in conduct, they never can secure for themselves respect from their people, or success in their work. Even the wicked and profane will condemn, in his absence, the perfidious conduct of an unholy and licentious minister. Be you holy, then, in all manner of conversation. Having this day publicly devoted yourself to the service of the Redeemer, in the preaching of the Gospel, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, and thus you will be preserved from dishonouring the name, or wounding the cause of your divine Master. Take your place beneath the shadow of the tree of life yourself, and partake plentifully of its healing fruit; thus you will be qualified to recommend with success its abundance to others, that they may eat and live for ever. Be assured that it is only by a holy deportment and a godly life that you will obtain the love of your people, the approval of your conscience, and the commendation of your Father who is in heaven.

The only other qualification for the work of the ministry, to which I would at present allude, is *gentleness of temper*.

Part of your duty as a minister, is to bear rule in the church of God, and to administer its discipline on offending members, and I trust you will ever do so firmly and conscientiously. Guard, however, against the indulgence of a haughty spirit in the discharge of your duty—lord it not over God’s heritage. In all your transactions with your flock act the part of a tender and compassionate father. As far as duty will permit bear with the weak, and do not superciliously despise them. “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then

X

peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of merey and good fruits, without partiality and without hypoerisy." Be clothed with this wisdom; it is the finest and the fairest garment with which you can be adorned.

I have now fulfilled the duty when devolved upon me; I have addressed you in the words of affectionate counsel. The interesting and affecting services of this day must have made a deep impression upon your heart, and I can easily conceive that in the fulness of your heart you are ready to ery out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Truly your heart might well sink within you, and your courage fail, were it not for the comfortable assurance that your sufficiency is of God. Let the promise of his aid encourage and support you. Cast all your care upon him; in the hour of temptation he will defend you; in the hour of perplexity he will direct you; in the hour of disappointment he will sustain you,

and in the hour of distress he will comfort you. And now, my brother, let me charge you in words more solemn and emphatic than those of men. "Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand."

"I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine," "in all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Amen and Amen.

THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD A LAWFUL SUBJECT OF HUMAN STUDY AND CONSIDERATION;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE ORIGINAL SECEDERS' CHAPEL, RICHMOND STREET EDINBURGH,

By the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D.,

Author of the Life of John Knox, Life of Andrew Melville, &c., &c.

"Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee, yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments."—JEREMIAH xii. 1.

THE circumstances of the prophet when he uttered these words were of a very distressing kind. He had long witnessed with the most painful feelings, the irreligious and wicked conduct of his countrymen. In the necessary discharge of the divine commission with which he was intrusted, he had declared the judgments of God against them on account of their sins and their impenitence, and he had the mortification to find that, instead of reclaiming them, or preventing their ruin, or delaying the calamities that were approaching, he had only awakened their resentment against himself and inflamed their guilty and criminal passions. They persecuted him as an enemy to the state, and reviled him as one who took a delight in the prospect of the disgrace and of the overthrow of his country. Their animosity against him was greatly aggravated by the representations of the false prophets, who took advantage of the merciful delay of the divine judgments, and flattered the people with long and uninterrupted peace, so that his own friends and the inhabitants of his

native town joined in the conspiracy and threatened him with death, if he did not desist from prophesying in the name of Jehovah. Now any one of these trials in itself would have been sufficiently painful; but, meeting all of them together as he actually did, they proved an accumulated load of grief which was to him quite overwhelming. In these circumstances, we find Jeremiah having recourse to the presence of his divine Master, pouring out his complaint before him, and begging of him permission to disburden his oppressed heart, by dwelling a little on those dispensations which were of a dark and perplexing kind. The saints of God are often found in circumstances which bear a great resemblance to those of the prophet, and accordingly his example is appropriate, and the due considerations of it must be useful under the blessing of God, for extricating their minds from some of those distressing feelings by which they are at times ready to be overwhelmed. Let me, then, here suggest to you a few general reflections.

In the first place, it is lawful for the saints to enter into the mystery of divine providence. We are not to pry into futurity except in so far as God has been pleased to unveil it by means of prophecy; and even the revelations of prophecy are so partial that we are generally apt to err in interpreting them, so that it is generally safest to wait until the proper meaning and application of them have been ascertained by the event. But the past and the present form a legitimate subject for devout and careful inquiry. Providence is the work of God. In its movement we may discern the actings of the Almighty, and if we are properly attentive to it, we may trace the marks of his power, wisdom, faithfulness, goodness, and holiness. The works of God in providence call for our praise and our prayers, for our adoration, humiliation and gratitude. But how is it possible that we can be affected with them in this manner, and as we ought to be, unless by meditation, by a careful comparing of them with the Scriptures, and by prayer, we ascertain their character, and endeavour to interpret their language? A great part of practical religion lies in the observance of the operations of Providence; and it is owing to our neglecting these, or cultivating this branch of religion in a careless and superficial manner that our minds often fall into a state of darkness or distress about the workings of the Almighty as to others or ourselves. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." On the one hand, a severe threatening is, in the word of God, uttered against those who observe not the works of the Lord, and regard not the operations of his hands; and on the other hand, a due and devout observance of God's operations and holy providence, is mentioned as a mark of true wisdom, and a means of safety. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things, prudent and he shall know them; for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them." "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." Accordingly we find that good and wise men in all ages have made this an important part of their study.

In the second place, I would have you to observe, my friends, that the saints are permitted to use familiarity with God in these

inquiries. He permits them to be free, and even hold, in talking with him upon this subject. They are not only allowed to commune with their own hearts upon their beds—they are not only allowed to commune one with another, and to ease their smart by imparting mutually their sorrows and their counsel, but they are allowed to commune with their God in direct addresses to his throne. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." He does not merely permit them to talk on the subject of his judgments, but is willing that they should lay aside reserve and restraint, and talk freely with himself about them. Nor is this all. He permits them to state their objections, and to make replies to his answers, to plead with him, in the language of our text. "Let us plead together," says he, "put me in remembrance," state your objections to any part of my conduct, "declare thou, that thou mayest be justified." Wonderful condescension! A terrible challenge which the Almighty thus, as it were, puts into the hands of his people! And, yet, it is a challenge, my friends, that many a one of them has accepted, and in the contest has had power with God, and prevailed. What a striking example have you of this in the case of the friend of God immediately before the destruction of Sodom, the city of the plain, where Abraham talks with God about his judgments, just as one man would do with another. When God imparted to him his intentions, Abraham reasons thus with him: "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee, Lord, to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" But it is necessary to warn you, that this familiarity with God about his judgments should always be tempered with deep reverence and humility. God permits his saints to use familiarity in such inquiries, but this implies, that they do not enter upon them of their own accord, and without leave asked and obtained from his holy word. He is not bound to give an account of his matters. The Most High is not under an obligation to listen to the complaints of his creatures, and to answer and remove all those objections, often very unreasonable and very slightly founded, that may arise in their minds, and give them

uncasiness. But then the Prophet says, "Let me talk with thee of thy judgments." Now, what we say by sufferance, we should say with great modesty. We should always remember, both when speaking to God in prayer, and also when inquiring in our own meditation, or in discourse, into the ways of the Almighty, that he is in heaven and that we are on earth, and therefore our words should be few. We should beware of pushing too far, either our complaints respecting our trials, or our demands into the reasons of the divine procedure. We should remember that our mind is too weak to fathom the judgments of God, which are "a great deep," and to follow "Him whose way is in the sky, whose path is in the deep waters, and whose footsteps are not known." How was Abraham tempered with deep reverence and godly humility, when he was interceding for Sodom. "Behold now," says he, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes. Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Oh! let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once."

Again, it is of the first importance in the inquiries into the dispensations of providence, that we retain on our spirits an abiding sense of the essential moral attributes of the Disposer of events. When he meets with difficulties and with trials, even the saint himself is sometimes in danger of razing the foundations of religion, of calling in question the providence of God, and of falling into a state of not unimpious despair. He is ready to ask, "How doth God know, and is there knowledge in the Most High?" and to say, "Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence." "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?" Now, in these circumstances, it is of great importance that the inquirer keep before his eye and have deeply impressed upon his mind, what I would call here the first principles of religion—that there is a God, and that this God is holy, and wise, and good in all the dispensations of his providence. The due

conviction of these truths serves just like a polar star to guide the Christian in the night of trouble, or it may be compared to the anchor, sure and steadfast, to keep the soul amid the storm of adversity. The conduct of Asaph while he threw angry eyes upon the prosperity of wicked men, and indulged envy to his fellow-men, was very much akin to impiety against God. When he cast his eyes upon the prosperity of the wicked, his steps began to slip, and he found himself going, when all at once he staid himself by planting his foot upon the unchangeable love of God to his people; and, therefore, he begins the 73d Psalm, which consists of a view of God's dispensations to the righteous and the wicked, by laying down this leading principle, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." He does not accordingly in what follows blame God, but only enters into the reasons of his conduct, that by the answers he obtains he may be able to reconcile God's goodness with the afflictions that he is pleased to send. Now, my brethren, it is permitted the people of God to inquire into the mystery of divine providence, and into the reasons why God deals so hardly with those that are his own children. It is even lawful for them to use familiarity in these inquiries, but this familiarity must always be restrained by reverence, and tempered by deep humility. And it is of the first importance in entering on such inquiries, that we should keep in our minds, and have deeply impressed on them, the essential moral attributes of the Almighty. "Righteous art thou, O Lord," is the first word that our prophet says when he is pleading with God, and begging liberty to talk with him with respect to his judgments.

The Rev. Doctor after observing that this might suffice, and he might permit those who had been attending to the things he had been urging to go away without any thing more, proceeded a little farther to mention some circumstances in the dispensations of Providence that were of a dark and of a perplexing nature, and to show, notwithstanding all this, that the Lord is righteous in all that he doth. But our limits force us to come to a conclusion.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

LECTURE by the Rev. JOHN MUIR, D.D., Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN B. PATTERSON, A.M., Falkirk.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST ;

A LECTURE DELIVERED ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, 16TH JUNE, 1833, FROM JOHN
xiv. 8—18.

By the Rev. JOHN MUIR, D.D.,
Minister of St. James' Church, Glasgow.

IN this interesting portion of the word of God, it is the object of our Lord to lay down some of the peculiar truths of revealed religion for the encouragement of his disciples, when evil or difficulty came in their way. He calls upon his friends, and through them upon us, not to allow their hearts to be troubled, because if we believe in God as ruler of the world and taking vengeance on sin, we should believe also in Christ, who came, not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. In short it is his object to inculcate that although our state be a fallen state, a state of sin and misery, it should by no means discourage us ; for while God the Father is judge of the world and the avenger of the workers of iniquity, Jesus Christ is revealed as Mediator between God and man ; and it is declared in the Gospel to be a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief. If we understand this very important thought, we should not be discouraged on account of sin and sorrow coming out to our view as characterizing human nature, but should just come to Christ the more.

“ Lord, show us the father,” says Philip, “ and it sufficeth us. This is just equivalent to an inquiry among ourselves on the part of those anxious to go to heaven when they die, Oh ! that we could find out the character of the invisible God with whom we have to do, who is judge between the quick and the dead, who knows our consciences, and knows also that we have sinned against him. God is revealed in three persons ; and the first of these, God the Father, is always brought out first in the economy of our redemption ; and it is a most natural wish to know what Being that God is with whom we have to do, who, being invisible, works by his providence on the right hand and on the left, who can show mercy unto thousands, and yet is so revengeful as to make thinking

men understand that he is no indifferent spectator of men's conduct, but is determined to call them to account for the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil. This natural appetite for knowledge is illustrated in some of the Old Testament Scriptures, as in the transaction between king Solomon and the queen of Sheba, in a very beautiful manner ; for the young queen of Sheba undertook a long and expensive journey from her own country, Ethiopia, unto Solomon's, the land of Israel, that she might verify what she had heard of Solomon's wisdom, and see with her own eyes wherein his glory consisted ; and the truth brought out in this is, that individuals who are anxious to please God undertake what to them is troublesome and sometimes expensive, with a view to ascertain for themselves wherein the glory of the invisible God consists, and wherein consists the glory of the Mediator. In Psalm cxx. David tells us, “ In my distress I cried unto the Lord.” In distress men begin to be serious, and would put far from them lying lips and a deceitful tongue, and show that they are in good earnest about the salvation of their souls. At other times they have no objections to forms in religion, Popish, Episcopalian, or Presbyterian ; but let religion go beyond the form, and then the lying lips begin. Accordingly, the prayer of the Psalmist is, “ Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips and from a deceitful tongue.” It is troublesome to please God, and when a man begins to be in earnest, it is natural for him to be anxious, by reading, by hearing the best preachers, by consulting the best books and the experience of the best Christians, to know the character of God, and whether he can forgive sins, and his sons in particular, and if he can forgive them, how he can retain his character for justice. “ Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou

not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father.

We cannot infer from this that the Father is clothed with bodily parts and human members as Christ was when he was on earth. He dwells in light inaccessible and full of glory. He is a spirit properly so called, without body and without parts; and when he says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," he must mean that the discerning mind, marking his temper, character, and conduct, and knowing him to be Lord in human nature all the while, must understand that the invisible God is beyond all doubt a merciful God and a just God, and these are the two parts of the character of God with which we have chiefly to do. There are many parts in the character of God. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, his wisdom, his power, his holiness, his justice, his goodness, and his truth; but of all the perfections of God his justice and his mercy are those with which we have principally to do. We read in *Exod. xxxiii. 18*, that when Moses said "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." Yes, says God, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy;" indicating that while by and by he would make his goodness pass before Moses, in the meantime Moses must be contented to know that very much of God's glory is his graciousness, his mercy, and the sovereignty of his mercy. "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." And again in *chap. xxxiv. 5-9*, "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us, (for it is a stiff-necked people,) and pardon our iniquity, and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance." It is the glory of the Lord or the

moral character of our God with which we have to do principally, and with which we ought to intermeddle continually—his being a just God and Saviour, visiting iniquity and yet long-suffering, giving mercy to thousands, and forgiving iniquity. In all these characters we see him in Christ, for there we see justice in the vicarious suffering of our Lord, and mercy described gloriously in his being the surety for those who are sinners and come to God through him. To this Christ refers, when he says, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, show us the Father?" This language proceeds upon the idea that men ought to be possessed of a spiritual sense and discernment, and ought to see more than his exterior, his body, his countenance. He takes it for granted that men are made by God spiritual creatures, and that they ought to see something of the spiritual God in the person of Jesus Christ. We read in the 12th chap. of John, that when Christ visited Jerusalem, there were certain Greeks among them who had come up to worship at the feast, who wished to see Jesus, upon which he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." If you only believe Christ correct in supposing that man being made originally after God's image, ought still to retain some spiritual sense and discernment, you will perceive that when they come to Christ they ought to see his spiritual glory in dying. The grain of wheat falls into the ground—the seed must first die, and if it die, it afterwards bringeth forth much fruit. So with Christ. By his dying he rose again, and acquired a right to raise along with him some who otherwise must have left their bodies in the grave and their souls in hell. But, says Christ, here "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In the 10th verse we have the explanation of this. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?"

The result is, that I and the Father are one. He is in me and I in him, and therefore we are one, the same in substance, and equal in power and glory, for the gospel proceeds on the supposition that the eternal Jehovah subsists in three persons, and yet that there is but one God. So then we are to understand that that wonderful personage called Christ, who was at this time going

about doing good, having assumed our nature, was nevertheless a divine person, the very God who made all things. He showed his condescension by taking our nature without taking sin along with it, and thereby he became mediator between God and man. This will help us to understand that those who have seen Christ, have seen the Father; for, if we had spiritual discernment, we would be able to reason somehow thus from facts and premises standing before us—first of all, that here is God the Son, the second person of the glorious Trinity, appearing in our world in the form of a man, and seeming to go about exactly as a man would do, and keeping God's commands as a man ought to keep them. These facts before us, our minds should reason, Surely this is not for himself, for there can be no obligation lying on him to act thus for himself. Is the Almighty God bound to become himself a creature, and to act the part of a creature with his own hand? Impossible. If, therefore, this mighty being is to act the part of a creature, it must be in the room and stead of others. It is to make the invisible God appear through Christ as a just God, and a most merciful God. Thus we get so much of the invisible God through Christ, that the Son of the Father, he who is the eternal God himself, did nevertheless take our nature, and in that nature did the creature's work; that therefore God is at once just and the justifier of ungodly men. But we must, in order to believe this, believe that Christ and God are one. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?"

"The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself."

No. To speak them of himself is to speak them as man: we see no more but the man with our bodily eye, but his words were spoken as God, and therefore with the highest authority. "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself," not as a mere man, which I appear to be to the eyes of your senses, but as God, as I really am, the Father being in me, and I in the Father. So then these words, "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions," &c., after the prediction of Peter's denial, are spoken on the highest authority, and are the words of eternal truth. In plain words, we are told that our state being a state of sin and sorrow, in place of our giving way to despondency under the gospel, we should be encouraged to be stronger in the faith and in giving God glory, for we have as good reason to believe in Christ the Saviour, as

to believe in God the avenger of all that work iniquity.

"The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."

These might be the miraculous works, many of which are put on record; but more than are recorded were done, for it is said in the end of this gospel, "There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Now all these works, recorded and unrecorded, were wrought by him as God, through the indwelling deity. He did them all in his own name and authority; but when he says, "the Father that dwelleth in me doeth the works," he means to say, the indwelling deity did the works, not the mere man—the works proved him to be God, and therefore his words are to be received by us as of the highest possible authority.

"Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."

"Believe me." Take my word for it, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me. We have here a repetition of what is stated in the 10th verse; and it is indeed a most important truth, the deity, the eternal deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God-head of Jesus Christ, and a truth which we are very apt to overlook; so much so, that I verily believe the great body of professing Christians, those at least who have merely a profession, never honestly believe at all that Christ is the eternal God, but a man—a very superior man in point of character, no doubt, but with all his superiority to other men, yet after all a man. But our Saviour is God, and it is of the utmost importance to know that our Saviour is the mighty God. Because he is so in his incarnate nature, his work has honoured God's justice and law, and he is perfectly able to apply to his people the benefit which his vicarious work wrought out. But this great truth is so apt to be overlooked that he repeats it: "Believe me," take my word for it, that I am God, and cannot lie; if you cannot trust my word for it, believe me for my very work's sake. Treat these books of the gospels as you do Cæsar's commentaries, or any authentic history of past events, and what do you conclude? The most inveterate enemies have risen up against them in all past ages, and could they have made them out to be lies, they would have done so; but they have never been able with all their research and ingenuity to overturn the facts of the gospel

history. They are the most substantial of all truths: they are real facts—that there came into our world the Son of Mary, who went about continually doing good, and working works which no man could do—his very enemies have been unable to deny this—that at last he died and then rose again, but appeared for forty days, after he rose, to many, and then went up to heaven with his body upon him, declaring that he would come again at the last day. These are facts that cannot be controverted. We have had diabolical imitations of these works in ancient and in modern times, but they were all smothered in darkness. Your popish miracles, and your other miracles of the present day, could not bear the light. Well then he was God—we ought to believe him to be God for the very work's sake. If we will not take his word, we must just examine those gospel facts which took place eighteen hundred years ago, and then we must be as brute beasts if we do not admit that this was God and not mere man. If we admit this, we must believe in the atonement through him, because in the eyes of God the innocent never suffer. Christ suffered: his very enemies brought no fault against him. Why then should this innocent person suffer? Because of the sins of others, the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

In the first place, we observe, that the truths contained here must be very important, because they are introduced by the usual double asseveration, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." He never uses vain words. The truths following must be very important in Christ's eye, and should be so in ours also. He calls them works such as he did, that believers shall do. They are like Christ's works, because they go to counteract nature. By nature, we mean a certain mode of procedure adopted by the great God who governs all things, in which he generally moves in the government of the world. For example, when the wind blows on the surface of the ocean, it makes it swell and roar, when it causes men reel to and fro, like drunken men; this is called nature. But Christ made the waters in a moment be hushed and smoothed down. This is coun-

teracting what we call nature, going against the usual course of nature, counteracting the ordinary course of procedure on the part of Him who governs all things. Now, says he, the believer also shall be able to counteract nature; but in what sense? not in the sense of making the winds cease, and the waves be still; for he says, greater works than these shall he do, meaning evidently, that this counteracting of nature is to be of a spiritual kind, and not over the material world. "Greater works than these," inasmuch as matter is an inferior thing, mind a superior and more excellent thing; inasmuch as our bodies are weaker than our spiritual part, and the soul gives to the body all its value. Believers' counteracting of nature being of the spiritual kind, their works are said to be greater and more excellent than the works of Christ, when he wrought miracles on the bodies of men. And why all this? "Because I go unto my Father," that is, because I finish righteousness; I work righteousness; and in proof of its being a perfect work, I go to the Father. In the 16th chapter, at the 8th verse, we read, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." After he had finished his work, he was received most cordially, with the approbation of the angels of God, never to come back any more, till he come again without sin. They are guilty of damnable heresy, who say that Christ shall come again in the flesh, as if any part of his work were left unfinished. We shall see him no more, till he come the second time without sin unto salvation. He leads us to infer that great things must come out of the connexion with Christ. We are, indeed, unable to calculate the amount of good that must come out to individuals who have made their connexion with Christ; and hence the propriety of the words, "Verily, verily," &c. Christ is God, and, as God, has obtained the approbation of the invisible Jehovah, in consequence of his having finished the work of righteousness in our nature. This is of vast consequence, and is well fitted to encourage us; and hence he says, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

Thus we get all the good he promised, and through the instrumentality of prayer; great relief from difficulty, and great power

to counteract and rise above nature in the spiritual world. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." This is not saying, "Jesus, good Lord, hear us, for Christ's sake, Amen." It is putting up a prayer in the enlightened understanding of what Christ was, and of what he did. So truly are believers identified with Christ in his finished work, that if we ask, we shall receive, in so far as promotes God's glory and the welfare of our own souls. "Be careful for nothing," says the Apostle, "but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," and you shall get wonderful things, at all events, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. The context shows the absurdity of being confined to set forms of prayer. Can set forms of prayer state every want that a man may come under? for he says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." Children, when very hungry, need not set forms of prayer, by which to express their wants. Prompted by the feeling of hunger, they say, Mother, I am hungry, I want some bread. In like manner, the Christian, when feeling wants, knows what language to use, without a set form of words, which, however, children may use till they become stronger.

The reason is "that the Father may be glorified in the Son;" that is, that the mighty power and the great grace of Jehovah, the eternal God, may appear to the subject, the creature, who comes in Christ's name, for the sake of the Son, that the glory may redound to God and to us through the Son. Perhaps the language here may receive some illustration from what happened after Paul's conversion. The attendants could not believe that a man so hot a persecutor could be now a believer, and when they began to see it true they glorified God—they saw the beauty of God's wisdom and condescension in turning this vessel of wrath, and making it from a persecutor a sweet preacher of the glorious gospel. They glorified God—they saw God in him. So here the Father is glorified in the Son, and God the Father is kind to that people who believe in Christ for the Son's sake. The Father glorified the Son, that God may have an opportunity of lavishing out his love on vessels of mercy chosen out from among mankind. Thus are the members of Christ identified with him; I count them all one, and my Son's work was so glorious that I wish to reward it. Oh! we are apt to overlook the value and the glory of Christ's work. It is foolish to ask remission of sins from man, because, unless it

is the will of God, it shall never be granted; but in so far as it is the will of God, though impossible to nature possessed of flesh and blood, all things with him are possible. The spiritual miracles of believers are not enthusiastical, because they are wrought in virtue of strength given for the sake of Jesus Christ. They are all agreeable to right reason, and there is no such thing as enthusiasm in the real Christian life. But observe how some modern enthusiasts have gone aside from these words, when they say that Christ will give the believer power to heal the sick, and perform other miracles, if they have but faith. When Christ speaks of miracles, he qualifies what he says by the statement, "greater works than these shall he do," because they are spiritual works—and to speak of a believer healing the sick is to reduce the standard of Christ—it is becoming children when we ought to be men. The miraculous works of believers are miraculous works wrought upon the mind. If you ask any thing of this kind in his name, he will do it. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." These words, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," in this connexion, intimate that as many as come under the description in the previous part of this passage, will thereby be drawn, as it were, by cords of love to love God and obey him. Jonah was bidden go to Nineveh and warn the inhabitants of their approaching destruction, but he rebelled and went in a ship, as he thought, to a foreign land—he paid his fare and took his passage, but was overtaken by a storm, and, conscious of his guilt, he confessed his crime of trying to evade the command of God, and was cast into the sea, where a large fish swallowed him up, and retained him in its belly for three days. In this situation he prayed, and God heard his prayer for Christ's sake, for he was vomited alive and found himself safe on dry land. In this case you may hear God pleading, and saying, "Now, just go to Nineveh and do as I bid you, and keep God's commands." So it is here. Peter would not believe what Jesus told him, that he was so bad as he was. But said Jesus, "I say unto thee, the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice." Upon the back of all this, however, it is added, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me, for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;" i. e. those who have come under the fear of sin and sorrow. "In my Father's house are many mansions," not only for unapostate creatures, as angels, but for lapsed creatures as men are. And, now, if by such a process you are brought to love

God—"if you love me, keep my commandments"—you will show that you love me—that you have rightly gone through this Christian process, if now "ye keep my commandments." Remember what I have been saying to you—endeavour to keep the moral law, the rule of life, and let not your heart be troubled, "ye believe in God, believe also in me." "Keep the commandments." Have the words of Christ dwelling in your hearts and minds, and thereby show that you love Christ and all who love his name. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Here observe that the gift of the Holy Ghost, as Comforter, is promised in a particular order. For whose sake is the Comforter given? It is because Christ prays for him, that the Comforter comes to men, not because they keep God's commands. They keep God's commands, being drawn by the cords of love, and yet this Comforter comes for Christ's sake, and not for their sakes. But still though he comes to you for Christ's sake, he comes for Christ's sake in a particular order; and the order is, we must show our love to Christ by living after new obedience. When we show our love to Christ by endeavouring to keep his commands, fearing the approach of sin, and calling in the grace of God to enable us to walk in some measure and way of new obedience; then the Comforter comes, "even the Spirit of truth." The Comforter comes to comfort just by bringing old truths up to remembrance. And this shows the vast importance of the Lord's table. Although some may stay away because they hear just the old story over again, yet

the Spirit, by bringing up old truths seasonably to remembrance, kindles in the heart the flame of piety. Men of the world scout the idea of piety altogether, because they have no experience of it, and what a man has no experience of, he must count as enthusiastic and revery. The Christian has experience of it—he knows it, because he has a taste for religious conversation, for religious books, for which he had no taste before—he has the experience of the indwelling God, but the world knows not God.

Your time will not allow me to enlarge. On looking back upon this passage it contains many important lessons and one is, that the idea conveyed to our minds in the gospel is quite different from that which, by nature, we entertain. We are apt to think that they are the happy people who get through life most smoothly, and who enjoy, in a good old age, a large portion of its goods. Those, we think, are the happiest who do not know change of any kind. The gospel proceeds upon the idea of human life being a state of sin and sorrow. Now, it is good for us to know the fact as it is, to have our eyes opened to our real state, as a state of sin and misery. And although it is knowledge very humbling, yet says Christ, Let not your hearts be discouraged now; but if ye believe in God, believe also in me; for you know that I came not so much a lawgiver and judge as a Saviour. The people, therefore, who know changes, if these give them a connexion with Christ, if they make them know what Christ is, are the happiest people. We ought, then, to allow the Lord to take his own way. We are in the valley of humiliation, but if we be conformed to Christ in humiliation for a time here, we shall certainly abound in the article of glory in the world hereafter Amen.

SELF-EXAMINATION EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED;

A FAST-DAY SERMON, PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF EASE, ANDERSTON, GLASGOW, ON THE AFTERNOON OF THURSDAY, 27TH JUNE, 1833,

By the Rev. JOHN B. PATTERSON, A.M.,
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"Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden."—GAL. vi. 4, 5.

THE text naturally and obviously divides itself into two parts, that which treats of the duty enjoined, and that which treats of the motive by which the duty is enforced. To these we shall now, with God's help, attend in their order. In illustrating this text, we shall speak, in the first place, of the duty enjoined, and then enforce it by the argument alleged.

In the first place, then, let us describe what it is for a man to prove his own work. What is called the *work of a man*, according to the scriptural use of that term, includes in it not merely his actions, but the principles from which his actions proceed. It is in general what we term his character, his ruling principles and habits of thought, and feeling, and action. Thus the word is used

in 1 Peter i. 17, "And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's *work*"—that is, according to his real character. Now this work, these characters of ours, we are in the text recommended to prove. The phrase, *to prove*, very frequently in Scripture contains in it, besides the idea of a trial, that of a satisfactory result of the trial. It signifies to prove, so as to approve. 1 Cor. xvi. 3. "Whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality." 1 Thess. ii. 4, "But as we were allowed of God," have been approved, thought worthy, "to be put in trust with the Gospel." That this is the sense which the word has in the passage before us is plain, from the concluding clause of the 4th verse, "Then shall he have rejoicing in himself," a consequence which follows, not necessarily from the act of self-examination, but from such an examination leading to a pleasing issue—from probation terminating in approbation. This, then, is obviously the Apostle's meaning, Let every man see that, let no man be contented till his character can stand the test of due examination, or approve itself in a satisfactory manner. The question then arises, What description of character is that which will abide such a trial, which the Apostle would account so approved, that a man might have rejoicing in himself? It is that character which he has himself described in the case of his friend, Apelles, whom he recommends to the Romans, as a man approved in Christ—that is, a tried Christian, a genuine disciple and follower of Jesus. Now, of this character, the fundamental principle is a firm and established faith in Jesus Christ, and the testimony of God concerning him as the only, yet all-sufficient Saviour; and the superstructure consists of all those spiritual exercises and graces, which are represented in Scripture as the native fruits of genuine and saving faith. The test, therefore, by which alone a man's personal Christianity can be satisfactorily tried, is the result of the question, Does this real faith really exist within him, and is it to any sensible extent producing these fruits? Therefore, it is distinctly propounded by the Apostle in a parallel passage, as the specific subject of inquiry in the work of self-examination: "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith;" and this is, in particular, the subject of that special self-examination which is so solemnly enjoined in Scripture as the necessary preparation for the holy communion, when it is said, "Let a man examine him-

self, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." For consider what is the express sense and meaning of the communicant's sacramental action in that sacred ordinance. The very record of the institution shows that it is that which is figuratively expressed by the phrases, eating the Saviour's body, and drinking the Saviour's blood; and what such phrases denote will become plain to you, by consulting the passage where they are used in John vi. 54, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day," obviously repeating, in figurative terms, what he had shortly before stated in more literal expressions, recorded at the 40th verse, "Every one who seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." To eat the flesh, and to drink the blood, of the Son of Man, according to our Lord's own explanation, is to believe in him, in the scriptural sense of believing; and what every communicant therefore does when he eats and drinks the appointed emblems of the Redeemer's body and blood, is, by signs, as distinct and definite as any words could have been, to profess and declare himself in the presence of all spectators, visible and invisible, in the presence of God and his attendant angels, and his assembled worshippers, a believer in Christ Jesus. Now, then, let every intending communicant distinctly realize to his own mind the meaning of the action he is about to perform. Let him put it into plain and distinct words: let him say to himself, I am going to declare, in the most solemn circumstances and manner, according to a form appointed by God, and in the sense understood by God, that I believe in Christ. But think, O man, think seriously, whether, in so doing, thou shalt declare a falsehood or a truth; and oh! ponder deeply, that if the former, thou liest not unto man, but unto God. Let this consideration prevail with thee, to give thy mind with the utmost possible seriousness, to obtain in thine own case, a true answer to the question, Dost thou believe in the Son of God?

In determining this question, there are two descriptions of evidence which it will be for us to examine: the direct evidence of consciousness to the act of faith, and the reflex evidence, or particular effect flowing from the power of faith. Faith or belief in Christ, that is, of the gospel testimony concerning Christ, as the only and the all-sufficient Saviour like every other operation of the mind, is the subject of the man's own

consciousness; and if we were able and willing in all cases rightly to interpret our own inner consciousness, we should not need any other testimony to form the ground of a perfectly satisfactory test, in regard to our being possessed or destitute of faith in Christ. Meanwhile, though from our liability to err in reading the records of this interior testimony, we ought never to allow it to satisfy us, unconfirmed from other quarters, it is in itself worthy of being strictly and minutely consulted. The more strict and minute our examination is, the more is the risk of error diminished. On this subject, then, let each sit down and deliberately ask himself, if he really is conscious of having seriously believed, of now seriously believing, the declarations of the gospel concerning Jesus Christ and man's Redeemer. Is the impression on his understanding of this system of truth equal, or like in nature, to that produced by any other truth which he knows, and is sure that he believes? Has he the consciousness of distinctly apprehending the meaning of the Scripture testimony regarding Christ, to some reasonable extent; to such an extent, as to find in it a sufficient and sure foundation for a sinner's hope towards a God of justice and of holiness? And is he conscious, in like manner, of distinctly apprehending its evidence, as well as meaning? Does he see it to be supported by the testimony of Him who cannot lie? Does he feel the Gospel to be the very truth of the Omniscient? Has he, with regard to it, set to his seal that God is true? This apprehension, first of the meaning, and then of the evidence, is what in every case constitutes faith, and the consciousness of faith, or belief, is the consciousness of this double apprehension. A want of either makes faith impossible. A man who does not understand what is the Gospel, does not, cannot, believe it. He may believe something about the Gospel, but he cannot possibly believe the very Gospel itself. And, on the other hand, however well a man may understand the system and the theory of divine truth, if he does not farther apprehend it to be divine truth, supported by the veracity of God, he cannot believe it, for it cannot be received on any other evidence whatever. By addressing the question, then, *Do I believe in Christ?* thus resolved into its parts, to our own consciences, we shall, perhaps, be more likely to be able to obtain a just view of the condition of our minds, than by putting it in any more general aspect. Only in making the inquiry, let us seek, above all things, let

our consciences be persuaded, to answer truly as in a case where truth or falsehood is of everlasting consequence. If the inquiry be thus pursued, we have little doubt that even the direct testimony of our own minds will go far to settle the question truly, on the answer to which depends our right to sit down at the table of our Lord.

But there are other materials of evidence of a more palpable kind, which in the work of self-examination, it will be our duty to consult; and these are to be found in the possession of those feelings of heart and principles of action, which are the natural and uniform fruits of faith. The very first of these, so immediate and so necessary as very often to be included in the definition of faith itself, is the feeling of settled and undivided reliance on Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. If we believe the Gospel at all, we shall believe what it teaches as its fundamental principles; on the one hand our own ruined condition as sinners, and our utter inability to redeem ourselves; and on the other, the absolute completeness and all-sufficiency, as well as freeness, of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, wrought out by his mysterious obedience and his atoning death. Whoever then believeth these things, it is plain, will be constrained to build whatever hope of salvation he has attained upon Christ, and only upon Christ; and he who is not exercising such a trust in the Saviour, is a stranger to the exercise of faith in the Saviour.

Is this then our hope? Is this our only hope? Are we forsaking and abjuring every ground of confidence in the sight of God and in the prospect of eternity, except what Christ has done and suffered for man's salvation? Has a feeling of contrite and lowly, but assured and steadfast dependence on the saving work of the Son of God, been effectually inwrought into the frame and habit of our minds. Feeling that other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus, do we seek to lay no other? Assured that that which is laid is a sure foundation, are we resting on it a good hope toward God? Have we that hope as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil—a hope, the only hope which shall never make us ashamed? And if the fruits of faith, as more obviously appropriate to the whole spirit and tenor of the ordinance with a reference to which we are now inquiring, test the reality of our happy belief, then where it is deficient, not only are we assured that the primary grace of faith

is deficient also, but we can perceive a direct disqualification for the due observance of the ordinance in which Christ is set forth, and by the true communicant acknowledged as the only but the all-sufficient propitiation for sin and the purchaser of salvation.

Another immediate and necessary effect of true faith in Christ, wherever it exists, will be love to Christ. The belief of the Gospel is the belief of Christ's most generous, and powerful, and triumphant love to man. And wherever a man is filled with this belief, and the perception of this love, and is led to depend on its effects as the ground of his own individual salvation, and so to feel the love in question overflowing in blessing to himself, what can he do but love that mighty friend who has first so loved him? Is this then the case with us? Do we know any thing of the love of Christ as a direct, and personal, and reigning principle? Dare we appeal with the triumphant Apostle to his own omniscience, and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Do we feel the love of Christ constraining us, mastering and controlling all other affections, so that more than we love father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or houses, or lands, or all that the world contains, we do love him? and do we feel that it is but just and meet, that if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ he should be anathema maranatha? Surely this proof and effort of faith is peculiarly fit to be sought for in our hearts, in the prospect of celebrating an ordinance like that before us—an ordinance which commemorates those stupendous transactions by which Christ obtained infinite and everlasting claims upon our gratitude and attachment, not loving his own life, but laying it down for our salvation.

But not to multiply particulars, let me remind you what the Bible teaches us to expect as the grand general proof of christian faith—christian holiness. It is obvious that the truth of the gospel, the truth regarding Jesus Christ, is altogether of a sanctifying tendency; and as truth operates upon character just by being believed, we are assured that wherever the truth of the Gospel is believed, it will exert a genuine, a hallowing influence over a man's whole walk and conversation. Besides, we are informed in Scripture, that it is through the truth that divine influence exerts itself by which man's fallen nature is renewed and purified according to our blessed Saviour's request—"sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Is it then so with us? Are

we proved to possess the genuine belief of the gospel by exhibiting its practical effects in all holy conversation and godliness? Can we take up the Apostle's challenge to those who separate between faith and holiness, and say, Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. I know that the obedience even of the righteous Christian is far from perfect—his conformity to Christ is faint and feeble—but still there is no real Christianity, be well assured, where there is not a ruling and habitual desire to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, where there is not some measure of conformity to that will which is our sanctification, and to his image which was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. "Hereby we do know, that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Let me ask you, then, can your characters abide the scrutiny of such a test? Is the desire to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, that which gives tone and character to your habits of thinking, and feeling, and speaking, and acting? Do you feel any desire after holiness at all in the spiritual and scriptural sense? Do you delight in the law of God after the inward man? Do you count all his commandments concerning all things to be right? Is it your wish, not that the law were brought down to your weakness, but that you were brought up to the law's perfection? and is this desire with any kind of distinctness marked upon your conduct? Is there an obvious endeavour to keep all God's commandments and all his ordinances blameless? Does it appear that the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath taught you to live soberly, and righteously, and godly? Mark the last word I beseech you. He that has been taught by the saving grace of God, has been taught not only to live soberly, although it is worthy of sober consideration that the intemperate, the abusers of the world, are plainly shut out from the character of Christians—not only to live righteously, although it is not to be forgotten that the dishonest, the unjust, are equally excluded from the sacred character, but godly, in the regular discharge of the duties a man owes to God as well as himself and his brethren. It is not enough to entitle you to the name and privileges of vital genuine Christians, that you maintain respectable and amiable characters in the eyes of those who look on the outward appearance, that as far as the

morality of time is considered no man dare impeach your purity, your self-command, your truth, your integrity, your honour, if he who searches the heart see reigning there the spirit of ungodliness, if among all the relations you occupy, you are habitually forgetful of the most momentous of all, if what you do, you do without reference to Him whose glory is the final end, and whose will is the governing law of the universe. Before, therefore, you call yourself a Christian, ask, are you a godly man? And the first commandment being restored to its supreme place over your nature and your lives, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, is He the supreme object to your minds and to your hearts? Is your present choice at one with your original destination, your chief end, which was to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever?

Such then are some specimens of the nature of that self-examination which the text enjoins. Let every man prove his own work, and let him prove it, so as to approve it. The Apostle of course is not to be understood as meaning by this expression, Let all decide favourably on their own character, with or without sufficient evidence—let all indiscriminately think and call themselves genuine Christians. Far, far from this. He knows too well that they are not all Israel who are of Israel, that many are they who have a name to live on their own lips, and on the lips of others, who yet are dead. But this is the import of the exhortation—whatever should be the present result of your investigation into your own character, let none be satisfied until he can fairly before his own conscience enlightened by God's word, approve his own character as that of a christian man. Let it be a chief object with all to obtain the well-founded assurance, that they are Christians, that they possess the character of Christ's true disciples, that they have therefore an interest in their blessed privileges, and their glorious hopes, and not till they have this assurance let them rest contented for the present, or esteem themselves safe for the future. Why? "For," adds the Apostle, "every man shall bear his own burden," every man shall have his portion assigned him at the last according to his character, and that portion shall be the burden of eternity, either on the one hand the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, or on the other the overwhelming everlasting load of wrath.

You know, my brethren, that all have an eternity before them, and are to be sent under the one burden or the other, which must be determined as Scripture often asserts, and as the text naturally implies by the character which they have or have not in life as Christians, by the interest which they possess or want in Christ and his salvation. Such then is the Apostle's advice. Judge of the infinite importance of now ascertaining your title to the character of Christians, by reflecting on the infinite weight and value of the interests which are suspended on the interests of that character. View the subject in the light of eternity, and dissipate other judgments and feelings from that period of solemn reflection. Oh! let creatures in such circumstances and with such prospects as ours, be assured, it will sooner or later appear that such a character was the only one with which they ought to have been satisfied to live, since it is the only one with which it is, meet for them to die. When eternity draws near, or when it has arrived, then it is, if not before, that we shall feel the pre-eminent importance of being genuine and approved Christians. It is ours to stand by many a deathbed, to watch the gradual approach and final entrance of many a soul into the dimness of eternity, and oh! what impressive demonstrations do such scenes sometimes afford of the importance, the infinite importance, of having an interest, and as far as possible an assured interest in Christ and his salvation—the assurance founded on scripture evidence of possessing the essential principles and features of christian character. Sometimes indeed we see God leave even those of whose real christianity, as far as human presumption may venture to decide, we can have no doubt, to struggle for a season in doubt in regard to their actual relation to the Saviour, but these exceptions are far from discrediting the general truth taught and confirmed in Scripture, that the true way to the assurance of christian hope is through the assurance of christian character; for when such individuals have doubted of their privilege, they have doubted of their character. If they had had firm conviction of the one, no fear could have been of the other. When such cases do occur, how solemnly do they not teach us how awfully important the christian character is likely to appear to us when stretched on the bed of death! Christianity with even the shadow of doubt, mingled though it be with much hope—we trust well founded—produces in those who

have a due sense of its value, such darkness and disquietude of spirit as imprints itself on the very countenance, in furrows drawn tight and deep, indicative of intense abstraction. But more impressive still are the lessons on this subject afforded by the deathbed scenes of those who do not so much doubt of their being Christians, as they are sure and can give sufficient evidence that they are not. As they enter beneath the expanse of heaven's mighty canopy, and see its immeasurable vastness coming down upon them, clothed with infinite wrath, how deeply do they bethink themselves, how solemnly do they teach others of the folly of having any character which did not prepare them to meet the burden of that hour! What would they not give that they had been Christians and known that they had effectually followed the advice of the text, and given themselves no rest till by the test of Scripture they could approve their work, so that now they might have in themselves the rejoicing of which the Apostle speaks, instead of that fearful looking for of vengeance, and that fiery indignation which overwhelms their spirits! It is true, that the spirit of recklessness, or of false hope in regard to eternity, which so often blinds men in the world to the importance of personally possessing the christian character, according to the scriptural measure, may continue with them even to the end. But the same delusive influence which whispered to the soul, peace, peace, in life, shall prove on its entrance on death that that is its ultimate limit—hitherto it shall come but no farther. In eternity itself there is no delusion. There the results of the character are not seen in distant expectation, but felt in closest experience. These results are as opposite as time and eternity, as happiness and misery, as heaven and hell. They are as infinite in degree as the capacity of the soul, and the duration of eternity. And when to the departed soul these results, forgotten perhaps in life, or miscalculated, are revealed in all their momentous reality and infinite magnitude, that man has his own individual portion assigned him by the judgment of Almighty God. If it be one of woe now as inexhaustible as it is infinite, when he remembers that it might all have been avoided, yea, exchanged for an equally irrevocable and infinite blessedness; and that he might have inherited the character of Christ's true disciples, how foolish, if not insane, will he not appear, having lived even for a moment to believe, while des-

titute of such a character, having accounted any object worthy of desire or pursuit, in comparison of winning Christ and being found in him, having taken it for granted, without a due examination, scripturally conducted, and satisfactorily terminated, that his faith was right, and his hope secure, and having so, by neglecting his own work, incurred the burden of an undone eternity.

And do not omit, my brethren, to observe how pointedly the text represents the duty and the motives of which we speak, as of personal concern to every individual human being. Let *every man* prove his own work, for *every one* shall bear his own burden. We have ways of which every one's experience will, I doubt not, afford an example, of escaping the edge of many an argument and remonstrance addressed to us in company with others. For example, in the midst of such a congregation of God's worshippers as I see before me, many may be hiding themselves in the crowd. We fear for others more than for ourselves. We think how well that remark affects this man, and how well this remark applies to that man. My neighbour here, we think, may take that to himself, and this exactly suits my acquaintance yonder. Meanwhile, we ourselves sit untouched and unaffected, as if we were in the centre of the multitude, where the arrow can reach us only through another's side; and so what is suitable to many is often effective with none, what is addressed to all is powerless with any. But the very language of the text should guard us all in the present case from this too common evasion by which, in our experience, that quick and powerful word which is sharper than a two-edged sword, is so often blunted and turned aside. The Apostle has addressed himself by means of this peculiar word in human speech, universal and yet singular, which, including all, addresses one; and so he assures us, that the duty enjoined is alike the duty of all and of each, that every human being has his own eternity to provide for, his own calling to make sure; and going round to you, and you, and you, and me, and all, he says, Thou art the man—thou art the woman—attend to thine own concerns—care for thine own soul—prove thine own work. Oh! let us all, my brethren, feel the text thus addressing ourselves, and for ourselves comply with its exhortation. Let us apply ourselves now, and ever and anon renew the most profitable exercise, to ascertain and try our own man,

to scrutinize our own hearts and lives according to the standard of christian character described in the holy Gospel. Let us be continually proving our own work by the Scripture tests, until it do approve itself, and that it may approve itself yet more and more, oh! let none of us rest satisfied, or feel comfortable, till our state be approved. Whoso, by that searching ordeal, shall find reason to think, that he has no part nor lot in the christian character, nor, therefore, in the christian graces, his part it is to seek it in the use of the appointed means—of which the earnest and persevering use God has promised to bless—of faith and holiness, which form the foundation and superstructure of personal Christianity; and whoso, on the other hand, shall discover, as the ripest believer among us shall discover, that the prints and lineament of Christ's image in his people, are in his heart and life imperfect and obscure, far beyond what they might have been, let him, in the use of the same appointed means, seek, and seeking sincerely he will obtain, to have that alliance more fully formed, strengthened and matured, and his whole character more completely cast into that mould of doctrine whereunto he hath been delivered; so shall he ever have more reason of rejoicing in the results, that is to say, in the grace which has made you what you are. And, oh! brother, sister, every one of you, that you may feel your personal concern in the duty, remember, finally, your personal interest in the result. "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden." Before each individual of the human race lies the individual certainty of death and judgment to fix that which is to follow. The eternal destiny is to be irrevocably fixed. "It is appointed to all men once to die, and after death the judgment." But these solemn calamities of common interest to all are yet of individual interest to each. Every one must die for himself—every one must be judged for himself. Oh! it must often have struck you, you who have witnessed deathbeds, the awful solitariness which invests the soul in dying. Many may be the conversations, and many the ministrations of friends around the sick man's couch; with the utmost stretch of sympathy they

may seek to enter into his feelings and thoughts; but, notwithstanding all, there is that about his eye and his demeanour, which shows you he feels alone. The separation between him and the world has begun already. Companionless he has gone down into the valley; and at every step the distance widens, and the shadow of death descends in a thicker film between him and those who have followed him, and who, if they could, would even now be at his side. Now he journeys solemnly and slowly, solitary and abstracted, till life's farthest bourne is crossed, and he stands in another sphere naked and lonely before his Judge. Thus, alone, must every separate soul among us transact with God at death. Alone, and only for itself, let every separate soul view the necessity of preparing for it. And, remember, that as for yourselves you must die, so for yourselves you must be judged. Not alone, indeed, will you stand before that great white throne. Oh! the multitudes, the multitudes, that will be there; but alone you will feel, because, according to your own character alone, will the issues of that great day to you be rendered. "At the day of judgment," says the greatest preacher of the last age, "the attention excited by the solemnizing season, the strange aspect of nature, the dissolution of the elements and the last trumpet, will have no effect but to cause the reflections of existence to return with a more overwhelming tide on his own character, his own sentence, his own changed destiny, and amid the innumerable millions who surround him, he will mourn apart." "It is thus," he adds, "that the Christian minister should endeavour to turn the eyes of every one of his hearers upon himself. The preacher, who aims at doing good, will endeavour, above all things, to insulate his hearers, to place each of them apart, and render it impossible for him to escape among the crowd." Oh, for such searching and insulating power! But, what we want of such power, my brethren, let your own willingness supply. Insulate yourselves. Not the greatest of modern preachers, but the greatest of Christ's Apostles now commands you, "Let every man prove his own work, for every man shall bear his own burden." May the Lord bless his word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES BARR, D.D., Port-Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, Edinburgh.

BENEVOLENCE, A CHRISTIAN DUTY;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, IN BEHALF OF THE
SOCIETY FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE SONS OF THE CLERGY,

By the Rev. JAMES BARR, D.D.,
Minister of the Parish Church, Port-Glasgow.

*"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the
fatherless and widows in their affliction.—JAMES i. 27.*

THE subject of religion, on which the Apostle here condescends to instruct us, all admit to be one of the highest importance. And as religion is a subject of universal interest, so it is a subject of very general inquiry. In a question of such vital moment, unanimity of sentiment is surely most desirable, and among those who have the light of revelation to guide them, something nearly approaching to unanimity might reasonably have been expected. The melancholy reverse, however, is undeniably the fact. Opinions on this subject are held by men professing an implicit submission to the authority of Scripture, which not only differ widely, but plainly contradict each other. That which some pronounce to be religion, others condemn as ignorant unbelief, or idolatrous selfishness. According to some, religion consists in a knowledge of certain views of the Gospel; others reduce it to a principle of love; not a few contend that it is another name for joy in God; but the greater number seem to identify it with the stated observance of religious ordinances, followed up in a course of decent moral practice. From the jarrings of human error, how refreshing to turn to the simplicity of divine truth! To the all-important question, "What is religion?" an inspired Apostle has recorded an answer, very different certainly from that which man's wisdom would have dictated, and not quite palatable probably to

some who make high pretensions to discernment and spirituality; but an answer dictated by the Spirit of God, and which, therefore, speaks the language of infallible truth—an answer which claims not only our assent as an object of faith, but our submission also as a rule of conduct which deserves not only to be retained in the memory, but engraved on the heart. It is given in these few and decisive terms, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

This passage speaks the truth, yet not the whole truth. The view which it presents of religion, though correct, is not complete. Far more is implied than expressed. The Apostle speaks of practice alone, but evidently supposes this practice to be the fruit of principle; for religion includes principle, and begins with it. How preposterous to erect a building on a sandy foundation, or to expect pure streams from a polluted fountain, and good fruit from a bad tree! But as principle must precede, so it will produce practice. The light will shine—the heaven will operate and pervade—the sanctified heart will appear in holiness of life—believers will obey the impulse of their renewed nature, in being careful to maintain good works. Religion is, therefore, a practical thing; and, in this view, the Apostle

contemplates it. He describes the character which it forms, not in all its features, but in some which are essential to its existence, which constitute its brightest ornament, and secure its happiest influence. He specifies two of its properties—charity and purity. That he does not speak of them in terms of higher commendation than they deserve, may be demonstrated, by considering them either separately, or combined. Our present business lies chiefly with the former, and to that I shall confine my attention. I address you this day in behalf of the fatherless and widows. I solicit the extension of your sympathy towards a particular and most interesting class of the fatherless and widows. Fortunately, the cause I advocate, needs not the recommendation of laboured argument. The claim requires only to be known, that it may be felt and supported. In subserviency to this claim, permit me to illustrate the important sentiment conveyed by the language of our text. I shall, 1st, advert to the benevolent practice which the Apostle so highly commends; and, 2d, show in what circumstances it possesses the character, and merits the commendation here given it. He recommends the exercise of charity, and he specifies, that particular modification of

I. Charity, which consists in deeds of compassion and kindness to the distressed. This has a very prominent place assigned it in the morality of the Gospel. It is the lovely character of the Father of mercies, who requires us to be followers of Him, as dear children. It shines forth pre-eminently conspicuous in the light of that divine example which the Saviour left, that we might walk in his steps. It forms the subject of precepts, than which none are more frequently repeated, or more pressingly enforced. Above all, it is insisted on as a necessary proof of attachment to Him who on earth went about doing good, and who, from his throne of majesty in heaven, still beholds the sufferings of humanity with an eye of pity, and a heart of love. His own influence has implanted a principle in the hearts of his followers, which disposes them to imitate his example, and he has placed them in circumstances that afford ample scope for the exercise of that principle. We inhabit an apostate world, and we read the sentence of its condemnation written in characters deep as its centre, and large as its circumference, in the misery which pervades it. We cannot walk abroad, without being

assailed by the cry of helplessness, or coming into contact with scenes of pain or penury, that send forth an appeal which cannot be misunderstood, and ought not to be disregarded. And it is but a small portion of human wretchedness that publicly obtrudes itself on the eye or the ear. The most distressing and most deserving cases are those which pride denies, or modesty conceals. The one-half of mankind have really no conception of the difficulties with which the other half are doomed to struggle; and the more minutely we survey the condition of society around us, the more should our gratitude be awakened, the more will our sympathy be demanded. Here, then, is opened a wide field of benevolent exertion, and the husbandman commands each of his servants, "Go, work to-day in my vineyard." Follow the impulse of humane and generous feeling: exert your energies, and employ your resources, in supplying the necessities, mitigating the sufferings, and adding to the happiness of your fellow-men. According to your ability, contribute to provide food for the hungry, clothing for the naked, medicine for the sick, and instruction for the ignorant. Pour the balm of consolation into the sorrowful heart, and let the blessing of him that was ready to perish come upon you. Let us do good, as we have opportunity, unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith. But charity should be under the guidance of wisdom. Feeling should be controlled by judgment. Attention must be paid to the counsels of the head, as well as to the dictates of the heart. For our direction, the Apostle has laid down a rule in the text, which admits of an easy and universal application. He teaches us, that charity should be prudently

1. Discriminating in the selection of its objects. The man who yields alike to every call on his benevolence, will probably become, in five cases out of ten, the dupe of imposture; and it may well be disputed, whether the good he does, in alleviating the severity of distress, can be sufficient to counterbalance the mischief he occasions in relieving the indolent from the necessity of labour, or in supplying the dissipated with the means of ruinous indulgence. We should carefully guard against that virtuous failing which shuts the eyes, while it opens the heart, and extends the hand; and which by a thoughtless profusion, as truly and scarcely less injuriously, perverts the talents with

which we have been intrusted, and for which we are responsible, as if we had buried them in the earth, or tied them up in a napkin. Besides, even with the most enlarged desire to do good, we have limited means. These cannot reach every case, and ought, therefore, to be managed with the most scrupulous economy, and in the exercise of a wise discretion, that they may effect the greatest practicable amount of good to men, and secure the largest possible revenue of glory to God. And if a selection must be made, surely we are bound to prefer those objects that most powerfully recommend themselves to our sympathy, not by the consideration of local vicinity, or religious connexion, or national partiality, or even of private friendship, but by the mournful extremities of suffering and of sorrow that distinguish them. The poor must not be allowed to starve—humanity pleads, justice demands for them what is needful to the body. But the claims of poverty press on us with accumulated force, when associated with the helplessness of age, or the horrors of disease. The path of duty leads to the house of mourning; but it points to the house of the fatherless and widow, as the place of our most affectionate resort, and the scene of our kindest ministrations. Accordingly, the Apostle here specifies this particular object of charity, not as the only case that merits our attention, but simply to express the necessity of a wise discrimination. He fixes our thoughts on this, as an instance of deep and most engrossing interest, which should awaken our tenderest sympathy, and which demands our best exertions—an instance, the very mention of which brings with it a long train of melancholy associations, conjures up a host of dismal and distressing images, and forces upon us the idea of all that is most unwelcome and overwhelming to the feelings of our nature. By thus alluding to the peculiar affliction of the fatherless and widows, he utters an appeal, which comes home to the bosom of every man, and carries along with it at once his understanding and his heart. What earthly ties so intimate and so endearing as those which attach a husband and father to the family of which he is the head! and what earthly calamity so disastrous and deplorable as that which the dissolution of those ties necessarily entails on the surviving members of his family, in the loss of a guide to direct them, of a guardian to defend them, of an instructor to teach them, of a coun-

sellor to advise them, of an example to go before them, of an intercessor to pray for them, and though last, in some respects, not the least aggravation of the calamity in the loss of a provider to feed them. The grief of a widowed mother may be expected gradually to subside; but the hand of time, in wiping the tears from her eye, opens it only to a clearer and more affecting discovery of evils in her situation, to which time can bring no relief, in a state of destitution and abject dependance, rendered doubly wretched by a recollection of the happy reverse which preceded it. Can she be insensible to the wants, or deaf to the cries of her now fatherless children? Deprived of all visible means of support, unable to dig, and to beg ashamed, whence shall she derive even the scantiest supplies, or how shall she bear the load of duty and difficulty that has devolved upon her, mortified by the coldness of former friends, discouraged by the neglect of an unfeeling world? She has a refuge, indeed, in the power and providence of Him, with whom the fatherless find mercy, and whose voice of compassion speaks to her in these animating words, "Leave thy fatherless children, and I will preserve them, and let thy widows trust in me." But this promise, so full of consolation to the soul, cannot, without human instrumentality, be made available to the relief of the body. God has, however, provided suitable instrumentality in the willing obedience of his people. He has assigned to them the high privilege of being the consecrated channels of his bounty. He has made it their duty to act for him, by doing what he designs, and by performing what he has promised: for "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." The Apostle here instructs us, that charity should be actively

2. Efficient in the application of its influence. He describes and inculcates a very different principle from that amiable but useless sensibility which evaporates in fine feelings, and produces no other effect than the expression of kind wishes and fair words. "If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" Did it better the condition of the man who lay half dead on the way to Jericho, that a

priest and Levite came successively to the spot, and looked at him attentively, and perhaps heaved a sigh or uttered a sentiment of pity over him, but made no effort either to cover his exposed, or cure his mutilated, frame? The charity of the Gospel has in it a tenderness the most exquisitely susceptible, and which is incapable of witnessing human suffering without the liveliest commiseration; but not that kind of tenderness which alike dissolves into tears in beholding the spectacle of real and the representation of imaginary woe, and whose impressions pass away with the objects that produced them, unsubstantial as the morning cloud, and fleeting as the early dew. It is the tenderness of the humane Samaritan who had compassion on the wounded traveller, and cheerfully put himself to trouble, and expense, and inconvenience, in order to rescue him from his perilous situation, and to supply him with the necessary means of comfort and recovery. True benevolence discovers a spirit of enlarged and self-denying liberality which readily consents to do and give to any required and practicable extent for the relief of its object, connected with a generous hardihood that resolutely meets every intervening difficulty, and rises in zeal and courage in opposition to the magnitude of the obstacles with which it has to contend, and over which it must triumph. What does the Apostle mean by visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction? Visits of empty ceremony, calls of formal politeness may be tolerated under the sunshine of prosperity, but would be miserable comforters in the dark hour of affliction. In such circumstances, however, a visit of friendly condolence is no less calculated to be useful, than it is seasonable, and will prove acceptable. Of such a visit, conducted in a becoming temper, and accompanied with suitable exercises, the effect must at once contribute to lighten the burden of sorrow, and, what Christian benevolence chiefly aims at, to render secure its spiritual improvement. For that charity possesses not the character, and deserves not the appellation of Christian, which overlooks the soul in its concern for the body, and exhausts its resources in conferring the blessings of time, whilst the interests of eternity remain neglected and unprovided for. But the affliction of the fatherless and widows requires, in many cases, something more than the pleasure of our conversation, and the sympathy of our prayers. Can these

afford shelter to the houseless poor, and protect them from the inroads of famine, or the shame of nakedness? It is not the charity which costs us nothing that can meet their necessities and relieve their distress, but that which is willing to communicate and ready to distribute, and which is disposed rather to accommodate its supplies to the exigencies of the receiver, than measure them by the convenience of the giver. Nor does it wait to be solicited. It imitates Him who sometimes prevents our petitions with the blessings of his goodness; and it delights, like Job, to search out the causes which we knew not. The situation of the fatherless and widow may derive advantage from a visit of inspection as well as of condolence. With their grief a stranger intermeddled not; they weep in secret places, and struggle with difficulties which often shrink from observation, and can be fully known only by being minutely and patiently investigated. But what they most of all need, and what the Apostle principally intends, is a visit of beneficence by actually and suitably ministering to their wants, and by gratifying, to the utmost of our power, their just and honourable wishes. Duty demands what is necessary to support; benevolence desires what is sufficient for comfort. Nor, in general, is its labour of love completed by a single effort, how liberal soever it may be. Temporary aid will, in some cases, suffice; but the destitute widow may be reduced to the condition of a pensioner on charity for life. Our text supposes this extremity, and provides for it. *To visit* expresses not merely one act of kindness, but a succession of kind actions; it denotes permanency of regard, discovered by a continuance of humane attentions. The visits of mercy must be repeated, and not, like those of angels, "few and far between," but with a frequency and perseverance that shall at once demonstrate our sincerity, and realize our design. Yet in the ministrations of charity scarcely less depends sometimes on the manner of its display, than on the extent of its bounty. The poor have feelings as well as the rich; and their feelings ought to be treated with respect; especially those which spring from the pride of honest independence, associated with the remembrance of better days. Their wants may be supplied without being exposed, and the substantial expressions of sympathy may be doubly enhanced from being dispensed by the considerate hand of

delicacy. Nor must the salutary caution of the Saviour be overlooked. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall himself reward thee openly." Such a course has its immediate reward in the moral influence which it exerts, and in the conscious satisfaction which inseparably attends it. And the righteous judge has already stamped it with the seal of his approbation as the pledge of its future recompense: for his word of eternal truth has declared that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." But this language must be understood with some important qualifications. The conduct which it recommends, though an essential part of religion, does not necessarily constitute religion. It will, therefore, be necessary to ascertain

II. In what circumstances the practice here enjoined, possesses the character, and merits the commendation which the Apostle has given it. He proceeds on two suppositions. He supposes that the practice which he so highly commends flows from

1. A right motive. Religion before men consists entirely of actions. These alone are visible to the human eye. We readily bestow our approbation on individuals who have rendered distinguished services to the cause of philanthropy; their views and feelings, which lie beyond our reach, and do not affect the value of their exertions, form not the subject of our inquiry, and never once enter into our calculation. But when we weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary, and contemplate them in the light of divine truth, and bring them into contact with the character and claims of the great God to whom they are accountable, and connect them with the prospect of a judgment day, and the realities of an eternal world, we subject them to a very different standard, and may be compelled to view their conduct in a very opposite light. Religion before God consists principally of motives. He looketh to the heart, and discerns benefactors by whom nothing has been given, and martyrs by whom nothing has been suffered. If he sees a willing mind without the ability, he accepts the disposition for the deed, but the exter-

nal act of beneficence, not dictated by a spirit of love, he abhors as he would the offering of a lame animal or a lifeless carcass. We have his own authority for affirming that a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and not have charity. He may be impelled by strongly excited natural sensibility, or by the desire of human applause, or by a regard to worldly interest, or by a purpose of self-righteousness: and those efforts of liberality which gladden the hearts of the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and convey the means of health and happiness to many a desolate habitation of poverty and disease, and call forth the loud and united and approving testimony of a grateful neighbourhood, may yet be dishonouring and offensive to Him who desireth truth in the inward parts, and who values the doings of the outer, in so far only as they faithfully interest the feelings of the inner man. Can we commit a grosser outrage on the religion of the Bible, than by giving the sanction of its name to the work of vain ostentation, selfish pride, secular ambition, or Pharisaical presumption? Will God be pleased with offerings extorted thus by necessity, or fear, or shame; the result of sordid calculation, a reluctant homage to the force of example, a vile expedient for healing the wounded spirit and pacifying an angry conscience? In his pure and piercing eye, how full of guilt and impious abomination is the dazzling munificence of silver and gold, when it covers the odiousness of a deliberate and systematic hypocrisy! The charity which he demands, by which he is honoured, and of which he will accept, is that which speaks the language of conscious unworthiness, humble dependance, and grateful love; and which ascends in sweet memorial before his throne with the incense of a simple, steadfast, joyful, and purifying faith in the atonement of the cross; and is, both in its spirit and design, the very reverse of that which assumes the attitude of meritorious self-importance, which goes about to establish a righteousness of its own, by offering its gifts as the price of peace, and doing its work as a ground of confidence and hope. We fear that not a little of the leaven of Popery, in its most corrupt and dangerous characters, exists under a Protestant name; so accordant is it with the principles, and so gratifying to the passions, of our fallen nature. How fatally have these words of Peter been perverted by it, "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." We

need not wonder that the Church of Rome taught the profitable error which substitutes charity for the atonement; but that members of the Reformed churches should concur in such a sentiment, may well excite our surprise, and humanity trembles to think of the multitudes who have fallen victims to the delusion. Charity does, indeed, possess an exalted value in the divine estimation; but it is that charity of which the giving of alms constitutes merely the outward expression. God looks on it with unmingled satisfaction, because he sees in it the operation of his own omnipotence, an emanation of his own uncreated glory, an infusion of the precious blood of his well-beloved Son, the gracious production of his Holy Spirit. Avarice may consent to part with its treasures—voluptuousness may relinquish its enjoyments—ambition may surrender its power, and nobility may lay down its honours for the good of mankind—but the exercise of charity lies as far beyond the capacity of the natural man, as it is for the blind to see, or the dead to move. The flame of love must be kindled by the fires of heaven—the principle must be transplanted from its native soil in the paradise above, and grow up in the soul, by the regenerating power of divine grace. It will then appear as the seal of God's image revived, and exert an influence that shall prove it to be the fulfilling of the law, and the end of the commandment. For religion consists not of one excellence, but of whatsoever is excellent and lovely, and of good report, each separate feature beautifully harmonizing with the rest, exhibiting a complete whole, cemented, sustained and animated by one pervading, sanctifying spirit. I remark, therefore, that the Apostle, in the declaration of our text, plainly supposes, that the practice which he so highly commends, stands in

2. Its proper connexion. It must not be alone, nor be made to serve as a substitute for other duties. Sincerity is indispensable, yet not more so than consistency. Assuredly Cornelius would not have offered an acceptable service, had it not been a united memorial of alms and prayers. The whole of the moral law is trampled on by an obedience which respects the second table, to the exclusion of the first; nor is the heart susceptible of love to man, in which the love of God has not exerted its hallowed influence. It is unfit that blessing and cursing should proceed from the same mouth. But

it is impossible that love and enmity can predominate in the same breast. They who deny the doctrines, and treat with contempt the authority, of the Bible, yield to none in their professions of liberality: yet what has the boasted charity of infidels done for the good of mankind? We cannot look to any one of those benevolent institutions with which our country abounds, and which have raised an imperishable monument to her glory, without being reminded that the only charity which merits the name, has truth for its basis, and piety for its associate. And the principle is at variance alike with the demands of truth, and the dictates of piety, which discovers a lively and even a liberal sympathy in the woes of humanity, but feels no concern for the honour of God, and permits us to treat his attributes and ordinances, his word and worship, with irreverence or neglect. We are not in general disposed to forget; and though the prevailing tendency carries the maxim to a ruinous extreme, we ought not to forget that charity begins at home. On this point, the influence of grace confirms the sentiment of nature, and enforces the duty which requires every man, in the first instance, to provide for himself, and for those of his own house. The zeal which searches abroad for objects of benevolence, and shuts our eyes to evils existing in our immediate neighbourhood, or affecting deeply the members of our domestic circle, commits an injustice for which the desire of extensive usefulness affords a most imperfect apology. These have primary claims upon us, and we blame the mistaken generosity which, in its wide embrace, overlooks their interest, for the same reason that we condemn the intemperance which would reduce them to beggary. Does she act either a consistent or a Christian part, who spends her time, and exhausts her strength, in pursuing the occupations of charity, whilst she neglects the affairs of her household, and suffers her children to roam about in idleness and in rags? It is commonly and truly said, that men should be just before they are generous. It is easy to be very liberal at the expense of others; but there is no charity in giving what belongs not to us. To expend in acts of beneficence that which is required for the payment of our lawful debts, would be in effect to act the part of one who violently forces his way into the house of a neighbour, and carries off his property. Self-denial may be practised without blame, from motives of benevolence.

To sacrifice personal enjoyment, for the sake of doing good, is a noble effort of Christian magnanimity; but the charity which abstracts a single farthing of what is due to the just demands of another, is not that of which God approves, and under a pretence of doing honour to religion, it violates one of its most essential principles. We learn, from high authority, that "charity proceedeth out of a pure heart;" and in our text, the Apostle not only describes its exercise, but subjoins its accompaniment; for he connects the practice of visiting "the fatherless and widows in their affliction," with the character of keeping "himself unspotted from the world." The thing that passes for charity in the world, may present to the eye a very lovely aspect, and may exert a very beneficial influence among men, and may attract the homage of a very high and general admiration; but it is Satan transformed into an angel of light, the garnishing of the whited sepulchre, fair and beautiful in the outside, but within, full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. The Christian's first object is to keep himself clean, thus only can he be qualified to make himself useful. The sacred work of charity requires clean hands; the pure in heart only can enjoy the sublime luxury of benevolence. To glorify God in doing good to men, is exclusively the attainment of Him who hateth the gar-

ment that is spotted by the flesh; and although the obligation of the duty extends alike to all, the capacity of performing it belongs only to those who are "washed and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Let us beware, then, of putting asunder what God hath joined together. To do good and to communicate, let us not forget; for with such sacrifices he is well pleased; but let us remember, that what we do, can prove acceptable to him, in so far only as it flows from the love which he has inspired, and maintains its connexion with that holiness which he demands. Actuated by these principles and views, we shall feel it both our privilege and our duty to consecrate to his honour the gifts of which he has been pleased to make us the stewards; and as our goodness cannot extend unto him, we shall cheerfully and liberally dispense it to those whom he has constituted his representatives, and whom he has, in this capacity, recommended as the objects of our beneficent regard. Who these are, he has himself condescended to inform us by the mouth of his Apostle, who has declared that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." Amen.

CHRIST, THE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, 26TH MAY, 1833, IN BEHALF OF THE NORTH AMERICAN COLONIAL SOCIETY,

By the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL, A.M.,

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"And gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."—EPIH. i. 22, 23.

THE resurrection of Christ would have been a most interesting event, even had he risen in a private, and not in a public, capacity. Such is the rigour with which the sentence, "dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," has been carried into execution—the myriads have been so innumerable, who have fallen victims to the infliction of this sentence—the sleep to which death hath consigned them, has proved so long and so deep, that the well established fact of any one having risen from the dead, in any circumstances, in any character, would

have been calculated to shed some ray of light over the darkness of the tomb, and to inspire us with the hope, that since one had risen, it, at all events, was possible that we might rise also. But, my friends, Christ rose not in a private, but in a public, capacity. He rose as the surety, as the federal head and representative of his people. It was in this character that he died, that he was buried, that he condescended for a time to lie in the prisonhouse of the grave. And had the work which he undertook not been completely finished—had the satisfaction

which, as surety, he was called upon to make for sin, not been given—had the debt he undertook to pay not been rendered to the very uttermost farthing—then the same causes which made it necessary that he should die and be cast into the grave, would have all conspired to detain him there. And this being the case, my friends, it follows, by an obvious and necessary consequence, that the very circumstance of Christ having risen, the very circumstance of the gates of the prisonhouse having been thrown open, the very fact of our surety having been set free from that prisonhouse, demonstrates to us that his work was complete—that he had made reconciliation for iniquity—that he had brought in everlasting righteousness—that he did pay to the very uttermost farthing—and that we have therefore now the richest encouragement to plead, that since he died, we may not die—that since he suffered, we may not suffer—that since he endured the curse of the law, we may escape that curse for eternity. It is, however, a very important and interesting inquiry, What reception did Christ meet with when he rose from the dead, and ascended to the state of that high and august dynasty upon which we, by our sins, have all of us been guilty of trampling? We very frequently judge of the sentiments by which an individual, on whom we are dependent, is animated towards ourselves, by the reception which that individual may be pleased to give to the person who has undertaken to plead our cause before him. The kingdoms of this world judge of the sentiments and feelings entertained towards them, by nations, states, and empires, from the reception which, at the courts of these empires, is given to the ambassadors and representatives of these kingdoms; and, on the same principle, by the reception which was given to our representative, when he ascended to the court of Him who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, we may judge of the sentiments and feelings by which the great and omniscient Jehovah is animated towards those who in deed, and in truth, are the people of the Saviour.

Such, then, is the first point to which our attention is directed, in the words that we have just now read to you. We are here informed, not merely of the fact that Christ rose, not merely of the fact that he ascended on high leading captivity captive, but our thoughts are directed to the special and high dignity to which, in the character of mediator and surety for sinners, he is exalted to

the right hand of God. He is given to be Head over all things. "God set him," as is stated at the 20th verse of the chapter, "at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things." This is the reception which the Lord our Saviour, in the character of our friend, and representative, and surety, met with, when he ascended on high, at the right hand of his heavenly Father. And in this reception given to him, we may recognise a most satisfactory expression of God's willingness to receive, and bless, and honour, all who put their trust in his Redeemer—all who give themselves up to him, and to his service. But, my brethren, it is also a subject of very interesting inquiry, Is Christ, in this state of glory and of dignity to which he is advanced, still animated by all those sentiments of kindness and meekness, and tenderness and condescension, which he displayed when he was an inhabitant of this earth—when he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—when he was pleased, though in the form of God, and thinking it not robbery to be equal with God, to assume the form of a servant, and to make himself of no reputation, and to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh? When in that condition of lowliness and degradation, he did display such kindness, and condescension, and tenderness, towards man, he declared himself, and by his conduct he showed himself to be, indeed meek and lowly in heart. Myriads repaired to him—many poor sinners cried to him—the halt, the blind, the sick, the lame, made known to him their sorrows, and there was not one sent empty away from him; and with respect to spiritual and eternal blessings, he showed himself far more willing to give, than mankind around him were willing to receive good at his hands. But how is it now? Christ is no longer an inhabitant of this earth—he is no longer a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—he no longer has the form of a servant, being of no reputation. On the contrary, we are here informed that he is exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. Is he animated then by the same

condescension in this state of glory that characterized him in his condition of lowliness? Have we, beloved, the same encouragement to go to him, now seated at the right hand of the throne of his heavenly Father, which the inhabitants of Jerusalem had to repair to him, when he walked through their streets, going about from day to day continually doing good? The words of my text, I conceive, afford a sufficiently satisfactory answer likewise to this question. Christ is here declared to be the head over all things; but he is spoken of as the head over all things to the Church, which is declared by the Apostle to be his body. "He gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body." The love by which Christ is animated towards those who put their trust in him, the connexion which subsists between the Redeemer and his people is frequently illustrated in Scripture, by those ties of consanguinity and relationship by which mankind are knit one towards another. He is spoken of, for example, in Scripture as the elder brother of his people. The Church again is declared to be the bride, the Lamb's wife, and is to have no connexion with unbelievers. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate," is the injunction addressed to every one of us, and the promise connected with obedience to that injunction follows. "And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And upon one occasion we are informed, when Christ was proclaiming to those around him the tidings of everlasting truth, that one came to him and said, "Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee," but he answered, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" And then stretching out his hands towards his disciples, he added, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." There is a tie, however, my friends, even more close and more intimate than that which either relationship or consanguinity involves. There are many who are quite indifferent about their families—there are many who are quite indifferent even about their soul, who live from day to day in the most perfect disregard of its salvation, but who, at the same time, do care for the body, who are most anxious to protect it from harm, who labour for its

nourishment and sustenance, and seek no enjoyment apart from it, and shrink from the thought of final separation from it. This tie then, my friends, by which our souls are united to our bodies, is that by which the Apostle here illustrates the strength and tenderness of that attachment by which the Lord Jesus Christ, exalted as he is to the right hand of his Father, is still animated towards those who put their trust in him—leading us from this figurative illustration to conclude, that just as we are all so anxious to protect our bodies from every species of injury, or willing to pay for the sustenance of our bodies, or anxious to promote the enjoyment of this our mortal part, and shrink from the thought of final separation from it, so will Christ protect his people, feed them with food convenient for them, and take care that they be not finally separated from him. No one shall be able to pluck them out of his hands. These are the conclusions which we are warrantably led to form from the declaration of the Apostle, "gave him to be head over all things to the Church, which is his body," and they are conclusions the justice of which is sufficiently confirmed by many passages of Scripture that we might quote. "A vineyard of red wine," saith the Lord, "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." "Thou hast put gladness," says the Psalmist, "in my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." And "Let not your heart be troubled," saith the Redeemer, "ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And again, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

It very frequently happens, however, that those around us are most ready to befriend us, to supply our wants, to visit us with acts of positive kindness, but they have not the power to enable them to do so. This may be said to a great extent with regard to all

our earthly friends without exception. They may be animated with the most kindly feelings and sentiments towards us, may be most anxious to promote our best interests, still it is comparatively very little indeed that they have it in their power to do. They cannot ensure that even the temporal good which they may be the means of conferring, shall prove in deed and in truth a blessing to us; and then with respect to spiritual benefit, they can only tell us of its importance, they can only tell us of the source whence we may derive it, but cannot themselves bestow it upon us. They cannot pardon our sins, they cannot purify our hearts, they cannot sanctify to us our trials on a dying bed. They can only stand beside us and direct our thoughts to the source of consolation. They cannot really and truly impart that consolation, and when death does come to separate us from this present place of our abode, it separates us from our friends, and from all possibility of their interfering in our behalf. Having, therefore, ascertained the willingness of Christ to do for them who put their trust in him—having found that this is satisfactorily demonstrated by the declaration to which our thoughts are here directed, where the Church is said to be his body, it becomes a subject of interesting inquiry, What is his power—what is the extent of his authority, and his resources to carry his intentions of kindness and of grace into complete and glorious accomplishment? In the words of the text, we have a completely satisfactory answer to this question also. Christ is here declared to be head over all things to the church. He is set down at the right hand of God, “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” The government is upon his shoulders, and all things are under his feet. And as mediator and surety he is invested with this supreme authority, that he may employ it for the interests of his people, in carrying into full accomplishment all his kind and gracious intentions with respect to them.

And this being the case, my friends, Christ being thus head over all things, and head over all things to the Church, then you who are his people, and who have put your trust in him, you who have given yourselves up to him may, in the first place, rest assured that every thing connected with this present life that is really and truly good for you,

will be communicated to you. You are not promised an abundance of the good things of this life. Christ being head over all things, has the sources of wealth entirely at his command, and were it in consistency with his will, from these sources he could make wealth flow to you in most copious and abundant streams. But then money is often the root of sad evil. While some have coveted after it, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. There are myriads in heaven now blessing God, because upon earth they were poor. There are myriads in hell now looking back upon the riches which they here had bestowed upon them as what alienated their thoughts and affections from God, and from those things that belong to their everlasting peace. Though Christ then, your surety, you have for your kindest and tenderest friend, as head over all things, yet still we are not warranted to assure you of the possession of this world's wealth, and just because instead of being a blessing, it might prove a curse to you. But Christ your head being head over all things, we are warranted to assure you, that you shall have of the things of this life what it is befitting you to receive. We are not merely warranted to tell you, that he who clothes the lilies and feeds the ravens, will feed and clothe you, but that he will also give you that measure of temporal good that is really most calculated to promote your spiritual and everlasting interests.

But besides this, Christ being head over all things to the Church, which is his body, we are warranted to assure you who put your trust in him, who are savingly united to him, not merely that the things of this life that are best for you will be freely and graciously bestowed, but that no evil of any kind will be permitted to come nigh you. We are not warranted to tell you that affliction will not be your lot, because it is the declaration of the Bible that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth;” for affliction proves one of the very best and most invaluable ingredients of that cup which God is pleased to put into our hands. But, then you may rest assured that even your afflictions will be converted into blessings, that not only will you be comforted amidst them all, but that every one of them, without exception, will be made to work in you the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and to

work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And then, my brethren, with regard to spiritual evils, with respect to the sin that dwells in you, the temptations that are around you, those principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places, with which you are here called upon to wage warfare, I would remind you that these are all under the feet of the Redeemer; he has spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross; and though this be the time of fighting, though while here you may expect it to be the scene of warfare, yet by and by the sound of victory will be heard by you, and you will be made more than conquerors.

But still further, Christ being head over all things to the Church, you may not only calculate upon the temporal good being given to you that is really and truly best for you, upon being protected from those evils to which you are exposed, but you may also calculate upon the positive spiritual benefit you stand in need of, being, from time to time, from hour to hour, imparted to you. We are all dependent upon the regular, the uninterrupted, the enlarged communication of such a positive spiritual good. We are insufficient of ourselves, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. The duties to which we are called are often difficult and of the highest importance, and while travelling through the wilderness of this world we may often be placed in circumstances of great perplexity and even of peril. It is most important, then, that we should have the assurance that as our duty is, so also shall our strength be, that the grace of our Saviour shall be made sufficient for us, that his strength shall be made perfect in our weakness. How complete and satisfactory, then, is the assurance which the words of my text are calculated to give upon this point? He who is knit to you who put your trust in him, by a tie as strong as that by which the soul is knit to the body, is head over all things. He has the streams of gracious invitation entirely at his command, and he is exalted to this station, dignity and authority, that he may confer these things on you, that he may make all grace even to abound towards you, that you, having all sufficiency for all things, may abound in every good word and work.

But further still, Christ being made head over all things to the Church, we may look

forward with confidence, not merely to time but to eternity. We are all of us by and by to quit the present place of our abode; that which now knows us shall soon know us no more for ever. And no one that has planted his feet upon the shores of that eternity that is beyond us, no one that has ever gone thither, has ever returned to tell us what it is to tread the dark valley and shadow of death, what it is to pass over that limit that separates the seen from the unseen world. But in these circumstances, oh! my brethren, how comfortable is it to know that Christ is head over all things, not merely in this world, but also in that which is to come; that when we pass from the present state of our existence into that condition which is beyond death and the grave, we do not go beyond the limits of the territory which Christ has had, and where Christ is head over all things. How comfortable is it to know that he not merely has all the events with which we here are connected, entirely at his disposal, but that heaven is at his disposal, that he has purchased it, that he has paid the price of it, that he has gone as the representative of his people to take possession of it, that it is as secure as the word of the living God!

In the last place, Christ being head over all things to the Church, his people may not merely rest fully assured, with respect to what concerns them personally and individually, but they may also take comfort with respect to every thing that concerns the Church of Christ, considered in its collective capacity. All who are united to the Saviour, all who in deed and in truth are his, not merely are desirous of receiving personal benefit at his hand, but are most desirous that his kingdom should come, that his will should be done on earth even as it is done in heaven, that the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. I ask of you, can this wish fail to be realized when Christ is head over all things, and head over all things to the Church? Though sometimes events may wear a very lowering and threatening aspect, though sometimes kings of the earth may set themselves and princes combine together against the Lord and his anointed, though sometimes hand may join in hand and the combinations seem almost universally to uproot the authority of the Saviour in the world—still he must be supreme, for he is head over all, and the authority he is invested with, he is to employ for the

interest of the Church, and, therefore, even in times of calamity and of threatening we may rest fully assured that the wilderness and the solitary place shall be made glad and blossom like the rose, and that the time will come when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, even as the waters cover the channel of the sea.

The last statement respecting the Church that is here made by the Apostle is that contained in the conclusion of the 23d verse, "which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all"—and the grounds on which this statement is made with respect to the Church of Christ I shall endeavour very shortly to state. All things are filled with God's glory. It may most truly be said, as it is here declared by the Apostle, that he filleth all things. "The heavens declare his glory, the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard, their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." But, at the same time, while every thing is thus full of the glory of the Father, the Church is here in an especial manner declared to be his fulness—and it is declared to be his fulness, I conceive, for the two following reasons. In the first place, in his dealings with the Church all the perfections of God's nature are displayed. In his dealings with those angels who have kept their first estate, who have never swerved from their allegiance, in his dealings with the inhabitants of the heavenly world, God's benevolence, God's power, God's wisdom, God's love of holiness, are manifested. But in his dealings towards that portion of his creatures, there is no display of his hatred of sin, of his determination to punish it, for in heaven there is no sin, there nothing entereth that defileth. In hell God's hatred of sin is manifested, and his determination to punish it, but there is no display of mercy, for there he has forgotten to be gracious, and he is to be favourable no more. But in God's dealings with his

Church, mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other. We have at once a display of mercy and a manifestation of authority, of hatred of sin, and of a determination to punish it, and at the same time of kindness, and tender mercy, and compassion towards the sinner. But besides what we have now stated, in God's dealings with his Church, there is not only a display of all the attributes of his nature, but these are manifested to an extent greater and more remarkable than in any other of his works to which our thoughts have been directed. In his dealings with angels, benevolence is manifested, but then not such benevolence as is displayed towards man. The highest exercise of benevolence consists in showing kindness towards enemies, towards those who are truly undeserving of our friendship, towards those who have exposed themselves to our indignation. In hell God's justice, God's hatred of sin, God's determination to punish sin, are displayed, but still not so strikingly as in his dealings towards his Church, as in what he has done to his people. Those who constitute his Church must be rescued from the misery to which they have exposed themselves. The inhabitants of hell are God's enemies—they have all of them, without exception, exposed themselves to his displeasure, trampled upon his authority, abused his kindness, provoked his indignation. But in God's dealings with his Church, our attention is directed to one who never sinned—in whose mouth no guile was ever found—who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners—who was God's son, his only begotten, his well-beloved son—who yet had such sorrow on account of sin passed upon him by imputation, inflicted upon his soul, that he exclaimed, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and the sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. The Church, then, is the fulness of Him who filleth all things, and in his dealings with his Church, all the perfections of God's character are strikingly displayed.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D., Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM ROUTLEDGE, Glasgow.

THE NATURE, NECESSITY, AND IMPORTANCE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE BARONY CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE FORENOON OF
THURSDAY, 27TH JUNE, 1833,

By the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D.,
Minister of St. John's Church, Glasgow.

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory."—
LUKE xxiv. 26.

MANY occurrences take place in the providence of God, the necessity and the propriety of which we do not at the moment perceive. The understanding of man is limited—he cannot see the end from the beginning, and therefore he cannot unravel the secret purposes of Him who makes his path in the deep, and whose footsteps are unknown. But we can, we may, know enough to be persuaded that the Lord reigns, that God's plans must all be formed in unerring wisdom, and carried into effect with almighty power. It is the province of God to act—it is the duty of man to believe and to adore, to rest persuaded that nothing takes place in vain, and that what may be dark and mysterious to us now, shall appear clear and consistent hereafter, if, to unerring wisdom, a disclosure of the divine proceedings shall appear fit and proper. Nothing can be more absurd than for imperfect, erring mortals to pretend to measure the designs and the operations of heaven by their limited faculties, or to call in question the propriety and the fitness of the ways of God, because they are not apparent to our clouded understandings. Often the designs and the circumstances of feeble mortals like ourselves, we cannot fathom; and how can

we pretend to grasp the ways and doings of Him whose eyes take in all space, who sees the bearing of every act and event, whose counsels run from eternity to eternity, in whose purposes and operations, not merely individuals, but a world, are interested, and which involve not merely the felicity of a few, but the happiness of eternity—not merely the well-being of a creature, but the glory of the Creator. Were all discoverable and apparent to us, we must possess the faculties of angels, and be wise as the unerring Judge himself. When we cannot, therefore, unriddle, let us learn to trust—let us cherish the belief, that what is dark to us, is clear to Omniscience—that what is inexplicable by us, God can fully explain, and that the wise, and immutable, and almighty, and gracious ruler of the universe, will bring light out of darkness, and order out of confusion, and good out of apparent evil. This disposition in man, to cavil and dispute, when he cannot comprehend, has prevailed in every age. To it the immediate followers of Christ appear to have yielded, as well as others; and, in not a few instances, do they discover this spirit. We mark it in the conversation that gave rise to the words of the text, uttered by Christ, with the view of

correcting their ideas. Respecting the designs of heaven, in the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, the disciples seem to have been all along in complete ignorance. They seem to have thought that Abraham's descendants were alone to share in heaven's regard, that the redemption of Israel consisted in nothing more than temporal deliverance from foreign subjection, and that salvation was to be effected by very different means, than the saving of men from sorrow, through the agency of the accursed tree. How blind is man, when unenlightened by heaven, and how absurd his reasoning on heaven, when not guided by the unerring Spirit of God! Even after our Lord's resurrection, it appears, that their views were still the same, and that recent events had not opened their eyes, or removed their prejudices. When two of the disciples were directing their steps toward Emmaus, with sorrowful hearts, and disappointed hopes, they conversed on the events that had lately taken place at Jerusalem. As they communed together, Jesus joined them, and entered into friendly converse with them—inquired into the subject of their conversation, and the cause of their dejection. They rehearsed to him those recent occurrences, in which he himself had so deep an interest—how Jesus, the mighty prophet, had been condemned, and put to death—how they had trusted that he would redeem Israel—how reports that his body had been taken away had filled them with astonishment, and that reports were abroad that he was still alive. He sharply reproves them for their sinful prejudices and unwarranted unbelief, notwithstanding all they had learned from the Prophets, and the Old Testament Scriptures. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

You are looking forward, my friends, to an ordinance that is strikingly to bring before you the sufferings of Christ. You are to show forth his death at a communion table; and I trust that our meditation on the words of the text, will not be found unsuitable exercise in the prospect of this sacred solemnity. May the Lord render what may be delivered profitable to our souls. In discoursing from these words, I shall inquire into the nature of our Saviour's sufferings shortly, and into the necessity and importance of these sufferings. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?"

It may tend to awaken our gratitude and love, to excite our adoring wonder and admiration, if we attend very shortly to the unparalleled sufferings and endurance of the Son of God. When we speak of the sufferings of the Son of God, it must be evident, that we mean those sufferings which Christ underwent in his human nature, as the Son of Man. As God, he could not suffer. Pain and anguish, and all those distressing feelings that enter into the lot of mortals, are perfectly incompatible with the divine existence; and when human passions and feelings are ascribed to deity, we are to regard God as employing such expressions as he frequently uses, in accommodation to the feebleness of human understandings. But while he stoops to our weakness, we must beware of levelling him to our infirmities. Jesus, as the eternal Son of God, could not suffer, nor be liable to suffering; but, as the son of Mary, he was made perfect through suffering. No bodily pain, no mental anguish, separate from personal guilt, was ever endured equal to what Christ endured. The cup of trembling that he was called to drink, was the bitterest that mortal man was ever ordained to taste. From the day when he opened his eyes in the stable at Bethlehem, till he closed them on the Cross at Calvary, an unbroken chain of suffering and sorrow was his portion. We cannot enter into a minute detail of all those ingredients that were mingled in Christ's cup of woe—the privations, the sorrows, the persecutions, to which he submitted, during his stay on earth. The short account of the Evangelist, which, we can easily suppose, embraces but a very small portion of our Lord's tribulations, cannot be perused, without awakening the most tender sensibilities of the human heart, and, at the same time, exciting the utmost astonishment, how a character so holy, so blameless, so beneficent, could possibly meet with such ill-deserved opposition, and calumny, and distress. Without attending to the early period of Christ's life, regarding which the sacred historian is, in a great measure, silent, farther than that he was born in a stable and laid in a manger, and that his blood was thirsted for in his infant days, I would observe, that the streams, the floods, of distress, flowed in upon him from every source and channel. He feels from extreme poverty and want—he is often hungry, and none gives him to eat—he is often thirsty, and none gives him to drink—he is often exposed to tempest,

without a shelter being provided. As he feelingly says, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." He feels, from the unmerited calumnies and reproaches of his own countrymen, and whole nations are leagued against him, and vie with each other in their slanders and evil charges. "He hath a devil—he is in league with devils—he is a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners." He feels the shafts of persecution that were directed against him. Night and day do his enemies plot his ruin; and had his time of departure coincided with their time of wrath, the Redeemer of souls had fallen under the hands of his enemies long before his hour was come. His benevolent soul suffers acutely from the folly, the perversity, the impiety, the vices, of the age in which he lived. His recollection of their past measures pierces him with most poignant grief; and their future awful fate draws forth many a bitter lamentation, and many a bitter tear. He feels from the weakness, and ignorance, and the prejudices, and the distrust of his disciples, and exclaims, "How long shall I be with you, ye fools, and slow of heart to believe?" He suffers from the injustice of those appointed to administer justice, from the treachery of bosom friends, from the desertion of chosen adherents. He hears the judge condemning him to death, and yet declaring his conviction of his innocence. He sees one disciple selling him for gold, and betraying him with a kiss; he hears another of his chosen and most devoted adherents denying him with oaths, and experiences all forsaking him in his hour of trials. There is not one of his many followers and admirers, there is not one of his constant adherents, not one of his disciples, to sympathize with him in his extremities, not one to defend him in his impeachment, not one to disprove the false evidences, not one to say, I know the Lamb of God. It might well be said, he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, while the malice of foes, and the wickedness and treachery of friends, united in making him "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." We can form some idea of Christ's feelings, when malice, and persecution, and cruelty, and human depravity, were directed against him—when one disciple betrays him, and another denies, and all forsake him. We can have some idea of the anguish of his soul. when, faint and fatigued, he is hurried

at midnight from tribunal to tribunal, when he sees his enemies gnashing on him with their teeth, and justice and truth perverted for the accomplishment of their nefarious purposes, and every feeling of humanity is extinguished, and he is smote, and blindfolded, and spit upon, and crowned with thorns, and scourged, and nailed to the cross. We can form some faint idea of his last trial, when he looked forward to death in its most appalling form. But there is an awful mystery hanging over some of the last scenes of his death. There is a dark and preternatural cloud enveloping that hour, when the powers of darkness assail him, which we in vain attempt to dissipate—which angels themselves wish to draw aside, when, with adoring wonder, they would remove the mystery that conceals what led to the groans of Gethsemane, and to the groans on Calvary, when his sweat is like great drops of blood falling to the ground, when an angel is sent to strengthen him, and when his repeated, reiterated prayer to heaven is, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," when his despondent cry to heaven is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Into these mysterious sufferings we cannot penetrate. Their extent, their severity, their intensity, we cannot conceive; for, when it is the King of glory who suffers—when it is the Lord of life that dies—when it is the hour of darkness that overtakes him—when they are the principalities and the powers of hell that do assail him—and when from him the radiance of his Father's countenance is withdrawn, and the sword of divine justice is unsheathed and directed against him—there is what compels feeble mortals, such as we, in silence, to wonder and adore. Such are some of the sufferings of Christ—of Him who was "holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners, the brightness of his Father's glory, the wonderful, the counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace."

I come now to point out the necessity and the importance of these sufferings. When we speak of the necessity of our Lord's sufferings and death, we do not speak of them as what could not possibly be avoided, for surely it was not absolutely necessary that the Son of God should be made of mortal flesh, that the Lord should live in poverty and die in ignominy. Even when necessity is taken in connexion with man's salvation, God might have permitted

men to suffer as apostate spirits, and endure eternal death. Neither is it necessary, as if God could have adopted no other plan for man's recovery, for this were to limit the power of the Omnipotent. Nor is it necessary, in the sense of obligatory on Christ, for all he underwent was voluntary—he had power to tabernacle on earth or not, to suffer and lay down his life or not, as he thought fit; but it became necessary as fulfilling the divine will; God choosing no other way for his own glory and the recovery of apostate sinners. Christ must suffer and die, otherwise man must perish eternally. Now that these sufferings have been undergone, we may perceive certain grounds on which they were necessary and eternally important, and what our Lord says himself is founded in propriety. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" The sufferings of Christ, then, were necessary to accomplish the purpose of the Almighty, and to make good the prophetic declarations concerning him. I put these two together, because we had known nothing of the one but through the medium of the other. The gracious purposes of Christ's appearance and sufferings could never have been conceived, far less known, had it not pleased God to reveal these in his own word—and it appears plainly from Scripture, that while the thoughts of God from everlasting were thoughts of love, that love was to be manifested in his not sparing his own son, but giving him up to death. It were absurd to suppose that Christ's sufferings were contingent, and arose merely out of circumstances—that they originated not in the divine counsel, and flowed not from the purpose of the Eternal Mind. Accordingly, it is said, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and, by wicked hands, have crucified and slain"—and elsewhere, "Of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." And the same truth is conveyed in various other passages of Scripture, "Lo, I come to do thy will; thou, Lord, hast prepared a body for me." The eternal covenant bore that he should pour out his soul unto death, and be numbered with transgressors. Christ's miraculous withdrawal from the hands of his ene-

mies is ascribed to this—that his hour was not come. "And," says Christ, "the Son of man came as it was determined"—and elsewhere, "Ye could not have any power over me at all, unless it were given you from above." And as it was the purpose of the Eternal that Christ, in the fulness of time, should assume human nature, and in that nature suffer and die, these things were the subjects of the earliest predictions. In the very first promise made to fallen man, this was obscurely hinted at, and by the mouth of all God's prophets he showed that Christ should suffer. The whole Levitical dispensation was a species of prophetic annunciation of what should take place in the latter ages of the world—its rites and sacrifices shadowed forth the life and death of the great antidote, and perhaps there is not one of the most minute circumstances of our Lord's humility and abasement that was not distinctly pointed out in Old Testament prophecy. These holy men, the prophets, diligently searched out, and testified before hand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. This appears almost the sole theme of the prophets—it is the theme and burden of their songs—the greatest and the chief of their promises—and it cheered the drooping hearts and the downcast spirits of the downcast in Zion. And while the prophets speak of the dignity of the Messiah's person, of the glories of his reign, and the perpetuity of his kingdom, as mighty in counsel, and the mighty God and everlasting Father; they, at the same time, and with the same breath, exhibit him as without form or comeliness, as despised and rejected, wounded and bruised, as taken to prison and judgment, and cut off from the land of the living. But it is unnecessary to multiply quotations upon this point. The humility and sufferings of the Messiah are so minutely and distinctly pointed out by some of the prophets, that one would be apt to conclude, that we rather have a historical narration of what had taken place, than a prophetic annunciation of what should in after ages happen. Our Lord frequently takes notice of the fulfilling of Scripture in the different parts of his humiliation, particularly towards the close of his history, and he intimates that every thing that befel him took place agreeably to the predictions of ancient prophecy. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"

But how, then, will the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" And again, "Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me. All this is done that the Scriptures and the prophets might be fulfilled." And in the verse succeeding the text, it is said that our Lord, "beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself." Now, had Christ not humbled himself—had he not been a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs—had he not suffered—had he not been lifted up upon the cross, what should we have thought of the everlasting purpose of heaven? Either that God was mutable, or that he wanted power to carry into effect his own decrees! What should we have thought of the ceremonial observances among the Jews, but that they were vain, and unmeaning, and absurd usages; and what should we have thought of all the prophetic annunciations, but that they were falsehood and a lie? We conclude, then, that Christ's sufferings and death were necessary to show that the counsel of the Lord shall stand, that they were necessary to establish the consistency of the Jewish dispensation, to vindicate the truth of the sacred oracles, and to prove the divine mission of Moses and other prophets, whose concurrent testimony it was that the Messiah should be born of a woman, and flesh of flesh should submit to suffering and yield to the stroke of death.

But, again, the sufferings and death of Christ were needful to make atonement for sin, and reconcile us to God. The fall of man occasioned a most lamentable change in the circumstances of our race. Sin raised a barrier of separation between man and his Maker, and from being the friend of God and the favourite of heaven, and the heir of immortality and bliss, he became a rebellious enemy, an outcast from Heaven's favour, and the victim of death and eternal misery. We cannot suppose a state more truly awful than that of our apostate progenitor with the righteous and unrepented sentence of the Almighty hanging over his head, without a promise of deliverance, or gleam of hope to cheer or to animate. It required, then, more than created wisdom to point out a method by which the recovery of a lost world could be effected, by which the ruins of the Fall could be repaired, by which a remedy could be provided for the injury sustained and the offence given, by

which justice could be satisfied, guilt cancelled, and man saved. Now, this is done by the sufferings and death of Christ. The leading-object of the everlasting Father, in the mission of his Son into this lower world of ours, in his incarnation, his deep humility, his painful sufferings and accursed death, was to effect this great result. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. His blood was shed for the remission of sins. He suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God—he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.

I know, that the doctrine of the atonement has given great offence to men who are wise in their own conceits, and would set the dictates of their own shallow understandings in opposition to the revealed mind of God. But if we give up the doctrine of the atonement of Christ for sin, we may give up every doctrine of Scripture, destroy our Bibles, and refuse to listen to Heaven's communications. It is a doctrine that runs through the whole of the Divine Record, and through all the different dispensations of religion since the Fall. It is a doctrine not only plainly implied, but expressly stated, in every part of the New Testament Scriptures. We grant that it involves a great mystery, that it bespeaks an interposition beyond the stretch of created man to fathom; a display of love which is incomprehensible, and which passeth all understanding. But, then, what if the ways and works of God are different? We cannot contemplate the smallest and most insignificant works of nature, without meeting with difficulties—we cannot study the ways of Providence, without meeting with difficulties at every step, and finding ourselves involved in the utmost perplexity. We cannot contemplate the divine nature at all, without crying out, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" And if we were to explode and disbelieve every thing beyond the grasp of our capacities, our creed must be limited indeed. Revelation is here our only guide. The feeble intellect of man cannot comprehend it; and we must with humility submit, and be taught of God, just because it is the subject of divine revelation. And who will deny that Jesus is set forth as the propitiation for sin? Who questions that it is plainly revealed, that we are reconciled to God, by the death of his Son—who, that Christ was cut off, that he might make an

end of sin—that he might make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness—that, without shedding of blood, there can be no remission? I cannot see what meaning we can attach to such terms as the Scriptures reveal and employ, if the atonement and substitution for sinners is not the doctrine taught thereby. It is not for man to ask why God acts in this manner—whether the Deity could pardon sin in any other way, or how the satisfaction of Christ operates in our deliverance—our object is with the fact. It is to inquire what God has done, and to bless his name, that he has been graciously pleased so to manifest his regard, and with gratitude and humility to receive his own explanation of his own procedure. The whole Levitical procedure pointed at Him who was to take away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. In Him, all the rites and ceremonies had their explanation, from Him they derived their efficacy, and without his appearance, they would have remained a cold and unmeaning ceremony, for it was impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin. I can see no other way of reconciling the rectitude of the divine character with the unmerited personal sufferings of the Redeemer, than, by regarding these sufferings and that death as the purchase of our peace, his blood as the price of our redemption; and I can conceive no way in which the rectitude of God could be so fully maintained—no way in which the Almighty's detestation of sin, and the clemency of the divine nature, could be so clearly manifested, as by his punishing sin in the person of his surety—by his smiting the shepherd, in order that the sheep might go free. We may ask, how the sufferings and death of a person whose life was a life of unsullied purity and unwearied benevolence, whose every pang of personal distress, whose every drop of tribulation was unmerited, could at all be experienced, but on the supposition that he undertook our desperate cause, and that the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. And where has such a display been given of the purity, and justice, and severity, of God, as in the groans that issued from the garden of Gethsemane—in the heart-rending cries that proceeded from the cross on Calvary? And, at the same time, oh! now strikingly and affectingly has God manifested the riches of his grace, so that we cannot forbear to exclaim, O the height and the depth of the love of God in Christ! it passeth understanding. There it is that

mercy and truth meet together—there it is that righteousness and peace do mutually embrace—there it is that God declares his righteousness in the forgiveness of sin. He is just, and, at the same time, the justifier of the sinner believing in Jesus. There we at once behold the triumph of justice and holiness, and the richest displays of divine mercy and grace. The angelic song resounds from the cross, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth, peace and good will to the children of men!” It is difficult to say to what extent the influence of Christ's interposition goes. This much, however, is certain, that to man there is redemption only by the blood of Christ, that man can be reconciled to God only by the death of his Son, that there is no other surety, no other Saviour for sinners, no other propitiation for sin, but the Lord Jesus Christ.

But I observe, again, that the sufferings of Christ were necessary, in order that he might afford us an example of patient and holy endurance, and that we might look at him in our day of suffering, in our distress, as our sympathizing High Priest. Jesus was an all-perfect Saviour. He destroyed the enemy—he removed the wall of separation between heaven and earth. Not merely so; he pointed out, and he trod the path of life, in which he would have his followers to walk. This is no unimportant part of Christ's character as Mediator. To exhibit in life what is enjoined by the lips, to exemplify in character what is inculcated by the person, is no easy task, but it is necessary in him who would be a guide and instructor to others; for we know that it is immaterial what a person says in the way of injunction, unless his life is an illustration of his precepts. Now Christ took on him the seed of Abraham, for this reason, that he might exhibit the beauties of holiness to mortal view—that he might illustrate what every child of God should be. In any other nature, it could not be shown what man should be, and what he should do, and in any other state than that of suffering humanity, he could not have displayed many of the most exalted virtues. Patience and resignation cannot be exerted, where there are no suffering and distress—resolution and courage cannot be displayed, where difficulties and dangers do not assail us—there is no room for fortitude, and for the exercise of meekness, where we have not been subjected to unmerited suffering, indignity, and wrong. Had he possessed all the comforts and enjoyments which wealth can purchase, there

might have been room for the exercise of self-denial and superiority to this world; and we are not without most illustrious instances of this in the life of Christ, as when he flung from him the oracular answers pressed upon him; but without lowliness of condition, without endurance and suffering, without drinking the cup of affliction and sorrow, Christ's example could not have come home to the general state of mankind—the spirit essential in the most trying circumstances of human life, could not have been exhibited. Our Lord might, indeed, have issued his mandates from heaven, or dictated his will by angels, but his requirements could not have been recommended with such persuasive energy, as when illustrated by his life, obedience, and sufferings, as when he became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and was made, in all respects, like unto his brethren. We have not strength, as it has been well said, to ascend to him, but he had grace to descend to us, and he has marked out and consecrated that path in which every child of sorrow is called to travel. We are accordingly directed to look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. We are commanded to consider Him who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, lest, at any time, we should be weary and faint in our minds; and the apostle Peter says, “hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” Into many a trying situation is the pilgrim on earth brought, as he pursues his journey to his father's home, and the character of the Christian is perhaps never more fully brought to the test, than when the storms of life beat violently on his head, and the bitter cup of tribulation is put into his hand. And where, in these circumstances, let me ask, shall we find such a pattern as Christ? There is poverty in Christ's life, but there is not a murmur of discontent—there is suffering in the extreme, in the life of Christ, but there is not a word of complaint, there is not a look of impatience—there is persecution and reproach in Christ's life, but there is not the whisper of recrimination, nor the thought of revenge. In patience he possesses his soul. “He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” He is reviled, yet he reviles not again—he suffers, yet he threatens not—and when loaded with execrations, and meeting with every thing that was calculated

to extinguish every benevolent feeling, he recommends his enemies, his very murderers, to Heaven's mercy—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!” Yes, these scenes of tribulation were needful, to perfect Christ's work as Saviour of a lost world—were needful to exhibit him to all the intelligent creation of God, as the object of admiration, wonder, adoration, and praise.

But the lowly condition and sufferings of Christ were essential to the perfecting of his character, as a compassionate and sympathizing High Priest. This is a view that is taken by the apostle Paul, of Christ's assumption of human nature, and he states, that he is fulfilling his glory, in assuming the garb of mortal flesh, and submitting to the many privations, and troubles, and sufferings, which were his lot; that they were essential on this very account—“in all things,” says he, “it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren”—for what purpose? Why, “that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” And again, “seeing that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession; for we have not an High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace, to help in time of need.” The Christian, in his pilgrimage through life, in his journey through the wilderness forward, encounters many a rough blast, many a swelling surge, many a danger. His road lies not always through the smooth valley, and through the smiling parterre, but the steep and rugged ascent he has often to travel—briars and thorns often impede his progress, and who shall sympathize with him in the dark night of sorrow and distress—who shall cheer him on in his lonely path—who shall say to the stormy billows, “Be still”—who prevent his drooping spirit from fainting, and who put to flight his fears, and his sorrows, and his foes? Who but the compassionate Redeemer, who but the once suffering Saviour, who but Jesus, who trod the same path, who encountered the same difficulties, who was beset by the same enemies, who was harassed by the same

temptations, who endured the same afflictions, who was agitated by the same fears—but endured them all? We naturally unbosom our sorrows to those who felt as we. We naturally disclose our wants, and make known our sufferings to him who has known what want and suffering is, and we count that a brother in adversity, is he who has been, or is still, disciplined in the school of affliction. And to whom shall we go with such freedom, such confidence, and such reliance, such hope, such perfect assurance, as to him who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cryings and tears, unto Him that was able to save—who suffered from every avenue of affliction—who endured more than ever man can endure, more than tongue can express, or heart conceive, for the sake of those very individuals who are now subjected to the blast, and surrounded by the billows.

But it may be said, must not he who knows our frame and remembers we are but dust, he who is aware of our every want, and our every suffering, and sorrow, and pain, be as capable of sympathizing with us, and extending relief without, as with that personal experience? He who made us knows our wants. Christ assumed our nature, bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows, not to give himself a more intimate knowledge of our state, not to awaken compassion that did not exist before, not to increase the sensibilities of the divine mind towards us, but on our account, to increase our confidence and awaken our consolation in the calamities of life. As he travelled through life in the form of a servant, and gave us a bright example that we should follow his steps, so his every drop of woe was tasted for man's sake and benefit; as in various points of view, so in this important view also—to banish sorrow from our minds, to dissipate every shadow of suspicion from the hearts of the most desponding, and afford us the most perfect assurance, that in Christ, the man of sorrows, we have a merciful and compassionate High Priest. When we know that Jesus suffered in the flesh, that he carried into heaven that body that was broken on the cross, that he bore about with him all the sensibilities of our nature, and in that very nature in which he suffered appears as our advocate at his Father's right hand, that he bears in mind the remembrance of those sorrows wherewith he was borne down in his time of tribulation and trial, and did all for this end among others,

that he might have a fellow feeling with us in those sufferings and distresses that may be our lot and experience while we tabernacle in this life. Sure I am that the thought that we have such a friend in heaven, clothed in our nature and alive to all our infirmities, cannot fail to raise the spirit and refresh the heart, and animate the faith, and strengthen the consolations of the children of God. What, oh! distressed and afflicted Christian, is the reason of thy disquietude? Art thou poor? Art thou persecuted? Art thou agitated with fears? Art thou cast down with sorrows? Art thou beset with temptation? Art thou harassed by Satan? Art thou racked with pain? Art thou subject to death? Bear in mind, comfort thyself with the thought, that the Redeemer, now in glory, was poor, and afflicted, and sorrowful, and beset with temptation, and persecuted even unto the death, and that now he is willing, and able as he is willing, to succour and to help thee. Look, then, to Christ, and take comfort, cast thy burden on the Lord, and rest persuaded that he will sustain thee.

I should observe again that the sufferings of Christ were essential to his own glory as Mediator, and to the glory of his redeemed children. This is taught us in the text and in various passages of Scripture. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Because he humbled himself, because he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. He is exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and, for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame. But not only is the personal glory of Christ merely connected with his humiliation and sufferings, though these were essential. It is not merely through Christ's sufferings and death that the flaming sword, which guarded the tree of life, has been sheathed, and the cherubim withdrawn, that the gates of Paradise have been again thrown open, and the forfeited inheritance, without the possibility of alienation, restored to the believer—Christ has in his eye to draw all men unto him. "And," says the Apostle, "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 our salvation perfect through suffering." Yes, my friends, if ever you or I enter in through the gates into the heavenly city, if ever we join the

general assembly and church of the first-born, if ever we be admitted to a participation of their joys and glory, if ever we sit down with Christ in his glory, and live and reign with him, we must equally glory in that day when he suffered, the just for the unjust, when his garments were rolled in blood, and when he triumphantly exclaimed on the cross, "It is finished!" All that have already entered in, all to the

end of time who shall enter in, have their eyes directed to the Lamb that was slain, and sing, and through eternity shall sing, this song:—"Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests. May the Lord bless his word, and to his name be all the praise. Amen.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CONDITION OF MAN,

A SERMON,

By the Rev. W. ROUTLEDGE,

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"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."—ECCLES. xii. 7.

HOWEVER gloomy and disagreeable a subject death may be in itself, it ought, nevertheless, to be frequently in our thoughts. For since this is the sentence of the Lord over all flesh, That dust we are and unto dust we must return, why should we show ourselves averse to attend to and remember it? Our disinclination, in this case, only proves the more strongly, the necessity of our being reminded of it, but can be no reason for slighting and neglecting it, so generally as we are wont. Sooner or later we all must die, and our aversion to remember this will not retard our fate one moment longer than God sees fit to order it. Every human being, therefore, who really has his own interest at heart, will be glad to have this king of terrors pass frequently in review before him, that, by familiarizing himself, as it were, with his enemy beforehand, he may neither be alarmed at his approach, nor unprepared to meet him.

The words which I have chosen for my text, contain a very short, but a very true account of the awful change that is to take place with us at our dissolution. "The dust shall return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

This history of man, short as it is, will yet afford us several very useful reflections upon ourselves, upon the state which we now are in, and upon that state into which

our spirits are to enter, as soon as they shall have quitted this tenement of clay. Some reflections upon each head I purpose to lay before you on this occasion.

And, first, let us attend to ourselves, and mark the reflections which arise from a steady survey of our own nature. Almost at the first glance we perceive ourselves to be a most wonderful composition of body and soul, of flesh and spirit. Of these two parts, united and compounded together, our whole frame consists.

But, at the same time that we perceive this, we may observe further, that notwithstanding the intimate connexion which subsists between these two parts, an essential distinction between the one and the other is still kept up. Each is possessed of its peculiar properties, each hath its peculiar offices assigned it by its Maker. The soul, being of a thinking and rational nature, gives life and energy to every movement we make; whilst the body, being but an earthly and material substance, is only to be considered as the handmaid of the soul, the mere receptacle or storehouse of our spiritual substance.

And as the Almighty thus made the one part of us inferior at first to the other, and entirely subservient to its will and directions, during all the time of their present connexion upon earth, so hath he appointed for each, upon their separation, a state propor-

tioned to their different worth. The body, having no other origin but dust, is ordained to return, in its appointed time, to the earth out of which it was taken; but the soul, which is of a divine and spiritual nature, shall return to God who gave it. We cannot, indeed, distinctly understand what spirit is, because God, the fountain of all wisdom, hath not revealed so much information to us. Only this we know, that it infinitely excels all earthly substances, both in dignity and duration; and that our souls in particular, which are formed of it, shall go to their Creator, and be upheld by him in being, through eternal ages.

Here, then, is a plain and scriptural account of man; an account which is levelled to every capacity, and which we have no cause in the world to mistrust, since it is communicated to us from the most unexceptionable authority, from Him who, as he is the God of truth, can neither be deceived himself, nor deceive us.

Having, therefore, gained so much information respecting ourselves; having thus found, from intelligence which may safely be depended on, that our frame consists of two distinct substances—the one mortal and the other immortal, and that these substances shall, upon their separation by death, be consigned over to two such different states—the body returning to its original dust, and the soul into the hand of God who gave it, the first and most obvious reflection arising from hence, is this—that we should pay to each of them its proper share of attention. If the body be but of so frail and perishable a nature, a small portion of our esteem must be evidently its due. If the soul be the sublimer and more valuable part of man, it will deserve to be revered accordingly. Yet, rational and evident as these conclusions are, how differently do we proceed in our common estimate of things? How strangely do we reverse the order of nature? How sadly do we misplace the subjects of our care? The body, though confessedly the meaner and more ignoble part, engrosses the chief of our attention and concern. For it we toil and plod on with incessant labour. For it we rise up early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness. For it we have contrived a most surprising variety of pleasures, and found out all the delights and gratifications that this world can afford. How eager are we in our pursuits of indulgences for the body? How

anxious to supply its wants, and to pamper its desires, whilst the soul, that illustrious particle of divinity within us, is suffered to lie waste and neglected as of little value. Such is the general folly and infatuation of human conduct.

But, when we consider the assurances which God hath given us in other parts of his Word; that though our bodies sleep for a while in the silent chamber of the grave, yet a time is appointed in the counsels of his providence, when they shall be raised again from the dust, re-united to our souls, and with them be destined to everlasting happiness or misery, according as our works shall have been here—when, I say, we consider this, and reflect, as we ought, on the concerns which we have at stake in another world, *then*, and not till *then*, shall we see clearly the necessity of minding our spiritual improvement, and giving *them* the preference in our cares.

But, as in our worldly concerns, we never are so absurd as to think that the imprudence of a part of mankind can justify the rest in following the same pernicious steps; likewise, in religious matters, so far should we be from considering the errors of a multitude as any encouragement or excuse for us to imitate their example, when we know it to be bad, that, on the contrary, we ought rather to assert our own freedom, and in spite of every discouragement that offers, manfully embrace the truth.

Since, then, the conduct of those who prefer the care of their bodies to that of their souls, is wrong, what have we to do but to reverse this system, and to restore to the soul that pre-eminence in our affections, to which it is in fact so justly entitled? Not that we are to be so very solicitous about the welfare of our *inward*, as entirely to overlook our *outward* man. Neither reason nor religion will authorize us to do so. Our bodies, 'tis plain, are as much a part of ourselves as our souls or spirits can be; and in the present state of things, we are as necessarily bound to provide for the one as for the other, only each ought to have its due share of attention, according to its real and intrinsic merits; and our conduct is only *then* blameable when we rob the soul of its chief seat in our cares, to place them upon *that* part which is not so deserving.

Instead, therefore, of being at so much pains, as most men usually are, in decking and indulging this frail body, which we now

carry about with us, let us above all things be studious to adorn our minds with every laudable accomplishment, and to furnish them with such a stock of pious and virtuous improvements, as may best become the powers we were born with, and, if possible, exalt our rational nature to still higher degrees of perfection. This it would certainly be the wisdom of every man to do even supposing that he had no other end to serve by it, but to return his spirit as pure and unsullied as he could into the hand of Him who gave it.

Remember, then, it is no trifling thing we exhort you to. It is no frivolous aim we have in view, when we advise you to be particularly attentive to your inward man. This is what the Scriptures very properly call—the one thing needful. Whatever respects the good of the soul is a most necessary work. It is a work of the most lasting importance to us. A work that affects our most essential interests, and will be felt in its effects by us to all eternity. For God's sake, then, and for our own sakes, let not our religious concerns be neglected. Let other cares—cares which relate to our present bodily welfare, not pass unnoticed; but, never let them come in competition with the care of our souls.

The second lesson of improvement which this account of our latter end contained in the text, ought to teach us is, that we should learn from it to set a just, that is, a moderate value upon the state of being which we now are in, and not to esteem it more than it deserves. For, since we are sure that we must die and leave this world, why should we be so imprudent as to form connexions with it, that can only fill us with sorrow and regret at parting, and cause us to quit it with reluctance? As we brought nothing with us into the world, so neither shall we carry any thing out. All our acquisitions and all our enjoyments, whatever they be, must be given up with our breath. Whenever the fatal hour of separation between soul and body shall arrive, then will be the time for us to bid an eternal farewell to this earth, and to every thing it contains. And what is human life that we should build so much upon it? At the best 'tis but a vapour which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. Is not the history of every revolving day a melancholy and convincing proof of this? Look about, and mark the thousands that are continually falling around you.—Observe how fast they are taken away, some

by a sudden, others by a more lingering death. Let any man who has passed the meridian of life sit down and recollect what numbers of his kindred and acquaintance are already become a prey to the silent grave. How few, in fact, will he find remaining! Now the death of so many valued friends, members of our community, and respected acquaintance, *ought* to be a continual admonition to us to remember and provide for our *own*. They are but gone before: we must follow them, and God only knows how soon. Why then live we so unconcernedly about our latter end? why attach we ourselves too closely to any of the possessions or pleasures of a state so uncertain?

'Tis true, from the very nature of our present circumstances, we cannot but be attentive to what is passing around us. Every man's calling and condition here is such as necessarily to engage him more or less in the concerns and affairs of this world; and as long as he acts wisely and well the part assigned him in it by Providence, so long he may go forward with alacrity—being assured that both God and man will commend his behaviour. But, remember, that all extremes in this case are carefully to be avoided; and that to toil our bodies and harass our minds so much about worldly matters as we too frequently do—to carry our cares about this life to any excess—and to lay plans and schemes in it, as if we were never to leave it—is so evidently wrong and unreasonable, that had we any such real regard for ourselves and our own good, as we pretend to have, we could never be guilty of so flagrant a piece of folly. Let us, then, be studious to do ourselves so much justice as not to grow immoderately fond of any thing here; but endeavour all we can through life so to use this world as not to abuse it; that whenever it shall please God to call us out of it, we may be ready and prepared to obey the summons.

The last subject for reflection, which I mentioned as arising from the words of my text, is, that we learn to entertain just conceptions of that state which we are to enter upon after death. But who, in truth, is sufficient for this? What heart can comprehend, or tongue express, the nature and importance of an hereafter? “Behold, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for those who love and serve him,” any more than for those who slight and disobey him.

As yet we must be content to see in part, as well as to know but in part. Yet after all, we doubtless know enough to fill our hearts with the deepest concern, whenever we stretch our thoughts beyond the limits of this frail world, and anticipate our destiny in a future one. We know that whatever be the length and duration of our present life, it is but a small space in the annals of our existence. All the while we continue here we may be said to be only just beginning to live; we are as yet but in the infancy of existence. But as in the earlier years of youth we find it necessary to treasure up so much of the improvements of human learning, as are necessary to qualify us for the employments which we are to undertake in manhood, so ought we, in the general amount of the life that now is, to cultivate such a temper, and acquire such habits and graces as shall fit us to appear before God in another world.

This world is the place allotted us for the knowledge and practice of that which is good. We are now in a state of trial and discipline, and on the care or remissness which we here show in *moral* and *religious* improvements, it will depend whether we shall be happy or miserable for ever.

Think, then, how great will be our confusion, when we come to enter upon our future state, if we either have made no provision at all for it, or only prepared ourselves by sin and wickedness for the worst of torments! How shall we then wish, but for ever wish in vain, that we had made better

use of time whilst it was in our power; and that instead of abusing or neglecting our day of grace, we had spent it in performing the will of Him whose servants we are—in doing our duty like honest men and good Christians, and thus fitting ourselves for heaven.

God give us all grace so to follow the good example of those who have departed this life, in thy faith and fear, that we may never have cause to condemn or reproach ourselves for folly hereafter. God grant that in the midst of all our cares and enjoyments here, we may never forget the concerns we have in view hereafter. May we all be mindful of our latter end, and remember that though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day—that we have each of us a soul to be saved, and that its acceptance or rejection by God will be the consequence of our good or ill behaviour in this life. For, as St. Paul assures us, “To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for honour, and glory, and immortality, will God give eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.”

“To Him,” therefore, “who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before his presence with exceeding joy, to God only wise, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, now and ever.—Amen.”

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. D. MACFARLAN, D.D., Glasgow.

SERMON by the Rev. G. B. BRAND, Dunfermline.

CHRIST, THE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH;

Sermon preached by the Rev. JAMES MARSHALL.—Continued from page 348.

IN conclusion, then, I would ask you, are you not connected with the Saviour? have you gone to him? do you trust in him? do you look to him as all your salvation? are you seeking to give yourselves up to him, and to have the grace imparted that will make you feel it to be your meat and your drink to do the will of your Father who is in heaven? Oh! then I beseech you, never, never forget the strength and the tenderness of the tie by which you are knit to that Saviour. It is stronger than the bond that unites the heart even of a mother towards her sucking child. You are members of Christ's body, and it is not more sure that you are willing to do for your bodies all that we have already stated, it is not more true that men, without exception, are ready and most anxious to do what they can for their mortal bodies, than that He who is exalted a prince and a Saviour, far above all principalities and powers, is ready to supply your wants—to minister to your necessities—to make his grace sufficient for you—to impart spiritual food and enjoyment to your souls—to give you the victory over the enemy—to strengthen you for the discharge of your duties—and finally to bring you to his heavenly kingdom. But are you not thus connected with Him? Have you been living in disregard of Him? Are you still living heedless of the benefits of Christ? Do so, we beseech you, no longer. Oh! think of the privilege to which you this night are invited. Men speak boastingly of their relationship, of their connexion with those that have claims to noble, to royal birth, but what are all these things but as the small dust of the balance when compared with that relationship which we have this night been considering—when compared with union to Christ himself, who has a name that is above every name—a union as intimate and close as that which subsists between the soul and the body!

This union he declares himself willing to establish this night between himself and your souls. Receive him then, and see that this relationship be established without the delay even of a moment. Insult not the Redeemer. Bring not guilt and condemnation on your own souls by virtually making a mock of him. This is the privilege to which I would call you, this the honour after which I would encourage you to aspire.

But, in the last place, while we are called upon, each of us for ourselves, to seek the blessings which Christ thus freely and graciously tenders, surely we are called upon to seek, as much as possible, to be instrumental in extending the enjoyment of these benefits to our brethren around us. It is by God's dealings with his Church, that the perfections of his nature have, in a most remarkable manner, been illustrated. Have you a friend whom you wish to recommend to those around you? would you not be anxious to make known the deeds of that friend, by which the virtues that in a particular manner adorned him, were most especially displayed? Would you have God's glory known and esteemed throughout every portion of the globe you inhabit? Oh, then, seek to be instrumental in sending every-where the knowledge of that work of God, which at once exhibits every perfection of his character. But, besides, hearing as we do, of the willingness of that God whom we have offended, not merely to receive sinners into a state of forgiveness and deliverance from all the consequences to which they have, by their transgressions, become exposed, but to admit them to the close and tender tie we have this night been considering, oh! surely every sentiment of benevolence should make us anxious to spread the glad tidings of great joy, that by them all our fellow-sinners every-where should come to know the way in which

they may be sanctified, and made manifest to be Christ's body, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

The persons for whom I this night, in a particular manner, am called to plead, have very special claims upon you. They have been under the necessity of leaving their native country; bidding adieu to the scenes endeared to them by many fond recollections—bidding adieu to the friends, as well as to the scenes, of their youth, they have gone to a land of strangers, and to a land where they not merely have not the associations that endear our native country to the hearts of every one of us, but where they have not those religious feelings that make this country such a delightful home to its inhabitants. There the Sabbath comes not as it does here. The sun of the Sabbath rises and sets upon them indeed, but, in many places, the gates of the Sanctuary are not thrown open, the church bell is not heard, the glad tidings of salvation are not published. In many places, there is not merely an entire destitution of the means of religious instruction, but even of the means of common, and that the most common, education. Did Christ tell his disciples, then, when they preached the Gospel, to begin at Jerusalem? did he tell them to begin in that place where he himself was crucified, where he was maltreated, where he was buffeted, where he was spit upon? did he thus show regard for his country? did he thus teach his disciples to cherish the same feeling within their breasts, and shall we hear of our countrymen in straits, and not stretch out our hand—not do what we can, that in the foreign land in which they are, they may have at least the consolation of hearing of the God of their fathers, and

be privileged to worship that God in the way in which they had been accustomed, when they were inhabitants of the country where we now are? There is another reason why I would urge upon you, the claims of this society. We little know what connexion we ourselves may have with the emigrants. Emigration is on the increase, and in all probability it will go on to increase still. We know not but some dear, very dear to us, may soon exchange this country for a transatlantic one. Not one of us who are parents, knows but that some of our children may be under the necessity of removing from the country of their fathers, to the land whither so many have gone. And in these circumstances, under the possibility of such an occurrence, do not motives of selfishness, as well as of benevolence, call on you to do what you can, to add to the means of grace that there are wanting to make the Gospel more extensively known? This is the object which the North American Colonial Society has in view. They have sent out many preachers and ministers to that land of spiritual desolation. Within these few months, fourteen preachers, in connexion with the Church of Scotland, have been sent out. In consequence of this, a heavy debt has been contracted, obligations have been come under to an extent considerably beyond the funds; but they look to you, to the public in general, with the utmost confidence, for the means to enable them to fulfil their ends; and I trust, that by your contributions in this way, while you are anxious to avail yourselves of the privileges you now enjoy, you will show that you are likewise deeply concerned for your countrymen, who may not be in circumstances so advantageous as you.

THE CHARACTER AND BLESSING OF HIM THAT OVERCOMETH

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE TRON CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE EVENING OF
SABBATH, 14TH JULY, 1833,

By the Very Rev. DUNCAN MACFARLAN, D.D.,
Principal of the University, and Minister of the Inner High Church, Glasgow.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things."—REV. xxi. 7.

Two questions here suggest themselves. In the first place, Who is he that overcometh? in the second place, What is the nature of that inheritance which is promised? To each of these in succession it is pro-

posed, shortly, by the blessing of God, to call your attention.

The blessing is promised here, and in many other passages of Scripture, to him that *overcometh*. To understand this aright,

it must be observed that the life of a Christian is uniformly described in Scripture as a state of danger and of toil. He is required to *strive*, to *hold fast*, to *fight the good fight*. Persecution was the trial to which the first Christians were chiefly exposed, and against which they were carefully armed, but in succeeding ages, and unto the present times, the attacks which are made on believers are more numerous and more various. Whatever from within or from without may shake the faith or disturb the consistency of a Christian, whether under cover of turbulent passion, inordinate desire, or malignant affection, whether in the shape of worthless solicitation, sinful example, unlawful pleasure, or dishonest gain, may be regarded as an enemy, and is to be firmly resisted. Now, this is a combat in which you at least profess to be engaged. By calling yourselves Christians, and by meeting in the house of God, you solemnly profess that you are animated by the example and encouraged by the promises of the Captain of your salvation.

What, then, are the qualifications of him who would fight successfully? The first is faith; such is the express and repeated declaration of Scripture. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" The world is continually present with you. Its temptations assail you day by day, and hour by hour. You every day behold the multitude doing evil, and hurrying you on by their powerful and fascinating example into a participation of their guilt and sin. You are often solicited, not only by the profligate, but by professed Christians and pretended friends, to do those things which are inconsistent with faith and a good conscience towards God, and you frequently meet with opportunities of promoting your lawful interests by unjust and unlawful means, and with favourable opportunities of indulging in sinful pleasures. These temptations assail you in every shape. They not only agitate your violent passions and disturb the balance of your *minds*, but steal on you under the mask of goodness, and seduce your first propensities into auxiliaries against you. They reconcile you to the example of the wicked by representing to you the folly and uselessness of your standing out against the general practices of mankind. They represent it as even a duty to comply with the requests of your friends, though it should not be quite clear that

their desires and wishes are altogether proper. They reconcile you to the indulgence of covetousness where it presents power, and honour, and gain, as means of increasing your usefulness. Now, against these, thus incessant in their attacks, thus perpetually arrayed or disguised to betray, what can support the soldier of Christ, or enable him to contend with perseverance or success? No general notions of duty, no views of self-interest, can arm him for that combat, or endue him with that determination of purpose which it requires. In faith alone is an adequate principle of resistance to be found. He who by Jesus Christ shall believe in God—he who setteth the Lord always before him, who, in all his thoughts, and words, and actions, has habitual reference to the all-seeing God, must be restrained from mortifying his favour and incurring his displeasure. He who walks by faith and not by sight, looking to him who came, not to do his own will, but the will of Him who sent him, of him who was despised and afflicted, and had not where to lay his head, will not extravagantly hunt after those pleasures and gains which his great master never stooped to be a partaker of. He whose entire reliance is on a suffering and crucified Redeemer, whose only hope is in the mercy of God, through him who laid down his life amid the trials of the cross for the deliverance of mankind, will not likely betray his advocate and intercessor, by indulging in those sins which put him to open shame. He who looks forward to the second coming of Christ will not likely be moved to provoke the displeasure of that Judge, and treasure up for himself wrath and shame, and confusion on the day of God. A person who is accustomed to look forward to the second coming of Jesus, and whose hopes rest on an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, must be thereby raised above all undue attachment to the gains, the pleasures, and the sinful practices of this world. What to him is the favour or the censure of mankind? the enjoyment of this world's pleasures, or the endurance of poverty and contempt? All these, all vicissitudes, sink into nothing in comparison of that glory which shall be revealed, and when estimated by him along with that inheritance. Such are some of the principles of him who overcometh—such are some of the motives for perseverence in keeping the commandments.

But, in the second place, he who over-

cometh must exercise constant and unremitting watchfulness. This is the decided language of Scripture. "Watch and pray," says our Lord, "that ye enter not into temptation." "Watch ye and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." The same command he repeats by his Apostles. "Watch ye," says St. Paul, "stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." If your condition has thus been as it has been represented, and as I am pretty sure you will have found it to be, a state of perpetual danger—it surely ought on your part to be also a state of perpetual watchfulness. In the spiritual, as in mortal warfare, the hour of fancied security is that of most evident danger. The very notion of warfare implies the necessity of continued watchfulness, lest your enemy take advantage of your carelessness, and surprise you when you are off your guard. When you blindly indulge the wishes which arise in your hearts, or follow unguardedly the maxims and example of the world—when you advance in a blind reliance on your own strength, and say to yourselves that nothing is too hard for you, you wilfully expose yourselves to the most imminent hazard of being betrayed into sudden misery and danger. He who overcome must exercise constant watchfulness over all his thoughts, words, and actions. Conscious of his own weakness, distrusting the alluring voice of pleasure, and jealous of those pursuits that appear in the most favourable light when their nature and tendency are not distinctly ascertained, he exercises constant vigilance over his temper, his inclinations, and his conduct. He who is wise in your sight engages in no undertaking, and indulges no inclination, without considering and weighing well the principles from which they proceed, and the effects they are likely to produce. He bears in mind the salutary counsels of wisdom, and ponders the path of his feet, that all his ways may be established. By the blessing of God, under this constant discipline, he is guarded against many of the temptations that may assail him, and delivered from many of those snares by which the well-meaning, but unwise, are so often entangled, to their utter destruction. "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day, nor the hour, when the deceitfulness

of sin may overtake you; yea, I say unto all of you, watch."

A third, and the most important weapon in the hand of him who overcome, is prayer. His combat is terrible—his path to success is strikingly described by the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." This injunction to habitual prayer and supplication is obviously founded on the imperfection and infirmity of human nature. Weak, indeed, are the children of men, wavering in their opinion, inconstant in their affections, inconsistent in their conduct. Most striking is the emphatic declaration of Scripture: "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." For a painful proof of this truth I may appeal to the conscious recollection of every one who hears me. Who is there, in this assembly, that has never mourned over his own faults, never blushed for his own errors? Who is there whose experience has not often brought to his recollection these words of the apostle Paul: "When I would do good, evil is present with me." In the hour of trial and temptation are not your affections cold, and your resolutions feeble and unsuccessful? To vessels, thus weak, thus insufficient, thus destitute of power in themselves, there is strength from on high. The Lord has declared he will make his grace sufficient for them, and perfect his strength in their weakness, and this strength they are commanded and encouraged to seek by prayer. "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 ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him ?" This aid the soldier of Christ requires, and for this aid he habitually applies. He regularly supplicates the Father of mercies, the author of all that is good, that he would be pleased, by his gracious Spirit, to enlighten his understanding, to renew his will, to support him under his straits, to strengthen him under all his trials, to rescue him from temptation, and deliver him from evil. Putting up these prayers in a pure heart, he trusts to obtain from Christ what is requisite to prevent him from being overcome of evil. While the blessing attends him from on high, even the devout action he performs carries along with it its own reward. When he regularly and habitually addresses himself to that God who is invisible, a constant sense of the divine presence, government, and inspection, is kept alive in his mind ; his thoughts are withdrawn from those outward objects which attract his external senses, and his attention is fixed on those glorious truths and realities which can elevate him above this world, and add him to the number of those who overcome its temptations. Every prayer he offers up is a renewed engagement to be faithful to his Lord, a new and solemn renunciation of all intercourse with his enemies. The blessing of God on the frequent repetition of this exercise must exalt the Christian above the contempt of this world, to his Creator and the works of the Lord.

Another of the requisites in him that overcometh is self-denial. " If any man will come after me," says Jesus, " let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." This necessity is founded again in the imperfection of the character of man. Were we wise and pure, and righteous, as we are taught angels are in heaven, it is perfectly easy to conceive that our inclinations and our duties would in every case coincide perfectly, and in the indulging of our inclinations we should be uniformly promoting the ends of our existence. This is, however, not the case. We are seldom just judges of what is truly for our own benefit. Even in the plainest cases of duty we are often miserably misled by passions, prejudices, or evil

inclinations. Our desires are often erroneous, sinful, at variance with our own interest and the will of the Most High ; but even when the inclination of man is not absolutely and directly very sinful, its habitual and systematic indulgence is in the last degree dangerous, weakening the authority of reason and conscience, and altogether unsettling the mind. It is no argument against this necessity, that it has been frequently misunderstood or abused. Mankind have often imagined that the Almighty is pleased with the sufferings of his creatures, and that gloom, and severity, and a peevish rejection of all ordinary comforts, are the evidences of a grateful heart, and a serious sense of his presence. Such notions we justly reject as grossly erroneous, and most disrespectful to the glory and benevolence of the Father of mercies and of love. He has no pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. He urges on them self-denial, not for the sake of abridging their pleasures, but of increasing their future happiness. It is a salutary duty in this state of imperfection to correct their follies and sins, and render them meet for happiness hereafter. He who has this impression on his mind is aware of his own weakness. Knowing how often he may be misled, how easily he may be betrayed, how dangerous the passage into what inclination would lead him, he exercises a constant control over his wishes, and is ever anxious that no pleasure should be so dear to him as for one instant to set aside the predominance of the holy principle of duty and conscience. He knows well that many inclinations, innocent in themselves, are apt to break forth by indulgence into the most violent excesses, and keeps a constant check on his words and actions. He trembles at being led into base neglect or criminal excess, and studies the constant and habitual employment of self-denial ; and in every case of doubt or emergency his prayer is, " Lord what wouldst thou have me to do ?" The ruling passion, the favourite inclination, of every man is, in fact, his weak side, through which he is most apt to be betrayed into the sin that doth most easily beset him. Here, therefore, the prudent man is particularly on his guard, lest he should be betrayed by it, and brought to experience the truth, that for all things God will bring him to judgment.

Lastly, it is essential to him that overcometh, that he persevere. To hold fast to

the end, to be faithful unto death, is the character of him to whom is promised the crown of life. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." "If ye continue in my word," says Christ, "then are ye my disciples indeed." "He that endureth to the end, shall be saved." There are many who set out in life with a fair outward appearance of success. They have all the zeal which arises from a lively spirit and limited experience. They perform the outward acts of devotion with apparent fervour and earnestness. They are, in their general conduct, scrupulously precise. They contend for truth with energy and zeal, but, by degrees, their zeal waxes cold, their energies abate, lassitude and indifference creep upon them, religion wearies and disgusts. They begin by entertaining doubts as to some of its doctrines, and by throwing off all respect for its precepts. Such is a very common process in the human mind, arising from the love of change, and the impossibility of keeping up warmth of devotional feeling, unless founded on rational principles. Still more does it manifest itself, when, to original weakness, is added actual temptation. Too many resemble the seeds that fall upon stony ground, which, when the sun was up, were scorched, and because they had no root, withered away. Far from this wavering of principle are the true and faithful followers of the Captain of salvation. Their belief is founded on deep conviction, their affections and understandings are equally engaged in his service, and all their faculties are devoted to the cause of their master. They go on from strength to strength, and become day by day more confirmed in his faith, more ardent in love to him, more resolute in resistance to temptation, and more and more abhorrent of iniquity. Is this the ease with your characters? Do you grow daily in grace, and in the knowledge of your Saviour Jesus Christ? Is your faith deep-rooted, and are you ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you? Are its fruits manifested day by day more distinctly in your temper and conduct? Do you advance from one degree of grace to another, dying more unto sin, and living more unto righteousness? Are you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain?

This is the character of him that overcometh—it consisteth in his faith in his

watchfulness, in his doctrines, in his self-denial, in his perseverance. Now, there are many glorious promises annexed to this character; but no words are more entitled to our serious consideration, than those of the text, "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things." Observe the words, "He shall inherit all things." The symbol of an inheritance is most happy. It strikes against the presumption of human merit, and is at once an admission of divine favour. It marks out those who are to be blessed hereafter, as having a peculiar character; they are the sons of God; if sons, then heirs, and joint heirs with Christ. "He that overcometh, shall inherit *all things*." This is the converse of a common expression—heaven and earth. It is said, "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"—that is, all things which are on this earth, in this world, or out of this world. In like manner, it is said or implied, He that overcometh, shall have the inheritance both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. It were easy to show how he that overcometh, inheriteth even the life that now is, how he escapes many sufferings, how he enjoys many blessings, how prosperity is enhanced, how adversity is soothed and alleviated by his successful contest with temptation. At present, however, I would rather direct your attention to the future prospect which is opened to you, the future blessing, the unspeakable eternal happiness which is implied in the expression, "He shall inherit all things."

What is the character of this inheritance? It is an inheritance of the highest honour and dignity. What is so dear to man as honour and dignity? What swells the heart so much as the opinion of being exalted in the eyes of his fellow-men, and of transmitting to posterity a distinguished and powerful name? What do men desire so much as power and office—and yet what of honour can all this world give, comparable to what is promised to the servants of God hereafter? They shall be before the throne of God—they shall be made kings and priests before God—they are clothed with white robes—they bear palms in their hands—they shall be made pillars and temples of their God. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Instead of dwelling on such a promise as this,

I go on to observe, in the second

place, that the promised inheritance is the inheritance of unbounded wealth. I need not tell you how desirous men are of riches, how they toil for wealth, what they deny themselves to obtain it, and how much they value its acquirement. What a man desires ardently, as the means of enjoying or doing good, becomes his ruling passion, to which every thing is sacrificed. But let him possess of this world what he may; it cannot secure him health, nor purity, nor peace of mind, nor the esteem and good-will of his brethren; and, in fact, it never does satisfy him. He who has much, always wishes for more. There is something wanting, some little addition discovered, and he still hazards his integrity and his conscience to add another grain to the heap. How different the condition of him who enjoys the riches that fade not away, who lays up for himself treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. How incomparably beyond all earthly possessions, are what Scripture so magnificently terms the riches and glory of God's inheritance in the saints. Every thing the heart can desire, every thing the mind can possess, every thing that a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience would direct us to seek after, will follow in the course of these who inherit the kingdom of heaven; and what is more, in the clearness of their own understandings, in the purity of their own wishes, they will be perfectly satisfied with what God bestows. No anxious cravings will they feel for any thing withheld, but will enjoy with delight those joys and treasures which God, in his bounty, permits them to share. In this world, their inheritance is very often the trial of friendship and brotherly love. All know what bitter disappointment often takes place, from being neglected and overlooked by those who, as we hoped, would remember us at their death—how friends, and neighbours, and families, are divided among themselves by the jealousy of their interests, by the grudge of preference given to another, by the thousand anomalous annoyances that take place in dividing that to which they all think they have equally a claim. Often a legacy, so far from being a blessing, is almost a curse, poisoning the harmony of friendship, setting brother against brother, parent against child, and friend against friend. Besides, in this world, when success does come, whether by the blessing of God on our own exer-

tions, or by our succeeding to something bequeathed by another, how often is our happiness incomplete? The health, or the strength, or the flow of spirits which would have enabled us to enjoy prosperity, is now gone by, and the friends whom we loved, and for whom we felt, and who we hoped would share what we might bestow, are removed from us, and committed to the dust, and we are enriched with the treasures of this world, as solitary pilgrims in a bleak howling wilderness. How different the character of the inheritance to which God encourages us to look forward hereafter. There will there be enough, and more than enough, to dispel the wildest wishes the human heart can form. There will be no clashing of interests, no jealousy of sects, no interference, one with another. And what perhaps is still more, we are encouraged to hope, that there will be there no solitude, that we shall share in the blessings of that inheritance with saints and angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, with all the wise, and the good, and the great, who have ever drawn the breath of life, and especially with those blessed friends whom we have seen before, loosed from all their infirmities, and never more to be again subject to death.

Again, I need not tell you that there is in this world—no good unmixed with evil, no pleasure ever separate from pain, no comfort without a mixture of sorrow and annoyance. The wisest of men, when he had tasted of all delights, declared, “All is vanity and vexation of spirit;” and such is the testimony of all the gay and prosperous, and happy, as they are called in this world. Every one has his own sorrows, his own annoyances, his own sources of mortification, his own disappointments; and, though outward afflictions be withheld, there is within us a root of bitterness and incapacity for perfect happiness. I need not advert to the innumerable annoyances which every one has experienced. But I see none such hereafter—none such in the kingdom of our God—nothing there left to seek for—nothing to desire that cannot be obtained, and a complete capacity for enjoying all that God bestows, with nothing to interrupt—nothing to make afraid—nothing to poison the cordiality of friendship, or tranquility of spirit; in short, a pure, unmixed, uncontaminated state of bliss, upon which our thoughts can scarcely dwell.

But lastly, the inheritance to which he

who overcometh is encouraged to look, is above all precious, because it is eternal—it is “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” It is well and most wisely and mercifully ordered in Providence, that our condition in this world should not be one of perfect happiness. We are mortal creatures placed in a state of trial and discipline; and that trial and discipline consist, in a great measure, in the corrections and chastisements of divine Providence, as especially necessary to wean our affections from this world, and to induce us to long for a better. It is when we are tried here that we look forward to another state. Even when our prospects are fair and unclouded—when we are blessed with possessions, and power, and reputation, and every domestic joy, our comforts and enjoyments are alloyed by the reflection that they cannot continue; that a few short months or years may separate us from all our bliss, or tear that bliss from us. I need not speak of the uncertainty of every thing. I need not say that the fashion of this world passeth away, that the most powerful are betrayed and brought

low, that riches make themselves wings and flee away, that the fairest reputation may be blasted by calumny, and that the beloved of our hearts may be taken away from us by the stroke of death. So our case is, and knowing it, we do not fail to see in it a heavy abatement of our enjoyments in this world. But no such changes await the enjoyment of the saints in light. They have no riches which will flee away, no dignity that will be obscured, no character that will be calumniated, no reputation that will be forfeited. All divine things will be steady, sure, and unchanged, and every thing blissful in life, every thing delightful in society, every thing exalted and prosperous, will be not only continued, but enhanced and improved, and rendered more and more blissful to their souls, through an endless succession of ages. But on this subject the attempt to say much would only weaken its effect.

May God give us the victory, and enable us to triumph over all our enemies, and receive us in glory to Himself—with Him to dwell for ever and ever. And to his great name be the glory and the praise. Amen.

ON THE DEDICATION OF CHURCHES ;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE 23^d JUNE, 1833, AT THE OPENING OF THE NEW PLACE OF WORSHIP, BUILT BY THE CHAPEL OF EASE CONGREGATION, DUNFERMLINE,

By the Rev. G. B. BRAND,

Minister of the Chapel of Ease, Dunfermline.

“And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.”—EZRA vi. 16.

OF the solemnity, my friends, to which our text refers, it is not to be presumed, but you have all a distinct and definite conception. You all know that the word *dedication*, as used in the Old Testament Scriptures, signifies the act of consecrating and setting apart to the worship and service of God. It was, in this sense, as we read in the 40th chapter of Exodus, that Moses dedicated, with all its sacred utensils, the tabernacle, which, according to the pattern shown him on the Mount, he had erected in the wilderness. It was in this sense, too, as we find recorded in the 8th chapter of the first book of Kings, that Solomon, and all the people of Israel, dedicated the temple which he had built at Jerusalem, and

which, after a period, according to Josephus, of four hundred and seventy years, was plundered and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. And it was in this sense that the Jews here mentioned, after their release from the Babylonish captivity, dedicated the sacred edifice, or as it has been called, the second, or Zerubbabel's temple, which they had now reared, and of which the dedication, we are told in our text, they “kept with joy.” It is not, however, I think it proper here to observe, exactly in this sense that we who live under the Christian dispensation, ought to understand the word, dedication. Under the Mosaic establishment, the whole constitution of which was typical, the places or things dedicated being

intended to serve as patterns or examples of better things to come under the gospel, there was obviously a propriety in these being consecrated, or made holy. But of these better things, Christ Jesus, who is the great antitype, the true temple, and altar, and sacrifice, and high priest, being now come—the types and symbolical representation of that which obtained and was consecrated by the divine sanction under the law, are entirely superseded, and can no longer be of any use or significance. When the Father sanctified and sent his Son into the world to do his will, in carrying into effect the glorious and heaven-contrived plan of our redemption, the grand design of their appointment received its full accomplishment, and, therefore, now that the substance is come, there is not only no need for continuing the shadow, but to do so we conceive to be not merely improper, but sinful, and virtually a returning “to the weak and beggarly elements of this world.” In fact, to Christians the coming of Christ in the flesh has completely put an end to the holiness of places. There is, indeed, a sense, in which a place set apart for divine worship may be termed holy, in as much as, so long as piety obtains among men, and in proportion to the influence which it maintains over their minds, they will be sensible, on entering it, of a feeling of sacred awe; and, I trust, the time will never come when, in this country, this will not be the case, for the absence of this feeling would, I am inclined to think, be a sure symptom of the absence of vital religion, and indicate the want of a due reverence for the Almighty. But considered apart from the purpose to which it is appropriated, the most splendid and magnificent place of worship that can be reared by the hands of man, though it could vie even with Solomon’s temple, possesses no sanctity and no sacredness. The true worshippers of the Father are they who worship him in spirit and in truth, and wherever these, united by the faith and hope of the gospel, assemble for the purpose of observing the ordinances of the Redeemer’s kingdom, it is the house of God, and there, without the least regard to its meanness or grandeur, he has promised to meet with, and bless them, and do them good: but neither this promise nor the most imposing ceremony that can be performed, can communicate to it the least particle or degree of holiness; and, therefore, in our acceptance of the word *dedication*, we must altogether leave out the idea of consecration,

or making holy, and understand it as signifying only the devoting, or setting apart, to the worship and service of God. It is in this sense only, I conceive, that we can consistently, as Christians, and especially as presbyterians, regard the dedication of a place of worship. But with this remark I proceed to the object which I have in view in the following discourse, viz., to state and illustrate some of the considerations which may be supposed to have caused, or at least contributed to the joy of the Israelites on the occasion here referred to, and which should also this day be matter of rejoicing to you. I say, with this remark, that we are to understand the interesting and solemn duty to which we are now called, in the dedication of this as a house of prayer, not as consecrating or making it holy, but as appropriating and setting it apart to the worship and service of the living and true God, we shall proceed to the object which I have in view in the following discourse, and which I shall accomplish, as God may be pleased to vouchsafe his divine blessing, viz., to state and illustrate some of the considerations which may be supposed to have caused, or at least contributed to, the joy of the Israelites on the occasion referred to in our text, and which should also this day be matter of rejoicing to you. And here we may observe in general, that the joy with which the children of Israel, and the priests, and Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God, may be supposed to have arisen from the considerations of its being now completely finished, of their regarding it as a token of God for good, as a demonstration at once of his faithfulness and favour towards them, and of the delightful prospect which it held out to them of their enjoying with comfort, and with advantage the public ordinances of religion. When we consider the numerous peculiarities in the case of the Israelites here mentioned, and the very affecting language in which they had poured forth their lamentations, when they sat and wept by the rivers of Babylon and remembered Zion, it is almost needless to observe that we can neither place ourselves exactly in their circumstances, nor fully enter into their feelings on this joyful occasion. In their circumstances there were many affecting particulars, to which in ours there is nothing parallel, and in their hearts chords were touched, to which nothing in ours can bear responsive, but still in respect of what we have supposed to have been the general

grounds of their joy, we too have matter of rejoicing. Our place of worship, as well as theirs was, is now finished. We are this day permitted, in comfortable circumstances, to meet in it to worship the God of our fathers; and looking at this event, as Christians ought to do, we cannot but regard it as a token of God for good to us, and I trust we will have cause to remember and bless him for this instance of his loving-kindness; and we too, in respect of enjoying the comfort and benefit of divine ordinances, have presented to us a most delightful prospect, and, therefore, it now becomes us, as they did, to keep the dedication of this house of God with joy.

But I observe more particularly, in the first place, that the joy with which the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of the second temple, may be supposed to have arisen from the consideration of their having been honoured and enabled to build a house to the Lord their God. Of all things the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem was, to the Jews, a work of the highest interest, and on which their hearts were particularly set. It was a work which was, in their regard, of paramount importance, and which deeply interested their every pious, and every personal, and every national feeling, and it was a work to which they willingly and wholly gave themselves, and to promote the accomplishment of which, their every energy and every effort were employed. Accordingly, as Ezra informs us, the foundation of it was laid with great rejoicing. "When the builders," says he, at the 10th verse of the 3d chapter, "laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they" that is, Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest, and the others who took the lead in this good work, "set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David, king of Israel. And they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." This rejoicing, however, was not unsullied. There were "many of the priests, and Levites, and chiefs of the fathers, ancient men who had seen" and remembered the glory of the former house,

and "when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, they wept with a loud voice." When they looked around them and beheld only a few poor and depressed exiles who had just returned from captivity, they felt their utter inadequacy to rear any structure that could at all be compared with the magnificence of Solomon's temple, and under the influence of this feeling, although they were equally interested, and rejoiced in the undertaking, they wept while others shouted aloud for joy. "The people," the historian adds, "could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off." Enjoying, as they did, not only the permission, but the countenance and support of Cyrus, the emperor of Persia, to whom the land of Canaan had now become a tributary kingdom, and of whom Isaiah had prophesied by name, two hundred years before he was born, that he should encourage the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple; they commenced this great, and, to them, interesting work under the most favourable and promising auspices. But these were not destined long to continue, and ere the object of their wishes was accomplished they had much opposition to encounter, and many years of bitter disappointment to suffer. They had scarcely begun when their enemies, the Samaritans, annoyed and impeded them by every means in their power, and at last, by their malicious representations to the court of Persia, the Emperor was induced to command them altogether to discontinue the building, which could not but involve them in the deepest distress. To this, however, with all its painful consequences, they were forced to submit, and it was not until the second year of the reign of Darius, and after a cessation of no less than *thirteen* years, that they were permitted to resume their labours, when having again, in the dispensations of providence, and by a means which their enemies intended should have the very contrary effect, restored to them the royal favour, they were enabled to prosecute their undertaking with renewed vigour, and with advantages which they never before enjoyed, and to bring it, in the course of four years, to a happy and successful termination. In these circumstances, and particularly when we consider how generally mankind estimate and are affected by things in proportion to the trouble they have cost them, or the difficulty of their

attainment, the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity," could not but rejoice in the successful issue of their labours. They had had to struggle with many difficulties and discouragements, and the enemies who, from its very commencement, had opposed them were numerous and powerful, and employed every stratagem to counteract and defeat the object which they had in view, but by the good blessing of God upon them, they had been enabled to overcome them all, and now when they beheld what many of them probably never expected to have seen, the house of God completely finished, their hearts could not but be filled with joy and gladness. But this, however gratifying, we can have no doubt, was neither the only nor the principal source of their rejoicing. Regarding it, as we have reason to believe they did, in a religious point of view, they could not but feel, especially all of those whose hearts God had touched, the high honour which he had conferred on them, in permitting and calling them to engage in this good work; and when they looked back and called to their recollection all the kindness and assistance which he had vouchsafed them, till, under his blessing, they had been enabled to complete it, they could not but feel and give way to the liveliest emotions of gratitude and joy. Solomon accounted it his highest privilege, and it was indeed the glory of his reign, that he was honoured to build a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel; and such, too, were the sentiments of his father David, with regard to his being permitted and enabled to make preparations for it. "Who am I," was his language in his admirable prayer, recorded in the 29th chapter of 1st Chronicles. "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?" And in like manner, we can have no doubt, that all the godly among the Israelites here mentioned, regarded it as an honour and a privilege that they had been permitted and enabled to build a house unto the Lord; and connected with this, there were many affecting considerations which could not but, in their present circumstances, suggest themselves to their minds and powerfully enhance the joy which they now felt. They had been honoured and enabled to build this house of God on the very site of that which was associated in their minds with all that was grand and good, and which God had peculiarly chosen, and where he had

been pleased to put his name; where he had often, and in a remarkable manner, manifested his divine presence and glory; where their fathers had for ages worshipped and enjoyed the benefits of religious ordinances, and of which the very dust and the stones were dear to them. In one sense they now beheld the prophetic language of David fulfilled. God had arisen and had mercy upon Zion; the time which he had set to favour her was come; the Lord had looked down from the height of the sanctuary, from heaven he did behold the earth to declare his name in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem. These were considerations which could not but deeply interest and affect their hearts, and inspire them with the most sincere and exulting joy.

Now, my friends, although, in one affecting particular, there is no similarity between yours and the case of the Israelites here mentioned, namely, that you have had few or rather no difficulties to contend with, and which, should this day heighten both your gratitude and joy, you cannot but perceive, that, in several respects, there is an obvious analogy, and that in what we have here supposed to have been one of the grounds of theirs, you too have abundant cause of rejoicing. God has honoured and enabled you to build him an house, and if—as I trust is the case, and of which, indeed, the manner in which the whole of this undertaking has been conducted, is no slight or undecided proof—you regard as a privilege, the opportunity which has been afforded you of expressing your piety and regard to religion, you cannot but be sensible of the honour which is conferred on you, and consequently must experience, in some measure, the joy which a sense of being honoured of God never fails to impart. This house, I am persuaded, many of you never expected to have seen, and in almost all the circumstances connected with its erection, you cannot but have observed, and must be ready to acknowledge, the providence of God. Attempts, as you all know, to rebuild the old chapel, were formerly made, and some of them, to human appearance, seemed not unpromising; but the time which God had set not being come, they proved abortive; but when his time came, and when, perhaps, there was less expectation than at any former period, it was gone into with a spirit and liberality which has not often been equalled, and which do you the highest honour. As in the case of the Israelites, too, there are considerations connected with

this house, which cannot but, to many of you, be deeply interesting and affecting. It is built on a site which cannot but be endeared to your hearts : it is the place where you yourselves, and the fathers of many of you, long worshipped—where you and they together had long joined in the exercises of devotion, and listened to the everlastingly important truths of the Gospel, and seen the glory, and experienced much of the Lord's goodness, and which cannot but be hallowed to your affections, by impressions and recollections, which, I am persuaded, you desire never to forget.

And here, speaking of your fathers, you cannot have forgotten the difficulties and opposition they had to struggle with, ere they obtained for this congregation the character and relation which it sustains with reference to the Church of Scotland. To their memory you owe a debt of deep and lasting gratitude. Convinced, on the one hand, of the excellence of the principles and constitution of our national church, and, on the other, of the advantages of being in connexion with her, and appreciating the blessing of enjoying an acceptable gospel ministry, which they believed could be most effectually secured by having in their own hands the election of their ministers, in the face of an opposition which would have discouraged any but good men, and with a fixedness of determination and perseverance, which could only be the result of firmly established religious principles, they prosecuted till they obtained this, which is no mean privilege. This privilege, of which, by the erection of this house, you have shown yourselves not to be unworthy, they have bequeathed to you, and I trust you will never relinquish, nor undervalue, nor disregard it. It is a privilege, than which there are few you can transmit to your children and posterity, of greater value and importance, and which, so long as religion is esteemed among mankind, will be desired and sought after. But here, too, I cannot forbear paying a tribute of respect to the memory of that excellent and godly, but ill-used, minister, who first occupied the pulpit from which I had formerly the honour and happiness to address you. Among you, the hearers of this eminent and godly man, and even those who remember him, are now few ;

but in all of those whom I have met with, I have found an impression of his worth and excellence as a minister and a christian, and of the satisfaction and benefit they enjoyed under his ministry, which I never knew equalled, and which reflects the highest honour on his memory. Ere this good man rested from his earthly labours, he advised those measures which led to the introduction of this congregation within the pale of the establishment. This, I know, was by some called in question at the time these measures were adopted and acted on ; and I know, too, that it has been denied in a late publication, but I know it to be supported by evidence, the most decisive of its truth. It is a well known fact, that to the end of his life, notwithstanding the harsh and unworthy treatment he had received, he entertained sentiments, and expressed himself in language of the highest veneration for our national church. Nor did he do this only in private, but also in public, and on the most solemn occasions ; and it is in the recollection of an esteemed friend now present, to have heard him say, in one of his discourses, that “ he had no doubt that long after he was sleeping in the dust, the pure doctrines of the gospel would be preached from his pulpit by many an eminent minister of the Church of Scotland.” To this good man, therefore, you ought to consider yourselves, in some measure, indebted, for the privilege which you enjoy, in being at once freed from the evils of patronage, and possessing all the advantages of being in connexion with an establishment which God has so eminently countenanced and blessed, for promoting in this country the interests of pure and undefiled religion, and which, I trust, will, notwithstanding the puny and unhallowed efforts which some are now making to accomplish its destruction, be preserved by the fostering care of the great Head of the Church, as a blessing to Scotland, to the latest posterity. These are considerations which cannot but interest and affect you ; and viewing them as you ought this day to view them, they can scarcely fail to produce in you those sentiments, and that frame of mind, which will dispose and enable you for the duty to which you are now called to keep the dedication of this house of God with joy.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN JOHNSTON, Edinburgh.
ADDRESS by the Rev. HUGH HEUGH, D.D., Glasgow.

ON THE DEDICATION OF CHURCHES;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. G. B. BRAND.—Continued.

BUT I observe, in the second place, that the joy with which "the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity," kept the dedication of the second temple, may be supposed to have arisen from the consideration of its being a means of promoting the glory of God. To all who love God, and fear his name, nothing is a source of purer, or more exalted, or more satisfying, joy, than the being instrumental in the promotion of his glory. It is inseparably connected with their best interests, both for time and for eternity, and the more they make it the object and business of their life, the more effectually they secure to themselves all that constitutes true and lasting happiness; and, therefore, how to do this, how to honour God, and how to do it most effectually, is with them an object of first and paramount concern. Now, of all other means of doing this, it is obvious that the most effectual is, to advance the interests of religion, the very end of which is to promote the glory of God. It is true that every action we perform, which proceeds from proper motives, and is directed to proper and legitimate objects, glorifies God; and that, if, on the one hand, we act an unworthy part, we dishonour him, and if, on the other, we fulfil the purposes of our creation, and in proportion as we do so, we promote his glory; but this is particularly the case in respect of every thing that leads to diffuse the knowledge, or bring mankind more under the influence of religion, and nothing, it will be admitted, possesses this tendency in a higher degree than the existence and erection of places of worship. In fact, the state of religion in any country may be fairly estimated by the number and condition of its places of worship.

Wherever these are few, or deserted, or allowed to fall into ruin, it is a sure proof that religion is in that country at a low ebb, and that its inhabitants neither know nor live under the influence of its power. But, on the other hand, where their number is proportioned to the amount of population, and where their condition keeps pace with, or takes the lead in, the architecture of the country, it is an equally sure proof that religion is there respected, and when this is the case, its blessed fruits will be more or less abundant, God will be feared and honoured, and his laws obeyed. Without religion, without such a sense of God, of his divine existence, and glorious character and perfections, on the soul, and such a conviction of obligation to and dependence on him, as will lead to that conduct which is acceptable and pleasing to him, it is not to be expected that he will, and indeed he cannot, be honoured; and, therefore, as the preaching of the Gospel, which cannot be done, to any extent, without having places of worship, is the most effectual means which he has himself appointed for inculcating on mankind the truths of religion, it is obvious that their erection is directly conducive to his honour and glory, and consequently those who are instrumental in erecting them, must experience the joy of which the promotion of God's glory is the source. They have the high satisfaction of knowing that they possess one of the distinguishing features of his people; "they seek his glory," and they have the elevating consciousness of acting up to the dignity of their rational nature, of doing what God requires of them, and what he is well pleased with, and he has promised to reward. These, we can have no doubt, were enjoyed by the godly among the Israelites here men-

tioned. They knew that the house which they had built, and now dedicated to the God of their fathers, would, under his blessing, be a means of advancing the interests of religion, and consequently of promoting his glory; and knowing this, they could not but rejoice in the work of their hands, and with one heart and soul, offer up to him their thanksgivings, that he had honoured and permitted them to honour him. Now, here, again, in regard of this, which we have supposed to have been another ground of the joy "of the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity," on the occasion referred to in our text, you too have abundant cause of rejoicing. For in as much as ye have built this house unto God, ye have contributed to the promotion of his glory. You have honoured God with your substance, or, rather as an expression of your piety and gratitude towards him, you have given him back, for the purpose of his glory, a part of that abundance with which, in his providence, he has blessed you, and, in so far as you have been influenced by proper motives, he will not only accept, but abundantly recompense, your expression of gratitude. God, if we may use the expression, is a good debtor: no sacrifice that is made, and no donation that is given, and no service that is performed to his honour, will be unrequited or unrewarded. Whatever contributions you have made to this house, if, as I trust is the case, you have acted from religious principle, if you have been actuated by a sense of duty to that God to whom you owe your all, and a desire to promote his glory, in one way or another they will be more than made up to you. None ever sought or served God in vain, and far less did any ever lose at his hand; and if even in the ordinary acts of charity, we often see that Scripture fulfilled, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth," how much more may we expect its fulfilment, in respect of what is immediately devoted to the glory of God. His is the earth, with the fulness thereof: he sitteth on the circle of the heavens, and regulates the whole of the machinery, by which the affairs of the world are conducted: every link in the chain of providence is of his forming, and every incident in the life of every individual is according to his appointment, and in his hand, too, are the hearts of all men, and he turneth them as the rivers of water; and therefore he can, in a

thousand ways, recompense the services of his people. In his wonder-working providence, many of you may, ere long, have reason to say, that all you gave for the erection of this house, has even in kind been restored many-fold. But even though this should not be the case in this world, for God takes his own time as well as his own way, of remunerating his servants, nothing of what you have done for his glory will be lost or forgotten. It is registered in heaven, and there is a time coming, when it will be acknowledged and rewarded before an assembled world of angels and of men. It is a truth stable as his eternal throne, that those who honour God, he will honour. Even at the stake, and in the midst of the burning flames of persecution, it has been the language of martyrs, that God is a good master, and that all the service and the suffering to which he has called them, has, in the measures of heavenly comfort which they have enjoyed, been abundantly rewarded even in this life. But his rewards are not confined to this short and transitory scene; they reach forward to, and are commensurate in their duration with, eternity itself. When time shall be no more, the joys and glories of those who have faithfully honoured and served God, will only have begun, and without intermission, and without end, they shall drink of those rivers of pleasure, which are at his right hand, for evermore. He will appoint to thee a kingdom, which can never be removed, and give thee crowns of glory, which shall never fade away. And in the assured hope and prospect of all this, can you other than rejoice, and do you not feel not only that it becomes you, but that your every pious, and grateful, and holy, affection, constrains you to keep the dedication of this house of God with joy?

But, I observe, in the last place, that the joy with which "the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity," kept the dedication of the second temple, may be supposed to have arisen from the consideration of its being a means of securing the observance, and extending the benefits of religious ordinances to future and succeeding generations. It is one of the effects of sin on the human mind, that it has narrowed and contracted it. However varied its exhibition among mankind, in respect of degree, arising from the peculiarities of constitution or moral circumstances,

it is naturally selfish, and a stranger to that love, which is termed the fulfilling of the law. But no sooner does it become the subject of saving grace, than this divine principle is implanted in the soul; selfishness is cast out, and the desire of the Apostle, who would have all men to be saved, begins to reign in the heart. The man who is renewed in the spirit of his mind, is concerned about and exerts himself to promote, not only his own, but the spiritual welfare of others, and nothing affords him more real and heartfelt joy than to hear, and be the means, of sinners being brought to Christ. Next to his own, the salvation of his fellow-men is to him a matter of the deepest interest. Nor is his benevolence, in respect of this subject, confined only to his contemporaries; but regarding as one family the whole human race, he is anxious also to make provision for the spiritual interests and comfort of those who shall come after him; and, therefore, as the preaching of the Gospel, and connected with this, the erection of places of worship, are the most effectual means of making this provision, he cordially gives to any undertaking that has this for its object, his countenance and support. He is persuaded, that, by securing the administration of word and ordinances, he shall most effectually at once promote the benefit of mankind, and advance the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world; and when he contemplates the myriads of other generations, to whose ears he may, by this means, be instrumental in bringing the glad tidings of salvation, a scene is presented to his mind, which cannot but fill him with the liveliest joy. That this scene was contemplated, and that this joy was felt, by the godly among the Israelites, here mentioned, we can have no doubt. They knew what it was to be deprived of the public ordinances of religion, and the affecting language in which they expressed their sense of this deprivation, shows how much they appreciated them; and therefore they would rejoice on this occasion, not only that by means of the house of God which they had built, they had now the prospect of enjoying themselves, the benefit and comfort of divine ordinances, but also that it would secure them to their posterity unto many generations, and that in the sacred courts which they now filled, sons yet unborn should assemble to praise and magnify the Lord.

Now, here again, in respect of this, which we have supposed to have been

another ground of the joy with which "the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity," kept the dedication of the second temple, you too have cause to rejoice. By means of this house of God, which you have built, you have secured, not only to yourselves, but to many who shall come after you, the inestimable benefits and privilege of a gospel ministry. Humanly speaking, for many generations yet to come, and long after you have slept with your fathers, in this house the pure doctrines of the everlasting gospel of the Son of God will be preached, the ordinances of his kingdom faithfully administered, sinners awakened and converted, and the hearts of the people of God made glad with heavenly comfort. The great day of accounts only will be able to declare the full account of the glory to God, and the benefit to the souls of men, of which the erection of this house will be the source. Then only you will meet with all who have worshipped within these walls, and among them it is not unreasonable to hope many will claim and own you as their spiritual fathers, in as much as it was in this house which you have built, that they heard those truths of religion which aroused them to a sense of their guilt and danger, and led them in good earnest to seek after God, and the concerns of eternity. But should only one individual of all the multitudes who shall assemble in this place for the worship of God, be brought to the saving knowledge of Christ, and through him made an heir of glory, all that you have done, all the sacrifices you have made, although they were a thousand times more than they are, will be infinitely rewarded. Who can estimate the value of an immortal soul? Could you conceive or tell the work of that precious blood which was shed for its redemption, or could you form an adequate idea of the glories and felicity of heaven, to which it is destined, then you might know its value. But this is impossible. The blood of Christ is beyond all price, and eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath the heart of man conceived the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; and, therefore, should only one soul be the fruit of your labours, the recompense will be infinite and eternal, and inconceivably glorious. But may you not hope that it will not be one, but many; that numbers of those who shall hear the Gospel in this house, will be brought under its influence,

and experience its enlightening and sanctifying effects, and that when Christ cometh to make up his jewels, it shall be said of this and of that man, and of multitudes, that they were born there. But whatever, in respect of this, may be the purposes of God in the exercise of his sovereign grace, if, as I trust is the case, you have been actuated in what you have done by principle, you have secured to yourselves the honour of being fellow-labourers with Christ in his vineyard, and you are encouraged to look forward with confidence to your receiving the glorious reward promised to those who turn many to righteousness, viz., that you "shall shine forth in the kingdom of God as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever." And when you think of all this, can you other than keep the dedication of this house of God with joy? Is it not now the language of your hearts, "O Lord, we will be glad and rejoice in thee. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children, and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us—yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

Thus I have endeavoured, as I proposed, to state and illustrate some of the considerations which may be supposed to have caused, or at least contributed, to the joy of the Israelites, on the occasion here referred to, and which should also this day be matter of rejoicing to you. I have observed, in general, that the joy with which "the children of Israel, and the priests, and Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity," kept the dedication of the house of God, may be supposed to have arisen from the consideration of its being now completely finished; of their regarding it as a token of God for good, a demonstration at once of his faithfulness and favour towards them, and of the delightful prospect which it held out to them of their enjoying with comfort and with advantage, the public ordinances of religion. But, more particularly, I have observed, that the joy of "the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity," may be supposed to have arisen, first, from the consideration of their having been honoured and enabled to build a house to the Lord their God; second, from the consideration of its being a means of promoting the glory of God; and lastly, from its being a means of securing the observance, and extending the benefits of religious ordinances

to future and succeeding generations. And I have endeavoured to show you that, in all these particulars, you too have this day cause of rejoicing. And I shall now have done in a very few words. In building this house, you have done well; and in so far as you have been influenced by proper motives, I feel confident you will never have cause to regret. God, you may be assured, will reward your work and labour of love. He will bless you, and cause his face to shine on you. But allow me to remind you, that nothing you have done, has any atoning or justifying merit. You have done nothing that can in itself be of the least avail either to justify or save you. Oh no, for these you must look away from yourselves, and from all your own doings, to the atoning blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, for in him alone there is salvation. All the good things you have done, or can do, can be acceptable in the sight of God only in so far as they proceed from the principles of faith in, and love to, the Saviour; and if you would either have comfort in or desire benefit from them, you must regard them as the fruits and evidence of your being under the influence of divine grace; and therefore let me entreat you, to give all diligence to ascertain that in all you have done with regard to this house, you have acted from these principles, and regard it in this light, for it is only then that it can be of real advantage to your spiritual and everlasting interests.

But, to conclude, knowing as I do, that many of you, in determining the amount of your exertions in the erection of this house, have been influenced by considerations of personal regard to me, I beg leave to return you the most sincere thanks; and feeling, as I trust I shall ever do, a due sense of your kindness and friendship, it shall be my endeavour to manifest my gratitude, by a more faithful and conscientious discharge of all my important duties as your minister, and by being more than ever concerned about your welfare, both for time and for eternity. If I know my own heart, no wish is dearer to it than that I may be useful to you, that I may be the honoured instrument of promoting your knowledge of and union with Christ, and of building you up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation. And if the means which I employ, with a view to these, should not always be the best, it is an error, be assured, of the head, and not

of the heart ; for I have no greater desire than that you should walk in truth, and that not one of you should be found wanting on the right hand of Christ in that day, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired of all them that believe. May the Lord be pleased to accept and bless to our souls the services of this day, and to Him be glory, and honour, and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

P. S. The minister to whom allusion is made in the first particular, is the Rev. Thomas Gillespie of Carnock, who was de-

posed, because he would not be instrumental in the induction of Mr. Richardson at Inverkeithing, against the wishes of the people, and afterwards was invited to Dunfermline, where, for many years, he ably and most acceptably preached the Gospel, and was one of those who formed the Presbytery, or Synod of Relief.

The friend referred to in the same particular, is Dr. Gile, a gentleman than whom none can be more highly esteemed for integrity and worth, by all who are honoured with his acquaintance.

CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, 23TH JULY, 1833, IN BEHALF OF THE EDINBURGH BENEVOLENT AND STRANGERS' FRIEND SOCIETY,

By the Rev. JOHN JOHNSTON,
Minister of Roxburgh Place Chapel of Ease.

"And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water; and they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins; and, when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him; for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk any water, three days and three nights. And David said unto him, To whom belongest thou? and whence art thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick."—1 SAMUEL xxx. 11—13.

THE hardening and debasing influence of prosperity and success, and the softening and humanizing tendency of disaster and distress, were never more strikingly and instructively contrasted than in the portion of sacred history to which the words that have now been read turn our attention. It exhibits to us, on the one hand, a most painful instance of savage cruelty and neglect, in the midst of triumph and gladness; and presents, on the other, a pleasing example of tenderness and sympathy in the season of sorrow and depression. When David fled from the jealousy and rage of Saul, he found a temporary asylum in the territory of the king of Gath. During his sojourn under the protection of this hospitable prince, a band of those fierce and restless barbarians, who were among the earliest and most formidable troublers of Israel, and who, in sacred history, are known by the name of Amalekites, attacked, pillaged, and destroyed the city of Ziklag, which had been assigned as the residence of David and his companions. The defenceless city fell a prey to these enemies of the living God—

they seized all that was valuable in it; and, having committed its miserable remains to the flames, they made its unarmed and unprotected inhabitants captives, and hastened to announce to their countrymen the success of their cruel and barbarous enterprise. In the train of one of those remorseless invaders was an Egyptian youth, the first and fairest of whose days were doomed to slavery, and who had experienced the cruelty and wretchedness of that degraded lot. His strength proved unequal to the exertion and fatigue of the enterprise in which his master had engaged, and, when sickness came upon him, he was left to struggle with its languor, and to meet its issue unpitied and alone; while his unfeeling and relentless master hastened to share the feast, and to join in the dance in which these savage warriors celebrated the success and triumph of their arms. The intoxication of prosperity had shut up any bowels of mercy with which nature had endowed him, and closed every avenue to sympathy and kindness. While the company of the Amalekites "were spread abroad upon all the earth,

eating, and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah," the name of the sick and expiring slave never came across the master's mind, to spoil the relish of the feast or to damp the joy of the dance.

For three days and three nights did this poor unfriended stranger remain in the field where his fierce and un pitying master had left him, struggling in all the depression of sickness and grief, without one drop of water to cool his burning tongue, or one morsel of bread to sustain his sinking frame. In vain does he cast his eye toward the land of his fathers, and think of the mighty stream that refreshed and gladdened its numerous people; in vain does he recall the scenes of free and happy days, or sigh out the name that expressed the earliest and dearest affections of his heart; for him no other prospect seems to open, but to close his eyes on an unknown sky, and to find a grave in an unknown land. Unpitied stranger! thou shalt not be left thus deserted and forlorn: in the bosom of those whom thy master and his savage associates pillaged, thou shalt find an asylum, and shalt experience, from the hands of the distressed, that relief and comfort which these successful plunderers have denied thee. David and his expatriated companions having resolved to avenge the wrongs of the plundered and captive citizens of Ziklag, were in pursuit of the Amalekites, when they found this Egyptian in the field. Depressed as they were by misfortune, and full of their purpose of battle, the condition of this deserted and forsaken stranger attracted their attention; and, instead of pursuing their journey, although every thing depended on it, they paused to listen to the simple history of his sorrows, and to minister to his relief. Their hearts were not so engrossed in their own wrongs, as to prevent them from regarding foreign sorrow. They had themselves been in the school of adversity, and they had learned its noblest lesson, to weep with them that weep, and to co-operate with infinite benevolence in relieving the sufferings of the wretched. While the unfeeling Amalekite deserted his poor Egyptian slave, as soon as he concluded that he could no longer be of any service to him, and left him to the mercy of the pursuing enemy, these Israelites evinced, in the midst of all their disasters, a benevolence and humanity becoming the holy privileges with which heaven had

blessed them, and have left an example of tender sympathy, and active charity, worthy of "Israelites indeed." And when we see the followers of David stop in the wilderness to examine the circumstances of this perishing stranger—when we see them give up for a time the pursuit of their enemies, that they may attend to the claims of suffering humanity—the scheme of vengeance superseded by the purpose of mercy—when we see them bringing out the cake of figs, and the cluster of raisins, and fetching the draught of water from the well in the wilderness, while the poor affected stranger gathers strength, and revives beneath their kind and fostering care—who among us does not feel disposed to bless the memory of these nameless children of mercy?—who does not long to cultivate the spirit which guided them to this deed of love, and to know the sacred satisfaction which such deeds of mercy yield?

This evening, my friends, you are called to cherish the spirit which animated these friends of the stranger, and to participate the joy with which it was rewarded. Higher and mightier considerations than those which influenced the companions of David, are presented to you by that better covenant, in which it is my prayer that you may all be interested. While *they* were guided by the instinctive impulses of humanity, and the general precepts of their law, *you* have, in addition to these, the authority and the love of Christ, to constrain you to love and to good works. Let me, then, have your attention, while I tell you of the sufferings which you are this evening entreated to relieve, and remind you of the motives by which the Gospel urges you to these exercises of benevolence.

With the exception of one circumstance, the case of this Egyptian youth is one which is daily presented to us, and makes constant appeals to our sympathy and beneficence. The exception to which I allude, is one for which we can never be sufficiently grateful to Him who appoints the bounds of our habitation. In this land of freemen, slavery is never added to the miseries of the wretched, and, in the gloomiest hour of poverty and distress, the consciousness of freedom is left to console the sufferer. But in this single, though invaluable, exception, the sufferings of this young Egyptian have many parallel in this vale of tears. The union of poverty and disease is one of the most common forms of human wretchedness; its bitterness may be estimated without any effort

of fancy, and its anguish painted without the aid of the imagination. Poverty and sickness are presented to us so often in melancholy union, that, to describe them, is not to draw upon the fancy, but to copy the sad original.

While health continues to be the poor man's portion, while he is able to go through his daily toil with his wonted vigour, his condition, in point of genuine happiness, may bear comparison with that of the richest and proudest of his neighbours. He is, indeed, a stranger to those luxurious comforts, for which the rich are often so vainly envied; but he is, at the same time, a stranger to all those harassing competitions, and vexatious disappointments, which so often attend wealth and greatness, and poison all the pleasures which they bring. Greater tranquillity and satisfaction often reign at the tables of the poor than at the banquets of the affluent; and while the wealthy are tossed and restless on their beds of down, the poor man rests in peace on his humble couch. Could we estimate the happiness of the poor man in his days of health and activity, we should find it more pure and satisfying than any thing that rank can inherit, or riches purchase. But when sickness invades the poor man's dwelling, this scene of simple happiness is sadly changed. It is then that the evils and the bitterness of poverty are felt, and those wounds are opened that bleed with sharpest agony. Whether it be the partner of his life, or the children of his love, on whom the hand of sickness and disease has fallen, the poor man feels alike the bitterness of his lot. The pittance which, in the day of health, was barely sufficient to meet the common demands of nature, is now found inadequate to the increased necessities of his house. He renews his labour day by day; and, while his brow is bathed in sweat, wrung from him partly by bodily toil, but more by mental anguish, his spirit sinks within him, as he returns to the scene of suffering, to watch the progress of sickness which he has no means to mitigate, to witness the pain which he cannot soften, and wants which he cannot satisfy. And if such be his condition when disease falls upon his family, what deeper scene of misery is exhibited when he becomes himself the victim—when the arm, on which his house leaned for support, is enfeebled and powerless, and the languor of sickness seizes on him who brought them their daily bread. Ye who have known

the anguish of sickness, when surrounded with all the comforts which riches could procure, and who still look back with disquiet to the chamber that was replenished with every convenience and stored with every cordial that could mitigate distemper or diminish the heaviness of grief, think, I beseech you, of those who have no home, or a home which it is sickness to inhabit, who, confined to a cold dwelling, and stretched on an uneasy couch, are destitute not only of the cordials which sickness needs, but of the very supports which nature craves, who see around them poverty in its gloomiest forms, and droop and languish in the arms of those who can give them nothing but their lamentation and their tears. These are scenes of daily occurrence in this vale of tears; and he that doubts, or affects to doubt, the reality of what I have now stated, is a stranger to his species—a sceptic of the coldest and the cruellest kind.

If the faint and imperfect outline of human suffering which has now been drawn, were questioned, I know where I should go for witnesses to its truth. I should bring before you the visiting members of the Benevolent Association in whose behalf it is this evening my honour to plead, and in whose labours of love you are entreated to take part, and one and all of them would tell you that it is their daily employment to look upon and to relieve sufferings, far deeper than I have described, and not less calamitous and appalling than what the Israelites beheld when they found the Egyptian in the field. They would tell you of many a famishing wanderer whom they had fed, and sent home rejoicing—of thoughtless youths whom vice had reduced to rags and wretchedness, to whom they not only administered food, but pointed out the better way, and restored to the affection of kindred and friends. They could point your way to many a wretched hovel in the streets and lanes of our city, where they found the father and the mother sinking under the anguish of sore distemper, and surrounded by children who seemed to know no other language but the cry for bread. They could take you to that mansion-house of disease, the noblest monument of our civic charity, where humanity and science are continually employed in mitigating human suffering, and whither they daily resort, that they may find out the recovered stranger and add the sweets of home to the joys of health. By such tes-

timony, I should confirm my statement of suffering, and establish my claims upon your charity. These witnesses to the truth of what we say, do not tell you what they have seen and done, to establish the melancholy fact of human wretchedness, but to induce you to be workers together with them in the cause of the sick poor and the fainting stranger; for surely you will not suffer them to go to this generous warfare on their own charges. If the urgencies of your various pursuits, or, it may be, the peculiar temperament of your feelings, prevent you from going along with them to the hovels of disease and want, you will not surely suffer them to go upon their errand of mercy, without giving them wherewithal to deliver the poor that cry, and the fatherless, and them that have none to help them. And, my friends, how many, and solemn, and powerful, are the considerations which bind us to this noblest of human duties. I can only suggest a few of them at present; but they are such as will leave you without excuse, if you leave this house without availing yourselves of this opportunity of doing good.

The first and most obvious consideration that calls us to this exercise of humanity and mercy, is our own liability to those very ills which this evening claim our sympathy and relief. Poverty and sickness are not exclusively incident to any particular individuals, or class of individuals, among the children of men. They imply the absence of the frailest and most perishable blessings of our lot. The uncertainty of health and riches has long ago become proverbial. They who now bloom in all the beauty and activity of health, may soon be laid low in sickness and frailty, and the riches in which thousands trust with a vain and deceitful confidence, may disappear in the tempests which so often overwhelm the treasures of the wealthy. The sources from which poverty and sickness may find their way to our persons and our dwellings, are so many and so various, that no one who, in the morning, rises to the enjoyment of health and plenty, can tell in what circumstances, and with what feelings, he shall see the sun descend. When, therefore, we entreat you to consider the case of the sick and afflicted poor, we call you to think of misfortunes that are incident to you all, and from which often neither wisdom nor virtue can shield you. They are not always persons originally of the humblest condition of

society to whom this Benevolent Association are called to extend their bounty. In their round of charity, they meet with many who have known better days, and the morning of whose life opened to them brighter prospects; they have found the descendants of the affluent in the hovels of want and wretchedness, and have heard the sigh of sadness from hearts which once danced to the song of joy. They are, then, calamities to which all flesh is heir, that you are this evening entreated to pity and to mitigate; and by doing so, you provide at least one source of consolation when the day of misfortune shall come. O how I pity the man who, in his hour of misfortune and trial, has no recollections of humanity and beneficence on which his heart can repose, and from which he can draw some consolation and peace—to whom the retrospect of the past presents nothing but prosperity enjoyed with a selfish vanity, and wealth wasted in the gratification of a vain and sordid ambition. But he whose ear is ever open to the history of misfortune, whose heart feels another's woe, and whose hand is ever ready to relieve distress, not only enjoys, in the act itself, a luxury compared with which the sordid gratifications of the selfish are pitiful and mean, but he lays up for himself a source of comfort when his own day of tribulation comes. In that dark and trying season, he can adopt the humble, but grateful, appeal of an illustrious sufferer in his hour of darkness—"If I withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate; then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone." "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble: the Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; the Lord will strengthen him on the bed of languishing, and will make all his bed in his sickness."

In the next place, you are aware that compassion to the afflicted poor is enjoined by the authority of the Gospel. The divine author of Christianity was anointed to proclaim glad tidings to the poor, and the poor and the sorrowful were his constant care

His whole life was one grand act of benevolence; and whether we think of the purity of his motives, or the extent of his designs of good, or his indefatigable labours, or his painful sufferings in the cause of humanity, we have before us a pattern of charity and mercy, the most affecting and instructive. And with his conduct, his doctrine most beautifully coincides. It breathes peace and good-will to man; and it enforces on all his followers the same love which he himself manifested to the sons of men. It is not, then, left to be determined by your taste or inclination, whether you shall attend to the duty of compassion or not; it is enjoined with the authority of a law—a law, be it remembered, which you cannot with safety disregard, and the neglect of which will expose you to the righteous displeasure of the God of mercy. Since our divine Master has made mercy and compassion to the poor, to occupy so prominent and important a place in that law of love which he lived to teach, and died to confirm—since he has left the poor and the wretched, the friendless and the stranger, as a sacred charge to all that honour and love his name, let it be our constant study, and our daily prayer, to comply with this solemn and salutary command, and as far as our Master has afforded us the means, let us prove ourselves his willing and obedient followers.

Besides, mercy and liberality to the poor, and to the destitute stranger, are the test and criterion of our love to our God and Saviour. St. Paul exhorts the Christians at Corinth to kindness and liberality to the poor, that they might “prove the sincerity of their love.” And the apostle John assures us in the most pointed and explicit terms, that all our professions of zeal for Christ are hypocritical, and all our religious feelings a delusion, unless we be faithful, conscientious, and constant, in the practice of this virtue. Mark his words, for they are the dictates of the unerring Spirit. “Whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” As, then, we would prove the reality and sincerity of our faith in Christ, we must abound in mercy to the poor and to the stranger. Be assured, my friends, on the authority of God’s unerring Word, that if you disregard the sufferings of the poor and the sorrowful, and “withhold good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand

to do it,” all your pretensions to religion are vain, and you proclaim, that you neither love God, nor Jesus Christ whom he has sent. To say, in so many words, that we neither love God, nor his only begotten Son, is an act of impiety that makes us shudder; but is it not the same, if, by our conduct, we evince that we are strangers to these holy affections? Our actions can speak as explicitly as our words; and if you retire from this house, and leave not your alms behind you, your claims to be “the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus” may well be questioned. While, therefore, you profess to love the Saviour, and to glory in his cross, give evidence of the sincerity of your profession, by taking part in this evening’s work of charity. In as much as ye do it unto those who are this evening looking for your beneficence, ye do it to your Lord. And if He whom the heavens are to retain till the times of the restitution of all things, thus condescends to make his appeal to our sympathy, shall his appeal be made in vain?

I must, finally, entreat you to remember, that our neglect of exercises of mercy to the afflicted will be the ground of that sentence which in the day of our last account will be pronounced upon us all. In terms which the simplest understanding may comprehend, but which no heart can hear without the deepest awe, the Judge of all has assured us that in that hour when we shall stand before him, the most searching inquiries will be made concerning our conduct to the child of want—that they who have not relieved him in his sorrowing members, shall be banished for ever from his presence, while they who have clothed the naked, and fed the hungry, and received the stranger, shall be welcomed and blessed as the children of his Father. If you are willing to take your portion in a world of despair, you may shut up your hearts against the cries of suffering humanity; but if you would dwell for ever in the presence of the Lamb that was slain, and be led by Him to living fountains of water, you will be glad of this opportunity of testifying your gratitude to Him who loved you and gave himself for you.

With such considerations no serious mind will, for a moment, dare to trifle. If you admit the truth of what has been stated, it cannot be matter of deliberation whether you will contribute to this work of charity or not; it is not left to our cold and selfish

calculation to determine the expediency or utility of the duty ; it comes upon us with all the authority of an unchangeable law ; it is proposed to us with the awful alternative of everlasting happiness or everlasting woe. We cannot, then, hesitate where to choose. The poor and sorrowful members of Christ come to us not in their own name, but in the name of Him before whose tribunal the small and the great are ere long to stand. Under this solemn anticipation, let us this evening deal our bread to the hungry, and be merciful, as our Father in heaven is merciful. If you are thus true to your principles and profession as Christians, I know well what will be the result : it will be a testimony of your love to Jesus which will revive many a cheerless spirit ; and it will stand for ever in the record of eternity—not indeed as your *title* to glory, but as *evidence* of your meekness for it.

In selecting your way of doing good, I do not know a better channel in which you can direct your charity than the society who this evening ask you to help them in their work of patience and labour of love. You have now had more than seventeen years' experience of their fidelity and tenderness in the administration of your charity and their own, and every year of their self-denying and unwearied labours has increased their claims upon your confidence and support. You have the best pledge for the faithful and economical administration of your bounty in the practice of the society, from which in no instance do they deviate, that no relief is afforded without personally visiting the applicants. By this regulation, the precise circumstances of every case are clearly ascertained, and imposture prevented, and the best pledge is afforded that the bounty with which a generous community may intrust them shall find its legitimate destination. And, in proof of the extent, variety and efficiency of their labours, I have it in charge to inform you, that since the commencement of the present year, their attention has been directed to no fewer than 1,147 cases, and that of these 602 have been furnished with the means of conveying them to their proper places of residence in different parts of the country. While so many of the resident poor have been relieved and comforted, the city has been freed of six hundred poor strangers, who, but for the activity and discretion of this society, might have remained to swell the amount of our begging population—a

consideration which, apart from every other, gives this society a high and decided claim to the gratitude and support of our enlightened community. Nor is their attention limited to the temporal necessities of the stranger and the destitute. They view the objects of their bounty as immortal creatures ; and, while they relieve their temporal wants, they seek to rouse them to the higher interests of their being. Having themselves been led to seek the way of deliverance from sin and the path to eternal life, they endeavour to show the afflicted and the stranger the moral danger of their condition, and try to bring them to Him who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Christ is precious to their own souls, and they labour to make others acquainted with his excellence. The hope which gladdens their own souls they seek to infuse into the souls of the suffering poor ; and, along with the meat that perisheth, they administer that which endures to everlasting life. While many of the poor and destitute are comforted amid the languor of sickness, and in the gates of death, with the knowledge of salvation, many a wandering prodigal has been sent back in peace to his father's house. Supplied by a kindred institution with the Scriptures, they are enabled to give the Word of life to soothe the sufferer amid the agonies of disease, or to cheer the stranger as he journeys to his home.

And shall a society that has so many and such powerful claims upon the attention and support of an enlightened and christian community make its appeal to us in vain ? Shall we withhold our hand from this work of mercy ? Shall we send them to the hovels of want and wretchedness to tell the sufferers that we refuse to hear their histories of woe, that we have no bowels of mercy, and hide ourselves from our own flesh ? God forbid ! Let us open our hand wide unto our poor and needy brethren. Let not humanity make its appeal in vain. In the midst of your abundance remember the poor. The plenty that surrounds you is not all your own. The Providence that gave destined a portion of it for the poor and the destitute. "When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it ; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow, that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the works of thine hands."

My brethren, the sun is fading from our view, and is on his way to give light and joy to other lands ; but how seldom in his long journey through the sky will he witness such a scene as that which is now to be presented—an assembly of the followers of a holy and benevolent master met to imitate his character—to stretch forth their

hands in the offering of mercy, and to soften by their charity the sufferings of their fellow-travellers in a vale of tears. May you do this sacred work aright—under a trembling sense of the presence of the mind-inspecting God, and a lively feeling of your responsibility to Him of whose bounty you are the stewards. Amen.

SELF-EXAMINATION ;

AN ADDRESS, COMMONLY CALLED FENCING OF THE TABLES, IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,

By the Rev. HUGH HEUGH, D.D.,

Minister of the United Secession Church, Blackfriars' Street, Glasgow.

THE object of the few observations I have now to address to you, is to present some features of christian character, in regard to which it becomes you to examine yourselves. Allow me, then, to ask you the four following questions. In the first place, What do you think of the character of our divine King? The character of Christ is very fully and clearly declared in the Scriptures, and all who profess to receive the Scriptures as the Word of God, and to hold those views of Scripture doctrine which are held in evangelical churches, are agreed in their professed sentiments respecting the character of Christ ; nevertheless, you are all aware that it is one thing to profess, and another thing to know, and believe, and value, the truth in regard to it. There is no doubt but that, partly by hypocrisy, and what is probably much more frequent than hypocrisy, partly by self-deception, very many make a correct profession of scriptural truth respecting the character of Christ, whose views in the sight of Christ are very unlike the views of Scripture. What then is the revealed truth respecting the character of the Saviour, and how far do our inmost sentiments correspond with these views? Hear the Scriptures. "Thou shalt bring forth a son," said the angel to Mary, "and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us." Says an Apostle, "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." Are you then in the sight of Christ prepared to declare that you receive this portion of the truth—that you are persuaded that he is very God as well as very man, and that that Word which was made flesh and dwelt among men who beheld his glory, was the eternal Word which was with God, and which is God, and by whom all things were created, and without whom not any thing was made that

exists? My friends, if you really receive this part of the truth as it is in Jesus, you have in some measure in exercise that faith which the Apostles professed, when they said, "Thou art the Son of God!" and of which our Lord said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Nor is this all his character, for as truly as he is God manifest in the flesh, he is the Christ, the anointed, the only Saviour. For this purpose was he manifested that he might save. He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost, to finish the work of satisfaction and expiation which was given him to do, and to glorify God on earth, by becoming obedient to death, even the death of the cross, and offering himself a sacrifice once for all. "Believest thou this." And do you not only go along with the Apostles, when they said, Thou art the Son of God, possessing the same nature with thine eternal Father, but thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Saviour, the only Saviour, gracious and mighty to save. We say that if you receive this truth in the love of it, flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but our Father who is in heaven.

In the second place, what do you think of that cause over which Christ presides? The great cause over which Christ presides is, first of all, the cause of truth. Do you think this a cause worthy of the interposition of the Son of God? Next, the cause of Christ is the cause of humility by which God is exalted and man is abased ; by which the order of the universe is preserved ; by which God maintains the place which is due to him, and man is put in the place which becometh him. Do you think this a cause worthy of the interposition of the Son of God? The cause of Christ is also the cause of righteousness. It is opposed to all iniquity. It requires man to be just

to himself, just to his neighbour, just to his God. Do you believe it was worthy of the Son of God to put down injustice in this last sense of the expression? Is this the judgment you form of the cause over which Christ presides, and do you *show* that you form this judgment? Then, as far as you thus judge, you are of one mind with Christ—you are not of the enemies of Christ who approve of the cause of falsehood and sin, but of the friends of Christ who in judgment and heart approve of the cause over which he presides; truth, and meekness, and righteousness.

In the third place, what do you think of the friends of Christ? Do you think of them as the world does? or as Christ does, and as he teaches them to think of one another, and to feel for one another? How does Christ judge of his people? He thinks that they are wise and the only excellent of the earth. He has made them what they are, and in as far as they have been transformed under the influence of his own mind and grace, Christ delights in them and cultivates their fellowship. Do you feel so in regard to the followers of Christ, in regard to the true friends of the person and of the cause of the divine Redeemer? Many profess this, but none are in reality like-minded with Christ upon this subject, except these friends themselves. The world loves its own. A worldly man may esteem a Christian, but he would esteem him much more if he were not a Christian. He esteems him not for his Christianity. Is it otherwise with you? Do you esteem the friends of Christ for their wisdom, not because they have high intellect which some of them may have, not because they have a great deal of worldly wisdom, but because they have that wisdom which is unto salvation? And do you love the followers of Christ, not merely because they have sweetness of natural disposition, softness of temper, and other things which even an un-renewed man may have, but for that which discriminates them—because they love righteousness and hate iniquity, because they love Christ and are attached to his cause, confess him before men, and would die rather than abandon their Lord, his cause, and his interests? By this we know that we are the children of God, if we love

the people of God—by this we *know* that we have passed from death unto life, if we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

The fourth and only remaining question I propose is this, How do you feel and act yourselves in regard to Christ and his cause? This would resolve itself into the three following questions:—Do you confide in Christ? Do you love Christ? Do you exert yourselves for the promotion of the cause of Christ? I only name these questions and earnestly invite you to put them before your own consciences in the sight of Him who seeth you. Do you *confide* in Christ? All the lovers of Christ put no confidence in the flesh, but place it in his atonement, his intercession, his grace, his truth—they rest entirely upon Christ. Again, do you *love* Christ? The question which he proposed three times to one of his Apostles he now proposes to you, “Lovest thou me?” Happy are you if you can answer, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.” What do you do for the *promotion of the cause of Christ* in your own hearts, in the Church, and in the world? In your own hearts do you endeavour to promote the cause of Christ, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to put off the old man and put on the new man? And do you endeavour to improve in the progress of true holiness in private and in public? And what do you do for the promotion of the cause of Christ among those with whom you are immediately connected? Do you countenance the day of God? Do you countenance the ordinances of God? Do you instruct those under you by counsel, by oral communication, and by the language of example? And what do you do for promoting the cause of Christ throughout the world? Are you assiduous in using the means which God has put in your power for extending the empire of truth, and meekness, and righteousness? Ask yourselves these questions, and ask earnestly, that so all these things may be promoted within you; and when you go to the Table of the Lord, ask them, my friends, in the sight of that Lord whose death you commemorate, whose dying command you proceed to observe.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BURNS, D.D., Paisley.

SERMON by the Rev. DAVID SMITH, Biggar.

LOVE TO CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, PAISLEY, AUGUST 4TH, 1833, BEING THE
COMMUNION SABBATH,

By the Rev. ROBERT BURNS, D.D.,

Minister of St. George's Church, Paisley.

"Whom having not seen, ye love."—1 PETER i. 8.

ALL the graces, and all the duties of practical godliness flow from the operation of one great and commanding principle—even love to God and the Redeemer. It is not sufficient that the way of truth and of duty shall be clearly and explicitly revealed; or that a series of precepts shall be prescribed for the regulation of the heart and of the life; there must be some one leading principle implanted in the soul, prompting to the practice of holiness, and rising superior to the temptations which surround us. The mere knowledge of duty affords no security for its performance. A man may entertain the most clear and satisfactory conceptions both of truth and of duty, while his heart remains totally devoid of all attachment either to the one or to the other. It is the glory of the Gospel that it makes provision for the existence and exercise of a principle of holiness in the mind;—a principle which presides in high authority over all the powers and capacities of human nature, and which bids defiance at once to the delusions of infidelity and the enchantments of sense. Under the agency of grace from above, the soul is awakened to some just impression of the greatness and the loveliness of the divine character; and its affections are led supremely to Jehovah. When love to God is thus established in the mind as the commanding affection, it is extended in its range so as to embrace the person and the character of the Redeemer as its fair and legitimate objects; and hence it is, that throughout the whole of the New Testament, believers are represented as supremely actuated by love to Christ, and as prompted

by this ruling principle to "keep all his commandments." In the passage with which our text stands connected, the apostle Peter exhibits Christians as supported under the fiery trials of persecution by the influence of this sacred motive. It was this alone, indeed, that could cheer amid the horrors of a dungeon, or calm the soul in the near approach of martyrdom. It was this which animated the spirits of Paul and Silas when, in the prison at Philippi, they "prayed and sang praises unto God." It is this which supports believers even now amid all their difficulties, rendering duty pleasant, and trials profitable.

I. Let us consider the nature and grounds of love to Christ.

The term "love," in its ordinary acceptance, signifies the affection of esteem. It is founded on the perception of excellencies, real or supposed in the character of its objects; and it is opposed to that feeling of aversion or of hatred which is occasioned by qualities that are sinful and base. It is apt to be confounded with certain other affections of mind to which it is nearly allied, but from which it is at the same time sufficiently distinct. *Gratitude* always presupposes benefits received, and it may be exercised towards those whose moral characters may not be the legitimate objects of approbation or esteem. *Friendship* may, to a certain extent, be exercised towards those whom we cannot be said cordially and sincerely to love on account of their distinguished excellencies. *Christian charity* embraces in its comprehensive range, persons whose characters are exceedingly

various; and *beneficence* consists peculiarly in doing good to those who need our help, whatever may have been their previous conduct. In none of these instances does it appear that moral excellence is *essential* to their objects. The affection of love, on the contrary, always supposes that its objects possess, in a high degree, those excellencies which entitle to esteem, and which qualify for its enjoyment: and love, when placed on Jehovah as its object, addresses itself to those attributes of his nature which distinguish him as the most excellent and lovely of all beings.

Were man a creature of pure intellect, his religion would rest in intellect only. A few speculative ideas, combined with the practice of a few external duties, would constitute the whole of it. Its features as first beheld, would be those of coldness and indifference. They who would banish the affections of the heart from the service of God, aim to introduce a religion of this kind; a religion which diffuses around it no salutary warmth, and which possesses no charm to interest or to attract. Is it forgotten that man is endowed with moral affections and feelings, as well as with powers of understanding, and that the christian scheme requires that this class of endowments as well as the other shall be consecrated to God? He expressly demands the homage of our *hearts*, and the "first and great commandment" expressly enjoins us to "love the Lord with all our *hearts*," as well as with all our "soul, and strength, and mind." The feelings and desires of the soul must necessarily be placed on something that is congenial to their taste, and what can be more reasonable than that they should be placed on *Him* who is the centre of perfection, and the source of all happiness? Christians profess to be the disciples of Christ whose name they bear; and what can be more becoming than that they should place their affections supremely on *Him* who is so justly entitled to their sincerest regards?

Love to Christ is not to be confounded with the raptures of a visionary enthusiasm. Its foundation must not be laid in those ideal representations of his person and character which a luxuriant fancy is apt to picture. It might be no difficult matter for a lively imagination to paint to itself the image of a beautiful form, clothed with light, and adorned with all the graces which can add dignity and elegance to the frame. We may place before our mind's eye an

image of the Saviour, arrayed in all the charms of beauty, and beaming benevolence in his every feature. We may picture to ourselves the divine Redeemer travelling in the greatness of his strength; enduring the scoffs and cruelties of his enemies; shedding the blood of perfect innocence in the garden and on the cross; pouring out his soul unto death; and with his last accents praying for his murderers. By such a shadowy representation as this, our feelings may for a season be awakened; a deep and poignant interest may be excited, and we may flatter ourselves, in the spirit of self-complacence, that this is the genuine effect of love to the Redeemer. The delusion is natural, and even plausible; but it is fatal. In all the process that has been going on, there is nothing of true evangelical affection towards the Saviour. The feeling is of a carnal nature, and, "like the morning cloud and early dew," it soon "goeth away."

Love to the Saviour signifies simply that ardent and sincere esteem of his person and character which is founded on what is revealed respecting him, in the records of inspiration. That Christ is the proper object of supreme regard, will appear beyond all question, when we consider him separately in the glories of his divine nature; in the excellencies of his human character; and in the riches of his mediatorial relations, as the Saviour of our guilty race.

1. Love to the Redeemer is the first movement of the soul, when illumined to discern the perfect excellencies of his divine character. By universal consent, the Supreme Being is acknowledged to be the just object of supreme esteem; and as Christ is the Word who was with God, and who was God, and who is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," "God over all, and blessed for evermore;" he must be equally entitled to the homage of our highest affection. Is *perfect holiness* the proper object of delight and love? Christ is represented as "the chief among ten thousand, and as altogether lovely." In *Him* holiness for ever dwells, for "he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and he cannot look on sin but with abhorrence." He is surrounded by the hosts of holy angels, and the "spirits of just men made perfect," who, in their sublime ascriptions of praise, continually exclaim, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, the whole earth is full of thy glory." Are *truth* and *faithfulness*, combined with *mercy* and *grace*

the proper objects of moral approbation and delight? In Him "mercy and truth have met together." On the one hand, we contemplate and adore impartial and unerring justice, unshaken faithfulness, and undeviating truth—on the other, goodness unbounded, mercy ever ready to pardon and to spare, compassion the most tender, long-suffering the most unwearied, grace the most liberal: these are the excellencies which render him glorious beyond compare, and which endear him in a peculiar manner to sinners ready to perish.

In a word: Is moral excellence in its highest possible degree the object of supreme regard and esteem? Then, surely He is justly entitled to our supreme regard, whose nature is infinitely excellent, and whose perfections are boundless. If the distant traces of goodness among creatures are fitted to excite our approbation and esteem, what ought to be the impression of perfect goodness in its full-orbed beauty? If the streams, though scanty, are pleasing to the contemplative eye, what shall we think of the full and overflowing fountain? "If each of the perfections of our Lord in his divine character be thus glorious and lovely, when regarded together, each renders the other doubly glorious, doubly interesting, till the saint, as he successively combines them in his view, feels sentiments awakened which all the names of admiration, reverence, and love, that mortal speech afford, are too weak to utter."

2. But the believer will not confine himself to the contemplation of his Lord in the attributes of his divine character; he will consider him in his *human* nature also, and, as such, the proper object of enlightened attachment. "He was found in fashion as a man;" and as a man he exhibited an example of perfect conformity to the whole will of God. Condescension to the poor and lowly is one of the brightest jewels in the crown of earthly greatness; and behold the ineffable condescension of Him who, "though he was rich, for our sakes became poor," "and took upon him the form of a servant." Humility and meekness are in every character estimable and praiseworthy, and Jesus was indeed "clothed with humility;" "he was meek and lowly in heart." Compassion, and brotherly kindness and charity, are lovely, and fully entitle those who cherish them to the affectionate esteem and love of every spectator; and Jesus was ever ready to compassionate and relieve the des-

titute; and, though now "exalted above principalities and powers, and every name that is named," he still beholds his people on earth, and bends to them the eye of a brother. Patience, in the endurance of sufferings, renders a man respectable and praiseworthy; and Jesus "when reviled, reviled not again;" "he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." Forgiveness of injuries stamps a greatness on the character, and prefers a just title to approbation and love; and Jesus prayed for his murderers, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Mercy to the guilty, and love to the souls of those "who were ready to perish," are godlike qualities; and Jesus loved his people to the death, even when they were enemies. Purity and holiness are the proper objects of approbation and love; and Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In Him, indeed, every excellence was united in its highest perfection; and the glories of his personal character are revealed to us, and exhibited in an embodied form, to excite in us the feelings of admiration, esteem, and love.

But it is not the character of Christ in the abstract, that is presented to our contemplation in the page of the New Testament. All the excellencies of the Saviour in his divine and human nature have been displayed in close connexion with the great interests of our personal salvation. This leads me to notice,

3. That the mediatorial character of Jesus justly entitles him to our especial affection.

It is, no doubt, true, that the emotion of love attaches itself—to the qualities of its object, independently of the relations in which we may stand to them; and love to the Saviour is grounded on his claims to our esteem, apart from all consideration of the benefits we may derive from him. Were we to love Christ merely on account of what he hath done for us, the object of attachment would not be the giver, but the gift. At the same time, it is certain that, *in fact*, and proceeding on the ordinary principles of human nature, we never can separate in our minds the thought of what Christ *is*, from the recollection of what he hath *done*. It is impossible for a creature, who owes *his all* to the interposition of the great Redeemer, to form a purely abstract conception of that Redeemer, or to consider him as entirely remote from all those rela-

tions in which he is presented to our faith in the New Testament. From what Christ hath done, we learn what he is; and the glories of his character shine with peculiar lustre through the veil of his mediation, suffering, and death. Jesus "loved the Church;" and in proof of the ardour and intenseness of his love, he came into our world, having left the abodes of bliss for a season; he submitted to all the demands, and all the penalties, of the law; he suffered the extremity of pain; he endured the scoffs of his enemies, the assaults of Satan, and the hiding of his Father's countenance; he voluntarily gave himself up to death, and descended into the dark prison of the grave. And what was the *moving principle* which operated in all? It was love—love to creatures who had wilfully apostatized from his authority; rebels against his righteous administration; ungrateful contemners of his lawful authority. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich." And can we contemplate so much love without feeling some corresponding emotion of love in return? It is the feeling of gratitude, indeed, which these displays of unparalleled mercy are calculated to excite; but gratitude and love are nearly allied; and in the heart of such a creature as man, when renewed by grace, they can never be separated. If we feel the gratitude which we ought to feel, we will also love the Saviour who redeemed us; and if again we love him aright, our hearts will overflow with gratitude for his grace. Gratitude and love are thus kindred feelings. They dwell together in holy harmony in the renewed mind, and they stamp their lovely image alike on the character and the life.

II. Christ, *though unseen*, is the object of a Christian's love. "Whom *having not seen*, ye love."

There is no doubt that it is more natural and, humanly speaking, more easy to love one whom we have frequently seen and associated with, than one of whom we have merely heard by the report of others. On this acknowledged fact proceeds the observation of the apostle John: "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Visible objects always make the deepest impression; and the actual sight of a friend must always affect the mind more powerfully than the most full intelligence we may

receive concerning him. At the same time it would be unreasonable, in the highest degree, to affirm, that because an object is invisible to the eye of sense, it is on that account unfitted to call forth the affections of the mind; that because a friend is not personally present with us, he, on that account, ceases to be the proper subject of affectionate and endeared remembrance. Suppose we are told that a person of distinguished dignity, whom we may never have seen, hath been often heard to declare himself our friend, that he hath many times indicated his kindest interest in us and regard for our welfare, that, in proof of this, he hath already done us many friendly offices, and is ever ready to interpose in our behalf, that he hath subjected himself to the most expensive and painful sacrifices in order to serve us, that, though removed at a distance from us, he still sends us many a kind message, and, by the instrumentality of mutual friends, holds a most beneficial intercourse with us, that he hath sent to us his nearest friend to be always with us to comfort and support us, and that he hath, moreover, sent us a visible pledge of his affection;—suppose that this distinguished friend hath done all this and much more for us, would we not be guilty of the basest ingratitude in refusing him the tribute of our affections, on the ground simply of our never having seen him with the bodily eye? Now, in this imaginary case, we have pictured out to us, though in feeble lines, the relation in which the blessed Redeemer stands to us.

1. Although Christ was never *seen* by us, yet we have been favoured with the *most full and satisfactory information regarding him*. He is brought near to our view in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and in the varied writings of the New—in the historical narratives of the Evangelists, who actually conversed with him—in the epistles of the Apostles who derived their commission immediately from his hand, and who had the finest opportunities of learning his will. He is brought before us in the glories of his divine nature—in the transcendent excellencies of his human character, and in all the riches of his mediatorial grace. So complete is the representation, that it places the subject immediately under our view, and introduces us into the most intimate acquaintance. A transient sight of the Saviour might please and dazzle us; but it is the frequent and serious perusal of

the records respecting him which alone can introduce us into the endearments of a personal intimacy.

2. Jesus, though we never saw him, is ascertained to be unquestionably our *best friend* and nearest *relation*. He is revealed to us in the attitude, the aspect, the manner, of a generous and disinterested friend, related to us by ties at once strong and tender. Originally and independently he is the Father of our spirits; for "in him was life, and the life was the light of men." He interposed for us in circumstances of the greatest peril, and he still prosecutes his designs of love to us. He lives; and "because he lives, we shall also live." Though exalted on high, he is ever near to us, for "lo," says he, "I am with you always." He is our instructor to point the way; our high priest to redeem and intercede for us; our Captain and King to bring many sons and daughters to glory." Complain not, then, that you *see* him not, when you feel him to be near you, and are assured of his interest in your welfare.

3. He hath given us the most *stupendous evidences of his disinterested love*. He came from the abodes of bliss, to save us from endless woe. He died for us when we were enemies, to make us his friends, and to reconcile us to God. Behold what manner of love is this! Measure the love of the Redeemer by his condescension, and again his condescension by his dignity, and when did love stoop from such a height of felicity, or descend to such a depth of suffering to express itself? We may be assured then, that our want of love to him, is just a want of faith in him; for if we really believed all this, we could not but love him.

4. This kind friend hath sent, and does send, us *many kind messages of love*, and hath actually left us a *legacy* to perpetuate his remembrance. By the word which he hath left on record, by the ordinances of his gospel, by liberty of access to a throne of grace, and, particularly, by the sacrament of the supper—by these he hath given us a lively picture of himself, by these he hath left as it were a legacy to perpetuate his remembrance, and through their means, he holds frequent and familiar intercourse with his people. In the use of these appointed means, we are brought even into his presence; we hold with him familiar converse; we recognise his every feature; and we receive directly from his hand the testimonies of his love.

5. Though not personally present with us, he hath given us, as his representative, *his holy Spirit to abide with us for ever*—to enlighten our understandings, darkened as they are, and debased by sin—to purify our hearts from the power of corruption—to raise our affections to things spiritual and heavenly—to check in us the power of sin, and to guide us amid the snares and temptations of our pilgrimage through the world. "It is expedient for you," says he, "that I go away," and that ye no longer enjoy my personal presence; "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come, but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The holy Spirit is our constant guide, and though invisible, he is really and substantially near us, he is at our right hand, and at our left, and his aid is promised us in all the varieties of our outward condition. We have thus a representative of Christ, and by his almighty arm, we may be guided towards heaven.

6. In fine, though we see not Christ *now*, we are assured that if we love him truly, *we shall see him afterwards*. He is now enthroned in glory; his human nature is circled with all the rays of divinity, and reigning amid the hosts of heaven. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And is not this a strong encouragement to love him *now*, though we see him not yet? If we live by faith here, we shall be admitted to the beatific vision hereafter; and it is only by the exercise of love, and the kindred graces here, that we can be qualified for perfected enjoyment above.

III. The manner in which love to Christ will practically express itself.

1. Love to Christ will lead us to cultivate a more familiar and intimate acquaintance with him. If we feel a cordial attachment to Jesus, we will not rest satisfied with a general and vague conception of him; we shall seek to know him more, that we may love him with greater ardour, that we may become stronger in faith, and thus be prompted with greater eagerness to run in the paths of his commandments. With this view, we will ponder the Scriptures daily; we will seek for Christ in them, we will compare the Old Testament with the New, we will meditate on what Christ hath done, we will derive a sacred and sublime pleasure from the contemplation of truth in Christ, and of Christ as emphatically "the truth." Every new discovery we make, will add to

the vigour of the affection, and sweeten its exercise.

2. Love to Christ will lead us frequently to *think* and to *speak* of him. The name and features of a dear friend will be ever dear to the affectionate heart. Christ, as our best friend, will ever be the object of our frequent and hallowed meditations. In fellowship with kindred minds, we will make *him* the delightful theme of our converse; we will plead his cause when assailed, and his cross shall be our glory.

3. Love to Christ will lead us to seek *intercourse with him* in all his ordinances. Christ meets with his people in all the holy institutions of his appointment, but more particularly does he hold fellowship with them when seated around his table, and engaged in the commemoration of his dying love. Around that table will the affectionate lovers of the Redeemer delight to rally; and why? because there they expect to meet with "Him whom their souls love." Thither they resort with gladness, as to the presence-chamber of their royal friend. They pour out their hearts before him, and "truly is their fellowship with him." Thus does ardent attachment to the Saviour manifest its native influence, and thus is it strengthened for the cheerful discharge of duty.

4. If we love Christ, we will *love his people and cause*; we will love all who bear the image of the Saviour; we will delight to seek the advancement of his king-

dom in its spiritual interests among men. The success of the Gospel at home and abroad will be an object dear to our hearts. We will pray for it; we will associate together for its efficient advancement; we will give of our substance for its encouraging progress. The good news from distant lands, with which we are from time to time cheered, will delight and animate our hearts. They that make mention of the name of the Lord, keep not silence; and they give him no rest till he arise and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

Finally. "If ye love me," says Jesus, "keep my commandments." This is the strongest and most substantial test of the sincerity of our love. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." Do we delight in keeping the commandments of Christ? If we truly love him, we will embrace every opportunity of doing his will; we will imitate him as the object best entitled to our supreme affection; we will study to adorn his doctrine in all things. Love sweetens toil. Love soothes in sorrow. Its quickening influence is felt in the culture of other graces, and in the practice of all the christian duties. Its ripened attainments are seen to bloom in the vale of tears and of death. The last beat of life's fluttering pulse stamps upon them an immortal seal; and the calm tranquillity of love is exchanged for a "joy that is unspeakable and full of glory."

ON TEMPERANCE AND ABSTINENCE;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY, 20TH JULY, 1833, IN GREYFRIARS CHURCH, GLASGOW, FROM JOHN ii. 1-11.

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THE interesting narrative, my brethren, which we have now read, as the subject of discourse, might be considered in a variety of important points of view. It might be considered as bearing upon the divinity of our Lord's mission. It contains in it the record of a miracle so divinely performed, and so amply attested, as completely establishes and authenticates our Lord's claim to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. It might be considered in its bearing also upon the institution of marriage. The miracle, of which we have the descrip-

tion in the verses read, was wrought upon the occasion of a nuptial solemnity, and was, in fact, a testimony born to the purity and honour of the marriage state. It might be considered also in its bearing on the personal character of our Lord. His conduct in that whole transaction was the exemplification of a temper and disposition of mind, from which every thing like sourness and severity was excluded, a temper and disposition of mind that was meek and mild, and social and gentle. It might be considered also in its bearing upon temperance, as

to the extent to which our Lord's conduct, on this occasion, gave a sanction to the use of intoxicating liquors. Perhaps it need not be said, that, on the present occasion, we intend to confine your attention to this latter view of the subject.* Most of you are aware that an argument has been constructed from this narrative, against the great characteristic principle of abstinence. It has been alleged, that in abstaining ourselves from the use of ardent spirits, and in calling on others to do so, we are attempting to deprive the disciples of our Lord of a liberty which he left them, and are casting an imputation, besides, upon his character and conduct. We propose, therefore, at this time, with all the partiality of which we are capable, to examine the bearing of this narrative, upon the great subject of temperance, and, for this purpose, we shall arrange what we have to say under two heads. In the first place, we shall endeavour to show what this narrative really does teach on the subject of temperance; and, in the second place, we shall mention some things which it does not teach, but which it has sometimes been supposed to teach.

In the first place, then, we propose to show what this narrative really does teach upon the subject of temperance. In looking over again the passage, you will perceive that there are two parts of our Lord's conduct here, which bear directly upon the subject under consideration. There is his being present at a festive entertainment, where wine was used as the principal beverage, and partaking of it along with the other invited guests; and the other is, his putting forth his miraculous power, to supply a lacking which had occurred in the wine. We mean to direct your attention to each of these in their order. In stating that he partook of the wine with the rest of the guests, we have stated more than is actually expressed. We are simply told that Jesus was there. But though it is not said in so many words that he actually partook of the wine provided, there can be no manner of doubt that this was the matter of fact. Independent of the strong ground furnished for this inference, by the miracle wrought, we have his own avowed practice to appeal to. Unlike his harbinger, John the Baptist, who, being a Nazarite from his mother's womb, was abstemious as to eating and

drinking, our Lord came both eating bread, and drinking wine—that is, he was in the habit of accepting invitations to social feasts, where, according to the custom of the country, wine was exhibited and used. Now, this part of our Lord's conduct clearly, we think, teaches two things. First, that the use of wine such as our Lord himself used, is, in itself, perfectly lawful. You will observe here the qualified terms we employ. We say the use of wine, in opposition to its abuse, either by unseasonable or excessive indulgence. The wine which our Lord used, was like every other kind of Judean wine, the unmixed juice of the grape simply fermented and purified. To what extent the wines, in common use with us, come under that description, or whether they come under it all, is a question with which we do not intend to meddle. It may be mentioned, however, in passing, that a very considerable portion of the wines in use with us, are artificial compounds, rendered stronger, and more intoxicating, by foreign admixtures, than they are naturally. We say the use of wine such as our Lord used, is perfectly lawful, in contradistinction to wines of a different kind. There is only one supposable case in which the use of wine by our Lord would not furnish a warrant for the use of it by us—his official and mystical use of it. The use of wine at the last supper, was plainly a mystical use of it, and therefore could be no warrant for us in the conduct of life. But he does not use it here as the Son of God, and in his official capacity, and with any sacramental view, but just in the same manner in which the rest of the guests that were present used it. In the second place, we remark, that this part of our Lord's conduct clearly teaches also that it is a perfectly lawful thing to use wine such as our Lord himself used, upon proper and lawful occasions of social distribution. It has been the opinion of some very excellent persons, that though the use of wine is in itself lawful, it ought to be used only as a necessary of life, and never as a luxury, simply as a medicinal restorative, and never as a means of exhilaration. This opinion is founded on the principle, that whatever is not necessary either for food or medicine, for the support or restoration of life, is unnecessary, and therefore unlawful. But, not to mention that this principle, if carried to its full and legitimate extent, would have the effect of sweeping off from the earth almost every thing like social entertain-

* This is one of a monthly series of Sermons in behalf of Temperance Societies.

ment, and stripping life not only of a portion of its sweets, but of all its embellishments ; it bears directly against our Lord's conduct upon this occasion. We cannot say that our Lord here made use of wine only medicinally. There can be no manner of doubt that it was used in subservience to the social enjoyment of those who were present.

The second part of our Lord's conduct, is his putting forth his miraculous power to supply a deficiency which had occurred in the wine, either in consequence of there having been too little originally provided, or in consequence of there having been a very considerable number of guests present. Much stress has been laid upon this part of our Lord's conduct, by the opponents of abstinence. It has been explained, as affording a latitude in the use of intoxicating liquors, and as strongly militating against every thing like systematic abstinence. Is it not, it has been asked, something like being righteous over much, to refuse ourselves the use not only of what nature has so richly provided to our hands, but of what the Son of God himself, when here upon earth, wrought a miracle to supply ? After giving, however, the most impartial consideration to the subject, which we have been able, we cannot see that this part of our Lord's conduct teaches any thing in addition to what the other part teaches, except this, that it is a perfectly lawful thing to provide for others the wine, which it is lawful for us to use ourselves. To perceive that this is the whole force of the miracle, we would crave your attention to the following circumstances. Notice what it was that our Lord changed the water into. It was not into strong drink that drunkards relish, but into wine. He could as easily have done the one as the other. He could, with as perfect ease, communicate to the water such poignant qualities as would have pleased the taste of those whom Solomon describes as mighty to drink wine, and mighty to drink strong drink ; but he did not put forth his power for this purpose. He changed the water, but simply into wine, rather into an exhilarating than an intoxicating beverage. Notice, secondly, in respect of the miracle wrought upon that occasion, that it was not upon a common, but a special, occasion, not when persons were met together for the purpose of ordinary indulgence, but when they were assembled to celebrate a marriage solemnity. It is one thing to

make use of wine occasionally, and at seasons which are dedicated to proper and lawful festivity, and another thing to make use of it daily and habitually. In the first, there may be wrong and danger, but in the second, there can hardly be but wrong and danger. Notice, in the third place, what is most important, the great object of our Lord in working this miracle. It was not, though it seems very frequently to be taken for granted that it was, in order to give a sanction for the use of wine on occasions of social festivity. This formed no part of our Lord's design at all. It was simply for the purpose of showing forth his glory, the glory of his benevolence, in doing a seasonable act of kindness to a person who had hospitably entertained him, his mother, and his disciples, and the glory of his power in performing a mighty miracle in the presence of his disciples. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory ; and his disciples believed on him." You will be able perhaps to appreciate still better the force of these remarks, and their bearing upon the subject, if you compare this miracle with another of a very kindred character, which our Lord wrought, the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. We are told, that on a particular occasion, our Lord put forth his miraculous power to such an extent, as to multiply five barley loaves and two fishes, so as to satisfy the cravings of five thousand individuals. The miracle was certainly a very extraordinary one, not less so than the one under consideration ; yet no one ever thought of deducing an argument with respect to the obligation or the merit of feeding on barley loaves, or upon fish. Every one perceives that the circumstance of the loaves and the fishes being the subject of the miracle, was merely an accidental circumstance. It was our Lord's object to *feed* the multitude, not to feed them with any particular species of food. Now, that wine was the subject of the miracle we are considering, was a mere accidental circumstance arising from this, that this was the only particular article that had run short. Had it been the bread, or the fruit, or any of the other dainties on the table, there can be no doubt but that our Lord's miraculous power would have been put forth in the very same way. It was his object to supply the deficiency, not simply to supply them with wine. Notice, lastly, the state of society in which the miracle was wrought. It was wrought

among a people among whom intemperance was not the prevailing vice. It is true that cases of intoxication were known among the Jews, but we would be much mistaken if we were to suppose that the vice of intemperance, in that people, appeared in the bare-faced manner it does among us. The Apostle tells us that among the Jews, they that were drunken, were drunken in the night, and so extraordinary was it for a person to be intoxicated in the early part of the day, that Peter founds on this the vindication of himself and his fellow disciples, when, on the day of Pentecost, they were charged with being drunk with new wine. This could not be, seeing "it is but the third hour of the day," nine o'clock. The force of the argument would not have been felt among us.

We have thus endeavoured to state distinctly what this narrative really does teach upon the subject of temperance; first, that the use of wine is in itself a perfectly lawful thing; second, that it is a perfectly lawful thing to make use of wine upon occasions of proper and lawful social festivity; and third, that it is a lawful thing to provide for others the wine which it is lawful for us to make use of ourselves. We are now, in the second place, to show what this narrative does not teach upon the subject of temperance, but what it has been sometimes supposed to teach. And here I remark, first, that it does not teach that we are at liberty to indulge, to any extent we please, in the use even of wine. We have admitted that our Lord's conduct does involve a warrant for the use of wine, such as he himself used, but a warrant does not include in it a right to abuse. As our Lord's conduct can only be pleaded to sanction the use of what he himself used, so it can only be pleaded to sanction the use of it to the extent that he himself used it. There are two circumstances in this narrative of which advantage has been taken by a certain class of persons, for the purpose, not only of excusing, but of justifying their excesses—the one is the large quantity of water which our Lord turned into wine, and the second is the passing observation of the ruler of the feast, who said: "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." But this attempt to convert Christ into the minister of Satan, and to represent him as the patron of drunkards, is as vain as it is imbecile.

That our Lord did turn a large quantity of water into wine is at once admitted, but it was not for the purpose of supplying the means of intemperate excess, but to show the liberality of his heart, and the almightiness of his arm. It was of the utmost importance when a miracle was to be wrought—and a miracle, the "beginning of miracles" which Jesus did—that it should be of such magnitude as should place the reality of it beyond all doubt. The word rendered "well drunk" does not mean drunk to intoxication, but only drunk freely. The ruler's words did not refer, and were not intended to refer, to the state of the company then present, but simply to the order in which the wine was set on the table. They contain an allusion to the practice of setting the good wine first and the inferior wine afterwards. But we make a very inadequate statement of the fact, when we say that our Lord Jesus Christ did encourage and countenance intemperance. He discouraged and discountenanced it in his conduct, in his teaching, and in the religion which he promulgated. He placed the stamp and brand of his unqualified disapprobation upon every form and degree of intemperance. In his conduct he manifested a perfect example of true moderation in every thing. In his teaching he often raised the warning voice against intemperance. "Take heed," he says, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." And with respect to his religion, it is in the whole frame and structure of it—in its spirit, and in its genius—altogether against intemperance. Christianity and intemperance are direct contraries—there can be no fellowship, no communion, between them. They are opposed to each other in their origin and character; Christianity is from above, intemperance is from beneath. Christianity is the hallowed offspring of holy love, intemperance is the shapeless abortion of night and of darkness. Christianity is the embodied essence and substance of purity and benevolence, intemperance has the impression of every thing that is malignant and foul—of the malignity of the serpent, and of the filthiness of the sow that returns to her wallowing in the mire. Christianity and intemperance are not only opposed to each other in their origin and character, but in their spirit and tendency—they are just antagonist principles. The tendency of

Christianity is to give to the mind an ascendancy over the flesh, the tendency of intemperance is to give to the flesh the mastery of the spirit. The tendency of Christianity is to make men happy, the tendency of intemperance is to render them miserable. The tendency of Christianity is to transform men into the image of Divinity, the tendency of intemperance is to change them into the foul likeness of demons. The tendency of Christianity is to elevate men to heaven, the tendency of intemperance is to sink them down to hell. And as they are opposed to each other in their spirit and tendency, so also are they opposed in their success. They cannot both prosper together. In proportion as the one advances the other must fall back. Indeed, of all the enemies Christianity has ever had to conflict, intemperance is the most powerful. If you compare Christianity to a fair field of precious grain, intemperance is the blight and mildew upon it. If you compare Christianity to a chariot going at a triumphant rate, then intemperance is the drag upon the wheel of the chariot. We know of nothing that has tended more to impede the progress of religion, more to harden the sinner, more to paralyze the arms of discipline, more to render inefficient the preaching of the gospel—we know of nothing that has tended more to do this than intemperance.

Again, we remark, that this narrative does not teach us what it has been sometimes supposed to teach, that it is an unlawful thing to abstain entirely from the use of wine, or any other intoxicating liquor. In the discussions which have been carried on upon this subject, it has not been an unusual thing, not only to argue as if our Lord's conduct had the effect of a permission to use wine, but as if it had the force of a prohibition against abstaining from it. Our Lord, it is said, did not abstain from wine, and therefore we ought not to abstain from it either. This method of arguing, if it had not been adopted for the avowed purpose of misleading, evidently takes its rise in the confounding of things which differ—a permission with a positive precept. Though every thing our Lord did in his private capacity was right, it does not follow that every thing our Lord did in that capacity we must do. His example, in matters of indifference, has simply the effect of a warrant, and it is only in matters of positive moral duty that it has the force of a law.

On this occasion he certainly gave a permission to his disciples, but did not enjoin a command, and accordingly his conduct here was never regarded by his own disciples, who unquestionably were in the most favourable circumstances for knowing his mind and what was really intended to be the effect of his teaching, as binding them up to the use of wine, and prohibiting their abstinence from it when they might see occasion. We are told that James the first, usually styled the brother of our Lord, religiously abstained from the use of wine, and that Timothy used water in place of wine; and when our Lord advised an alteration of his diet, he does not insinuate that he had done any thing wrong in abstaining, nor does he advise it upon the ground that would favour the opinions of the opponents of abstinence. He says: "Use a little wine." For what purpose? Not for sociality's sake, not for exhilaration's sake, not for custom's sake, but "for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities." While, therefore, there was nothing in our Lord's conduct that we may not imitate, we are at most perfect liberty to abstain from wine and from every other intoxicating liquor, of course, without any violation of duty, or any compromise of christian principle. When we take, in connexion what our Lord taught, with what our Lord did, his example with his instructions, we find that there are two cases in which we not only may, but must abstain from the use of wine. The one is, when the use of wine by us tends to betray us into a sinful excess in the use of it, and the other is, when this use of wine tends to tempt others to a sinful excess in the use of it, or to harden them in that sinful excess. In the first of these cases it is clear that it is not only lawful but incumbent on us to abstain entirely from the use of wine. Our Lord lays down the following principles in very striking, though figurative language, in reference to every thing that would prove the occasion of sin to us. He says: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee, and if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee." Now, the principle contained in these words admits not only of legitimate application, but of an easy and direct application to intoxicating liquors. Admitting that intoxicating liquor is dear as the right eye, and to the drunkard it is, still it must be parted with, however painful the sacrifice. The eye that offends is not simply to be bandaged

up, but to be pulled out. Admitting that it is useful to him as a right hand, as necessary to his health, comfort, and activity, still if it be the occasion of sin, it must be avoided entirely and abstained from. We are not directed to use the right hand that offends, moderately, to bind it up simply, but to amputate it, to cut it off and cast it from us. Here, then, a plain christian principle is laid down by our Lord himself, which not only justifies, but requires abstinence from the use of every kind of intoxicating liquor, when it may prove the occasion of sinful excess. But why, it has been asked, is there not a positive precept? Intemperance is not a new thing on the earth; cases of intemperance were known under the Old Testament dispensation and under the New, and yet God himself, it is alleged, never prescribed abstinence as the remedy. To this we answer, that having an authoritative principle, such as we have described, it is not necessary to have a positive precept. But there is, at least, one instance of the very thing required, a divine authority for prescribing abstinence as a remedy in a case of danger against intemperance. We are told in the book of Leviticus that Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire to the Lord, and in consequence of this that both of them died. From the connexion of the narrative, with the subsequent enactment, there can be no manner of doubt, that these two unhappy individuals committed the sin which was the occasion of their punishment, under the influence of intemperance. The drink-offering, which usually consisted of wine, placed it in the power of the officiating priest to indulge in excess, and, therefore, exposed him to imminent danger. Now, observe the provision which God himself made against the recurrence of such a sin. Does he say, Let the priests, whenever they are engaged in the public service of the tabernacle, be particularly abstemious in the use of wine? No! He prescribes entire abstinence as the remedy. Thus did he say unto Aaron: "Do not drink wine nor strong drink." Observe the words "do not drink wine, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations."

The other case in which it is not only lawful, but incumbent to abstain from wine, and, of course, from every other intoxicating liquor, is when our use of it, to whatever

extent, is the means of leading any other to a sinful excess, or of hardening him in that sin. Our Lord states the matter quite plainly. He says: "Take heed lest ye offend one of these little ones," that is, place a stumblingblock in their way. And to render the matter still plainer take the Apostle's commentary upon this. "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." It was an early controversy in the christian church whether it was lawful to purchase and use meats and drinks, flesh and wine, which had been first offered in sacrifice to idols, but which was afterwards exposed in the public market for sale. The Apostle states that as an idol was, as it were, nothing, there being no gods but one, the circumstance of the meat or drink having been offered to an idol, neither made it better nor worse, and, therefore, as far as the thing itself was concerned, every Christian was at perfect liberty to use it. But he states also, that if the use of this liberty should be the occasion of leading any of their weaker brethren into sin, they were in that case to abstain, and he states, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

We have only one other circumstance to direct your attention to, on the head that this narrative does not teach what it has sometimes, and very frequently been supposed to teach, about the use of ardent spirits, as in itself a lawful thing. Most of you are aware that there has been a question agitated to a considerable extent of late, as to whether even the most moderate use of ardent spirits is in itself a lawful thing. Many have maintained, upon very plausible grounds, that it is not lawful. It has been contended, on the highest and best medical authority, that ardent spirits are poisons in their nature, though of a slower operation, and more subtle nature, than some other poisons, and consequently that the use of them, however moderate, is as really a crime against human life and health as arsenic, or deadly nightshade. We do not intend here to meddle with the question of the abstract lawfulness of the use of ardent spirits, but whether lawful or not lawful, their lawfulness is not proved by the passage under consideration. The permission to use genuine wine does not involve in it the permission to use ardent spirits. He that says so has either a very

illogical head, or else an intemperate habit. It has been tried to identify, or rather to confound, the use of the two. It is alleged that both are in their nature intoxicating, and, therefore, if it is lawful to use the one it is lawful to use the other. It has also been alleged, that ardent spirits stand to us in the same relation that wine did to the inhabitants of Judea, their country being a wine country, and ours not. Both positions are untenable. We admit the premises in the one case, but we certainly deny the conclusion. We would be disposed to admit the conclusion in the second case if the premises were sound, but they are unsound. That genuine wine and ardent spirits are intoxicating is admitted, but not in the same degree at all. Perhaps the one is less so a hundred-fold than the other. Neither in logic, nor in morals, can it be the same thing to grant an allowance of what, if used to a considerable extent, may intoxicate, and to grant an allowance of what, unless used in the very smallest quantity, must produce intoxication. Ardent spirits and laudanum are both intoxicating, and yet who will maintain that a permission to use the one involves in it a permission to use the other? What parent is there, even the parent most addicted to the use of intoxicating liquor, who, in giving a permission to his child to take a social glass with a neighbour, would consider himself as granting a permission to chew opium, or drink laudanum? The cases are quite parallel. The other case is false also. Ardent spirits do not stand in the same relation to us that genuine wine did to the inhabitants of Judea. Quite the reverse. The one is comparatively a natural product, the other an artificial. The one is produced by fermentation, the other by distillation. It is logical to argue from one kind of fermented liquor to another, but not from a fermented to a distilled liquor. That which stands in the nearest relation is clearly malted liquor, derived from the natural products of the country, and produced in the same manner, that is, by fermentation.

We have thus endeavoured, in the second place, to mention some circumstances which this narrative does not teach upon the subject of temperance, but which it has some-

times been supposed to teach. We say it does not teach that we are at perfect liberty to indulge, to any extent we please, in the use of wine; second, that it is an unlawful or improper thing to abstain entirely from wine, or any other intoxicating liquor; third, that even the moderate use of ardent spirits is in itself a lawful thing.

In conclusion, you see from what has been said, that in calling on you to abstain entirely from the use of spirits, we are not calling on you to abstain from any thing our Lord and Master gave you a permission to use. We allow a permission to use every thing that he allows, and to the same extent. But in calling on you to abstain entirely, we are calling on you only to act up to your principles as Christians, to act up to the principles which he whom you call your Lord and Master lays down for the guidance of your conduct; and it becomes you, if you would justify your profession, if you would act in agreeableness to the name you bear, unless you choose to trample on Christ's authority, and to say: "We will not have this man to rule over us;" to abstain in every case, when it is the occasion of sin to yourselves or to others, rigidly and entirely. Let the right eye be plucked out, let the right hand be cut off, and show that you are Christians, by just going as far as Christ required you to go. We might appeal to expediency, to prudence, to your benevolent regard for your fellow-creatures, but we appeal to your christian principles, and we say you are bound, as christians, in every case in which the use of wine and spirits is proved to be sinful to yourselves or others, to abstain; and it comes to be a matter entirely between God and your conscience. Those who are persuaded that the use of these may prove the occasion of sin to themselves, or tend to harden others in sin, are bound, have no alternative—unless they would act in defiance of their christian principles and be at variance with their christian profession—to abstain entirely, to take the resolution of the Apostle, and say not only "if meat make my brother offend," but if intoxicating liquor make my brother offend, I will drink no intoxicating liquor, not even wine, "while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Amen.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. J. MACFARLANE, A.M., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN PARK, Liverpool.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF ANGELS ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE WEST CHURCH, EDINBURGH, ON SABBATH FORENOON,
30TH JUNE, 1833,

By the Rev. JAMES MACFARLANE, A.M.,
Minister of Stockbridge Chapel, Edinburgh.

" Which things the angels desire to look into."—1 PETER i. 12.

WE need scarcely remind you how richly the temple service of old was fraught with the intimations of a coming Messiah; nor need we remark how every department of the temple itself, constructed as it was on a divine model, bore some pointed reference to the great blessings of redemption. Into no portion of its precincts can we enter which is not filled with the holiest inspirations—to no corner, whether of its outer court or of its inmost recess, can we turn, which does not speak of a higher and more spiritual economy than what the bleeding victim, or the smoking incense, might at first seem to indicate. You know, for instance, for Scripture informs you, that the holy of holies was a type of heaven, whither the great forerunner has now gone with the blood of sprinkling to offer up the prayers of all saints. You know, too, that the mercy-seat which covered the ark, wherein lay the book of the law, was a type of Jesus, whom God has set forth as a true mercy-seat, and who covers and shelters his people from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. Now, you will observe, that over this mercy-seat were placed two cherubim overshadowing it with their wings, looking down upon the ark with bended head, the posture of deep contemplation, as if there was that there which called forth their most powerful sympathy, and exercised their most fixed attention. Hence, it could not but happen that the devout Jew, whose mind rose from the shadow to the substance, and from the type to the reality, would view this figure as intimating the fact, that the angels in heaven are no indifferent spectators of the development of the plan of mercy, but that their eyes are fixed upon it, as though there were nothing else in the whole circle of creation which could, in comparison, call forth their regards. To us, at least, who live in a

clearer and more perfect dispensation, there is no mystery or doubt as to the studies and employments of the celestial throng. It is our privilege to know that the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow, are the common ground of meditation on which saint and angel meet, and that the loudest song of the redeemed on earth is but the faint echo of that anthem in heaven, which seraphs, and the spirits of the just made perfect, conspire in singing to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever. It is our privilege to discover, in the covenant of grace, a chain of sympathy which binds heaven to earth, a centre of union around which the holiest thoughts of men, and the highest exercises of angels, ever circulate; for though the message of its unsearchable riches is falling here with but little impression on the ears of a listless and alienated world, the finger of inspiration points us to a scene where those lofty intelligences who live in the light of the upper sanctuary, whose faculties are developed most widely, and whose affections glow most intensely, are expending their deepest regards on the great mysteries of redemption. This is the one subject of all others which thrills heaven with rapture, and lays angels and archangels prostrate before the throne of the Eternal. This is that field of glory whose height no manifestation can display, and whose depth no created being, however exalted, can fully comprehend. This is the golden treasury of mercy on which the fixed gaze of the cherubim has for ages been turned, and from the fulness of which they draw such fresh supplies of knowledge as are adequate to the utmost measure of their still expanding capacities. They feel no weariness—they know no decay. Infinity is the only range, and eternity the only period of their investigations. They have long basked in the efful-

gence of the beatific vision, and still as time revolves do they desire to look into these things, without danger of exhausting their powers, and without the possibility of terminating their inquiries.

At the threshold of such a subject the question at once occurs, How is it that the heavenly host contemplate the work of man's salvation with so much interest? And in answer, we remark, first, that it is because they obtain here their most extensive view of the glory of God.

We mean not from this to say, that angels are not awake to the glories which are so profusely scattered over all existence, as to be observed by men of every country, and kindred, and clime. Dwelling in the heaven of heavens, and as the messengers of God, in which capacity we have reason from Scripture to believe that they visit not only this world, but the innumerable planets which steal along the face of the sky, they have the most ample and perfect opportunity of understanding the endless multitude, and the astonishing character of the works of creation and providence. Nature, in all its diversified operations, lies stretched out before them, and from the throne of their Creator they behold a golden chain of bounty which leaves no world beyond its embrace, and no creature beyond its control. Would they trace wisdom in the minute, or power in the magnificent? Would they see Jehovah's ways in the movements of the material universe, or in the even tenor of his providence? Would they see, in the vicissitude of seasons, the superintendence of a faithful friend, and the bounty of an unwearied benefactor, or meet the footsteps of a parent in the worlds he had formed, and the arm of a Creator working visibly on the right hand and the left? they have but to turn from earth to heaven, and from heaven to earth—they have but to survey the new Jerusalem, the capital of all creation, or contemplate those wandering worlds which are balanced on the emptiness of space—they have but to gaze on the solid earth, or the rolling seas, and every-where will they behold the skirts of that robe of glory with which the deity is clothed—every-where will they behold wisdom, and goodness, and power, portrayed in characters too bright to be mistaken. Yes! the foundation of the temple of knowledge is laid deep, and wide, and lasting, on the face of the universe. All creatures, whether animate or inanimate, demonstrate the being and perfections of Him who formed them, and it cannot be supposed that

those sons of God who raised the song of triumph as they saw Omnipotence calling this world into existence, should ever forget that shout of joy with which they hailed the birth of time, or cease to admire the wonders of creation throughout the endless progress of their being. But nature, with all its lessons of wisdom, must now yield to grace, and the era, when this fair system arose at the divine command, must not vie with that, when, from condemnation and misery, it emerged into happiness and peace. Every other theme of study must fade away before it, and acknowledge the supremacy of an enterprise, the very object of which is "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good-will to men." This constitutes the bright centre to which all the divine attributes converge, and from which they are again reflected over the intelligent universe. This forms the choicest spot on which, amid much that is great and glorious, the eye of angels most instructively dwells.

It must not, however, be supposed that this superiority consists in any thing of outward grandeur or external magnificence. There is little in the manger of Bethlehem, or in the company of fishermen—little in the judgment-hall of Pilate, or in the hill of Calvary—little either in the commencement or in the evolution of that plan of grace, which, from eternity, had been folded up in the bosom of Deity, that is calculated to attract the carnal eye, or to arrest the carnal attention. Attended with no external majesty the cross of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, and it perhaps might have been imagined that angels would have concurred in the estimate, and that the heavenly throng would have turned away from such an uninviting scene to seek for occupation in other spheres and in other studies. But we look and the calculation is reversed. As a scheme of grace in which the glory of God is manifested, through the medium of every thing that is awful and striking, the gospel is replete with much on which the soul of the believer feeds as its richest repast, and in that man of sorrows, in that weeping babe and dying victim, the principalities of heaven beheld the most glorious object in the whole created universe, because in him the perfections of Deity shine forth in their most stupendous exhibition. The veil of flesh and the guise of a servant, hide not from them the majesty of God, nor in the indignities of Calvary can they forget—a finished work—a perfect redemption. Their understanding is rivetted on those unsearch-

able riches whereby the guilty fugitive is called back from his apostasy, and invited to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Their affections bow before that sovereign dispensation which overlooked their fallen brethren, and brought the fellow of Jehovah from his throne, and stretched forth the golden sceptre and established a spiritual kingdom in the very recesses of guilt and misery. On every feature of the work glory is described, and from every point the majesty of power and the rectitude of justice, the immutability of truth, and the beauty of holiness beam forth in lines of undying light. Does it not preserve untainted the dignity of a violated law, and the majesty of offended Godhead? Does it not unfold the depth of human wretchedness, and let in the brightness of another region on the darkness and the poverty of this? Does it not offer more than all the riches of this globe could purchase, or the services of all the seraphim in heaven could earn? What more than a crucified Saviour could angels wish to behold—to what theme but salvation could the regards of time, or the studies of immortality, most instructively turn? Every divine attribute has here its demands satisfied, its claims vindicated, and its essential dignity displayed and exalted. All harmoniously unite, and each lends its aid and co-operation in ennobling the other—wisdom dignified by power, and power regulated by wisdom—mercy sustained and invigorated by justice, and justice tempered by the meltings of love—grace establishing its throne on the basis of Jehovah's truth, and the warm tide of mercy's beams mingling with, and pervading all. Oh what an exhibition of every divine perfection is unfolded here! Who can expatiate over this field of divine goodness and compassion and not call upon his soul, and all that is within him, to bless the Lord! Take the highest creature in the universe, darken the light of creation around him, give him all the powers which earth or heaven can supply, and let him bend those powers to this one effort—the knowledge of a salvation wrought out for ruined man—and how much will he learn? As much as to lay him prostrate before the throne in the heavens—as much as to convince him that the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. Ages, as they pass over him, still find him at the task, breathing the fervent prayer, “Lord, show me thy glory;” and eternity, as it rolls on, will still witness him gazing on an ocean whose

depth no line may fathom, and whose bounds no eye may reach.

Nor will the interest, with which angels survey the great mystery of redemption, as displaying the perfections of Deity, lose any thing in its intensity when we reflect that it is of a growing character, depending on the gradual development of the plan of mercy. The mind of man can seldom rest for any period of time on a study, however elevated, which is not increasing the boundaries of his knowledge, or rewarding him with fresh information, and it perhaps might be supposed, that had the intimations of God's purposes, to the human race, been as familiar to the angels at their beginning as at their close, they would long ere now have tired in the contemplation of a subject which was ever presenting the same unvarying aspect. But, believing as we do from our text, especially when compared with the context, and with other passages of Scripture, that this knowledge is of a growing nature, and that they, as well as we, only learn the several parts of this design of grace in their successive accomplishment, it is at once manifest that the celestial company are perpetually alive to a subject which is gradually disclosing with broader and more defined features, its purposes of mercy. The Church on earth was the ground-work on which were inscribed the praises of the living God, in order, as the Apostle informs us, that by that Church his manifold wisdom might be made known in heavenly places. The wells of salvation from which the saints below ever drew their supplies of knowledge and of strength, were the common resort of angels, and amid type and ceremony, from a bleeding victim and smoking incense, from the ark and the mercy-seat, from the prophet's school and the high priest's temple—they too, we may well conclude, were gathering up those bright intimations which strung their harps to a higher melody, and tuned their songs to a loftier praise. What, with them, is knowledge now, was thus perhaps at one period, but mystery and gloom. Who can tell what silence reigned in heaven when, by the fall of Adam, the harmony of all creation had been broken, and God himself, in the awful majesty of holiness, stood ready to pronounce his threatened award? What could angels expect for man in that hour of apostasy, but the full measure of insulted wrath, and the miseries of an irreversible decree? And, oh! when the uplifted arm was staid, and no voice but that of mercy was heard, saying, “Deliver from going down to the pit, for I have

found a ransom," who can say with what noly joy they welcomed the intimation, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head? It was now that a field of knowledge, as yet untrodden, was opened up before them, a field over whose shadowy outline the dimness of futurity still partially rested. It might be, that with patriarchs and prophets of old, they looked to the day of Christ when yet afar off, and that, like the early travellers, they were cheered by some few streaks of the rising sun, yet was it to them but the faint presage of the opening day. It might be, that with Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, they desired to see, yet were they not able clearly to discern the face of Jehovah's mercy, shrouded, as it was, beneath the covering of a typical economy. It might be, that, with the very followers of the Lamb, they traced the footsteps of their own King on earth, and watched over him at Bethlehem, and ministered to him in the wilderness, and comforted him in the garden of Gethsemane, yet still, in the fulness of the latter day, ere the consummation had arrived, God alone knew how Judas should betray, and Pilate condemn, and the Jews crucify, the Prince of peace. Not yet is the vision full—not yet is the harvest reaped. The years, as they sweep over our world, and bring to pass the purposes of Jehovah, are extending the boundaries of angelic wisdom, and though surrounded with a blaze of glory, visibly gathered from every point of a finished redemption, the loftiest spirit who surrounds the throne is still travelling in the great circle of knowledge, like the planets in their course, unfettered in his movements, and unsullied in his progress. His zeal dreads not the languor of weariness, nor his pursuits the inroads of decay. Every new view is yielding God a fresh revenue of praise, and still does he desire to look into it, that he may show forth the greatness of Him who stepped forth to our aid unsolicited and uncalled, except by the tender accents of his own unmerited grace.

Secondly. We remark, that it is not merely in a speculative point of view that angels contemplate the great work of redemption, but that they desire to look into these things, because of the good which thereby results to the human race. Men and angels once belonged to the same peaceful family, and had no tempter interfered to mar the harmony of their union, they had still lived in the bonds of a holy and happy fellowship. At the birth of time, no impediment existed

to the spontaneous flow of social affection, or to the intercourse of heaven and of earth. The voice of the Lord God was hailed with delight; and as there was no disposition in man to hide himself from his presence, so was there nothing to arrest the footsteps of angels, or destroy the congeniality of kindred feeling. Our world was not yet degenerate, but reflecting in its every scene the beauty and the holiness of the upper sphere, the very angels smiled upon it as the home of brethren whose souls burned with a common love to the great parent of all. But when man revolted from his lawful sovereign—when conscious guilt abashed Adam in the presence of a pure being, and made him desirous of hiding himself from his view, not only did sin separate between man and God, but shut up the very gates of heaven to the egress of the celestial host. Henceforward the chain which bound together the intelligent creation, was snapped asunder, and, dissevered from the harmony of the moral universe, our globe became a prodigal in the family of God. Henceforward happiness gave place to misery, holiness to sin, and far from the abode of his innocence, our great progenitor saw the flaming sword of the once friendly cherubim, guarding the place where he had talked with God, even as one friend talketh with another. We cannot, therefore, but suppose, that as the friends and lovers of mankind, who take an emphatical pleasure in all that advances our happiness, the angels should desire to contemplate a scheme which has again re-united us to their company, and by destroying the works of the devil, holds out the blessedness of Eden, under circumstances of still greater serenity and peace. We cannot but suppose, that, next to the glory of God, they should be mindful of the salvation of man; and that while they seek in the mysteries of grace, a more distinct knowledge of the perfections of Deity than creation yields, they should not rejoice the less in these discoveries of Godhead, because they have changed the moral aspect of our world, and again opened up a channel, through which the sympathies of heaven may flow out over the habitations of earth. If angels weep, they must have wept over that act of apostasy which drove man an exile from paradise; and if they rejoice, it must be to behold him no longer presenting that image of sin, with which their holy spirits can hold no alliance. The miracles of grace are to them no mean or uninviting spectacle. That reconciliation cannot be neglected which satisfied divine

justice, and from the smitten rock poured forth those healing streams which a broken law had dried at their source. That salvation cannot be overlooked, which is working a radical cure in the very centre and seat of the malady, cleansing the fountain of corruption, renovating the very constituent faculties of the human mind, and constraining them to a pure and holy service. Because visited by its influence, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—all loose their charms when contrasted with the requirements of the moral law. Because touched by its reviving energy, the believer springs from the cell of condemnation and the embrace of death, into all the holy activity, and living beauty, and usefulness, of the regenerate man. The veil is removed which eclipsed the glories of the world to come; the fetters of passion are burst asunder, iniquity is abandoned, the love of God cherished, and with the joy of Christ in his heart, and his praise on his lips, the once abandoned transgressor sinks to the grave, rich in all those spiritual endowments which can support the soul in the hour of death or prepare it for the communion and happiness of heaven. “Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.” Over the whole inner man, there breathe once more the influences of heaven, displaying themselves in their loveliest forms, and in their highest glory. Once more does the flame of devotion burn, and prayer delight to make known its request, and praise to offer up its incense of thanksgiving, and faith though not sight, to welcome the presence of Him whose face he shall yet behold in righteousness, and be satisfied with his likeness. Once more does the disencumbered spirit rise upward to its proper good, and, amid the remembrance of miseries escaped, and the anticipation of mercies in reserve, pant for the hour when, freed from all corruption, it shall be raised in its attachments to a congeniality with a holier and happier sphere. This is the glory; these are the triumphs of the Gospel; and, impressed with their greatness, they who once watched the earthly paradise, the messengers of woe, now celebrate the change with all the benevolence of gratulation and joy, and desire to contemplate a scheme which, like the ladder of Jacob, is binding the throne to the footstool, by imparting to both the harmony of one great and peaceful throng.

In adopting such an argument, it must not be thought that we are travelling beyond the range of Scripture, and indulging in the

mere wanderings of fancy, which may, or may not, have their origin in truth. We know that there “is joy” in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, thus intimating that the very seraphs notice and rejoice at the success of that process on character which conforms man to the image of Christ, and that this, more than any other cause, conspires to scatter blessedness over the celestial plains. Bound to a holy obedience by the distinct apprehension which they have of the supreme excellence of that Being in whose presence they dwell, they know the peace which flows out upon them who are admitted to his fellowship; and this knowledge must doubtless be accompanied with the conviction of the extreme wretchedness of those who rebel against the majesty of heaven. Living in the purity of the upper sanctuary, they drink pleasure at the fountain-head, and belonging to the government of Jehovah, they owe and pay to him an unlimited love and obedience. Their minds, then, on the one hand, must be fully awake to the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and, on the other, their very loyalty must serve to augment their joy, when Satan is defeated, and man restored; so that we cannot assign too much importance to the idea, that the blessings with which redemption is fraught, is an incitement to their study in the celestial world. The Gospel is the seed which, lodged in the heart, gradually produces a new creature—a seal which, stamped on the soul, leaves the deep and abiding impression of the divine image—a light chasing away the shadow of darkness—the rod of Christ’s strength and the sceptre of his might, by which he bends the nations before him, and subdues unto himself a peculiar people in the day of his power. The ministry of reconciliation is the moral lever, which is raising our world from the depth of misery into which it had sunk—the great resurrection which is gathering into one the dispersed members of Christ’s body—the stream which, issuing from the throne, is running through the dry places of this earth, reflecting from its peaceful bosom many a smiling village and christian shrine. Instead of holding forth a single cup of water to the fainting pilgrim, it has opened up a fountain in the desert, to which nations repair; instead of sheltering itself amid the ruins of Jehovah’s sanctuary, it recognises no other limits but those of the globe; it scorns a narrower temple than the earth and the skies. United in the sympathy of a common faith, and touched by the inspiration of the same Spirit, the sons of the stranger are

bowing down before it, and from their numberless habitations, are sending forth the high praises of God and of the Lamb. Here the dark understanding has been illumined; there the rebellious will has been softened; here the troubled conscience has been tranquillized; there the depraved affections have been sanctified. The prejudices of the idolater have fallen before the wisdom of the just; the pride of the philosopher has humbled itself before the Spirit of truth; the profligate Gentile and the bigotted Jew have become the willing subjects of the Prince of peace. Yet a little while, and all flesh shall come before the Lord; yet a little, and the human heart shall become an holy altar, and this earth one great temple, in which the children of men are made meet, to join in the new song, and to mingle with the innumerable company of angels in the Zion above. Even now has the decree gone forth, and this central fire, this mighty reservoir of spiritual light, is but awaiting the divine command, to burst up in splendour, to disperse the gloom, and consume the impurities of a degenerate world.

It is not to be wondered, then, that they who rejoiced over man's birth, and, it may be, wept at his fall—who sung the descent of peace on earth, and are still the heralds of the good news of repentance to their fellow-spirits in the heavenly kingdom, should desire to contemplate an object thus full of mercy to the human race. It were unnatural to conclude, that amid all the joys of their father's house the inhabitants of heaven should not desire to look into those mysteries which have for their end such a change of character, and such a transformation of will as assimilate man to God, and the worship of the footstool to the nobler services which encircle the throne. Deeply imbued with seraphic love, there is no delusion in the idea that they enjoy all the luxury of philanthropic affection as time discloses the fresh trophies of redeeming grace. Accustomed to look upon the whole human family with a benign aspect, there is no presumption in the thought that they turn their attention to that treasure-house of mercy which is scattering so many blessings on our path, that they bend an attentive eye on the progress of the Gospel—that they sympathize with the toils of those holy men who have borne the ark of the true God into the lonely wilderness, and that they are waiting for the era when the kingdoms of this earth shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. Nor as eternity runs on, can it be imagined

that the highest archangel should forget that love which is gathering up all that is fair and holy out from the ruins of the tomb, and the deeper ruins of the Fall, and in the new Jerusalem is more than realizing the harmony and the peace of Eden.

In conclusion. Are these the studies and employments of angels? Then, my friends, we would turn this day from heaven to earth, and remind you, that, if destined to become their companions hereafter, you must be associated with them in spirit and in character now. This world is a nursery, in the distant soil of which the spiritual plant is reared, until removed to adorn the paradise of God, and it is impossible that they should have any meetness for its pure pleasures and its exalted society, who are total strangers to all those ardent affections which religion demands. And yet it is melancholy to think how little this world, amid its bustling pursuits, is reflecting the exercises of heaven—how to a wicked generation the empty vanities of time and sense have a more exquisite relish than that bread of life with which angels are replenished through eternal ages. It is mournful to hear the scoffing of the ungodly, while the highest intelligences wonder and adore—to behold the lofty attitude of unconcern with which men listen to that which is the study and the delight of principalities and powers. Why this great dissimilarity of moral taste between seraphs who bow before the throne and creatures who dwell upon the footstool? Why should the man whose soul burns at the contemplation of nature going forth in her majesty, feel no holy love as he traces the living footsteps of heavenly grace? Why should the philanthropist, whose eye kindles at the mention of an enterprize which has touched the chains of the captive and bid the slave go free, turn away with aversion from that sublime undertaking which more than all the bounties of creation is fraught with mercy to the human race? And, above all, why is it that the philosopher and the sensualist, the worldling and the profane, start from their appropriate occupation to fling the sneer of ridicule against him who dares to break the frivolous current of ordinary converse, by adverting to the glad tidings of salvation as the main-spring of his hope and joy? If angels tremble, 'tis at such a sight. This sad neglect of every thing which ought to occupy the attention, is as clear as it is tremendous. This discordance between the employments of heaven and the pursuits of earth, is disqualifying man for the pure services of the upper temple,

where the triumphs of the cross are felt as the most animating subject of delight. Nay, to you they are not only important as a matter of study, but as a matter of deep and serious interest. It is on your account that angels desire to look into these things, and if you seek to neglect them on your own, nothing can be expected for you but a "certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation to devour the adversaries." As then you would not perish in the vision of light the most clear, and advantages the most distinguishing—as you would enjoy somewhat of the glories and the felicities of the upper sphere in this the house of your pilgrimage, we would call upon you to make the blessings of redemption all your salvation and all your desire. To sit in faith beneath the shadow of the cross—to derive by the ministration of the Spirit all our hope and happiness from the inestimable

merits of the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne—to cast anchor on the covenant favour and covenant faithfulness of Father, Son, and Spirit, are the grand and only sources of holiness and joy. Without these you cannot enter the kingdom of God—without these you have no meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, must stand eclipsed by the riches of the cross, or in the midst of rejoicing hosts you would still be wretched and sigh again for the scenes you had left. The song of salvation must be learned now, or the spirits of the just made perfect, shrinking from your presence, would seek some purer spot in the realms of space, where no jarring voice would mar the melody of their heavenly anthem. Wherefore "how shall you escape, if you neglect this great salvation." Amen.

ON THE INVITATIONS OF THE GOSPEL ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE TRON CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON SABBATH EVENING, 19TH AUGUST, 1833,

By the Rev. JOHN PARK,

Minister of St. Andrew's Church, Rodney Street, Liverpool.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."—REVELATIONS xxii. 17.

THESE words, my friends, may be regarded as containing the concluding subject-matter of the book of Revelations, and of the Word of God. The rest of the chapter, from which they are taken, consists only of solemn warnings against adding to, or subtracting from, the Apocalypse, (as if the inspired writer referred to both the infidel and sacrilegious attempts which have been undertaken to invalidate its authority, or apply its prophecies to party purposes,) and the book ends with an admonitory promise of the coming of Christ to judgment, and a blessing in the spirit of our text, as if the Apostle would have repeated its affectionate invitation, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." With you all! To whom were the last recorded revelations of the Spirit of God addressed? Not to the seven churches of Asia alone, but to all who had, or would have, access to the knowledge of the Gospel. "He that hath an ear," it is repeatedly said, "let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Let every man listen to the warnings, the encouragements, the prophecies, and the invitations, more immediately addressed to them. It is to all, therefore, who have access to the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, that the

entreaty of our text is directed; and we cannot but remark it, as a consistent and affecting circumstance, that while the record of our hopes begins with the sublime announcement, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and while that record contains the account of man's alienation from God, and the means of our deliverance from sin and punishment, it ends with these imploring words, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come, And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

In discoursing from these words I propose, in dependance on the divine blessing, to consider, first, what is implied in the invitation before us, "Come, and take of the water of life freely;" secondly, what is implied in this invitation being here put into the mouths of the Spirit, the bride, and him that heareth; and, thirdly, who are they to whom the invitation is so especially addressed, under the descriptions, "him that is athirst," and "whosoever will."

I. What, then, is implied in the invitation before us? It will readily occur to every one who is familiar with the language used in Scripture, on the subject of conversion, that coming unto, or believing on, the

Lord Jesus Christ is here meant—that the present and future benefits of his mediation are implied by the water of life—and that the invitation to take of it freely, intimates the grace and bounty with which these benefits are proffered to our acceptance. The metaphor here used is one which is very frequently adopted by the inspired writers, in speaking of the spiritual benefits secured to men by the Redeemer. The prophet Isaiah exclaims, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” In speaking of the promised Messiah he says, “A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind; as rivers of water in a dry place.” The prophet Jeremiah represents those who forsake God, as forsaking the fountain of living waters. Our Lord himself says, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst,” and the propriety and force of this metaphor is easily understood, when we recollect the necessity of the element of water to the support of natural life, and the peculiar value attached to it under the hot climate, and amid the extensive deserts of the East. In the text this metaphor is used in a very strong sense. The water of life is, in other words, the water which *gives* life, which delivers from impending death, and restores to the everlasting enjoyment of the most blessed existence, and the expression, thus beautifully, shadows forth the recovery, the pardon, and the holiness implied in salvation here, and the enduring perfection and endless bliss implied in salvation hereafter. Let us look for a moment to the benefits thus graciously proposed to us, my friends. They are, indeed, inestimable in themselves, and infinitely so, when contrasted with the things which we too often prefer to them. We are sinners against God, and exposed to evils of the most fearful magnitude, in consequence, and *pardon* is presented to us. We are averse to repentance and perseverance in holiness, and the constraining Spirit of God is promised to our prayers to enable us to will and do of his good pleasure. We are surrounded on every side by innumerable dangers, both spiritual and temporal, and the sleepless providence of a heavenly Father and protector is revealed to us as the rock of our confidence. We are assailed as immortal beings by a fearful looking for of judgment and punishment hereafter, and a heaven where there is neither sin nor sorrow, is unveiled to our hopes. And these blessings are often represented as met together, and combined in Him who said, “Come unto me, and I will give you rest.” He is the

gift of God to an otherwise lost world. It was He who brought life and immortality to light. It is His blood which washes away our sins, and speaks peace to the alarmed soul. It is His obedience which forms at once the plea on which we shall be admitted to the presence of God, and the example which is to guide us. It is His Spirit which changes our hearts—His power which delivers us from evil, and His word which instructs us in the knowledge necessary for us. Even to such a friend as this are we invited to come, with the assurance that he will in no wise east out any who comply with his affectionate request. And what is comprehended in coming to Him? Simply obeying His word! Obeying that word which shows to us the extent of our sinfulness, and urges us to entreat pardon through an all-sufficient Saviour—that word which shows us our own helplessness, and tells us to repose our dependance on Him who is the Saviour of sinners—that word which shows us the vanity of a present evil world, and tells us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness—that word which shows us the exceeding evil of sin, and tells us to turn from our earthly idols, to serve the living God in holiness of heart and conduct. Without repentance and new obedience in dependance on Christ, we cannot, in a scriptural sense, be said to have come unto him; and without coming unto him, we cannot be partakers in the benefits of that salvation which he hath wrought out for his followers. The way is, indeed, so plain, that even the wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein, and whatever perplexing mystery may sometimes be connected with coming unto Christ, arises from the too curious speculations of men, and is easily removed by having recourse, and adhering to, the plain and intelligible directions of the Scriptures alone.

Yet though a transition from the service of sin to the service of God, is thus essentially necessary to our salvation, and in fact forms part of it, this necessity by no means diminishes the freedom with which, on the part of God, the benefits of salvation, are offered and given to us. Though He demands that we shall repent, else we must perish—that we must place all our dependance on the Redeemer else we shall be rejected—that we must be holy else we cannot enjoy the happiness his presence and favour impart,—does this make salvation the less a free gift, or restrict the gracious liberty vouchsafed to us, of partaking in it? Most certainly not. Were our repentance

and obedience the purchase of the offered blessing, there might then be some truth in the opinion, that by insisting on their necessity to salvation, we taught a legal religion. But they are not, and never could be in our case, the meritorious conditions of acceptance and favour. They are necessary first as our duty, and then as characteristics plainly indispensable to the very consistency of the case—in the instance of a being who loves God, and enjoys his favour. It was not because he foresaw that we would repent and turn to our proper obedience, that He provided salvation. It was of his own free grace and goodness, that sinners might be saved, and many sons brought into glory, and when the Son of the Highest appeared amongst mankind, it was as one who came to proclaim pardon and peace to rebels—privileges of which they were altogether undeserving, and which, on *no* ground of any repentance and amendment of theirs, they could have justly demanded, or expected. It is in this point of view, that salvation by grace and not of works, calls for our deepest gratitude and love to God—while it displays the infinite benevolence of our Maker, descending like a flood of light, upon the world. It is in this point of view, that the gospel is calculated to give us confidence and encouragement—a good hope through grace—while it assures us, that all which we need has been already provided, and we have but to apply for it in the appointed way. It is in this sense that we are called on to take of the water of life freely. We have not to wait until we have *deserved* forgiveness—that we could *not* have done—before we entertain the hope of pardon. We have not to be denied the privileges of children of God, until we have raised ourselves—that also we could *not* have done—to the moral purity of his angels. Even now the chief of sinners is invited to return to God, with the promise of free forgiveness, and the prospect of everlasting felicity held out to him. To him no less than to others, is the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ available—to him no less than to others, is addressed the argument of a yearning parent's love, and the assurance of admission to all the advantages of a father's household, and he who most sincerely repents, he whose application to the Redeemer is most earnest and frequent—he whose efforts after all holiness are most vigorous and unwearied—he will feel, while he experiences the peace, and the strength, and the hopes of a child of God, and while he contrasts his Redeemer's goodness with his own unworthiness, that he indeed is privileged to take of the water of life freely.

Viewed as it respects any merit, in the be-

liever to *deserve* it, salvation is indeed *unconditional*. When we speak therefore of being saved only *on condition* of repentance or obedience, we use language not objectionable when it is properly explained, but which is rather objectionable just because it always requires explanation, to avoid conveying error by it. Repentance and obedience are necessary to our salvation, but Christ alone has fulfilled the meritorious conditions of our salvation. He removes the penalty of transgression. He gives us a new heart, and renews a right spirit within us. He giveth our souls *that* life which fits them for heaven, even as he raiseth our bodies from the grave to immortality—and thus, though for the attainment of such privileges as these, it is necessary that we come unto him, yet it is no less true that coming unto him, we take and receive of the water of life *freely*.

II. Such then, my friends, is the invitation before us. Is it, in what it requires us to *do*, aught else than what our own consciences have often and again urged us to do? Has the still small voice within us never told us, that while we are at a distance from God, we never can be happy—that while we live on in sin or ungodliness, we have the prospect only of dissatisfaction here and misery hereafter, and that while we have not secured the favour of our Maker, we are only spending our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not? Yes! it has indeed, in many a silent hour when we reviewed the past, and brooded over the future, and saw something of the hollowness of all temporal pursuits and pleasures. It *has* told us so, in many a moment of reflection, whose wiser though despondent feelings, we foolishly drowned amidst reckless amusement, and frivolous undertakings—and we forgot that all the while, our responsibility was doubling and trebling upon us—that for every warning of conscience we were answerable, that every suggestion to repentance would be recorded to our account, and that by refusing to consider and obey, we were but increasing the guilt, and aggravating the folly, whose probable consequences for a time alarmed us! But we have also to remember, that the calls to return to God, which have been addressed to us, through the instrumentality of conscience, were in reality the dictates of that *Spirit* of all grace and goodness, who is represented in the text as inviting us to a Saviour. Though we cannot explain His operations, nor distinguish them usually from what we call those of our own minds, yet we know that the Spirit of God suggests and excites to *all* good, that it is *He* who restrains us from utter reprobation.

tion, that He is ever intimately present with us, and that while the thoughts and imaginations of the natural heart are evil continually, every good, every truly good gift of whatsoever nature, cometh down from the Father of lights. We give no countenance whatever to enthusiastic pretensions, in making such assertions as these. We know that where the work of the Spirit is distinguishable in itself from that of man, it then only assumes the name of a miraculous operation; but we know also from the testimony of Scripture, that God operates upon our minds by means—and we know by that same testimony what we should refer more directly to his spiritual working. But we have also to observe, that the invitations of the Spirit are addressed to us in the written word of God; and oh, how frequently are the entreaties, the warnings, and the calls of that word read, without the slightest remembrance that it actually is the word of God to the reader! Were the written command, “Repent, or ye shall perish,” uttered in a supernatural voice from heaven, no greater authority could be thus given to it, than what it actually bears. Were a commissioned prophet as of old, sent with undeniable proofs of divine authority, to proclaim in our ears the cry of Isaiah, or the threatenings of the Baptist, he could not add to the sacredness or the truth of their recorded warnings. The words which so often meet our cold and unattentive eyes on the pages of the Bible, are as much the inspiration of God, as if they were written in sunlight upon the everlasting firmament—and he who turns from them with indifference, despises an authority no less than that which spoke in the fiery handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar, and shone in the midnight pillar of fire to the Israelites. Yes! with whatever ease you have made your escape from the upbraidings of conscience,—however speedily the more serious thoughts awakened by worldly misfortune, or the death of friends have been dissipated,—however indolently you may have perused the expostulations of Scripture, and however rapidly you have forgotten them all, as you would the faint words of a dream, the Spirit of God hath said to you *come*, and as yet you have refused to listen and obey. And are such means of grace becoming more and more ineffectual with you? Has the voice of conscience less power than formerly over your secret feelings? Are the dispensations of providence around you, and in your own history, less impressive and awakening to you? Have the fleet lapse of your days and years, and the frequent spectacle of decay and death, less power than ever to excite you to serious reflection? And

is the word of God still more and more an unheeded and ineffectual thing with you? Alas! we trench on no charity, and we speak no fable when we warn you, that all this intimates the withdrawal of the Spirit from you, and that they who are most secure in indifference and ungodliness, are just in other words they with whom the Spirit of God hath ceased to strive. Inquire and see whether these things are so. Surely in a matter of such importance, it should be the dictate of self-preservation, never to rest until you had arrived at a satisfactory conclusion. Surely it is not a question to be dismissed without concern, whether your Maker has called on you to return to his service and favour, and you are exposed to the fearful penalty of shutting your ears to *His* call, and despising His reproof.

The Bride saith, Come! It is well known that the Church of Christ is meant by this expression. The grounds of this interpretation are easily given. In the 2d verse of the 21st chapter of Revelation, we read, “I John saw the holy city, the *new* Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” The expression *new* Jerusalem, evidently distinguishes the thing signified from the old Jerusalem or the old Jewish Church. In the 9th and 10th verses of the same chapter, the *New* Jerusalem is distinctly named the Bride. In the 5th chapter of Ephesians and from the 23d verse onwards, the same metaphor is used explicitly in reference to the Church. “The husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church,”—and, “husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it.” That Church, my friends, consists not only of those Christians who are now on earth, but of those also who have gone before us, on the path which leads to God, and now live in his presence in heaven. We are not only, through the mercy of the Almighty, called on to consider the things which belong to our peace, through the instrumentality of christian institutions around us, but we should also remember that they too call upon us, who now enjoy the reward of their toils, and have entered on their rest, to follow in their footsteps and emulate their example. Amid the temptations which so powerfully solicit us to confine our views to the present scene alone, and beset, as we are, on all sides, by the formidable influence of worldly example, it ought to be a salutary recollection that the christian life is recommended by the voice of experience, as well as advised by the sanctions of Religion. *It* alone has combined the most substantial happiness,

with peace and purity of soul in this world, and carried its advantages beyond the bounds of death, while every other course has been a vain chase after temporary pleasures, which the grave terminates for ever. Nor need we urge this reflection upon you, my friends, only from the cases of that earlier cloud of witnesses who call upon us to aspire to a faith so lofty, and a peace so stable, and a hope so glorious, that the utmost wrath of man could not unsettle, nor the flames of persecution quench them. Many of you may have been privileged to behold, and perhaps in the living histories of some who were dear to you, the holy beauty, the enduring calm, and the blessed end of a consistent life of faith on the Son of God; and if so, we can appeal most confidently to you, whether there was not in *their* experience, however outwardly troubled it may have been, something which transcended all the world can give; and whether there was not in their death, and the hopes which shed their lustre around it, enough to engrave the wish upon your inmost hearts—May my last end be like theirs. The dead as well as the living call upon you. The affections of nature add their entreaty to the command of divine authority; and every holy example of departed saints, in the record of your own memory, or in that of Scripture, as well as all the invitations addressed to you through the instituted means of grace, form but, as it were, the united voice of the Church in heaven and the Church on earth,—“Come!” come to lay hold on the only rock which can sustain you amid all the storms of life, and afford you the prospect of surviving in a better and brighter land, when all its storms are over. Come to participate in the privileges of those who were the truly honourable of the earth, and to an eternal re-union with the great and good, in unmingled happiness and perfection. Come to God the judge of all, as to a father and a friend, and to the enjoyment of Him for ever.

Let me but make one observation on the words, “Let him that heareth say, Come”—him who has already heard and obeyed the call. The responsibility of Christians, in reference to the eternal interests of those around them, is too often overlooked. But he that loveth God must love his brother also; and that love is very short of the required degree, which stops with the promotion of men’s temporal interests. We are bound, as far as in us lies, to make known the Gospel of our hopes to others, and endeavour to induce *them* to believe and obey; and, may we not add, that this should be felt by Christians as the impulse of affection, not merely as the

obligation of duty. “Let him that heareth say, Come.” Let every one who has experienced the value of the Saviour, the benefits of the Gospel, use his personal exertions to enlighten the ignorant, to direct the erring, to extend the authority of Christ, and turn sinners from the way of death. Opportunities, both public and private, are abundant, for this joint exercise of christian love and christian obedience. And are there not abundant motives to it? It is to be a fellow-worker with Christ. It is to be an honoured means in God’s hand, of accomplishing greater good than lies within the attainment of earthly power or wisdom; and they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever—and he which converteth a soul from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

III. In the third place, who are they to whom the invitation of our text is so especially addressed, under the descriptions, “Him that is athirst,” and “Whosoever will?” The metaphor employed in our text directs us intelligibly in pointing out the first of the classes referred to. Let him that is athirst take of the water of life freely. That is, him who thirsts for *that* water! There is a state of mind which has too often seemed a favourite topic of derision with some men, but which may be described as the anxiety of an immortal soul, alarmed by a sense of guilt and danger, and seeking a *friend* and *safety*. Fit topic of derision! In such a state of mind the inquirer is very frequently exposed to error, from the very impatience and hurry of his investigations; and we believe it is very generally attested by facts, that he is far more disposed to err on the side of despondency than on that of hope. He *thirsts* for pardon, for peace, for deliverance from the power of sin; and in the case of such a person, if he is not entirely ignorant of the Gospel, repentance and prayer must have been exercised in some degree. The particular directions given to him, must of course greatly depend on the extent of his knowledge, and often on personal peculiarities of mental constitution, but all directions may be summed at least in this:—*Come* to Christ, and take of the water of life freely; intrust yourself *unreservedly* into *His* hands, and to his disposal, as your teacher, your master, and your Saviour; and while you do this you will experience that the more your knowledge of Him increases, the more your peace and your hope will increase also. It is, in truth, the inquirer’s unwillingness to submit himself to Christ in *all* his offices, which *usually* stands in the way of his own

peace. We believe there are exceptions, but not so numerous as to disprove the general assertion. A sense of sin leads us to *distrust* the Redeemer, or a love of some sin renders us indisposed to renounce it. To meet these obstacles the Gospel is, on the one hand, abundant in its assurances, that none ever did or shall trust in God in vain; and, on the other, most peremptory in its demands, that *all sin* shall be renounced, in coming unto Christ. In proportion, it may be asserted, as our dedication of ourselves to God is unreserved, will we *enjoy* the privileges of his children—and if we feel that we are sinners, that we are exposed to ruin, that we cannot be happy without reconciliation to God, and the experience of his favour,—it is to us that the direction is addressed with such peculiar propriety, “*Let him that is athirst come!*” “*And whosoever will!*” Whosoever is sincerely desirous to partake in the benefits of salvation, whether his feelings are characterized or not by the excitement of those just referred to, let him too, come! The description is just made more general in these words, for the purpose of displaying more forcibly and persuasively, the divine goodwill towards *all*; nor can we conceive a limitation to the comprehensiveness of this description, which would authorize us, in refusing to *any*, the hopes and invitations of the Gospel. It excludes only those who have irrecoverably ceased to have the least desire of returning to God, or regaining his favour. Who these are is known, not to us, but to the Searcher of hearts—for such a victim of his sin, is *himself* we believe, unconscious of his want.

The subject with which we have been employed, my friends, is one which claims serious attention from us all. The apparent novelty of *something* temporal, in the present or the future, whether of a private or a public nature, is often a bar in the way of religious reflection. There is much truth and wisdom in the words of Solomon, however, “*That which has been, is now; that which is to be, hath already been*; and God requireth that which is *past*!” He requireth the account of the years that are gone, and the hour comes rapidly when it must be rendered. Many years at most, have not elapsed since we became awake from utter nothingness, to the existence we now spend on earth, and few years at most remain, ere we are summoned to that high tribunal where we *know*, or where, in our unbelief, we *dread*, that we must yet appear. The hour is on the wing, and will soon approach, when

we, like the myriads who have gone before us, must take our last look of that sky and this earth, and all that we now see around us—when our souls shall be separated from all upon which we fix our affections here—when the world with all its pursuits and pleasures, shall be to us, as if it had never been, and we must enter on a new and untried state of being, where our fate shall be for ever decided in happiness or misery. And innumerable are the instruments of our doom. The lightest events in the hand of God, may serve to awaken in these corporeal frames of ours the maladies that shall destroy them. God is ever teaching us, by daily occurrences, that we are, what we seldom remember we are—*mortal!*—and along with this, may the retrospect of our past days convince us that we have not been refused the enforcement of the brighter truth, that an immortality of happiness is set before us. Oh! was it that we might live and die in ignorance of Him, that our Maker gave us existence, with all our nobler faculties, and stamped a record of himself on the face of the Universe around us? Was it that we might never feel gratitude or love to Him, that he has thus long spared us in our guilt, protected us in our weakness, and so often made our eup run over with his blessings? Was it that our sins might be persevered in with impunity, that his message of mercy has been so often addressed to us, and so many means of instruction have been vouchsafed us? And was it that we might still cling to a perishable world, that he has so often broken the links which bound us to it, and snapped the props upon which we leaned? No! It was not without a purpose, that since we first knew right from wrong, He has either comforted or chastened, or encouraged or admonished us. We *may* read his benevolent designs in every leading event in our lives, in every prominent feature in our circumstances; for, dark as his purposes may seem, when we would search too minutely His secret counsel in particular dispensations, this one truth will be found a luminous comment upon them all—that God desireth not the death of any sinner, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live. Let us take warning from the past, my friends, and apply the future, with stronger resolutions to better and higher purposes: and may He, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, give us of His mercy in the Redeemer, that grace which alone can enable us, so to number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM, Greenock.

SERMON by the Rev. HUGH HEUGH, D.D., Glasgow.

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE HIGH CHURCH, PAISLEY, ON THE EVENING OF SUNDAY,
4TH AUGUST, 1833,

By the Rev. WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM,

Minister of the Mid-Parish Church, Greenock.

" Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."—TITUS ii. 14.

THESE words, my friends, contain a comprehensive statement of the great purpose for which Christ Jesus suffered and died, and of the great object consequently which all his followers are bound to aim at. They set before us, first of all, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then they inform us of the great result which Christ's work was intended to accomplish. The work of Christ is described in the text in these words, that He "gave himself for us." From the instructions you have recently received, and from the holy ordinance of which you have so recently partaken, I hope that you all not only know the nature of Christ's work, but that you feel its power in your hearts, that you have felt, in some measure, your obligations to devote yourselves to the promotion of the great object for which Christ suffered and died, and that you are now ready and willing to do any thing that can be proved to contribute to the accomplishment of that end. Your minds are still filled with the great truth, that Christ gave himself for you. You still retain a deeper impression of this great truth, in consequence of the solemn and impressive way in which it has been recently brought before you, and you are disposed to receive more readily and cordially than on any former occasion the practical admonitions deduced from it. The great truth set before you in the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper is, that Christ Jesus gave himself for us—that he offered himself up to God in our room—that he endured the penalty which our offences deserved. This is, indeed, the great truth

which constitutes the gospel of our salvation, on which all our hopes, in reference to eternity, and all our confidence towards God, are founded. Unless you understand and believe this great truth, you as yet know nothing of the Gospel of our salvation; and unless you have had this great truth more deeply impressed than ever on your hearts, by engaging in the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper, you have failed to derive from that ordinance the profit which it was intended by God to be instrumental in bestowing. We take it for granted, however, at present, that you know and believe this great truth, that you have right views of the work of Christ, as described in the text, when you are told that he gave himself for us; and that by God's blessing, attending the holy ordinance of this day, you have had this great truth more deeply impressed than ever on your hearts, and that you will submit more willingly than ever to any practical instructions that may be deduced from it. The great truth then descriptive of the work of Christ, is—that he gave himself for us—that he undertook to stand in our place, and suffer in our room and stead, and pay the penalty which we had incurred by our sins—and that in the execution of this great and precious undertaking, he did actually submit to a life of humiliation, affliction, and hardship, and at last died a cruel and ignominious death. The object, then, for the sake of which Christ gave himself, was, that he might deliver us from that everlasting misery which, by our sins, we had deserved—that he might

bring us back to the enjoyment of that favour of God which we had forfeited—that he might prepare us for the enjoyment of God's presence, for which, by nature, we were wholly unfit. This was the great ultimate object of Christ's giving himself for us, and of all that is implied in the great truth, that he did once offer up himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God. But the more direct and immediate object of Christ giving himself in our room, is stated by the Apostle in the text to be this—"that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." In discoursing to you, then, from these words, we shall endeavour, through the divine assistance, first, to explain to you the object on account of which Christ gave himself for us, and to illustrate the connexion that subsists between his giving himself for us, and our being redeemed from all iniquity, and purified unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works; and then, in the second place, we shall attempt to make some practical application of the subject.

In the first place, then, we have to explain to you the great object on account of which Christ gave himself for us, and to point out the connexion between the means and the end. The Apostle tells us in the text, that Christ gave himself for us with this object, and in order to promote this end, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Now, to redeem from all iniquity here, just means to deliver from all depravity in thought, word, and action. The word *redeem*, indeed, in Scripture, is perhaps more frequently employed to describe the effect of Christ's work, in delivering men from the guilt and condemnation of sin—in altering or affecting their state and condition in God's sight—their relation to that law which they had broken. In the 3d chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, at the 13th verse, we are told, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," where the word *redeemed* evidently is intended to describe not any change effected in the moral character or principles of men, but a change effected upon their legal state or condition, that is, their relation to the law of God, as demanding punishment, and requiring satisfaction. It describes the more direct and immediate effect of the death of Christ—of the shedding of his precious blood as a ran-

som paid for the deliverance of men from the penalty which they had incurred, implying, of course, the cancelling of that guilt which they had contracted, but not including the renovation of their moral nature. Christ's death, indeed, considered as a satisfaction for divine justice, is frequently set before us as being a price paid to deliver men from the bondage in which they are held, in consequence of their having transgressed, and hence the language in which the effects of Christ's death are commonly described in Scripture, is adapted to this leading idea. The language, however, *i. e.*, the terms *purchase* and *redemption*, is applied not only to the effect of Christ's death, in delivering man from the curse of a broken law—not merely to its direct effect on man's state in the sight of God, to which it is primarily applicable—it is applied also to the effect of Christ's work on his moral character and principles. Of this we have an example in the text, where it is plain that the *iniquity*, from which it was Christ's object to redeem us, was chiefly, if not exclusively, inherent depravity with all its manifestations, and not merely the penalty which we are bound to pay. *Redemption*, indeed, in its strict and proper sense, as implying Christ's bearing our sins, and thereby paying the penalty, which, by our sins, we had incurred, is described substantially in the statement given of Christ's work in the first part of the verse, where we are told that he gave himself for us, that is, in our room, so that, in other words, the meaning of the verse is this—that Christ, in giving himself for us, has redeemed us from the guilt of sin, and the curse of a broken law, in order that he might also redeem us from the power of sin, and from all depravity. The word here translated *iniquity*, is never used in Scripture to describe guilt or liability to punishment. It always implies some actual transgression of the divine law in principle or in practice. The word, indeed, commonly rendered *sin*, is used indiscriminately in Scripture to denote either guilt or depravity; as, for example, in the Epistle to the Romans, in the earlier chapters of which, where the Apostle is discussing the subject of justification, *sin* most commonly means *guilt*; whereas in the latter chapters of the doctrinal part of the Epistle, *sin* commonly means *depravity*, or *sinfulness*. Not so with the word translated here, *iniquity*. It always means actual sinfulness, positive transgression of God's holy law. The object, then,

on account of which Christ gave himself for us was, that he might deliver us from all tendency, and all inclination to sin, that he might free us from all actual transgression of God's law. He found men all by nature lying under the power of depravity, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, led captive by Satan to his will, following every vain pursuit, and indulging every sinful gratification, and his object was, to redeem them from this degraded and dangerous condition, to deliver them from the dominion of Satan, and from the depravity of their own hearts. This object is still more fully and plainly illustrated by the words which immediately follow verse 12, "and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works," from which we see clearly that the statement which the Apostle means to convey, is substantially this, that Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might deliver some of the guilty and depraved children of men from their natural condition of subjection to sin and Satan—that he might make them willing subjects to himself—that he might implant in their hearts those holy principles which would constrain and enable them to run with zeal and perseverance the race that had been set before them, which might lead them to obey all God's commands, and discharge faithfully all the obligations he had imposed upon them. Men are by nature all equally guilty, and equally under the dominion of sin and depravity. They cannot change their own character—they cannot rescue themselves from the bondage of corruption—they cannot restore themselves to personal holiness of heart and of life, and yet holiness, as you well know, is essential to the salvation of the soul. Men cannot be admitted into heaven without it, and therefore Christ Jesus, as the great Saviour of sinners, undertook to make them holy, that is, to select for himself a peculiar people out of the mass of mankind, to enlist them in his own service, to make them conformed to his own blessed image, and thus meet at length for the enjoyment of his presence in glory. The phrase, *a peculiar people*, here properly means a purchased people; and by this very remarkable form of expression, the Apostle no doubt intended to intimate, that those alone are purified, or made holy, who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and that the great object, on account of which Christ died, was, that he might redeem from bondage, and that he might purchase to himself a chosen

seed—that he might deliver them from the remaining power of depravity, engage them in a course of new obedience, and in this way conduct them into the land of uprightness and of peace.

Such, then, being the great object on account of which Christ gave himself in the room of men, "teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" that he might deliver them from all sin and all depravity—that he might select his purchased people from among the mass of mankind—that he might clothe them with the beauties of holiness, and make them meet for the enjoyment of his presence, let us now consider the connexion subsisting between the means and end—between Christ giving himself for us on the one hand and his redeeming us from all iniquity and purifying us to himself, a peculiar people, on the other. Man, by sin, had lost the favour and image of God, and had been driven away from God's presence. It is a fundamental principle, in that constitution of things which God has in sovereignty and wisdom established, and in the principles of that moral government which he is continually exercising over the affairs of this world—that without holiness no man shall see the Lord—and that holiness is indeed the ground and the essential element of the happiness of all his intelligent creatures. To restore man, therefore, to a conformity to the divine image in knowledge and in true holiness was the great end of all God's dispensations to the children of men; it was the great purpose he had in view, the great object to which all his plans of mercy were directed. The holiness of the divine character, however, and the honour of the divine law, rendered it inexpedient, or rather impossible, that man could be restored to the favour of God, or obtain any spiritual blessing without a Mediator, and without satisfaction being rendered to divine justice. Hence the necessity that men should be redeemed—redeemed by the blood of Christ, as the foundation of all other spiritual blessings—that Christ should have borne their sins in his own body on the tree—that he should thereby have cancelled their guilt before they could be admitted to the favour and restored to the image of God, and made meet for the enjoyment of his presence. Their having redemption through Christ's blood, even the forgiveness of their sins, was indispensably necessary to their ultimate

salvation; but still, after all, it was but a preliminary step. It removed a most formidable and otherwise impassable barrier, but it did not directly prepare men for enjoying the favour of God, and being admitted to his presence and glory. This can be done only by redeeming them from all iniquity, and by their being purified unto himself in the sense in which we have explained these expressions; and, accordingly, Jesus, by giving himself for us, provided equally for the accomplishment of both these objects. Men, by nature, were living wholly under the power of depravity—they were contentedly submitting to the authority of him who still reigneth in the children of disobedience, and it was necessary that some powerful influence should be put forth to rescue them from this state of slavery, to deliver them from the dominion of sin, to change their natures and renew them in the spirit of their minds. Now, this Christ has accomplished by procuring for his people, and sending forth on them, the gift of the Holy Ghost. We are taught in Scripture that the gift of the Holy Ghost, like all other spiritual blessings, is the fruit of Christ's purchase bestowed primarily by the Father on Christ himself, as a reward for his labours and sufferings, and then by him, and through him, upon his chosen people. We know that Christ has ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, having received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them; and we know that the presence of God among us, the author of every good and perfect gift, as a God of mercy and not of vengeance, is owing entirely to the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit procured for us by Christ suffering even unto death, and bestowed upon us by him in the exercise of the unlimited dominion with which, for our sakes, he has been invested, there is abundant provision made for changing men's nature and making them holy, delivering them from the power of Satan and bringing them to God, for the Holy Ghost is himself God—possessed of divine nature and divine perfections. Formidable as the opposition made to men's deliverance from depravity by spiritual adversaries, he is able to overcome it all. Great as is the change that must be effected in bringing a human soul from depravity to holiness, he is able to accomplish it. In short, in procuring and sending forth the Holy Ghost to

renew men's natures and sanctify their souls, to dwell in them and guide them in all their ways, Christ has provided for redeeming his people from all iniquity, and purifying to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works; and, accordingly, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and his operation in sanctifying men's natures, are repeatedly described as forming a leading feature of the Gospel scheme. We read in the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, 2d verse, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death"—the law of the Spirit of life, meaning substantially that great scheme or system, of which the operation of the life-giving Spirit is one grand leading feature, and to this it is ascribed, through Christ Jesus, that men are made free from the law of sin and death—that they are delivered from that condition of things, of which sin, reigning unto death, is the leading characteristic. But while Christ is procuring and sending forth the influences of the Holy Ghost, he has provided a sufficient power to change men's sinful natures and make them holy—still this was not of itself enough. Men are rational beings, capable of being influenced by motives addressed to their understandings and their hearts, and God, in all his intercourse with them, treats them as rational beings, addressing to them motives to induce them to do what yet they cannot do without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. It is universally true, that men are required to do nothing in God's word, for the doing of which they are not provided with adequate motives. They cannot, indeed, return to God without the converting power of the Holy Ghost, and yet God thus addresses them, commanding them to turn, and giving a reason why they should, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die." And in like manner, in regard to the whole process of sanctification, there are presented to us, in the Scriptures, motives which should constrain us to be holy as God is holy, and make us zealous of good works. Now, the great motives to holiness of heart and life, set before us in the Scriptures, are derived from the work of Christ—from the views of him there presented to us. It is in what we are told in God's word concerning Christ, his incarnation, sufferings, and death, his resurrection and ascension at the right hand of God, and coming to judge the world, that we should find those motives which should constrain

us to follow his example, to devote ourselves to his service, to run and not weary, to walk and not faint, and to be advancing from one degree of grace unto another, till at length we appear, before the Lord, perfect in Zion.

Such is an outline of the doctrine of sanctification, that is, of the provision contained in the Gospel scheme for making men holy. It is founded altogether in the work of Christ. It is in consequence of his work that the obstacles that stood in the way of man's restoration to his image are completely removed, that sufficient power has been put forth to change men's natures, even the almighty power of the Holy Ghost, and that, finally, adequate motives are presented to our minds to constrain us to the practice of holiness, that is, motives in themselves adequate, but which will never, in point of fact, be sufficient without the accompanying energy of the Holy Ghost. This, then, elucidates the connexion between the two different statements of the text, between Christ giving himself for us, and his redeeming us from all iniquity, purifying unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. By giving himself in our room, he removed all the obstacles to our enjoying God's favour and receiving tokens of his loving-kindness—he procured the gift of the Holy Ghost, which he bestows in answer to our prayers, and set before us objects of contemplation which are fitted, and intended, to afford us motives for all holy principles and all holy practice.

Having thus endeavoured to explain to you how Christ giving himself for us was directed and adapted to the redeeming us from all iniquity, and “purifying unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works,” we would now wish to apply the subject just to that very purpose, that is, to set before you the great truth, that Christ gave himself for you, in such a way as to lead you to abandon every appearance of evil, to cultivate every grace, to discharge every duty, and to resist every temptation. Your minds are still, we hope, deeply affected by the great truth set before you in the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper—that Christ gave himself for you an offering and a sacrifice; and what are the principal lessons you ought to learn from this great truth?

In the first place, when you contemplate this great truth in its connexion with the purpose of the work it describes, you cannot but see that there is a great object set

before you, which you are bound habitually to aim at, “teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”—the advancement of the divine life in your souls, and the practice of all good works. It was in order to make you holy, and cleanse you from all unrighteousness, that Christ suffered and laboured so much, and at last poured out his soul unto death, and surely you cannot think of his humiliation—the sufferings and death submitted to on your account—without devoting yourselves to the great object he came to effect. Now, this object is your own holiness, it is your own happiness, and the more you do to promote the great object your Saviour came into this world to effect, the more completely do you advance your own best interests. Christ suffered toils and hardships that you might be delivered from all iniquity, and can you grudge any exertion on your part? He made many sacrifices that you might be redeemed from all iniquity, and purified unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, and can you shrink from any sacrifices that may be requisite to raise you above the level of the ordinary professor, and to enable you to let your light shine before men, so that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven? When you reflect on Christ's sufferings, all endured on your account, surely you must see that the object he had in view should be dear to you as your own souls. And when you find that the promotion of that object, and the salvation of your souls, are one and the same, surely you cannot but be constrained to pursue it with the utmost zeal and eagerness. Sin is exceedingly hateful in the sight of God. This you see illustrated in the great truth, that God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to death for us all, as the only means of delivering us from the punishment to which, as sinners, we are exposed. You will regard it as the cause of all our Saviour's sufferings, because he suffered for our sins; and you will remember, that in so far as you are still polluted with it, Christ may, in a certain sense be considered as having suffered for your own sin, or rather as still suffering on your account. When you indulge in any iniquity in thought, word, or deed, you are frustrating the object Christ had in view, you are treating his interposition and deep humiliation with ignominy and contempt. Al-

though professedly his own familiar friend, you are lifting up the heel against him, you are counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, you are putting your Saviour to an open shame. In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper you show forth Christ's death, you proclaim it to all the world as the foundation of your hopes, and the origin of all your practical principles, even as the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to the salvation of your souls; but in so far as you cherish any iniquity in your hearts you are bringing reproach on the death of Christ; as if it were unable to accomplish the great purpose for which it was intended, you are yourselves losing sight of the great object you are bound to pursue. You surely desire that Christ should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, and yet, in every sinful thought which his people cherish, in every sinful action which they perform, they are disappointing his hopes, they are abstracting, as it were, a portion of his well-earned reward, they are forgetting the obligations under which he laid them, they are breaking their own solemn words, and losing sight of the great object to which, as followers of Christ, they had devoted themselves. Until you are redeemed from all iniquity, and this is what none of you has yet nearly reached, all the good pleasure of God's goodness has not yet been fulfilled in you, the object of Christ's sufferings and death has not yet been effected in you—you are still called on to make a diligent and faithful use of all the means of grace which may contribute, through the divine blessing, to lead you to grow in holiness, and you must especially fix your thoughts more frequently on Christ Jesus and the great purpose his sufferings were intended to serve, that you may thus be constrained to greater exertion in abandoning all sin to a more zealous prosecution of every good work, and a more faithful performance of every duty. Looking always to the death of Christ, to the great truth that he gave himself for you, you will ever keep in mind that the one great object you are bound at all times to pursue, is, that you may be redeemed from all iniquity, delivered from every thing sinful in thought, word, and deed, delivered from every sinful desire, and action, and habit, and enabled to exhibit, at all times, a life and conversation conformable to the example and precepts of Christ Jesus, to act in such a way, in regard to all your duties and occupations, as shall clearly show

that you have been called out of the world, that you have been redeemed from your vain conversation, that you have entered into the service of Christ, and are striving to keep ever in view the great object, on account of which, God has called you to a knowledge of himself, namely, that he may lead you into that state into which nothing that defileth can enter, and where God's people shall be all righteous. By a reference to this great object of complete redemption from all iniquity, and the zealous prosecution of all good works, so as to make your light shine before men, should all your plans and occupations, all your exertions and enterprizes, be regulated. While many other matters may be safely neglected in your consultations and plans, this never can. It should be your first object, most constantly kept in mind, and most steadily pursued. It was the object for which Christ died, and it should be the object for which you live. It is an object quite sufficient to occupy your attention—one which you are in danger of neglecting, because you are surrounded with temptations—one, the successful prosecution of which requires constant care and unceasing exertion—one, to the zealous prosecution of which you should feel yourselves constrained by every thing affecting in the love of Christ, by all those powerful emotions which the contemplation of what he has done and suffered in your room cannot fail to produce. Every time you think of Christ and survey the history of his life, every time you fix your thoughts on his death, and think of the object he had in view, you will return to the work of your own sanctification with greater zeal and diligence than ever, pursuing it more steadily and perseveringly than you did before, and keeping more habitually present to your mind those affecting motives which are derived from the consideration of the sufferings and death of Him who gave himself for you, just that he might redeem you from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

In the second place, when you know and believe the Scripture truth, that Christ gave himself for you, or in your room, you cannot but see and feel that you are not your own, but bought with a price. Christ has given himself for you, and by giving himself for you, he has redeemed you to himself. He has acquired a new and most affecting title, to regulate all your powers and faculties, and to direct the whole tenor of your conduct.

There is no desire of your heart you have any right to gratify, excepting in so far as it is in accordance with his will. There is no faculty you possess which you are warranted to exercise, independent of his control. There is no portion of your time which you are at liberty to spend, without a reference to his authority, and the accomplishment of his purposes. You are wholly his. He has redeemed you, soul and body, and it is therefore right that your soul and body equally and exclusively should be devoted to his service. You are not now the servants of sin, and you should, in no instance yield to its power. You are not debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh. You have done many things according to the flesh, gratifying your own unsanctified inclinations, and you must confess this day, that you have derived from it no real and permanent enjoyment, that you are under no obligation from your past experience, to act any longer upon these principles. But you are debtors to Jesus Christ, for you owe to him all the peace and happiness you have ever enjoyed, or can ever hope to obtain. It is all his gift, procured for you by his humiliation, sufferings, and death, imposing upon you a weight of obligation which you can never discharge, calling on you to exert all your faculties, and to make every exertion for the promotion of his design, and the advancement of his gracious purpose. All the worldly substance you possess is the gift of God, and, like every thing else you have, must be directed to advance the cause of Christ, and promote your own spiritual welfare. All the means of grace you enjoy, come from the same source, and should be directed to the same object. In the whole tenor of your conduct, you should feel that you are under law to Christ, bound to have every thing regulated by a respect to the relation in which you stand to him, by a remembrance of the sufferings he has endured for you—the claims he has upon you—the obligations under which he has laid you. You should engage in no enterprise—you should place yourselves in no new situation, without considering its harmony with the great object he came to accomplish, its bearing on your own personal deliverance from all iniquity and zealous prosecution of all good works. You will ever bear about with you the dying of the Lord Jesus, dwelling on its true nature, and its great object, and be constrained by right views of it, and the emotions these views are fitted to call forth

to glorify him in your bodies and in your spirits, which are his, to devote yourselves to the great object for which he came into this world, and especially to cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to be perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

In contemplating this subject, surely you must all see and feel that you have great reason to be humbled at the remembrance of all your sins and short-comings; surely you will readily acknowledge that you have not acted suitably to the relation in which you stand to Christ; surely you will not deny that you have made him a most ungrateful return for all the great and precious blessings he has conferred upon you. It is true, that if you are worthy communicants and genuine believers, Christ gave himself in your room; but it is also true, that he gave himself in your room, that he might redeem you from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, while it is unquestionably true that you are still stained with much iniquity, and that your zeal for good works is comparatively feeble and languid. You must all acknowledge this is the case; and when you think of it, you ought to be deeply ashamed. These things ought not to be. It is incumbent on you to dwell on this great truth, that Christ gave himself for you, in order that all iniquity may be washed away, that you may be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and enabled to seek more diligently for glory, honour, and immortality. Think how far you are from being perfect, and resolve now in the strength of God, and depending on his blessing, that you will forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to the things that are before, and that henceforth you will be ready to sacrifice your own convenience, that you may press forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. I fear there are some present who have not yet been redeemed from any portion of that natural depravity in which, by nature, they lie, and who have not yet manifested any zeal for good works. I fear some of you are still living in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, and of whom it is still true that sin is reigning in their mortal bodies, and that they are yielding their members as servants of uncleanness unto iniquity. These persons are in a fearful condition—they have committed many offences—they have aggravated them all, by

neglecting the great salvation, refusing the invitation of Gospel mercy, by refusing to come unto God, when he was beseeching them—and finally crowned all their sins, by this day sitting down at the Lord's table, professing faith in Christ, when still the servants of Satan, drawing near to him with their mouths, while still engaged in the cause and service of his great adversary. Surely it is time you should bethink yourselves. Surely it is time you should now consider whether or not the great practical object for which Christ gave himself in the room of sinners, has been in any measure accomplished in your souls. It is now time you should cease to repose an unwarrantable

confidence in Christ's atonement, unless the power of sin has been subdued within you, and received a mortal wound, and unless you are becoming more and more zealous of good works. Let me beseech you to attend to these things; and, in conclusion, let me remind you, that even for these sins, there has been a way of escape opened up. The truth remains unchangeable, that Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works;" and it still is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. Amen.

CHARACTERS OF THE CAUSE OVER WHICH CHRIST PRESIDES;

AN ACTION SERMON, PREACHED ON A LATE SACRAMENTAL OCCASION,

By the Rev. HUGH HEUGH, D.D.,

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"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee."—PSALM xlv. 3—5.

THAT the person to whose honour this psalm has been consecrated is the Messiah, appears from internal evidence presented in the psalm itself, and from the direct authority of the New Testament. Some, indeed, have imagined that Solomon is, in the first instance, referred to in this psalm, and that it was composed in honour of his nuptials with the Egyptian princess, whom he married. But not to mention that it is altogether unlikely that the Spirit of God would thus honour an illegal connexion, the language applied to the person celebrated in the psalm, is totally inapplicable to Solomon. His throne was not for ever and ever. Without blasphemy, Solomon could not have this addressed to him, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." But we need not go farther than the text itself. Solomon was not a warrior, he fought with no enemies, he subdued no nation. He was the peaceful successor of his warlike father, and ruled in peace Israel and the nations around, which, by the arms of David, had been made tributary to Solomon. It is quite manifest that a greater than Solomon is here, and from the psalm itself, in connexion with

the direct authority of the New Testament, there can be no doubt, that the king here celebrated, is the king Messiah. In support of this, we give the following authority from the Epistle to the Hebrews.—"But unto the Son he saith," quoting from this psalm, "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever—a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." We are, therefore, to regard this psalm as forming an interesting portion of that system of prophecy, only a small part of which was set apart for devotional purposes, and the object of which is to testify to the excellence of Christ, to his deep humiliation for a season, including his sufferings and atoning death, to the glory that followed that suffering, to his righteousness and almighty administration, and, in one word, to the everlasting result of his great mediation. Full of these subjects, the inspired writer thus begins: "My heart is inditing," or rather struggles with "a good matter." I am about to speak of the things which I

have arranged, in regard to the Messiah, and from the fountain of thought within, the stream of my words is irrepressible. "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer," guided like that pen by another and by a superintending mind. And then addressing the king, he thus speaks, "Thou art fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips, therefore God hath blessed thee for ever." It is generally understood, that in the two first clauses, the inspired prophet has reference to our Lord's humiliation; for, although he was despised and rejected of men, and in the estimation of blinded mankind, had no beauty why he should be desired, yet, in reality, he possessed excellence superior to the most excellent of mankind, being, to use the figurative language of the Bible, fairer than the chieftest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, and combining in his own person, all human and all divine excellence. Referring also to the doctrines of salvation, which he promulgated, the Psalmist says, "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips;" and in consequence of his thus being the Father's well-beloved Son, glorifying him on earth, and finishing the work given him to do, it is added, "God hath blessed thee forever"—according to the glowing corresponding language in another psalm, also intended to celebrate the glory of Messiah the king, "Thou presentest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him." And then raising his views to the Son in this exalted condition, he thus addresses him: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee." Oh! my friends, may that Spirit who takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them to men, and thus glorifies him, guide us while we endeavour to contemplate in this passage the glorious character of our King himself, the characters of that cause over which he presides, the characters of his administration of his dispensation in support of that throne, and finally, the sentiments of

devotion and homage which his people entertain in regard to him. These, my friends, are the four particulars under which the following explanatory observations shall be arranged. First, I shall call your attention to the character of our king, as described in the text, He is the Most Mighty, he is arrayed in glory and majesty. Secondly, we shall examine the characters of that cause over which our King presides, the cause of truth, and meekness, and righteousness. Thirdly, we shall attend to his dispensation and the course of his administration in furtherance of that cause, and for the destruction of what is opposed to it. He has his sword on his thigh, he rides prosperously in his majesty, his right hand shall teach him terrible things, his arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, whereby the people shall fall under him. In the last place, we shall examine those sentiments of devotion and homage towards this glorious person, on the part of his true subjects, of which the text may be understood as the expression.

In the first place, then, let us attend for a few moments to the character of Messiah the king, as described in this passage. He is called the Most Mighty, or the Mighty One, and he is described as resplendent with glory and with majesty. When he appeared in the world, he appeared in our nature; he was truly a man, and your minds are familiar with those descriptions of humiliation and abasement in regard to his first manifestation with which ancient prophecy abounds, and which, we learn from the sacred historians, were fulfilled to the letter in the earthly history of Jesus of Nazareth. One prophet declared "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." But the same prophets and historians teach us that he had another character infinitely superior to his human—in a word, that he was divine, as well as human, God as well as man, God and man in one person, the true Emmanuel, God manifest in the flesh. And if he appeared for a little season in apparent weakness, and helplessness, and suffering, this did not arise from any personal weakness, from any suspension of the might of the Mighty One, as the miracles which he often then wrought demonstrated; or if he appeared without any visible manifestation of divine glory.

this did not arise from his wanting that glory, from his being destitute of that majesty, but merely from that economy under which, and for a time, he was placed, by which his glory was veiled, while, in the likeness of sinful flesh, he kept the condition of a servant. But in a little, we are taught, he arose from this state of weakness, he emerged from this state of concealment, and his strength appeared, and his glory burst open. He rose the third day, according to the Scriptures, ascended into heaven amid thousands of attendant angels, when he appeared in honour before the presence of the eternal Father, and was set down on his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named. O! what must *his* might be who is the Mighty God, who made, and upholds, and controls, the universe—what must *his* glory be, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead, that is, all the plenitude of divine perfections dwells, and what must His majesty be, who is glorified with the glory which he had with the Father before the world was! Let us then set before our minds, in this first part of the subject, the character of our Redeemer as the Mighty One, clothed with glory, illustrious with majesty, and let us now apply to him such language as the following: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” Let us hear his own words. “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” These are the explanations of the text—the Mighty One with his glory and with his majesty.

But, in the second place, let us attend to the cause over which this Mighty One presides. This cause has these three characters—“truth, and meekness, and righteousness”—and we must be more minute in our explanation of this part of the text. You are aware that these are three characters which are applied to the Messiah personally. Considered as God, he is the God of truth, and without iniquity. As Mediator, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge dwell in him. He said of himself, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” The ancient prophets thus addressed Jerusalem, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation.” And for an explanation of

righteousness, as a personal character, we refer to the 7th verse. “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” And “he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” I do not, however, consider these as the three personal characters of the Messiah, but as three characters descriptive of that cause over which he, as the King, the Mighty One, the Messiah, presides. Let us then attend to the import of these three characters descriptive of the cause of the Messiah. What are we to understand by truth? In Scripture, truth is applied to the views of the mind, to the sentiments which the mind entertains, and the judgments it passes, as well as to the language of the lips and the actions. In this view, I say again, What is truth? It is opposed to falsehood; and in reference to the views of the mind, it consists in the correspondence between our views, and the real nature or qualities of the objects to which these views are directed. When, for example, I view a person or object as that person is, when I judge of the character of a person or object, according to what that character really is, my mind is said to be in a state of truth; whereas if I form an erroneous conception of the character of that person or object, then my views are false—they are not in a state of truth. It is unnecessary to detain you with examples; but suppose a man think himself to be what he is not, according to the language of the Bible, his mind is in a state of falsehood relative to himself. If a man think of God different from what he is, in the language of the Bible that man’s mind is in a state of falsehood relative to God. On the other hand, if my views of myself correspond with what I really am, and my views of God correspond with the character of God, then my views are in so far true views, or according to truth. Truth, as possessed by the mind, is opposed to a state of ignorance. The mind has not truth, in respect of that of which it has not knowledge. In one word, correct knowledge is truth, and that system which exhibits correct views of that of which it treats, is a true system, a system of truth. Now, my friends, to understand the application of this to the system over which the Messiah presides, bear in mind that mankind naturally are in a state of error and falsehood, respecting the most important subject to which the

human mind can direct its faculties. We do not mean to say that unregenerate men may not have correct views on many subjects, respecting their temporal interests, respecting objects about which history, art, and science, are versant. But what are the most important objects, considering the obligations and present and eternal interests of man as a moral being, to which the human mind can be turned? Think of these, and you will perceive that men have been, and naturally are, in a state of falsehood in regard to them. We are in natural ignorance of these most important subjects, the nature and attributes of that God with whom we have to do, and whom it is our duty, as well as our happiness, to know, and love, and reverence, and seek after, and enjoy, and obey—our condition as not only immortal, but as guilty and fallen beings, polluted and helpless—God's method of delivering man from this fallen and miserable condition, and by which he brings them to his own favour, and fellowship, and image, and to the enjoyment of himself here, and to all eternity. What are all the subjects to which the human mind can be turned, when compared with these? and what does it signify how correct a man's views may be in regard to other subjects, if his mind is in a state of falsehood, in respect to these? Now the system of truth over which Christ presides as King, consists of those views so essential to the present and eternal interests of man, respecting God, and respecting man, and respecting what God would have man to know, and believe, and do. In a word, this system of truth is made known in the Gospel of divine revelation. This is the truth, in opposition to the delusion and error prevalent in the world, over which the Messiah, as King, presides. When he sent forth prophets, ere he came he sent them to make known this truth to men. When he came to the world, he came to bear witness to the truth, and when he sent forth Apostles to all the world to preach his gospel to every creature, this was a gospel which made known the very truth.

The second character of the system over which Christ, as King, presides, is meekness. I understand the term meekness to be equivalent to humility in its larger acceptation. Humility is the opposite of pride. Pride, my brethren, is the attribute only of a depraved mind, and it governs all depraved beings, and is always in proportion to their depravity, so that the most depraved being

in the universe is the most proud. What is that pride against which the system of the Messiah is levelled? It is the principle of independence, by which the fallen creature wishes to be independent of the God who made him, by which the fallen creature spurns to own his dependence upon God for happiness, spurns to own his obligation to God for all that he derives from God, spurns to own his subjection to God in every thing, his absolute disposal to the will of God, and his obligation to give the praise of every thing to God. What, I ask again, is pride? It is that principle by which the fallen being wishes to be an independent source of knowledge, or excellence, or happiness, to itself, by which it wishes to have the honour of what it is, in some measure, ascribed to itself, and by which it wishes to be a law to itself. This principle of pride was fully developed, and is so still, by the fallen angels, who would rather quit heaven than be subject to the God of heaven. It appeared in the first temptation, by which proud, but fallen, spirits successfully assailed our first parents, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," and it appears in the character of all those fallen descendants, who are invariably proud in the ratio of their depravity. Now humility is exactly opposed to this. It consists in owning the principle of dependence; it consists in consenting that God should occupy his place, and that creatures should occupy their place; it consists in ascribing to God independence in regard to every thing, and to the creature dependence in regard to every thing. Humility delights in thinking of the transcendent greatness of God, and of the comparative emptiness and nothingness of all creatures in the presence of God. Especially humility consists in owning that all we have must come from God, that the will of God should be a law in every thing, and that the praise of all that creatures ever did, or can do, should be ascribed not to them, but to God. In relation to the Gospel, humility consists in adopting sentiments, according to which the man cannot endure a sense of his sin, take a situation too low, cherish obedience too contrite, or utter language too expressive of self-abasement. This is the language of humility, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight." "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: where-

fore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." "I am willing to be saved entirely in thee, by the grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." "Nay, say, not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory, for thy mercies and for thy truth."

The system of meekness, then, over which, as King, Jesus Christ presides, is simply the principle to which the whole Gospel does homage, that no flesh should glory in God's presence, but, according as it is written, "he that glories, let him glory in the Lord."

The third character of this system, over which Christ, as King, presides, is righteousness. I consider the term righteousness here as equivalent to justice or equity. The opposite, of course, is injustice or iniquity. There is a remarkable expression in the Bible, which will throw light on this. "All unrighteousness is sin." It may be inferred, therefore, that sin is unrighteousness, that is, injustice. Sin is injustice to a man's self, to his fellow-creatures, to his God. It is injustice to a man's self. Do you think a man has a right to destroy himself? Has a man a right to destroy his own soul? Has a man a right to prefer subjection to the destroyer to subjection to the Saviour? Has a man any right relatively to himself to conduct his soul to perdition, in preference to taking the path to glory, and honour, and immortality? Sin, as it is against our fellow-creatures, is injustice to them. God, when he says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," makes it absolutely unjust for any man not to love his neighbour as he loves himself, not to seek his neighbour's temporal and spiritual interest, not to do what in him lies to advance the one or the other, or in heart, speech, or conduct, to do any thing against his neighbour. Then, if you think of God, how does the injustice of sin appear? Do you think God demands for himself any thing he has no right to demand? Do you think that the Lord God, in commanding us to love him supremely, to subject ourselves in thought, word, and deed, to his law, which is holy, just and good, asks too much? The unprofitable servant thought so, but let God be true and just, and every man unjust and a liar. All sin is unrighteousness, whereas the whole law of God, over which Christ

presides, is a system of equity. It only requires man to be just to himself, his neighbour, and his God. O what a scene of injustice has our world been in the eyes of Him who seeth not as man seeth, but who judgeth righteous judgments! What a scene of apostasy does it exhibit at this hour in the sight of Him who is King of kings, and Lord of lords! How different would it be, were God's law written on men's hearts, were it to become the rule of their thoughts, feelings, words, and actions!

I have thus endeavoured under this second particular, to give you a very brief outline of that system over which Christ as King presides, and which system is detailed in his own words as a system of truth, meekness and righteousness—and were it not for detaining you, I would have shown from these characters of the christian system, what must be the nature of the system which Christ opposes, and which constitutes opposition to Christ, and constitutes the friends of that system Christ's enemies. Whatever opposes the truth as it is in Jesus, whatever would tend to lift up men before God, to dethrone God and exalt men, and whatever is inconsistent with the divine laws, is opposed to Christ, and is constituting one's self, one of Christ's enemies. I intended to have shown you, that this system over which Christ presides, is a system altogether worthy of Christ. Is it not worthy of Christ to preside over a system of truth which consists in bringing men's minds out of those delusions by which they are away from God, and bringing them in as far as this system governs their whole character into a state of similitude with his own, and with the mind of that God who is a God of truth, and not of iniquity? Is it not worthy of Christ to preside over a system which guards the rights of Jehovah and of his creation—a system which reckons God as supreme and independent, and the creature as inferior, subject, dependent? Is it not worthy of Christ to put himself at the head of a system of equity, and to declare himself against a system of iniquity, so that all his subjects, in place of being ashamed of their King and of his cause, shall say in praise and in triumph, these are the characters of thy system, which thou conductest and guardest—truth, and meekness, and righteousness?

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BUCHANAN, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev GRAHAM MITCHELL, A. M., Whitburn.

CHARACTERS OF THE CAUSE OVER WHICH CHRIST PRESIDES ;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. HUGH HEUGH, D.D.—Concluded.

ON the third part of the subject I shall scarcely enter, reserving what remains of time for the illustration of the last part. The third part of the subject relates to what our Lord does in support of this system of truth, and meekness, and righteousness. The language is strongly figurative, and is derived from a military sovereign, and his armour and his prowess. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh—ride prosperously in thy majesty—thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies—thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things." The sword was one of the principal weapons used in close attack of old, and when wielded by a powerful arm, was a tremendous instrument. The arrows were light missiles cast by the hand, or shot from the bow, and when sharp, barbed, and powerfully, and skilfully thrown, struck to the very heart of the unhappy being whom they reached. There is, no doubt, an allusion to the war-chariot, in the words—"in thy majesty ride," and ride "prosperously"—and I may add, that some critics are of opinion, that the terms glory and majesty, although certainly indicating ultimately personal character, have a reference to the resplendent armour with which the ancient warriors were emblazoned. The phrase, "Thy right hand shall teach," or show "thee terrible" or wonderful "things," refers to the achievements of champions by which they intimidated their enemies, put them down, trampled over them, and after their work of carnage was accomplished, were astonished on contemplating the field of

their own conquests. All these are figures and we must appeal to the other parts of the Old Testament and the language of the New, if we are to understand how the Saviour fulfilled these characters. We read in Scripture, "The sword of the Spirit is the word of God." We may also consider the word of God as indicating those arrows which Christ employs. At the same time, when a sword and arrows are mentioned, sometimes judgments are referred to, striking judgments, and in providence executed. The same thing may be applied to the work of the right hand, and to the prince and chariot. The following things then are brought up to us here. In the first place, Jesus Christ accomplishes these objects by his own word. When he would subdue the enemies of himself, this was the command he gave to his Apostles: "Go into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." His own gospel, however was always accompanied with his own gracious presence and his own resistless power and when he gave this command he immediately added: "Lo! I am with you." Go where you will I will accompany you. I will be present to aid you, and will give testimony to the word of my grace. The gospel accordingly is called the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth, and is compared, in its energy, to a sharp sword with two edges, which pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and

lays bare even the thoughts and intents of the heart. I have no doubt there is a reference here also to what our Lord does at his dispensations favourably to his cause, and unfavourably to his enemy. He makes most marvellous displays of his own gospel. How often, by his providence, does he bring down with grief the heart of a proud individual, in order to make the more welcome and seasonable the good tidings of his free salvation? And how often does he shake kingdoms in order to overthrow systems which are at war with the progress of the gospel of peace and salvation? I may appeal to the history of the first ages, I may appeal to the history of our Protestant Reformation, I may appeal to the predictions of the word of God, respecting things still future—but we search not at present for illustrations of a truth which I intend in my next, of a series of discourses on the subject of providence, to bring before you, showing how Christ orders the events of providence for the furtherance of his kingdom of grace, and in this way comes forth in compliance with the predictions of his prophets, girds his sword upon his thigh, appears with his glory and his majesty, in his majesty rides prosperously, defending the cause of truth, meekness, and righteousness, his right hand showing marvellous things, his arrows sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under him.

I now conclude by requesting your attention for a few minutes to what we may consider as the practical improvement of the whole, the sentiments of devotion and profound homage which the text expresses on the part of the redeemed church, in regard to their Redeemer and their King. Now, in the first place, the text implies that those using this language rightly, are themselves subjected to the cause. Naturally blind to the truth, as it is in Jesus, they have had their eyes opened, they have become wise unto salvation, and have got those discoveries of God, and Christ, and sin, and salvation, and duty, to which they were naturally insensible. Naturally proud, they have become subject to the Redeemer, and humbly sued for mercy and obtained it; and naturally unrighteous, they have been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God—they have become the servants of righteousness to the enjoyment of everlasting life.

In the second place, the text is expres-

sive of the adoration with which those subject to Christ honour him. When they say, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty," they say, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Regarding him as the Mighty One, nay, as the mighty God—regarding him as the divine patron of truth, meekness, and righteousness—regarding him as the terrible and resistless, but righteous, opponent of his enemies—regarding him, in one word, as their Redeemer and their Lord, they honour him with divine adoration, they comply with his own request, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;" they comply with the call given in this passage to the spouse of the great King: "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him."

Still farther, the text expresses the earnest desire of the genuine subjects of the Redeemer for the success of his cause. They all desire the success of his cause. Indifference to the cause of Christ may, and does characterize very many who care not whether the interests of truth, meekness, and righteousness prevail, or are prevailed against, and who are, in a great measure, regardless whether Christ's friends, or Christ's opponents, rejoice and triumph. But it never can be so, in regard to Christ's genuine sons. That his cause may prevail in the church in general—that it may prosper in that portion of it with which they are particularly connected—that it may prevail in their own families, in their own hearts—that they may be more under the influence of truth, meekness, and righteousness—these are subjects which stand higher in estimation, and which awaken more ardently the desire of the people of God, than even any secular interests which are peculiarly their own. The language of the ancient church is the language of all true followers of the Redeemer. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Another sentiment expressed in this psalm, is the dependence of Christ's people upon himself for the success of his cause, which has two effects—inspiring them with confidence, and leading them to prayer for the exercise of his power. All the true followers of Christ know that his cause depends for success upon himself. They know that, for number, his cause has always

hitherto at least, counted but few friends comparatively—that those hostile to his cause have been far more numerous, and more powerful, than those friendly to it. But what is far worse, they know that in no one, naturally, is there any thing but opposition to the cause of truth, meekness, and righteousness, so that they are perfectly assured that if this cause were left to itself, or merely to the power of men, lying and delusion would still be preferred by all the nations to the truth of heaven, the pride of fallen angels would characterize fallen men every-where, and our unhappy earth would continue to be, in the generations to come, what it has been in the generations that are past—a scene of the injustice of men to themselves, of the injustice of men to their fellow-men, above all, of the injustice of men to their God. But the humble believer thinks when he goes to wait upon ordinances—when he thinks of his own condition—when he thinks, if he is a parent, of the condition of his children—when he thinks, if he is a philanthropic Christian, of a world of pride, delusion, and unrighteousness, that the cause is Christ's, and that the power which will make that power triumph is the power of Christ, which is the power of God; this inspires him with confidence, and animates him to prayer. Oh! then, let us enter into the prayerful, but consistent spirit of Christ's humble followers. Let us say to our illustrious King: Pluck thy right hand out of thy bosom, fill thy quiver with thine arrows, unsheath thy sharp two-edged sword, manifest thy glory, unvail thy divine majesty, go forward more swiftly in thy chariot of salvation, let thine enemies be scattered at thy presence, let the prostrate nations fall before thee and do thee homage—"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; wherewith the people fall under thee."

Still farther, the text suggests that the true followers of Christ will delight to be honoured as his instruments, in doing any thing for the promotion of the cause over which he presides. They are, in some measure, like-minded with Christ; they believe that the honour of Christ, and the happiness of men, as well as the fulfilment

of the expectations of the Church, all centre in the progress and triumph of the cause at the head of which their mighty Redeemer has placed himself; but they know that in the furtherance of his cause he will continue to employ, as he has hitherto employed human instrumentality. Are you willing, then, to be instruments in doing something for advancing that cause for which Christ came forth from the Father, and sojourned in our world, and laid down his life, and ascended to the throne, and wears his crown, and sways his sceptre? Whether you have been newly joined to the spiritual host, or have long continued to fight along with it the battle of the Lord—whether you occupy a conspicuous or influential, or a very humble and obscure situation in that spiritual array, do what your hands find to do; listen to the orders, be animated with the presence, and be strong in the strength of your leader—and it may be that your leader will honour you with success. At all events he will not deny you his gracious and eternal recompense. His language to you who fight the good fight of faith is this, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." His language shall be this, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

I cannot conclude without addressing a single word to the enemies of the King. There are always some such, there is reason to apprehend, in our assemblies. I may be addressing some now who are the open enemies of the King, by defending falsehood and opposition to his truth, by proudly refusing to subject themselves to his cause and authority, and by openly refusing to do what he commands them; or I may be addressing some who are the secret enemies of the King; secret, because, like Judas, in the guise of friends, they are perpetually calling him "Lord, Lord," but as perpetually refusing to do the things he commands. Oh! do you think that imagination itself can conceive a condition less enviable, a condition from which every man, who has not lost regard to his own safety, should flee with so much haste as the condition of an enemy secret or open, to Him whose glory and the character of whose cause we have been now contemplating. What is it to live in opposition to Him who occupies the throne of the Universe? What is it to live in a state of hostility to him? And Oh! what is it to

stand an armed and condemned rebel in his presence, when he shall sit on his great white throne for judgment? There are two passages of Scripture I shall now repeat to such. The one is from the psalm from which I have already quoted—"Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee." O think what follows! "Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the day of thine anger. The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them." The other

is, "As for these, mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them forth and slay them before me." But he now holds out to you the sceptre of mercy. Will you refuse to come in faith? He now calls on you to bend before him, and sue for favour. He bids you look to his cross, and flee to him for salvation. "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved, for I am God, and there is none else." May God bless these observations, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

 *For the Address which succeeded this Sermon, see No. 72, p. 383.*

THE DIFFICULTIES OF DECLARING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE TRON CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SABBATH, 25TH AUGUST, 1833, ON THE OCCASION OF BEING INTRODUCED TO THE PASTORAL CHARGE OF THAT CHURCH,

By the Rev. ROBERT BUCHANAN,
Minister of the Tron Church, Glasgow.

"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."—ACTS XX. 27.

THERE is scarcely, perhaps, any feature in Saint Paul's character, as an Apostle, which it is at once so interesting and affecting to contemplate as his earnest solicitude about the spiritual welfare of those among whom he had ever preached the glad tidings of salvation. If, in his absence, they had become remiss, he addresses them as little children of whom he travailed in birth again, until Christ should be formed in them the hope of glory. If their backslidings compelled him to write unto them in the language of rebuke, he did so out of much anguish and affliction, and with many tears. If he heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and of their love to all the saints, he gave thanks to God for the great blessing, and ceased not to make mention of them in his prayers. If he found them walking altogether contrary to the faith and obedience of the gospel, it was with weeping he told them that they were enemies to the cross of Christ. Of all the churches, over which the Apostle thus yearned with the affection of a spiritual father, none appears to have lain nearer to his heart than the church of

Ephesus. For three years, a long period in a life shared among so many cities and nations, it had been the seat of his personal ministry. He had found it at his coming shrouded in heathen darkness, and its people far from the knowledge of the Saviour, and under the power of an idolatrous superstition, but so mightily did the word of God grow, and so much did it prevail during the time of his sojourn among them, that many of them who used curious arts, brought their books together and burnt them before all men, and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. So deeply, indeed, had the gospel taken root, and so widely had it spread over the city and neighbourhood, that the great temple of Diana itself was brought into the shade, and its long established fame was threatened with disgrace and destruction. "Ye see and hear," said the alarmed Demetrius to his fellow-craftsmen, whose ungodly gains were in danger of perishing with the superstition, "that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people,

saying that they be no gods which are made with hands; so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth." Even in cities in which the gospel had been faithfully preached for generations, it had been always found that multitudes continued in ignorance and unbelief, strangers to the power of godliness, and whose lurking enmity to the gospel cause required only some favourable occasion to call it forth into open and bitter hostility. It need not, then, surprise us that in the crowded population of Ephesus a long established idolatry, whose license was so agreeable to their sinful hearts, should still have had followers enough to fill the whole city with commotion when fairly aroused and set in array against the holy religion of Jesus. As the Apostle was evidently the object against which the violence of the populace was specially directed, it was deemed prudent that he should withdraw and not needlessly endanger a life so valuable to the Church of Christ. Having, therefore, called the disciples together and embraced them, he departed to go into Macedonia, and it was after a long circuit through many cities and islands of Asia, distinguished for letters and refinement, preaching repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, that in turning again towards Jerusalem he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church to meet him at Miletus. As he was hastening, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, he durst not venture to present himself among his beloved converts, whose desire to enjoy the comfort of his personal ministry might have involved him in unavoidable delay. At the same time, his concern for their spiritual welfare would not suffer him to neglect this opportunity of conveying to them his counsel and his blessing. Accordingly, sailing by the city of Ephesus situated on the sea-coast, he landed about thirty miles beyond the place, where he had summoned the elders to meet. The address he there delivered to these elders, or pastors, of the churches which he had planted amid so many dangers and labours, and nursed with such anxious and incessant care, is at once most impressive in its solemnity, and most melting in its tenderness.

Having reminded them how earnestly and how faithfully he had preached unto them the great doctrines of salvation—a work which, as they well knew, he had prosecuted with all humility of mind, with many tears, and amid many temptations, after telling them that he was now going, bound in the spirit, to Jerusalem, not knowing what would befall him there, save that he had the witness of the Holy Ghost, that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him, after solemnly assuring them that they should see his face no more, it was in these affecting circumstances that he took them to record that he was pure from the blood of all men, "For I have not shunned," says he, "to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

In reading these words of the Apostle, they naturally suggest the idea that there had been certain difficulties in the way of his declaring all the counsel of God, difficulties which might have operated to induce a less zealous and less faithful preacher to sink, or to obscure the message he had been commissioned to declare, and a very little reflection might suffice to satisfy every one, not only that such difficulties do exist, but that such difficulties do always exist. It may not be unsuitable on an occasion like the present, nor, by the divine blessing, unprofitable, shortly to consider what these difficulties are. On the one hand, it may serve to remind me, in entering upon the duties of that important relation which has been established between us, how needful it is that I should wait daily and diligently on the teaching of God's Word and Spirit, that I may be enabled rightly to understand his divine truth, which it is to be my office to proclaim, and how needful it is to seek grace to be faithful in commending that counsel to your consciences as in the sight of God, not only for doctrine and instruction in righteousness, but for correction and reproof. And it may also, on the other hand, serve to remind you that you ought not too severely to condemn imperfections in that earthen vessel in which it has pleased our Lord to send the treasures of the gospel among you, nor too rashly to reject that gospel, because, like many a salutary lesson, it may sometimes be bitter to the taste. The difficulties to which I would at present advert as existing to tempt the preacher to shun declaring all the counsel of God, are of two kinds; the first arising out of the extent and the profundity of that

divine counsel, out of the length and the breadth, the height and the depth, of the subject with which he has to deal; the second arising out of the nature of that divine counsel, calculated, as it is, to excite the opposition and to provoke the enmity of the carnal mind.

In the first place, then, I would advert to the difficulties arising out of the extent and the profundity of the counsel of God. It must be well known to every one who is not wilfully ignorant, that although God at no time left himself without a witness to testify to mankind that his being and perfections, and that his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly manifested in the things he hath made, yet not liking any longer to retain him in their knowledge, they have every-where changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all, blessed for evermore. The condition of our race, therefore, before revelation was vouchsafed, was not that of creatures who had never known God, nor possessed the means of understanding or performing the duties this relation to him involved, but it was the condition of creatures who, "when they knew God, glorified him not as God, neither were thankful;" it was the condition of creatures who, by their own perversity, had excluded God from their vain imaginations, and from their hardened and polluted hearts. Had their case been one of simple ignorance, it might then have sufficed to unfold to them just so much of the divine counsel as might serve to acquaint them with his existence, and with his glorious excellency—a discovery which could not fail to draw forth the homage, adoration, and love, of every creature whose moral nature was pure. But, my friends, such a discovery, not only though written in the stars and with signs in the firmament of heaven that declare, in their great characters, the glory of God, and that show forth his handy work; but though written in plain words in the page of revelation itself, would have been of no avail to meet the wants and necessities of man. To meet the circumstances in which he stood, a far wider and deeper disclosure of the divine Being was required, so wide that four thousand years were required to develop its wondrous extent, and so deep that men had to be trained up to the full comprehension of its glorious mysteries by

tracing it onward, from its simple elements, promises, and types, and prophecies, till thus long looking on the shadows of good things, their eyes had been strengthened to see the very image of the things *themselves* in the full radiance of the Sun of righteousness. The world, it is true, left to its own carnal wisdom, knows not God at all, but had revelation gone no further than just to restore again to man the knowledge of God as the Creator whom he had not only failed to glorify, but whom he had disowned and forgotten, as the gracious preserver and benefactor whose bounty he had not only unthankfully received but perversely abused, as the sovereign Lord and King whose authority he had disclaimed, and whose laws he had trampled under foot—what could it have availed save to sink him into utter despair? To have been made acquainted with the mercy he had abused, with the justice he had violated, with the holiness he had dishonoured, with the power he had dared to affront, would have been just to have had his eyes opened to behold every attribute of Deity armed against him. All this was revealed, and all this it was needful to reveal, that man might be qualified to comprehend and appreciate that special and wonderful development of divine counsel which it has been the grand purpose of the Scriptures to unfold—a development of divine counsel by which a mystery has been disclosed, into which the angels of Heaven desire to look—for, however much they had previously beheld and understood of the divine glory, it is, we are expressly assured, in the great scheme of man's redemption, that even these principalities and powers, in heavenly places, have found the brightest display of the manifold wisdom of God. By this wonderful development of the divine counsel, we have been introduced, if, with deep reverence, we may venture so to speak, into that inner sanctuary where the glorious Godhead dwells, and to hear the announcement of those unfathomable purposes which are from everlasting to everlasting. To behold the Father, in his boundless mercy and compassion for a guilty and perishing race, entering into covenant for their redemption with his own well-beloved and only begotten Son—to behold that Son freely undertaking to offer himself, through the eternal Spirit, a sacrifice without spot for their sakes, that they might again be reconciled unto God; and

after thus witnessing, as it were, the counsels of eternity, to be led on to contemplate the holy child of the Highest proceeding to the fulfilment of the great work his Father had given him to do, after gradually preparing his own way by revealing; as the eternal word, the purposes of divine grace, speaking, at sundry times and in diverse manners, to the fathers by the prophets, at length being himself manifested in the flesh, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world; and received up into glory, and thence sending forth the Holy Ghost, the Comforter promised by the Saviour for his Church, that he might sanctify that Church which he has redeemed by his own blood out of every country, and tongue, and people; to behold all this is to behold such a development of the great mystery of godliness as forces us; all indeed, that we can do, to exclaim with the Apostle, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments; and his ways past finding out!" And who is there that is sufficient for these things? Who is there that is sufficient to declare the mystery of this Three-One-God, of this glorious person, this Emmanuel, God with us, of the deep things in the character and office of this blessed Spirit, whose coming, though it be like the winds, silent and unseen, is yet mighty to the casting down of strongholds, and of every high thing that exalteth itself against God?

But, wonderful as is this divine counsel, even when considered abstractly, it is still more wonderful in its perfect adaptation to all the wants and necessities of those to whom it is appointed to be declared, and, therefore, it is that the preacher is required not only to exhibit it fully in its own intrinsic value, but to exhibit it practically, as bearing on the condition, the duties, and the destinies of man as a moral and accountable being. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and all of it, without exception, is profitable for doctrine and reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness, and when we speak of the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, of this counsel of God, and when we think of all the diversities that exist in the nature and condition of men, there is not one on which this divine counsel may not, and ought not, to be made directly and immediately to bear, possessing, as it does, its

tears to persuade, its mercies to allure, its awful threats to alarm the impenitent, its solemn denunciations to arouse the careless and ungodly, its free grace to revive the humble and contrite, its great and precious promises to encourage the weak; who are ready to faint and fail, its blessed consolations to sustain the afflicted and the mourning—when all this we remember, surely none will deny, that in the way of declaring all the counsel of God, there is a difficulty presented, by its extent and profundity, of the most formidable kind—a difficulty in contemplating which even the "Scribe who is best instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," may well tremble, lest it should be said of him, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth?" But while the slothful and superficial preacher may be led by this difficulty to shun declaring the whole counsel of God, it is the unspeakable consolation of those who, by giving themselves wholly to these things, earnestly desire that by divine grace they may be found faithful and able ministers of the New Testament, that the Lord himself hath said, "His secret is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant."

The second difficulty to which I propose to advert, as existing to tempt the preacher to shun declaring all the counsel of God, arises out of the nature of that counsel, calculated as it is to excite the opposition and to provoke the enmity of the carnal mind. It was with a special reference to this peculiarity of the gospel that its divine author himself said to its disciples, "Think ye that I come to send peace on earth? I tell you nay! but rather divisions. I come not to send peace, but a sword." It was, indeed, the first, as it is the invariable effect of sin to make men dread and dislike the voice of their God. It is recorded of our first parents that when, immediately after their transgression, they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden, a fact which did exhibit in the very first hour of the Fall that great feature in the character of sin, by which, in the subsequent history of man, it has ever been distinguished, I mean its instinctive repugnance to holiness, and in-born consciousness of being unable to stand in its presence. The counsel of God, by whomsoever com-

municated to our fallen race, necessarily placing before their minds that holy and righteous Being whom they like not any longer to retain in their minds, never failed, at any period of its progressive revelation, to call forth the enmity of the carnal heart. Accordingly we find it recorded in the pages of inspiration that the preachers, in all ages, "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments," that "they, were stoned, sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword." To reveal the character and will of God was just virtually to condemn the character and conduct of men. The more clearly the purity and rectitude of Jehovah were discovered, the more distinctly, in the light of that discovery, did men's guilt appear. The more fully the high and holy sanctions of the divine law were unfolded, the more certain was the contrast between the sin and suffering of its guilty transgressor. And although preachers had been specially appointed to set forth the terrors of that holy and violated law, just that, as a schoolmaster, it might serve to bring men to Christ, to convince them of their sin and danger, to show them the necessity of fleeing for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel, yet so hateful to men were the doctrines that proclaimed his guilt and wretchedness, and so hateful to the carnality of man were the doctrines that summoned him to enter on a life of spotless and holy obedience, that when the Lord himself appeared the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together, to break his hands asunder, and cast his cords from them. Saint Paul was no stranger to this hatred and opposition to the counsel of God. In declaring it he had himself been in labours abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in deaths oft. In defending it he had to fight at Ephesus with wild beasts, encountering a rage and malignity, and pride, from many of its people, which no other expression could briefly or adequately describe. The doctrine of the cross, the cardinal doctrine of that divine counsel he had been sent to publish, was, to the Jews, a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but though bitterly persecuted by the one, and ridiculed and insulted by the other, he had never ceased to publish that gospel which he knew to be to all who embraced it, the power of God and

the wisdom of God for their salvation. He had kept back nothing that was profitable to them, however much they might be disinclined to receive it. Their resistance to the truth had indeed caused him to shed many tears, but never led him to desist from proclaiming the great doctrines of repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. True it is that the circumstances in which the preacher is called to declare the counsel of God in a community like ours, are very different from those to which I have just referred. By the grace of God Christianity has long possessed, in the pleasant places where our lines have been made to fall, an influence sufficient to restrain the wrath of man from manifesting its hostility, either in the way of public insult, or of open violence, and in consequence it may, at first sight, appear as if the difficulties specified under the present head of discourse, no longer existed to tempt the preacher to shun declaring the whole counsel of God. There is reason to fear, however, that such a conclusion is but too little warranted by the real state of the case. Certainly it might be very difficult to discern in the spirit of the age in which we live any tendency to unsheath the sword of persecution. The tendency of the spirit of the present age is not so much directly to assail any one form of religion, as by affecting to esteem them all alike, virtually to confound the true with the false, and thereby silently, but effectually, to undermine whatever is peculiar and distinctive in the holy religion of Jesus. The high claims and the humbling doctrines of the gospel, the spirit of the present age would teach men to regard as matters not by any means to be resisted by the strong arm of power, but to be compliantly set aside as just so many relics of the bigotry and superstition of a less enlightened age. The depravity of our nature, the necessity of an atonement, the gracious agency of the Holy Spirit—has not every devout Christian felt himself often withheld from ever alluding to these doctrines, although they lie at the very foundation of divine truth, from a just apprehension of the sneering scepticism with which the very mention of them would be received? And when it is remembered that these are doctrines which the faithful preacher must not only set forth and exhibit as abstract and essential truths, but which he must bring to bear on the hearts

and consciences of individual men, to convict them of personal guilt and unworthiness before God, to show them their personal danger, to admonish them of their own insufficiency to do God's holy will, to alarm their fears, to humble their pride, to rebuke their indifference, to summon them to the cultivation and exercise of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord—when it is remembered that this is the language which the faithful preacher must have ever in his mouth, language not to be confined to the pulpit, where its generality might render it less offensive, but from house to house, to be brought to bear on the condition, character, and life of every separate family—when, I say, all this is remembered surely none will deny, that to declare all the counsel of God, even in a community like ours, demands a strength of christian principle, and a sense of ministerial responsibility, and an amount of moral courage which are not easily attained. And the difficulty is all the greater where this duty is to be performed among those with whom the preacher is called to partieipate in the ordinary courtesies of social life. The conventional forms and restraints of a highly artificial state of society impose restrictions by which the most faithful preacher has often felt himself fettered and bound when his duty to his divine Master would have demanded admonition or reproof. Little are worldly men aware of the painful struggle to which they often give rise in a minister's mind, when, by their filthiness and foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient, they compel him to listen to that which he is only deterred from putting down on the instant with the solemn language of merited rebuke, by the fear which, to a minister, too often bringeth a snare, lest it should excite dislike towards his person, and thus injure perhaps his usefulness, but which yet he cannot hear in silence, not only without sore offence to his feelings as a christian minister, but without dreading what is unspeakably harder to bear, lest his silence should be encouraging them in their ungodliness. Great need is there, then, that I, like Paul, entreating you to pray with all supplication for all saints, especially entreat that you pray also for me, that utterance may be given me, and that I may open my mouth to speak boldly the gospel as I ought to speak.

Having thus adverted to the difficulties

attendant upon the discharge of the great ministerial duty of declaring the counsel of God, let me very shortly, in conclusion, advert to the duty and responsibility of the people in waiting upon that divine counsel their minister is appointed to declare. Taking the words of our text, in their connexion with the preceding verse, you cannot fail to perceive how plainly and solemnly it is intimated that a heavy load of responsibility lies upon that people who have the Gospel preached to them, that in truth their blood is on their own heads—and this, permit me to remark, there is just cause to fear, is a consideration which, especially in attendance upon public ordinances, is too often overlooked; for it is a fact, of which many who now hear me must be aware, that very many professing Christians, in coming from Sabbath to Sabbath to the house of God, seem to think that the minister alone is the person who has a duty to discharge in that place, and that their chief business in going there is just to observe how that duty is performed. On leaving their dwellings, accordingly, in the morning, it is without any thing of that solemn sensibility which a man feels when he is about to engage in a great personal duty; and if accordingly they come down at even from the temple of God with affections cold, and hearts uninterested, they are too ready to set it down to the deficiency of the minister. They seem to think that it is their part to be entirely passive in their endeavours. In the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, if the words and manners of the preacher have been such as to kindle a temporary warmth of devotion, and to excite for a time at least, some serious thoughts in their minds, they think it so far well, and give him so much credit for the right discharge of his duty; but if it has been otherwise, and his words have fallen unheeded, as water spilt on dry ground, they are not ready to acknowledge any thing defective on their part. They have put themselves within the reach of the preacher's voice, and if it fail to convince their understandings, or affect their hearts, the fault may be very probably his, but they are not so ready to say that it may also be their own. Such individuals, and we fear there are too many such, are little disposed to take to themselves that share of responsibility which as truly lies upon the people as upon their pastor; for, if it be manifest, as it is, not only from the words before us, but from the

whole tenor of Scripture language, that every person living under the preaching of the Gospel is charged with the personal responsibility of working out his own salvation—and if waiting on the preaching of the word be not only a great and solemn duty binding on all, but an appointed means which God has expressly promised to bless, when rightly employed, for the communication of saving knowledge and saving faith—if all this be true, and that it is so none surely will venture to deny, then it must be obvious that not only the preacher who presides in that ordinance, but every individual who participates in it, is personally responsible to Him by whom that ordinance has been appointed. To worship God surely implies an exercise of the worshipper's own mind, not the mere act of repeating or saying of prayers which are sent up in the service of God—not the mere act of standing up with the minister, or even of piously listening to the supplications which, in their name, he pours out before a throne of grace—not a mere cold intellectual consideration of the clearness or obscurity, of the force or feebleness of style in which the subject of discourse is handled by the preacher; and yet we fear that this is all, and more than all, the service that too many render unto God on such occasions. I would desire, therefore, to avail myself of the present opportunity for stating, by way of admonition, that not only the preacher who declares the counsel of God, but the people who hear that divine counsel, are responsible to Him for the manner in which they wait on the preaching of the word. The mere drawing near to God with the mouth, and professing to honour him with the lips, is not a service with which God would be well pleased. "Son, daughter, give me thine heart," is what he himself has said, and what he has declared to be written in every act of religious worship, without which it is but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. And what different effects might we not anticipate would attend the preaching of the Gospel did people assemble under that sense of personal responsibility I have been seeking to enforce? It would be like the difference between the casting of seed upon the unbroken and untilld surface of the ground, and sowing that seed on a soil that has been cultivated and prepared. In the one case, we can expect at the utmost but a few scattered ears as the fruit of our labour; in the

other it might be our high privilege to raise an abundant harvest. And surely the best means to enable you to bring your hearts and minds on the Lord's day into that state I have been seeking to enforce—for the wandering from which you are as responsible to God as the person who declares the divine counsel in your presence—is by making religion a week-day, as well as a sabbath-day consideration. If God and his word, and your own salvation, be neglected and forgotten for six days, what reason is there to hope that they should occupy a very prominent place in your minds on the seventh? If six days of the week be given wholly and heartily to the world, and only one, and that nominally, to God, what effect can we expect to accompany the preaching of the most accomplished minister? He speaks in that ease to those who seeing see not, and hearing hear not, for their eyes are heavy that they cannot see, and their ears are dull that they cannot hear. If we desire that a blessing should rest on the preaching of the Gospel, the people must be fellow-workers in the same cause with their minister. It is for their salvation he is labouring, and surely it is an object about which he cannot be more solicitous than they ought to be, that his labours shall not be in vain in the Lord. His responsibility for the faithfulness with which he does his duty of declaring the divine counsel, is a matter between his own conscience and the great judge of all; but let it never be forgotten, that, however the case may stand with him, it will not affect the ease with them. He may have failed to warn the wicked to turn from his wicked ways, and, though the blood of that wicked man shall assuredly be required at his hand, yet that wicked man, nevertheless, shall die in his iniquity. Look then, my brethren, to yourselves. On the great day of reckoning, when the books shall be opened, and the secrets of all hearts shall be made known, the minister shall then answer for his part and the people undoubtedly shall answer for theirs. If he has been unfaithful, and has lived and died without a personal interest in Christ, it will avail him nothing to say, "Lord, have I not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful things?" And if, on the other hand, the people have been unconverted, it will be equally fruitless to charge their ruin upon him, for though such a charge, if alleged

with truth, must terribly aggravate his guilt, it will neither remove nor lessen their condemnation.

In entering, then, on the duties of that important and interesting relation which has been established between us, let us seek to have this solemn consideration engraven on the tables of our hearts. You have called me to preach, and kindly received me as your minister in the Lord; I have deliberately accepted and obeyed that call, rejoicing in this cordiality, and by the appointed office-bearers in the church have been placed in the position you have invited me to occupy. A contract has thus been established between us, the consequences of which shall be felt throughout the ages

of eternity. The great head of the church has been witness to the pledge which has virtually passed between us, and not one of these high and sacred obligations, either on the one side or on the other, can be violated without being seen and regarded by Him whose eyes are as a flaming fire. Behold He cometh; let us therefore watch and pray, so that at his coming, instead of coming to fight against us with the sword of his mouth, because of our unfaithfulness and unfruitfulness, he may, on the contrary, come to testify of our faith and service, and works of charity, and to make us pillars in the temple of God, to go no more out. May He bless his own word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

GOD, THE SOLACE OF HIS PEOPLE;

CONCLUSION OF A SERMON PREACHED FROM DEUTERONOMY xxxiii. 27, AT BORROWSTOUNESS, ON THE COMMUNION SABBATH EVENING THERE, BEING A VERY FEW DAYS AFTER THE SUDDEN AND LAMENTED DEATH OF THE REV. DR. RENNIE, MINISTER OF THAT PARISH, WHO HAD MADE ALL THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS, AND FIXED THE DIFFERENT MINISTERS TO ASSIST ON THAT SACRAMENTAL OCCASION.

By the Rev. GRAHAM MITCHELL, A.M.,

Minister of Whitburn.

God is the refuge and solace of his people, when they are called to mourn the loss of a faithful, zealous, and efficient pastor gone down to the grave, to whom they have been long united by the most tender and hallowed tie. In the affecting circumstances, therefore, in which you are thus placed, think on the divine consolations which have been submitted to your view, while you think of the sudden exit of him whose departure from life was more like a translation than a death, who laboured so indefatigably and affectionately among you for so many years, and who, in the ardour of his soul, had purposed to take some share in the solemn services of this Communion Sabbath; but, alas! while man may devise, it is the Lord who directs, "who holds our souls in life." But was not God his refuge and his strength? He delighted in his Master and in his work, To this I can bear my humble testimony. Having enjoyed the benefit of his friendship

for many years, I can speak from experience that he had the good of souls deeply at heart, and that he had no greater joy than to see his people walk in the truth; to the justice of which statement, the heart of every one present will be ready to respond. Deservedly then ought his memory to be held in affectionate remembrance by us all. Especially the instructions he gave you, which were embodied in the holy and consistent life he led, "whilst he went out and in among you," ought now to remind you of the great design and tendency of them all, to lead you to an implicit dependence on the Rock of salvation, to draw your happiness from the deep reservoir of divine love, the fountain of living waters, by making God your refuge, and the Most High your habitation. Sheltered within this impregnable fortress, think, ye children of affliction and sorrow, what light arises in the midst of darkness, even in contemplating the solemn

truth of a watchman of immortal souls, called to give an account of his stewardship. It should fill the heart of the Christian with joy and hope, that to the believer sudden death is sudden glory, and that the ambassador of Christ, whose loss you all so deeply deplore, is just called to reap the reward of those who have turned many unto righteousness, "who shine as the sun and the stars in the firmament for ever and ever." What earthly considerations can be compared to this! It should abate much of the anguish naturally felt attending so sudden and unexpected a call. It should dissipate much of the gloom so apt to brood over the mind, when looking towards the still and peaceful grave, filled by one whom we saw so lately in health and life. It should fill with everlasting consolation and good hope, through grace, the hearts of all under his ministry, that though it could have been little anticipated in regard to this Communion Sabbath which your pastor had looked forward to with more than ordinary interest—that when the solemn day actually came round, that it would have brought, as it has done, such a train of affecting feelings and associations to the bosoms of his afflicted family, and to you his bereaved flock. Yet what greater comfort than to reflect, that, being enabled to be faithful in the vineyard

even to the last, in so far as regarded his personal safety he has "given in his account with joy, and not with sorrow." What though the chief shepherd and overseer of souls permitted him *not* to take a share in the solemn services of this Communion Sabbath, as he himself had fondly purposed and anticipated? what though that voice which was to have addressed you from the Table of the Lord, be now mute for ever, and those hands which were to have broken the bread of life, to have distributed among you the emblems of redeeming love, be now cold and motionless in the grave; yet here is your comfort, that he has been called to a sweeter fellowship—that his communion this day is direct with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Godhead unveiled, and not like us only by mere symbols and signs—that there faith is turned into sight, and hope into full fruition, amid rivers of pleasure which are at God's right hand, for he is permitted to drink of the fruit of the vine ever new in his Father's kingdom. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow." May this God be thy God, so that when heart and flesh faint and fail you, God may be also the strength of thy heart and thy portion for ever.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ARCHIBALD NISBET, Glasgow.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN THOMSON, Shettleston.

THE GLORIFIED HUMANITY OF CHRIST, AND THE COMFORT
ARISING FROM IT TO THE FAITHFUL;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. ARCHIBALD NISBET,

Minister of the Chapel of Ease, North Albion Street.

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."—REV. i. 17, 18.

WHETHER we consider the excellent truths which it contains, or the spiritual consolation which it is so well calculated to impart, the book of Revelation presents us with abundant evidence of its divine and heavenly origin. Those truths which the Spirit of God had formerly revealed to holy men of old, are here amply confirmed, the most animating encouragement to perseverance in the faith presented to the believer, and, above all, a view of future events well fitted to gladden our hearts, and elevate our hopes. At the period before us, persecution had reduced the Church to the most imminent danger, and exposed all its true members to suffering and to death. But in this book, a glorious view opens to us, and before its termination, Jesus rises triumphant, and fills heaven and earth with the splendour of his name, so that the stream of sacred prediction, which once appeared like a small fountain, but was seen to increase as it flowed along, amid revolving ages, now magnifies upon the view, and becomes a mighty river, enriching, adorning, and refreshing, the adjacent land. Such a portion of the divine will is therefore worthy of our deep regard and serious attention. That it contains many difficulties, it were presumptuous to deny, and, till the event interpret the things that are spoken, at present, insuperable. But

while we presume these are frequently magnified, a diligent perusal of the book before us will ever afford to the believing mind much instruction, and much consolation. The author of it, who, as the title sufficiently evinces, was the apostle John, introduces himself by an account of a striking and wonderful vision with which he was favoured in the isle of Patmos. Being in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and entranced in deep and solemn meditation, he hears behind him a great voice as of a trumpet, and turning round, is admitted to a sight far too dazzling for human eye, and overwhelming to the weakness of the human spirit. There Jesus his Lord and Master, to whose friendly voice he had often and often listened in deepest attention—with whom he had sojourned many a weary day, amid the scorn of men—on whose bosom he had once leaned in all the familiarity of tender affection, and whose death he had witnessed on the heights of Calvary—is seen arrayed with unparalleled lustre, encompassed with radiance unutterable, and adorned with all the honour and exaltation of mediatorial glory. No sooner does the Apostle cast his eye upon the exalted personage standing before him, than he is seized with terrible alarm, and like the Prophet of old, when placed in similar circumstances, falls at his feet as dead. But as Jesus had appeared,

not to terrify, but to comfort—as his tenderness is the same in heaven as it was upon earth, and as he is ever ready to pour down the abundance of the same upon all his followers, he supports him by the hand, adding these consolatory words: “Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hell and of Death.” We cannot too frequently meditate upon the glory of our risen and exalted Redeemer. If we wish to have our affections purified, our souls elevated, and our minds filled with heavenly joy, it will be our delight to engage in such an exercise. Besides, when we remember that in commemorating his dying love, we are often called to contemplate him in the depth of degradation, through the symbols of his broken body, and his shed blood, let us now raise ourselves above the world—let us look within the veil, and, convinced of the marvellous truth that the crucified Jesus was God over all blessed for evermore, let us dispel every fear, and in this faith rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. In discoursing to you a little farther from these words, it shall be our endeavour, humbly depending upon divine aid, to consider, in the first place, the description here given of the glorified Jesus, and, in the second place, advert to the consolation which it is calculated, more especially in the prospect of death, to impart to his followers, concluding with an application of the subject.

According to this method, we are then, in the first place, to consider the description here given of the glorified Jesus. This we shall do, in the order of the words before us. “I am the First and the Last.” That such perfections belong to the eternal God, to Him who is the fountain of all existence, to Him who has sat, and will for ever sit, on the throne of a far and wide extended universe, cannot admit of a single doubt. At the same time, it is worthy of observation, that the exalted Being to whom these are attributed, is also represented as Man, and accordingly described in such a manner, as to convince us that he is so; “his head and his hairs were white like wool; his eyes were as a flame of fire; his feet were like unto fine brass, that burned in a furnace, and his voice like the sound of many waters.” We may, therefore, conclude, that the personage whose glorious appearance so overwhelmed the Apostle, is to be considered in this passage neither as God exclusively, nor as man, but

as both—even the eternal Son—the brightness of the Divinity—the express image of the Father, and the Redeemer of a guilty and an apostate race. Such a notion of God and Man, mysteriously united in one person, we know to be rejected by some as inconceivable, and thus, according to their mode of reasoning, false and absurd. But, not to enter into a controversy which we presume to be decided by the words of the text, it is our joy and confidence that He who once appeared as the messenger of God, and the Messiah of his people, who became a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief, who was slain without the gates of Jerusalem, buried in the grave, and now, having accomplished the salvation of his people, stands exalted above all principality and power, is, indeed, one with God, the equal of the Almighty, and the fellow of Jehovah. At the same time, we are fully convinced that the words of the text are not applied to Jesus as he is God, but only as he is God-man, and that as in the scheme of redemption, as to its purpose, its execution, and its fulfilment, he holds the first and the highest place, he may well be called the “First and the Last.” It is true that he existed before all things, and by him all things consist. It is true that when heaven, and earth, and sea, when suns and systems, those bright memorials of his divine perfections, shall have fled away, and no place be found for them, he shall still endure unchangeable, amid every change, and may therefore claim the titles asserted in the text. But we consider it here assumed by Immanuel, wholly in reference to the scheme of Redemption, and that as he was from eternal ages appointed by the Father to this exalted undertaking, was alone qualified for its accomplishment, and is now Head over all, He may well be called the “First and the Last.” Long before time had numbered days and hours, long before creation had unfolded its beauties and bounties, even while he dwelt in the bosom of the Father, he was destined to this arduous and important work. Nor was this without ample reason. Being invested with the glories of omnipotent power, unerring wisdom, unfailing mercy, and unchangeable truth, he was fully able for the accomplishment of a task from which all the millions of his creatures would have shrunk with dismay. In this character, he was the eternal delight of Jehovah, and as the Head of that covenant by which divine justice was to be magnified,

and yet divine love infinitely exalted, the first and the chief in the Almighty mind. On Him was lavished all the fulness of the Godhead—around Him blazed the splendours of Omnipotence, and before Him heaven even poured out her unnumbered delights. “Jehovah possessed him in the beginning of his ways. He was set up from everlasting or ever the earth was. He was by Him as one brought up with Him; he was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; when there were no depths, he was brought forth, and when there were no fountains abounding with waters, no heavens settled, no mountains prepared, and no clouds established, he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men.” The same exalted station which he occupied in the divine mind—the same high place which he obtained in his everlasting purposes, he found in the manifestation of his will. There as the object of all faith, and as the foundation of all hope, he stands gloriously pre-eminent. To exhibit him, and him alone, is the end of all Jehovah’s works and ways; so that when that Being condescended to draw aside the veil, and speak to mortal man, break that silence in which he might have eternally dwelt, and treat with the creature of utter frailty as with a fellow, make our world a theatre of so many and so astonishing wonders, it was wholly to manifest and make known his Son’s exalted name. From the beginning to the end of Revelation his works hold the chief and the highest place. Not only do we find him as the Ancient of days, calling a world into existence, declaring himself to Abraham as the Almighty God, proclaiming his glory amid the thunders of Sinai, and exalting his name by awful signs and unnumbered miracles, but at the same time as about to become incarnate, as the end of every Revelation, the substance of every sacrifice, and the fulfilment of every promise. Did the Eternal whisper in dream or vision—speak from the whirlwind or storm, or thunder from the majesty of Heaven? Did he demand the blood of lambs, the slaughter of innocent victims, rivers of oil, and clouds of incense? Did he guide his people in danger, support them in distress, and cheer their souls in the prospect of deliverance? The design of all was to prepare the way for Immanuel, and introduce a coming God. Ask me the reason of all this, and I tell you that He is the only image of Divinity, the only mani-

festation of the eternal, and all-pervading Spirit to his intelligent creatures, and as the Head of a new and everlasting covenant, by which manifold glory hath redounded to Jehovah, the first and the last of beings. And now, that as God-man, he sits at the right hand of his Father, and in yonder shining world is encircled with the radiance of inconceivable glory, he has that place in his church militant and church triumphant as to entitle him to such an exalted claim. From Him, as the only mediator between God and man, his people derive life and peace, consolation and joy. By his power they are protected, by his wisdom they are guided, by his goodness they are sustained, and by his gracious hand will at last obtain eternal redemption, and be brought to the realms of unfading day. Thither let us cast our eyes, and still He is the same. There millions of holy and happy spirits encompass the throne, clothed with purity, adorned with honour, and crowned with joy. But, like the sun in the firmament, round which revolve a thousand dimmer and inferior orbs, he blazes brighter than them all, and will continue so amid all the changes of a coming futurity. But our blessed Lord claims the exalted title, not only of being the first and the last, as he is the eternal Creator of all things in heaven and in earth, the head of the covenant and king of his Church, but also that of the “Living one.” “I am the First and the Last, I am He that liveth;” or, as it might be rendered, “I am the living one.” This is a title peculiarly appropriated to the eternal and self-existent, and uncreated God, and that for various reasons. First, in opposition to the idols of the nations, which were nought but blocks of wood, or pieces of stone, unable to feel or to will, to speak or to move, while he is a living, a quickening, an all-pervading Spirit. Again, in opposition to all created existence, whether angels or men, and who, as they came into being at the word and will of another, may again perish and pass away, while he was from everlasting and shall be to everlasting, immortal, imperishable, and undecaying. But, thirdly, Jesus is called the Living God, or the Living One, chiefly because he is the source of all life and motion to his creatures. From Him, as water from a fountain, or as heat from the sun, this life floweth in unmeasured and inexhaustible abundance, so that let his Spirit but move, and immediately the dark and dreary, and noiseless void teems with animation—the

scene of desolation is lighted up with gladness, and the valley of death becomes the land of living men. It was in the full glory of this perfection that he peopled the sanctuary above with the hosts of the unfallen, and surrounded his throne with spirits, in number ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands—formed man out of the dust, and breathed into a piece of clay, spirit and motion, understanding and wisdom. It is in the full glory of this perfection that he quickens the soul corrupting in spiritual death, lights up the lamp of holiness in that charnel-house of unnumbered abominations, and infuses new life and new motion where all was sad and silent as the slumber of the grave. And in the full glory of this perfection it shall be, that, on the morning when the trump of the archangel shall be heard through heaven and earth and ocean's inmost caves, sounding the knell of eternal death to millions, he shall break the long slumbers of the tomb, animate the mouldering remains of his people with a life that can never die, and from these sad memorials of sin bring forth the army of his redeemed ones, making all to join in that anthem, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death was sin, and the strength of sin was the law, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." Hence, it must be evident, that upon him all creatures depend for life and breath, and to him owe gratitude and love, obedience and praise. Hence, it must be evident that He is the object of all faith and the foundation of all hope, both in time and in eternity. Hence, it must be evident that he shall endure for ever, that none of the vicissitudes of time can affect his being, and when sun, moon, and stars, have fled away, when heaven and earth shall have been burnt up, and all nature shrivelled and shrunk like the consuming scroll—he shall still be the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the eternal and unchangeable God. At this point, however, a marvellous wonder meets our view, and a mystery far beyond created comprehension is presented to us in these remarkable words, "I was dead," or as it might be rendered, "I became dead." What! did the First and the Last, and the Living One, the eternal Creator of all things, and the fountain of existence, submit to such a degradation? As God, this was impossible, for what can affect the omnipo-

tent and independent Jehovah. As man, however, he did suffer, and thus, the declaration in the text, is not only certain, but the essence, nay, the glory of the christian faith. Surely, then, such a truth deserves our most serious attention, our most solemn regard. Here, let it be remembered, that man had violated the law of his Creator—had rebelled against the government of his Maker, and, renouncing the supreme and universal Lord of all, had entered into unholy rebellion against the blessed God. Against him, accordingly, divine justice, armed with a flaming sword, thundered its denunciations, and injured right, in all its terrors, stood ready to destroy. But that God, who is declared to be love, whose tender mercies are over all his works, and whose benignity and compassion are ever bending towards the creatures of his hands, could not behold so many millions of immortal beings descend into the chambers of everlasting night, and therefore, in the plenitude of his bounty he thought of their deliverance from such tremendous consequences. At the same time, however, this could not be done to the disparagement of his other perfections. It became Him to vindicate his holiness, to satisfy his justice, and to preserve the honour of that law which had declared, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them." On this account, a sacrifice and a surety became necessary, both for the glory of God and the salvation of man. Here we are not to contemplate the Almighty as a wrathful and vindictive being, as actuated by any thing like human infirmity or passion, and relentless like some hellish tyrant, or some heathen god, till satisfaction is obtained. No! that were the veriest ignorance and the grossest absurdity. In this transaction we must recognise Him as the holy and righteous governor of the moral universe determined to preserve the honour of his law, and preserve the glory of his inflexible justice. But where were a proper sacrifice and sufficient surety to be found? The forests of Lebanon, with the cattle of a thousand hills, sweetened with all the perfumes of Arabia, were insufficient for a burnt-offering; the father stretched upon the altar could not atone for the son, nor the son for the father—nay, the whole hosts of heaven, throwing their crowns at the footstool of the eternal throne, could not ransom one

active from the power of the grave. At this moment, if we may so express ourselves upon such a mighty and majestic theme, the Son of God was found, who, as the second person of the blessed Godhead and the Almighty One, was fully qualified to bear the weight of sin, and to make atonement for the guilty. As God, however, he could neither suffer nor die. It thus behoved him to veil the splendour of his Deity, clothe himself in human form, and submit to all the degradation of a servant. Nor was this, as some ancient heretics imagined, a fictitious, but a real and true humanity. The fulness of time did come, and he who, from eternal ages, had reposed in the bosom of his God, became an infant of days—he who had erected the beauty of heaven and stretched out the immensity of space, became a man of sorrows, and that very being whose arm had swayed the sceptre of universal dominion, and to whose praise many an anthem had been struck, bowed to contumely and all contempt. Nay, more, as a sacrifice for sin, the same glorious personage was, in the depth of ignominy, nailed to the cross, and while his eyes dropt tears of bitterness and grief, while his hands were torn by the piercing nails, while his body was rent asunder in agony, and his heart poured out like water, while his soul was encompassed with darkness, borne down with the horrors of hell, and deserted of all that was desirable, was compelled to exclaim, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” But this was not all. Death, as the punishment of sin, was permitted to assail him. Then, astonishing spectacle! the Holy One of God was seen to bow his head, and in the presence of God, of angels, and of men, expired upon the cross, and that night found his body wrapped in the dreariness of the tomb. What an awful sight! The Prince of life shrouded in death! the Lord of glory lying in the grave! and Heaven’s delight wrapped in the caverns of the cursed earth! “Come, O come, and see the place where the Lord lay,” and as you behold his pale countenance and pierced side, his stiffened limbs and nerveless arm, drop a tear over the scene, and be constrained to say in admiring wonder, “Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.” But what follows? “I am alive for evermore.” This, indeed, is matter of joy. Though he was laid in the grave, and continued for a time a stiffened and stretch-

ed corpse, it was not possible that he could see corruption, or that the bands of death could detain him in their degrading grasp. Though enveloped in all the semblance of corruption, he was God over all and blessed for evermore. Though encompassed with the paleness of mortality, he was still the second person of the blessed Godhead; and though he was surrounded by the sadness of the tomb, and all the other accompaniments of sin’s conquest, he was still united to the undying and the eternal Spirit of the true God. If his enemies, therefore, could have bound in chains the winds of heaven—if they could have grasped in their hands the waves of the ocean, then, with equal ease, might their seal, and their stone, and their guard of Roman soldiers, have confined Emmanuel among the dead. But as the one was impossible, so was the other. That irresistible energy, by which his humanity had been at first framed, quickened his mortal body, and recalled the spirit to its former tenement, so that the adamantine gates of death were broken asunder, hell was trampled under him, and a victory was achieved, which, though it sounded not highly in the courts of earthly kings, made the hosts of heaven to shout forth in hosannas of unwonted joy. Now, accordingly, he is alive for evermore, and is Head over all things to his church. It is true, that when the consummation of all things shall arrive, and the ends of his spiritual government have been attained, he shall resign all authority into the hands of the Father. Still, however, as one with Jehovah, he shall continue to be the fountain of joy, the object of worship, and the endless theme of praise, to the redeemed in the land that is above. “Amen” is added here, and may be considered either as the word of Jesus to confirm the truth of what he had said, or the assent of the Apostle to the same, as if he had added, Yes, I believe, and I rejoice, that thou art the First and the Last, and the Living One, the image of Divinity, and the brightness of that glory. I believe, and I rejoice, that thou didst clothe thyself in human form, submit to every sorrow, and for me and mine iniquities, expire on the accursed tree. I believe, and I rejoice, that the bands of death were not able to contain thee, but that, by the power of thy Godhead, triumphing over principalities and powers, thou didst accomplish the salvation of thy people. I believe, and I rejoice, that thou art now in heaven, the prophet, the priest, and the king of thy

Church, able to deliver from sin and from death, and that though I am yet far from thee, though a shadow intervene between us, and that though I cannot penetrate that veil behind which thou sittest in awful and innumerable splendour, yet, after the night of death is past, I shall awake and be satisfied with thy likeness, drink of that ocean of love which ever floweth from thy bosom, and join that throng whose notes shall, through eternity, swell louder and louder as they sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

But there is something more than this. In consequence of his death as a ransom for sin, his triumph over its power, and his ascension to glory in human nature, Jesus, the Mediator, further declares, "I have the keys of hell and of death;" that is, the sovereign dominion both of this and the invisible world, moving them from the perishable scenes of the one, and introducing them to the awful realities of the other. The word which is here translated "Hell," does not give the full force of the original, and might be more correctly rendered the unseen, or the unknown, state, comprehending that of the righteous and of the wicked upon their separation from the body. Death being the portal through which immortal spirits pass into this state, is also in the hand of the exalted Immanuel. The meaning, therefore, is as if he had said, I have the keys of death and of the invisible world. Sin and death had obtained power over the human race, barred the entrance into the celestial country, and with most inhuman sway lorded it over the vanquished. But the Son of the Eternal, glorying in the strength of his Godhead, went forth to the battle, fought with undaunted heart against the enemies of heaven and of man, bore from their hands the ensigns of their authority, and, returning from the bloody contest, was welcomed with loud hosannas as the Lord both of this and the invisible world, as determining the fates of the one and possessing the absolute disposal of the other. Nothing can give us a higher idea of the glory to which Jesus has been raised than this truth, and its evident testimony of his being God over all and blessed for evermore. And this will be evident upon slight consideration. Seated on a throne high and lifted up, honoured above all the sons of God, and in the enjoyment

of a full felicity, he not only determines the times and disposes the fate of all the millions of our race, but also over the spirits of the invisible world, whether holy or wicked spirits, whether the happy of the redeemed or the wretched of the condemned, holds absolute and unbounded sway. Death comes, and that often when not expected, but it comes at his command. And thus it is that when men are busying themselves with this world's affairs, pursuing profit and pleasure, and a thousand vanities, rearing projects which are soon to be blasted by the breath of the devouring tyrant, and living as if the same were at a distance, Jesus is opening the gate and introducing them to the land unseen. Our times are wholly in his hand. Now, he calls the infant of tender years, whose eyes had scarcely welcomed the beauties of creation, and whose ear had scarcely tingled with the sound of human voice. Then he summons the youth whose imagination had pictured out many a gay scene, who dreamt little of eternity, and who, despite the warning of pale disease, was living careless of all beyond the present. Now, he speaks to the man of bustle and of business, and from mourning wife separates the husband, from weeping children the parent, and from grieving friend the kind companion. Then he lays his mandate on infirmity and age, dissolves the tottering and enfeebled frame, and lays the wearied and the worn at rest, inscribing upon all the mournful sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." As Jesus, in the exercise of his authority, appoints the moment, so he determines the manner of death, and thus, whether that event may come in sudden surprise, lingering sickness, or protracted agony, call it not chance, call it not accident, but the doings of Him in whose hand are the spirits of all flesh, and who, being Lord of heaven and of earth, has a right to give, and a right to take away, at whatever time, and in whatever manner, he may please. On the same ground he has full power to save, and has frequently saved his people from death, delivered them from the grasp of the devouring monster, and then caused them to triumph in his glory. On the same ground he has full power to destroy the wicked, and in the midst of all their glory and greatness, their pomp and pride, their boasting and rebellion, to lay his enemies prostrate in the dust. Think of the former, O believer, and be not afraid of the scorn, and hatred, and cruelty of men.

Think of the latter, whosoever thou art, O thoughtless, and ungodly, and impenitent sinner, and, remember that, while thou art dishonouring the name, profaning the ordinances, violating the laws, and resisting the love of Jesus, he has power to visit thee with the stroke of death, and, from the commission of sin, to bring thee at once to his judgment-seat. But the power of the glorified Redeemer occupies a wider and a still more important scene. He has the keys, not only of death, but also of the invisible world, and can, therefore, translate the departing spirit into a state either of joy or of ceaseless woe. That the soul exists separate from the body, and that after death men are situated according to the merit or the demerit of their actions, are truths which reason will acknowledge, though she could do but little in the attainment of this discovery. The nature of the human spirit, which, being immaterial, perishes not, the natural longings of the inner man after immortality, and the justice of God, were arguments which made the very heathen conclude, that death was not the extinction of being, but, on the contrary, the introduction to some new, some higher state of existence. What the boasted wisdom of man could not do, the gospel has discovered, giving full assurance of life and immortality beyond the grave, and declaring that to such as seek for glory, honour and immortality, there is eternal life, but to them who are contentious and obey not the truth, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. Over this invisible, this unknown land, Jesus is commissioned to possess full and absolute authority, so that of all the millions of this world who are daily departing and entering the invisible realities of the other, not one can escape his all-seeing and all-searching eye. The soul labouring and heavy laden, disquieted and cast down, may be ready to suppose that it will leave the present, tread the dark path, and be left to wander unprotected and unseen. But no; the blessed Jesus, as he turns the key of their earthly destiny, is ready to receive his people, to welcome them to joy, and to give them a place in the mansions of everlasting rest. The hardened and impenitent and obstinate sinner, as he escapes judgment here, and runs unhurt the career of rebellion and iniquity, may expect to enter that world, and find a place where to cover his enormity and guilt. But no:

Jesus is no less just than he is gracious, and while he saves to the uttermost all that come unto God through him, he must consign to the blackness of darkness, the enemies of his name. Yes, the Lord of glory sits on high, and while in the lustre of his Omnipotence, he rules among the kingdoms of men, the perfections of his Godhead are equally exhibited in the world of spirits—bestowing upon one poor sinner who has just breathed his last, glory and honour, and inflicting upon another, infamy and shame—introducing the one to joy, and consigning the other to bitterness and sorrow. Contemplate a friend or fellow-creature closing the eye in death, and bidding adieu to us and to time, and think of the important sentence that is passing. Meditate upon the joy and the delight which the redeemed now possess in heaven—the misery and woe, and ceaseless sorrow, to which the impenitent are doomed in hell, and above all, look forward to that period when the doors of the grave shall break asunder, and the mansions of the dead shall be laid open, when body shall be joined to spirit, and spirit shall be joined to body, and then you have some faint idea of the glory of that Being who overrules the whole, and who therefore says, “I am the First and the Last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” And this brings us to consider briefly the comfort which his followers may derive from this description of the Redeemer’s character. The language of the text is evidently intended to confirm the Apostle against the fear of death. But as it is a declaration of the power and authority of the blessed Redeemer, it is well calculated to gladden the hearts and elevate the hopes of his people in every condition of life. If their compassionate Saviour is the First and the Last, and the Living One, why should they at any time be alarmed? If he is almighty, all-wise, and all-gracious, why should they be disquieted or cast down? If he is eternal and unchangeable, why should the world, or any of its concerns, affect their spirits? From the abundant and inexhaustible stores of his goodness, he will supply them with all temporal and spiritual good. By the Omnipotence of power, he will protect them from a thousand raging enemies. In the glory of his grace, he will at last bring them to the joy of his

Father's house. Instead of mourning and murmuring—instead of grieving and doubting, the true Christian has reason to rejoice, and even when clouds and darkness are round about, to sing in the language of exulting triumph. Moreover, if that Redeemer became dead, and is now alive for evermore, sin has been expiated, and the guilty children of men, placed within the reach of pardon and eternal life. Grateful, exceedingly grateful, indeed, must it be to the ministers of Christ, to proclaim such glad news to condemned and dying men, and above all things consolatory, it must be to the believer, to hear that mercy and truth have met together, that righteousness and peace have embraced each other. The foundation of this is firm as the everlasting mountains, and thus we hesitate not to call upon every sinner, whatever be the unworthiness of his character, to take refuge in this heavenly truth; and we beseech every believer, to relish more and more, to live more and more upon its sweetness and grace. Yes, Jesus was crucified for sin and wounded for transgression. But he now lives, and is alive for evermore, and therefore they who believe in him, will be delivered from the punishment and the power of sin, and when heaven, and earth, and seas, have fled away, shall flourish in the glory of a spiritual and everlasting redemption. Farther, if this glorified Redeemer has the keys of hell and of death, his people have a powerful antidote against the fear of the last tyrant. We know, that the very best of men are ready to eye with reluctance the dark valley, and shrink back in amazement, as they see in prospect the swellings of Jordan. While this in a high degree, is unreasonable, it is most faithless. Do they not desire him to direct their ways, and guide their paths in this world? Do they not pray that he may keep them in all their wanderings, and bring them at last to security and rest? Do they not daily implore his presence in all their ways,

and his countenance in all their actions? and shall they not fearlessly, cheerfully and undauntedly follow him, not only from place to place here, but even from world to world? how lightsome and pleasant the one, how dark and gloomy the other. By him the path of death is not untrodden. By him that land whence no traveller has ever returned, is not unknown. In these circumstances, he is well qualified to be their guide from time to eternity, from a world of matter to one of spirits, and therefore should command at that time not only their cordial resignation, but also their most implicit confidence. True it is, their bodies will moulder in the grave, and become the food of worms. But we know that a day will come, when their mortal shall put on immortality, their corruptible, incorruption, and death be swallowed up in victory; and thus it is, that though to the wicked and impenitent, death be an awful and alarming event, to the believer it must be one of joy and of exulting triumph. Let such, then, as are without God, and without hope in the world, be awakened from the deathful slumber, and now in the day of mercy find an interest in this Almighty Redeemer. Without this, the consequences will be awful. For they may rest assured, that the very same power which is exhibited in the salvation of his people, will at last be displayed in the destruction of his enemies, and then, upon every consideration, there is a loud call upon the unbelieving and the ungodly, “to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.” Let believers, while rejoicing in his peace, live to his glory. This will be an evidence of their interest in and union to him. Without this, all is but an empty formality. Let them wait upon his word, be obedient to his will, and then shall they be prepared for beholding him at last in all the fulness of his power, and living eternally in his blessed service.

ON ASSURANCE OF SALVATION;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. JOHN THOMSON,

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"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."—2 PET. i. 10.

A DIFFERENCE of opinion exists as to the force of the exhortation before us, corresponding to the opposite views entertained of the manner in which our preparation for eternity is to be accomplished. By those, on the one hand, who conceive that our title to the blessings of the gospel redemption depends, in a great measure, if not entirely upon ourselves, the Apostle is here understood as requiring us so to act as to secure, in virtue of our own good deeds, those blessings, to which as disciples of Jesus we are called, and for the enjoyment of which, on condition, as they allege, of our thus meriting the attainment of them, we have been chosen or elected of God. By those, on the other hand, who maintain that salvation is entirely of free grace, emanating solely from the good pleasure of God, and, in no sense, the result of human merit, the language here employed is regarded as simply directing us to seek after, what is elsewhere denominated by the apostle Paul, "the full assurance of hope"—in other words, to aim habitually, or as it is here expressed, with "diligence" at the possession of a rational, because well-founded, certainty as to our interest in the fruits of Christ's purchase, or, in the words of the text, our "calling and election."

The latter of these two opinions, in respect to the meaning and bearing of the exhortation before us, is that alone which we apprehend can be entertained in any consistency either with the general scope of scripture declaration, or with the peculiar nature and obvious tendency of the gospel scheme. Not only do the sacred writers set before us, prominently and repeatedly, as a fundamental article of revealed truth, the inability of man, in his present fallen condition, of himself to do any thing that is really excellent or meritorious, far less any thing that can so bear upon his past guilt as to satisfy the claims of God's incensed justice, but in every passage where any direct allusion is made by

them to the source or the procuring cause of man's salvation, that salvation is uniformly ascribed to *free grace* or unmerited mercy. We might refer you to a vast multitude of such passages; which indeed are to be found in almost every page of the Sacred Volume. There are only two or three, however, to which we think it necessary, at present, to call your attention, but which we apprehend are themselves quite decisive. The first of these is contained (in Rom. iii. 24.) where the Apostle, speaking of the gospel salvation as bearing upon the divine glory, not only ascribes it all to the *FREE GRACE* of God, but traces its source to something *APART FROM THE SINNER ALTOGETHER*, even the already finished work of the Saviour himself. "Being justified *FREELY BY HIS GRACE, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." The same doctrine is very distinctly taught, Gal. iii. 11. where the sacred writer, disproving the possibility of being saved by our own good works brings forward a quotation from the prophet Habakkuk, "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, *the just shall live by faith.*" And again we find the same Apostle thus (Titus iii. 5—7.) disclaiming all merit on the part of the redeemed, and proclaiming the mercy and the grace of God, as their only source of pardon and eternal life. "NOT BY WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS which we have done, but ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." It needs but little penetration to perceive that the passages thus submitted, (which we apprehend to be very fair examples of the general scope of scripture declaration,) while

they are manifestly in strict accordance with the former of the two opinions referred to, regarding the force of the exhortation contained in the text, are also, at the same time, in direct contrariety to the other supposition, that the language here employed by the apostle Peter, is to be regarded as directing us to establish for ourselves, by personal meritorious obedience, the right to the blessings of the gospel salvation.

Nor is this supposition less manifestly inconsistent with the nature and tendency of the gospel scheme. The grand object for which that scheme has been devised, and brought into operation, is just the deliverance of our fallen race from the spiritual and moral corruption by which we are now characterized. This state of *death in trespasses and sins*, as it is termed in Scripture, involves essentially the incapacity of man either for knowing or for serving God aright, and necessarily, therefore, precludes the possibility of our being able to do any thing of ourselves which can either disarm the divine vengeance, or merit the divine favour. It is consequently very obvious, that, if we are to be rescued at all from the evils of our present degraded condition, it must be in some way different from that personal meritorious obedience which was required under the covenant of works, but which, now that that covenant has been broken and abrogated, is thus on our part utterly impossible. Accordingly, in seeking to deliver us from our naturally ruined and miserable situation, the Gospel is fully accommodated to the peculiar characteristic feature of this fallen state. Pardon and eternal life are here proclaimed as in no degree dependent upon any condition to be performed by man. An adequate satisfaction to the claims of divine justice is, no doubt, still recognised as essentially requisite. The honour of the divine law, and the glory of the divine nature, could not otherwise have been rightly preserved. But the redemption of the Gospel is not on this account the less gratuitous. For, with the actual accomplishment of the required satisfaction, the sinner himself has nothing whatever to do. It has already been fully perfected by the obedience and death of Christ as his substitute and surety. All that belongs to him in the attainment of the blessings of salvation is just, in the exercise of evangelical faith, to cast himself unreservedly upon the Saviour's perfect righteousness and accepted sacrifice, receiving these blessings of salvation humbly and

implicitly, as secured for all Christ's believing people, solely in virtue of what has thus been done and suffered on their behalf. *FREE, not less than rich and overflowing MERCY, then, IS OF THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL.* Deprive it of this peculiar distinguishing feature, and you necessarily take away from it all its consistency, and all its practical power. It follows, therefore, that, since the nature and tendency of the Gospel scheme is thus completely at variance with every thing like meritorious obedience on the part of the sinner, when the Apostle exhorts us, in the language of the text, "to make our calling and election sure," he cannot be justly regarded as intending us to establish for ourselves a right to the various blessings which these terms imply. We are consequently directed to the only other meaning of which the verse before us is susceptible—that which points, not to the *act* of securing our calling and election, but to the *evidence* that these are already in respect to us completely made sure. In other words, the Apostle is here to be understood as requiring us to seek after a full assurance or moral certainty, as to our being effectually called, and thus to ascertain the fact of our election to grace and to glory.

But here there are three very important questions which naturally present themselves. First,—Is the attainment of this moral certainty, as to our calling and election, really possible? Secondly,—Does it essentially belong to the christian character? And, thirdly,—How is it at all to be secured? The resolution of these questions shall occupy the sequel of the present discourse.

I. *Is the attainment of this moral certainty, as to our calling and election, really possible?*

We hesitate not for a moment to answer the question in the affirmative. Indeed we can scarcely conceive it possible for any one who really understands the meaning, and attentively considers the bearing, of the language contained in the text, to have any other opinion on the subject. The Apostle, you will observe, not only directs our attention to this personal assurance of salvation, as a legitimate object of desire and pursuit, but actually commands us to devote to it our utmost exertion and unwearied care. "GIVE DILIGENCE," says he "to make your calling and election sure." If then the object to which, as we have seen, this exhortation unquestionably points, be altogether

beyond our reach, how are we to account for the importance thus manifestly attached to it? Is it at all reasonable to suppose, that in this case the acquisition of it would have been so particularly and pointedly recommended? Or is it possible to overlook the uselessness, nay the utter absurdity, by which, on such a supposition, the language of an inspired Apostle is necessarily characterized? And are we not therefore at once shut up to the conclusion, that the very reverse is to be, or rather cannot but be, inferred from the exhortation before us? Nor is this the only passage of Scripture whence the very same inference is obviously to be drawn. The Prophet Isaiah (xxxii. 17.) speaking of the happy consequences of the outpouring of the Spirit, expressly declares, that "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, *quietness, and assurance* for ever." The Apostle John also (1st John iii. 19.) exhorting his fellow-disciples to cultivate the grace of charity or brotherly love, as a distinguishing mark of conversion, puts forth these remarkable words, "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and *shall assure our hearts before Him.*" We find the apostle Paul likewise (Heb. vi. 11.) thus addressing the Jewish converts, "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to **THE FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE** unto the end." And surely if such an expression of desire by the Apostle towards his believing countrymen has any meaning or any consistency, it must be understood as intimating that the prevailing assurance of an interest in the blessings of Christ's purchase, is, not only of possible attainment, but the privilege of genuine disciples—a privilege, towards the enjoyment of which, their every effort should be directed, and without the possession of which they ought never at any time to rest contented.

What is thus plainly taught by the explicit language of Scripture is, at the same time, very obviously involved in the connexion that subsists between the faith of the Gospel, and that eternal life which the Gospel promises and secures. For, the attainment of this eternal life, or, in other words, of final salvation, being the absolutely certain result of genuine belief in the Saviour, if it be possible, in any way, satisfactorily to ascertain that we are the real disciples of Christ, then unquestionably, upon the very same grounds, may we rest **assured** that we are truly interested in all

the blessings of redemption. But that the faith of the christian disciple may indeed be thus fully ascertained, will not and cannot be disputed by any one who gives himself the trouble to remember that it is not only of a definite character, but is clearly marked out in Scripture as invariably productive of certain specific fruits. It follows, therefore, that being thus able to discover whether we are really in the faith, the certainty of our personal salvation, as inseparably connected with this grand christian principle, is also at the same time within our reach.

Nor is the attainableness of this personal assurance, or moral certainty as to our calling and election, less clearly proved by the evidence of fact and experience. That it has been often realized in all its fulness, cannot but be well known to every one who is in any degree conversant with the history of the Christian Church. Not a few examples, the most unequivocal and decisive, are presented to us in the pages of inspiration. Without resting particularly on the experience of the psalmist David, whose language very frequently denotes the fullest confidence as to his spiritual state, or on that of the patriarch Job, whose expectation of acceptance on the great day of account, was not less firm and undoubting, or on that of the apostle Paul, who, in addition to many other declarations of similar import, thus expresses himself in his second epistle to Timothy: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day"—without resting particularly on such instances as these, or on several others of a like description, recorded in Scripture, (which, however, we still hold to be perfectly legitimate and truly decisive examples,) we may refer to the case of the Jailer at Philippi, whose fear, under the conviction of sin and the prospect of destruction, was turned into joy under the attainment of peace with God, and the expectation of eternal life. We are expressly informed (Acts xvi. 34.) that when Paul and Silas, in answer to his question, "What shall I do to be saved?" had spoken unto him the word of the Lord, he not only received from them the privilege of christian baptism, and manifested at the same time, by treating them with kindness, the actual change produced upon his cruel temper and hardened feelings, but also "*rejoiced*, believing in God with all his house." Of this joy in the Holy Ghost, which unquestionably is inseparable

from "the full assurance of hope," another example, not less striking and decisive, is recorded in the 8th chapter of this same book of Acts, where we are told that the Ethiopian Ruler, to whom Philip had been specially sent by the Holy Spirit, being brought to a full belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, was enabled, immediately after his interview with that Evangelist, to go forward on his way *rejoicing*. Again, we find the same personal experience, with its happy fruits, presented to us 1st Peter, i. 8, 9. where the Apostle, referring to the spiritual state of those whom he is more immediately addressing, speaks of them as, "*rejoicing with joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, receiving the end of their faith, even the *salvation of their souls*."

What has been thus decisively exemplified in the earlier ages of the Christian Church, has been also realized in almost every subsequent period of its progress. Individuals have very frequently made their appearance, who have not only exhibited the most assured confidence as to their interest in the blessings of Christ's purchase, but the steadiness of whose christian principle, and the practical power of whose christian hope have left us no room to doubt, that such confidence was in their case not less well-founded than it was real and confirmed. And though, indeed, the utmost caution is necessary in our estimation, of every case where the attainment of such personal assurance is now professed, yet surely it is far from being an unreasonable conclusion that the same principles and views, which thus certainly operated to this effect upon not a few of the primitive disciples of Christ, may still, at times, be productive of the like happy and consolatory fruits.

II. But again, *Does the attainment of*

this moral certainty, as to our calling and election, belong essentially to a state of grace?

This is a question which has been much agitated of late, and regarding which the most erroneous and pernicious opinions have been entertained and propagated. While on the one hand it has been confidently asserted that assurance as to our personal interest in the blessings of Christ's purchase, bears presumption on its very face, and is therefore in itself a strong ground for suspecting even the absence altogether of genuine Christianity—not a few, on the other hand, going to the very opposite extreme, have as confidently maintained that this assurance of salvation is of the very essence of faith; or, in other words, that without it we cannot, by any possibility, be genuine believers, and, by necessary consequence, can have neither part nor lot in the redemption of the Gospel. Of the former of these two opinions it is unnecessary at present to take any farther notice. Its fallacy, we apprehend, has been sufficiently exposed, by the remarks already submitted in reference to the attainableness of personal assurance. The latter, however, now demands our particular attention. And here we have to declare our most decided conviction, that it is not only most completely erroneous, but also in no ordinary degree pernicious and dangerous.

That it is erroneous appears evident, we apprehend, from its contrariety to the nature of the christian life, and its inconsistency with the general bearing of Scripture statement and exhortation; and that it is pernicious and dangerous is no less evidently to be inferred from the consequences to which it naturally leads.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

ADDRESS by the Rev. J. A. WALLACE, Hawick.
SERMON by the Rev. GAVIN STRUTHERS, Glasgow.

NOTES OF A FAREWELL ADDRESS;

DELIVERED ON 5TH MAY, 1833, TO HIS LATE PARISHIONERS AT BURNTISLAND,

By the Rev. J. A. WALLACE,
Minister of Hawick.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—In addressing you on the former part of this day, we took occasion to direct your attention to three important facts, in the history of the apostle Paul, from which we derived three general principles, which admit, we conceive, of application to the circumstances of any other minister of the Gospel. And the conclusion to which we are now led by the facts to which we have adverted, is just this:—that, under certain circumstances, and for certain reasons, the relationship between a minister and his people may be dissolved, and that without any dereliction of duty.

No doubt, when such a relationship is actually established, and so long as it lasts, it infers the most solemn obligations on the part both of the minister and of the people; on the part of the minister, to watch over the souls that are intrusted to his charge, even as one who must render an account of his stewardship unto God; and, on the part of the people, to give unto the minister, according to the terms of the *call*, all due respect and encouragement in the Lord. That is the case, so long as the relationship lasts; and, moreover, it is a relationship of great sacredness, and of unspeakable tenderness, cemented often by the solemnities of death-bed scenes, and productive occasionally of those deep and everlasting friendships, which separation or death may interrupt for a season, but which shall be revived again, amid the enjoyments of another and a happier world—a world where there shall be no separation, neither sorrow, nor sickness, nor any more death. And though, certainly on that account, it is a relationship which is not to be *rashly* dissolved, yet there are certain solid and substantial reasons which may make the dissolution of it, not merely a matter of expediency, but a matter of positive duty.

(Such a change, for example, may be de-

manded by the circumstances in which a minister is placed. Perhaps he may not be uncomfortable amongst his people, nor yet may his ministrations be altogether unacceptable, but he may be doing very little good. That is a possible case; for it is one thing for a minister to be comfortable, and another thing for a minister to be useful; one thing to escape the censures, and to secure the good wishes of his people; another thing to fulfil the object of his ministry, and to be the savour of life unto their souls. He may attain unto the one; and yet there may be men within the borders of his parish, and of these not a few, into whose houses he has entered, and whose consciences he has assailed with all the solemnities of death, and of judgment, and of an eternity to come; but who, in defiance of all his warnings, have never once entered within the gates of the sanctuary, where God hath sent him to warn them of the wrath that is to come, and to preach to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. And there may, moreover, be great multitudes who are in the practice of sitting regularly under his ministrations, and even professing to him their attachment and esteem, who in their very hearts are rejecting his testimony, and crucifying the Saviour whom he preaches, and putting him to an open shame. And when that is the position in which a minister stands to his people, it may be of vast importance to them both, that the relationship between them be immediately dissolved. It may be of vast importance to him, by saving him from the deadening influences which are apt to flow into his soul, from the complacency of an uncomplaining people, and rousing him into action, by bringing him into a rougher contact with the trials and the indignities of an ungenerous and unbelieving world. And it may be of vast consequence to the people,

by ridding them of the ministrations under which their souls may be sleeping, and withering, and going down to death eternal, and subjecting them to the agency of some other servant of God, whose preaching may come home to them with demonstration and with power, and raise them from their lethargy into life, and liberty, and peace.

Again, the dissolution of the relationship in which a minister stands to his people, may be justified by the prospect of more extensive usefulness. A field may be opened up before him, which hitherto has been lying waste, and which loudly demands the most strenuous of his exertions, and which, by right cultivation, and through the blessing of God, may be productive of the most abundant fruit. And as it ought ever to be the grand object of a minister, to aim at the greatest possible amount of good, to be instrumental in the salvation of the greatest number of souls, he may not only be at liberty to go where that object is most likely to be accomplished—where the most abundant harvest of souls may be gathered unto Christ, but it may be his bounden duty—a duty which every christian principle may prompt him faithfully and conscientiously to discharge. And, in that case, it signifies but little when he may go, or whose souls he may gather, if they are the souls which Christ hath purchased with his blood. They may be the souls of the rich, or the souls of the poor—the souls of the heathen, or the souls of the civilized—the souls of them that are near, or the souls of them that are afar off; for they are all of equal value in the estimation of God. “And they that are wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.”

And once more, the translation of a minister from one parish to another, may be justified by the leadings of divine providence. It is not for him, indeed, to settle himself down in one particular spot of the vineyard of God, or to form the determination, that from that spot he shall never be removed. But though it may be congenial enough with the feelings and the associations of his own mind, it may, nevertheless, be inconsistent with the purposes of God. Possibly it may even be befitting that the people, amongst whom he labours, should be deprived of the privileges which they have failed perhaps to improve; and God, moreover, may have more important work for him to do elsewhere, and work which it is necessary for him to do without delay. No matter though his old associations are likely to be broken up, and difficulties and dis-

couragements may seem to be thickening around him; nevertheless, the call of God is paramount to every other consideration; and that call may be so urgent, that neither his understanding nor his conscience may be at liberty to resist it.

And over and above all this, there may be external advantages connected with the situation to which he is called, which, though not of vital importance, when considered by themselves, are yet by no means to be despised, in as much as they are the gifts of God, which may not only contribute to his temporal comfort, but may furnish him with the means of ministering more abundantly to the necessities of his fellow-men. And when the change from one parish to another is dictated by such considerations, it is, we conceive, to be regarded as neither inconsistent with the constitution of our church, nor opposed to the principles of the Bible.

Now, my friends, in adverting to the reasons which have weighed most powerfully on my own mind, and which have had the greatest influence in bringing me to the conviction that it is my duty to leave you, I cannot say that I have been uncomfortable in the midst of you; nor, perhaps, have I any evidence which might lead me to conclude, that my ministrations have been altogether unacceptable. On the contrary, I have met with testimonies of attachment and affection, to which I feel, indeed, that I have no just claims, but to which I cannot be indifferent, without yielding to a spirit of the basest ingratitude. And had I been guided merely by the kindness of your feelings, or by the warmth of your affections, there would assuredly have been no necessity for the change which I am about to make.

Nor can I say that I have been led to the decision to which I have come, merely by the vast importance of the sphere to which I have been called. For I have always been inclined to think, that the number of souls already committed to my charge, was far greater than what my strength was able to attend to, and that the responsibility attaching to the situation which I now hold, was far heavier than what I was well able to sustain. And, if I know any thing of the state of my own heart, I can scarcely think it possible that I ever could have been persuaded to employ any active measures, for the sole purpose of augmenting the weight of my own responsibility. And the fact, therefore, of the charge to which I have been appointed being one of higher importance, and of a

weightier responsibility, would not, I think, of itself, have been sufficient to induce me to break asunder the bonds by which we have been so long and so intimately connected.

But what has weighed most powerfully on my own mind, and which appears to be paramount to every other consideration, is the hand of divine providence in the whole steps which have been gone through, with regard to my appointment to the parish into which I am about to enter. The question which I was called upon to determine was not, whether I should employ any means for the purpose of dissolving my relationship with you, or whether I should seek to be introduced into some other parish where the sphere of my own exertions was to be enlarged, and the weight of my own responsibility was to be increased. That is what I never sought, and what I never desired. But the question was:—Am I to enter upon the path which, independent of my own exertions, the providence of God has opened up most evidently before me? or, am I to consult my own ease and my own comfort, and, for the sake of these, to resist the leadings of divine providence, and to rebel against God? That was the position in which I felt myself to be placed, and that was the question which I was called upon to decide. Had it been otherwise—had it been a plan of my own devising, or a path of my own choosing, the circumstances of the case had been widely different. But it was not: I was invited into a path which the keenest foresight of my own mind never could have detected. And the voice of divine providence was so loud that I could not resist the invitation, without going in direct opposition to the dictates of my own reason and the convictions of my own conscience. These I found it impossible to gainsay; and it is in yielding to their suggestions, that I have come to the resolution of leaving the tranquil scenes in which it has been my privilege to labour so long, for the purpose of entering upon another scene, which has all the prospect, at present, of being one of great difficulty, of great labour, and it may be also of great trial.

But though, my friends, I have no doubt as to the path of duty which is at present opened up before me, yet you may easily believe it is with very peculiar feelings that I contemplate the dissolution of the relationship which has existed between us so long. It is now on the verge of six years since I came amongst you, in the character almost of an entire stranger, and it is impossible for me to look back to that interesting period, or

to trace the progress of my ministry amongst you, or to revert to the many changes which have intervened between that time and the present moment, without feeling an interest in this parish which it seems impossible to destroy. And there are various considerations and recollections which, though they may appear of little moment in the estimation of other men, are nevertheless fitted to stamp this conviction indelibly on my own mind.

Since the time, for example, that I first came amongst you, I have admitted into the visible Church of Christ, by means of the solemn ordinance of baptism, about two hundred and forty little children, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and praying over them that the Lord would bless them, and keep them, that the Lord would be gracious to them, and make his face to shine upon them, that the Lord would lift up the light of his countenance upon them, and give them peace. And though I am called, by the providence of God, to leave these little ones to the care of another, and, I trust, of a tender shepherd, yet I cannot sever them altogether from my thoughts. They are inseparably connected with one of the most important objects of my ministry amongst you. And when I think, not only that I have been the instrument of introducing them into the Church of Christ, but that they themselves, in the lapse of a few years will, in all probability, be occupying the situations of the most active and responsible agents in the community, then I cannot think of them with any other than a feeling of the deepest interest.

I have also admitted, during the course of my ministry amongst you, the number of an hundred and thirty, for the first time, to the solemn ordinance of the Lord's Supper. These, for the most part, have submitted, with all readiness and docility of mind, to the preparatory exercises which I have deemed it expedient to prescribe to them; and have furnished me, by their own teachableness of disposition with special opportunities of pressing home upon their hearts the great truths which relate to their everlasting peace. How far I have been able to avail myself of these opportunities, and how far the earnest and the solemn appeals which I have attempted to address to them, have been blessed by God, for the sealing of salutary, or of saving, impressions on their mind, it is not for me to say. It may be that some of them have fallen from their steadfastness, and have thereby brought disgrace upon me, and disgrace upon their own character, and

disgrace upon the Church of Christ, and disgrace upon their father's house. It may be that others of them are still halting between two opinions, sensible that the Saviour is supremely entitled to their affections, and yet allowing these affections to wander after vanity and lies. And it may be that others of them still are adorning the gospel of Jesus Christ, their Saviour, by a conduct that becometh the gospel; or else have died with the precious and the comfortable hope of an abundant entrance into glory. Yet, whatever has been the result, I am entitled and disposed to regard them all with a feeling of peculiar interest. Their character and their position, as members of the Church of Christ, are most intimately associated with my own, as a minister of the gospel of the grace of God. And though I should be spared for many years, and permitted to dispense amongst another people the bread and the water of life, yet it will be long ere I can stand at the Table of Communion, and look around me with such emotions, and recognise so many as I now do, who were once like the lambs of my own flock, and the objects of my tenderest concern. In fact, the individuals, whose names were recorded in the roll of communion, at the commencement of my ministry amongst you, have been dying rapidly away. The lapse of every year and of every month has been carrying away another and another from the list and enrolling them with the spirits of eternity. All, but a feeble remnant of the communicants of a former generation, are extinct. The list is now marked with the names of individuals who, for the most part, have passed under my own tuition, and been the objects of my own peculiar regard. And should the providence of God permit me to revisit you in days that are yet to come, and to address you, as heretofore, from the Table of Communion, you may easily believe that it will not be with the feelings of a stranger, that is either unacquainted with your history, or indifferent to the best interests of your souls.

I have beheld likewise in their dying moments, or have followed to the grave, what will amount now very nearly to the number of three hundred and ten. Some of them were little children, carried away in the very midst of their fascination, or else borne from their mother's breasts to the cold and the solitary grave, and they are now lying not far away from us, slumbering in that deep repose from which no cry of agony, and no voice of parental tenderness, can awake them more, yet seeming to whisper into the hearts of their bereaved parents,

"Parents, keep yourselves from idols, and suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Some of them were cut down in the very season of their youth, affecting cases these, worthy of your sympathy and your commiseration; their opening prospects gilded with all the attractions which a youthful fancy can conceive, bright and fresh with the dew of their youth, and reckoning, no doubt, as was most natural for them, on many days of cloudless and uninterrupted joy. But their strength began gradually to decline. Clouds overshadowed the gay and the flattering prospects which lay so pleasantly before them. In the place of them were appointed languor, and sickness, and weariness, long months of vanity, and dark nights of sleeplessness, and at last through the power of a deceitful slow-wasting consumption, they have come to the house that is appointed for all living, their early blossoms scattered, their bright hopes blasted; a warning, now, to the young, and the gay, and the thoughtless, to consider their latter end, and to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Some of them held the interesting and the responsible character of parents, surrounded with little children, and deeply engrossed with the solitudes and the enjoyments of domestic intercourse. These also have been arrested in the midst of their comforts, and removed from the bosom of their happy families, and have left their empty places to be occupied by God, that he himself, in the character of a father, might say, unto their weeping and their desolate children, "My son, give me thine heart; wilt thou not, from this time, cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth." Others of them had attained to all the strength and the vigour of manhood, and seemed, from the healthiness of their appearance, and the buoyancy of their spirits, and the soundness of their constitution, most likely to reach to the maturity of old age. But even these have been assailed by disease, and have lingered for a little, and are now lying with the weakest in the same dark and desolate abode, proclaiming to the stoutest and the healthiest of us all, "Let not the rich man glory in his riches, nor the strong man glory in his strength. But let him that glorieth glory in the Lord: for all flesh is grass, and all the glory of man is as the flower of the field, the grass withereth, the flower thereof fadeth away, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it. Surely the people is grass." And many of them have borne the character of aged and venerable pilgrims, to whom

the evil days had come, in which they could truly say that they had no pleasure. Some of them living almost alone in the world without friends, or relations, or children, all of them bending beneath their burdens, and some of them groaning for the rest of a less toilsome and a less troublous abode. These also have returned to their long home, and for them, as for those who have passed away before them, the mourners have been going about the streets.

Thus, by reason of events, such as these, the aspect of this congregation is in a great measure changed, since I came amongst you ; and the change is becoming more apparent every day. There is scarcely a single seat which is now occupied with the same individuals. Some of them have gone to other places, or to distant lands ; and their well known seats are either altogether deserted, or are now occupied with the families of strangers, and very many of them have gone away to the land whence they shall never return—even to that land of darkness and the shadow of death, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. And when I pass through the churchyard, to which the dust of these departed ones has been consigned, I cannot say, that unto me it is a land of strangers. It is peopled with multitudes whom I knew ; and there are few steps that I can take, without treading on the graves of some, with whom, in their happiest days, I have shaken hands with the familiarity of a friend, or whose spirits, in their decline, or amid their dying agonies, I have solemnly commended unto God who gave them.

For reasons such as these, go where I will, or dwell where I may, I cannot but think that this parish will retain an everlasting hold of my affections, and an everlasting place in my heart. It was the earliest and the most interesting scene of my ministerial labours, where God sent me, amid the inexperience and the despondencies of my youth, and where, notwithstanding of all my shortcomings, I have never ceased to enjoy a large share of your kindness and affection. Indeed, I can well remember how greatly lightened were the fears and anxieties that depressed me, by the cordiality of the welcome that you gave me, when I stood before you in the character of your minister ; and though the pleasant memory of those early days is now darkened by many clouds of sorrow, that have fallen heavily upon the fascination of your domestic circles, and bereaved me of a vast multitude of my flock ; yet still the place, amid whose hallowed scenes I am still lingering, and whose peaceful shores I am most reluctant to leave, is

enshrined in the inner sanctuary of my heart. It is connected with associations that are imperishable. It is out of the power of my nature to extinguish them. And though the bond which unites us be rent asunder, the broken cords will still remain, and entwine themselves about the fibres of my heart. It is the birthplace of some of the brightest of my hopes : it is the scene of some of the most interesting of my labours : it is the grave of some of the dearest of my friends—friends who, in their lives, were very pleasant, and in their deaths were not divided.

My friends, the words which I have spoken to you from this place, I believe in my heart to be the words of everlasting life, designed to lead you to the mercies of that Saviour, whom to know is life eternal. Whether they may, or may not, have ministered to your edification, or conviction, or comfort, or refreshment, I cannot tell ; nor is it needful that I should know. I leave the result of all my ministrations in the hands of that Spirit, who searcheth all hearts, and before whose judgment-seat all secret things shall be disclosed. Yet on this, the last, and the most solemn occasion, in which I shall ever be permitted to address you in the character of your own minister—on this last and solemn occasion, I beseech you, by all the mercies of God, every one of you, whether you be old or young, whether you be rich or poor, whether you be parents or children, whether you be husbands or wives, whether you be masters or servants—I beseech you all, without exception, without distinction, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain—that this day you close with, and accept of, the call of the Gospel, which is addressed even to the chiefest sinner amongst you, that ye may escape from the wrath that is to come, and enter into life eternal. And I protest this day before God, and before your own consciences, that if you reject the call, you do it at your own peril ; I wash my hands of your blood ; your blood must rest upon your own souls. “ Seek ye, then, the Lord, while he may be found, call ye upon him whilst he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” “ And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” “ For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward ; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ?”

Men and brethren, fathers and little children, I leave you all with kindly feelings. The warmest and the tenderest affections of my heart are moving over you, as if the bond between us were too strong to be wrenched asunder. Yet I do not leave you for ever, nor abjure the interest which I feel for your well-being, nor give up my claims to your sympathies, your affections, and your prayers. If spared by the kind providence of God, I entertain the comfortable hope of yet meeting with you again, of reviving our earliest associations together, and, peradventure, of addressing to you, from this place, the words of comfort and of everlasting life. Yet these are dark uncertainties. We cannot reckon upon them with confidence. They are hid amid the secrecy of an unexplored futurity; and the probability is, that some of us shall meet again no more, amid this scene of changes, and of sorrow, and of trial. In a little while we shall be separated—some of us, it may be, by vast continents of land—some of us by dreary wildernesses of sea—some of us by dark gulfs of death—some of us remaining amid the quietude of home—some of us removing to the loneliness of a foreign shore—some of us roaming amid the wilds of the boundless and the solitary sea—some of us in the business of the world—some of us in the valley of death—some of us on earth, and some of us in heaven.

But if we are amongst the people of God, united together by the bonds of christian friendship, we shall meet again on the confines of another and a happier world; but

not as heretofore, with the view of bearing each other's burdens, and comforting each other's hearts; for all our burdens shall be removed, and all our tears shall be wiped away.

Oh! let us make sure that these prospects are ours. Let the hope of meeting again in that world of everlasting light, and of everlasting glory, be ever present to your souls. In the view of it, be it your part to walk through the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in the spirit of charity, in the spirit of forbearance, in the spirit of kindly and of brotherly affections. And amid the pressure of your present trials, and the prospect of your future glory, may He who walketh amid the radiance of the seven golden candlesticks walk and dwell for ever amongst you. And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, who never slumbers, and who never changes, and who never dies—may He be with you, to perfect all that concerns you, to keep you by his mighty power, to gather you amid all your wanderings, to shelter you beneath the covert of his wings, to sustain you amid all your trials—and thereafter to bring you to that land of light, and purity, and peace, where you shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, where the sun shall not light upon you, nor any heat; but where the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed you, and shall lead you unto living fountains of waters, and where God himself shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.

THE ATTRACTION OF THE CROSS;

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE DISPENSATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER;

By the Rev. GAVIN STRUTHERS,

Minister of the Relief Church, Anderston.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. (This he said, signifying what death he should die.)"—JOHN xii. 32, 33.

ONE part of Scripture throws much light on another. He who would understand Christ, must frequently consult Moses. Allusions in the New Testament derive much of their meaning, from being read at the foot of prophets, and compared with the symbols of patriarchal times.

In the twenty-first chapter, for example, of the Book of Numbers, we are informed that the children of Israel murmured in the wilderness of Edom against God and his servant Moses, because they had no water to drink, and no food, save light and insipid manna to eat. It ill became those, who had been supported forty years miraculously with bread from heaven, to complain against

their kind benefactor. As a requital for their murmuring words, the hissing of serpents was heard in their camp. These noxious creatures were bright as fire; their sting was burning, and their wound was mortal. All around lay the dying and the dead, and no one could tell how soon he might be struck by their poisonous fangs, swell, corrupt, and die.

Punishment at length produced penitence. Murmuring under the chastening hand of God was eventually followed by prayer; and lo! He who had sent the plague, also in the greatness of his compassion appointed the cure. He enjoined that a bright serpent of brass should be elevated and sus-

pended from a pole, in a conspicuous part of the camp, whilst all who were bitten, were to direct their eyes thitherward, and obtain relief. If they had only strength to turn themselves round in the agonies of death, and take one believing view of the brazen serpent, their pain ceased, their wounds were cured, their life was preserved. It was, look and live. It was, look and live.

My brethren, there are serpents also in our camp. We have heard their hiss, and felt their sting. The old serpent who beguiled Eve by his subtlety, and those scorpions John saw coming out of the bottomless pit, have filled the whole length and breadth of the land. Into our veins they have infused the poison of sin. It inflames our passions, it rankles in our conscience, it produces sickness of heart, and threatens to bring us down to the shades of death. Who can tell the havoc which Satan, by his temptations, has made among the inhabitants of this world. He is not to be permitted, however, to revel always in the production of human misery, by seducing men to sin. Jesus came to bruise the head of the serpent. He appointed a cure for the deadly malady which Satan occasions. Before his incarnation, he even typified the sovereign remedy for the *serpent's* wound, by that very *serpent* of brass which Moses uplifted in the camp of Israel. Every poor suffering Israelite that looked to the brazen serpent, and obtained a cure, speaks to us in language reaching from the deserts of Edom to the coasts of Britain, that health, and life, and comfort, are to be derived from the cross of Jesus.

It is no vain fancy of mine to make the brazen serpent uplifted in the camp of Israel, project light upon the cross planted on Calvary, and to find it a type of that salvation to which all types point, and in which they have received an ample fulfilment. Says Christ to Nicodemus, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must also the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have eternal life." And, again, in the audience of two of his disciples, and of some Greeks who wished to be introduced to him, he refers to the same occurrence with the same design, "And I," says he, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. (This he said, signifying what death he should die.)"

In this passage, two ideas present themselves for our consideration.

I. The nature of Christ's death.

II. Its influence.

I. Of the nature of Christ's death. He was to die, by being *lifted up* from the earth.

This is a simple, but a graphic, description of a scene which shall never cease to excite human emotions, so long as there are hearts to feel, and souls to be saved. It carries us at once, as interested spectators, to Jerusalem, where Jesus was condemned, and especially to Calvary, where he was by wicked hands crucified and slain.

My brethren, what means that immense crowd rushing out through the gates of the holy city. I perceive the waving helmets of Roman soldiers, and the white ephods of priests. Amid the motley groups of old and young, rich and poor, I hear the cry of children, and the shriek of females. On the face of this Levite, I see the smile of pleasure, but on the cheek of that fisherman of Galilee, I discern the big rolling tear. Surely there is some person coming in the centre of this dense throng, who is the object of deep and universal interest. As the multitude roll hither and thither like the ebb and the flow of the ocean, I can catch an occasional glance of his person. He wears a cloak without a seam. A large piece of wood is laid upon his shoulder. He is the most composed of all the company that come up behind, and when the females weep and lament, he chides their sorrow, and stills their tears, and says, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." Who is this? It is my Saviour. I know him by the thorny wounds which he bears upon his brow, and the marks of spitting and of buffetting which he has upon his face. "His visage is marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."

Will you go with him to Calvary? There you perceive how the guard of Roman soldiers are pressing back the crowd, and leaving an empty space for the executioners to perform their duty. They are nailing together the two pieces of wood. They are digging a hole for the upright post. They are stripping Jesus of his garments. His shoulders, you perceive, are raw, and all trickling with blood. On his back are the furrows long and deep, which the scourges have left. He is stretched out upon his cross, as if it were a couch. Spikes, long and thick, are driven through his hands and feet. And now it is not, "And I, if I be lifted up," because you can discern four strong Roman soldiers applying their brawny arms to the transverse beam, and he is lifted up, and hangs suspended by his flesh. When the crowd catch the first glance of his naked, wounded, and bleeding body nailed to the cross, there is a thrill of horror felt by his friends, and a very indecent expression of joy displayed by his inveterate foes. The priests and Levites walk

past on this and on that side, casting upon him a look of scorn, insulting his sufferings, and wagging their heads in mock imitation of his convulsive agony. Even the thieves crucified, the one upon the right and the other upon the left hand of Jesus, regard him as an object of such universal and deserved ridicule, that they throw their scandals upon his name, and pour their contempt upon his cause. Taking up the cruel reproaches of others, they also cast them in his teeth, saying, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God."

The Jews were influenced by two considerations, in inflicting upon Jesus this uplifted death.

1. That his death might be shameful. Jerusalem was at the time full of visitors, who had come up from all quarters to observe the feast of the passover, and the Jewish rulers wished that all should have an opportunity of seeing this far-famed impostor from Nazareth expiring upon a tree. To have cut him off in secret would not have served their purpose. To have stoned him publicly, according to the Mosaic law, would have been a death too honourable. He must die the death of a foreigner, as altogether unworthy of even being recognised by the manner of his dissolution as of Jewish extraction. Nay, he must be ignominiously crucified as a Roman slave; and thus be lifted up between heaven and earth, as an outcast from both. Ah! what would Mary, and the other female disciples, not have given to have been allowed to cast a mantle over the naked shoulders of Jesus, as he hung expiring publicly upon the cross!

2. They were desirous that his death should be painful. This fact we can easily gather from the different parts of the relation. They were eager for his dissolution. And it was when their anger was excited almost to madness, and when they were gnashing their teeth against him, as the wild beast does at its prey, that they raised the murderous cry, *crucify him, crucify him*. Like the wild warwhoop of the Indian, when he lifts his tomahawk, and displays his scalping knife, this murderous cry, *crucify him, crucify him*, conveys to us an indescribable impression of the eagerness with which they thirsted for his blood. They wished, so to speak, to drink it, drop by drop. They wished that he should die by inches. They wished that every pang from the cold iron should go home to his heart. They wished that as much agony should be extracted from his frame as it could possibly yield, and therefore they pierced it where the nerves were plentiful. They also wished that the

pain connected with his dying should be as long protracted as cruel artifice could devise, and therefore they pierced it, not in the heart, but in the hands and the feet, which are the seat of feeling, but far from those organs which are the seat of life.

The Jews did obtain their wish, that his life should be wrung out of his frame by severe and protracted sufferings. Nay, in a certain acceptance, though they knew it not, their eagerness for his anguish was more than satiated. His crucifixion by the hands of man was light as a feather, when compared with his inward sorrow. All their puny attempts to cover him with shame, and inflict agony upon him, were nothing when contrasted with the deep wound from the sharp sword of divine justice, which pierced his heart. The universal observation has obtained currency, on account of its truth, that the sufferings of our Saviour's *soul* were the *soul* of his sufferings. Like fiends, however, his Jewish adversaries centred all their aims in his torment; while that God who casts the clouds beneath his feet, that he may cover this world of ours with verdure, and who causes present suffering to terminate in future good, ordained that Jesus should be lifted up like the unseemly serpent upon the pole, that his shameful and painful death might be rendered highly influential for the healing of the nations.

11. Of the influence of Christ's death. "And I," says he, "If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

1. Christ, by his cross, attracts to himself. Keeping to the comparison contained in our text, that, by the illustration of its figurative language, we may bring out its import, we would invite your attention to the fact, that a serpent is far from being a pleasant object. We instinctively draw back when we see it in our path. Its very picture makes our flesh to creep. It is scarcely possible to conceive of any sight which could be more obnoxious to the feelings of the Israelites, stung, and sick, and dying, than a flaming representation of the very serpent by which they were bitten. God, however, in his sovereign wisdom, appointed that their cure should come from such a representation; so, that while they were restored from a deadly malady, they might at the same time be rendered sensible of the greatness of their sin. The first view which they took of the flaming serpent, would make them shudder; and this convulsive shudder would, for the moment, cause them to feel its punishment. No sooner, however, would their disease abate, and health begin to flow through their veins, than the sting of sorrow would be succeeded by the feeling of joy, and

thus they would learn to look with gladness to the brazen serpent. Profit made it pleasurable. Relief from pain, and life from the dead, rendered it delightful. We can conceive how every spot of rising ground in the camp of Israel would be crowded by successive companies of wounded Israelites looking to the brazen serpent, and receiving a cure, and giving thanks to God for his goodness. There goes that venerable Israelite with his beard flowing down to his girdle, and his pot of manna in his hand ; but, lo ! he is stung by a fiery serpent. He steps up on this ridge of rocks, looks steadfastly towards the brazen serpent, and is cured. Or, again, here is a nice little child sporting by the door of its father's tent. Unwittingly, the child lays his hand upon a serpent, screams with agony, while his mother bursts forth, takes him up in her arms, points his eye to the brazen serpent, and then fondles and clasps him to her bosom completely restored. Many such scenes we can easily conceive to have occurred throughout the wide spreading camp of Israel. Prompted, therefore, by a sense of advantage, the diseased of Israel would be drawn nearer and nearer to the place where the brazen serpent stood, just as the panting harts crowd to the springs of water, or as the afflicted sons of Israel crowded to the margin of the pool, the first eurl of whose wave, excited by the angel's wing, was certain to bring a cure.

Now the antitype is, in many things, just a fuller development of the import of the type. In itself, the crucifixion scene is far from being a pleasant sight. Here Jesus is, indeed, seen in the likeness of sinful flesh. Sin, imputed to him, is discerned lacerating his frame, draining off his blood, and spreading the cold expression of death over his face. Some, therefore, have felt such a proud aversion at having the author of their religion crucified, that they have studiously explained it away, and others have thrown it into the back ground of their discourses, and Popish missionaries, in far distant lands, to please the native pride of the human heart, have altogether denied it.

The wisdom of God, however, is not to be dictated to by the mere sentimentalities of man. He saw it proper that the source from which our salvation should flow, should make us loathe the deadly poison of Satan, as well as impart to us health and vigour, and accordingly Jesus upon the cross is both a crimson instance of what sin does, as well as the healing remedy of all its effects. The first believing view of the cross of Christ does fill the mind with an idea of dread. We start at the sight of the Saviour of the

world dying the death of a common malefactor. But when we reflect upon its cause, and remember that our sins nailed him to the cross, then we perceive the evil of sin, and are humbled to the dust, and the sluices of penitential sorrow are opened, and we learn to hate that sin which brought the Redeemer even to death. And as we continue to look to his cross with the eye of faith, there comes gradually from it a sweet and salutary influence, breathing comfort over our mind. Experimentally we are in time made to feel that our sin is pardoned, that our wounds are cured, that our health is restored, and that we are to live for ever. From a conviction of these unspeakable favours received and enjoyed, we are not only, like David, disposed to bless the Lord, but we are insensibly drawn nearer and nearer to the cross, and our affections are bound closer and closer to the Saviour. Having come within the circuit of his healing and saving influence, we are gradually attracted towards his person, just as the object which has come within the vortex, is irresistibly drawn nearer and nearer to its centre, till at last it is absorbed by the waters, and embosomed in the flood. In other words, "we are drawn to him with the cords of love, and the bands of a man." And his bands are not those of brute force, but of enlightened and winning persuasion.

Lest you should think this kind of illustration rather the imaginings of my own mind, than the sober dictates of truth, I would remind you, that it is a matter of historical record that the promise of Jesus, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," has been verified according to its strictest letter. Aye, where his cross has not been concealed by a ministry falsely called christian—where it has not been east into the back ground of their discourses, and referred to merely in the way of allusion, and employed occasionally as a fine termination to a brilliant paragraph ; but, on the contrary, where the faithful herald of the cross has dwelt upon it frequently, affectionately, and explicitly—where he has insisted upon its vicarious nature, and called upon all to believe, and struck at the foot of the cross the passions of sorrow, of love, and of joy, by presenting to his people vivid descriptions of the wounded, bleeding, and dying, Saviour—there religion has prospered and there the disciples of Jesus have been seen to increase. I appeal to the histories of the Church of Geneva, and of the Church of Moravia, to bear out the truth of my statement. In the land of Calvin, vain philosophizing has banished the preaching of the cross, and exiled religion ; but among the followers of

Huss and of Jerome, vain philosophizing is not known, and the preaching of the cross of Jesus, in a manner peculiarly simple and affectionate, is their unvarying theme; and lo! from the small and poor Church of the United Brethren, there have gone forth more missionaries to evangelize the world, than what have been sent out in modern times to preach the Gospel to the perishing heathen from all Christendom besides. And thus it is that the preaching of the cross of Christ, which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, is still the wisdom of God, and the power of God, for the conversion of the world.

2. Christ, by his cross, elevates to himself. He was lifted up from the earth, that he might lift up his people above this world. The design of his enemies was, that he should thereby be covered with shame, and be made to experience the keenest agony; but his design was, that he should thereby disengage his disciples from the low grubbing dispositions of this world, and induce them to seek those things which are above. This he does by his cross in a variety of ways.

By his cross, he occupies the mind of his people to the exclusion of the world. The mind of man cannot be engrossed with two objects at once. It is just as impossible for two pieces of matter to occupy the same point of space at the same moment of time, as for a human being to serve God and mammon at the same instant. He will cleave to the one, and despise the other. Now, when the eye of the believer is fixed upon the cross of Christ—when his understanding is engaged in tracing out the benefits of redemption—when his heart is softened with a sense of redeeming love—when there is a thirsting after Jesus, as the water of life, and a searching for him as the pearl of great price, it cannot be that the same individual should be setting his heart upon houses and lands, riches and pleasures. The cross of Christ is therefore said to crucify the world. It is like opening the deep trench around the walls of the ancient city of Babylon. It absorbs the waters of the mighty Euphrates, and leaves its former channel altogether dry.

Again, by his cross, he brings the mind of his people into such a situation, that they are thereby induced to loathe and hate the world. It is impossible to be brought into a sick room, and not to have impressions of mortality, stronger or weaker, produced upon our mind. It is impossible to enter the chamber of death, and to behold our friend stretched out, cold, pale, and inanimate, without being persuaded that our life is a

vapour, and that the most ample possessions are an unsubstantial good. After such a visit, all business is felt, for a time, to be a burden. And, when we also are brought to Calvary—when we see Jesus giving up the Ghost—and when we see the world inflicting death upon him, we are thereby constrained to loathe the world, and to hate its practices. On Calvary we see every worldly passion around him fiercely at work—jealousy and revenge, cunning and hypocrisy, ambition among the rulers, cruelty among the priests, and worldly-mindedness among the Roman soldiers, all encircling the cross of Jesus, and conspiring to put him to death. How we sicken at the barbarity of those who can insult the dying Saviour, and at the rapacity of others casting lots for his vestment, and parting his garments, amid the expiring groans of the sufferer hanging over their head. Such are the matters that are brought into vivid contrast around the cross of Christ; and it is morally impossible for a believer to stand on the hill of Calvary, where those sights are seen, and these deeds are transacting, and not to turn away with disgust from the world which put Jesus to death.

Lastly. Christ, by his cross, brings the mind of his people into such a situation, that their thoughts are thereby uplifted from earth to heaven. Christ did not die beneath us; Christ died above us. The consequence is, that whensoever we look to him in faith, we look upward in the vault of heaven. Assisted by the very line of vision, our feelings are borne away from his cross to his crown, and from the sufferings he endured to the glories which followed. We are naturally thereby led to contemplate yonder world, where Jesus has received the reward of his sorrows, and where earthly crowns are fading flowers, and the sceptres of monarchs feeble reeds, and where the largest extent of worldly dominion is not worthy of being compared with the inheritance of the just made perfect. It is therefore found that Christians who are possessed of the strongest faith, are the most spiritually minded; and those who think most upon the cross, think also most upon the crown. Hence the justness of that definition of faith given by the inspired penman, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

3. Christ, by his cross, attracts and elevates to himself universally. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto me." This language is to be understood in a general acceptance, but not as if it admitted of no exceptions. The context tells us how it is to be explained.

At the time when these words were uttered by Christ, some Greeks had earnestly entreated Philip to introduce them into the presence of Jesus. They were the first fruits of the Gentile nations. On hearing of their application, the universal nature of his kingdom rose up like a splendid vision before his mind. He saw that his Gospel, unlike the economy of Moses, was not to be confined within the narrow precincts of Judea. He saw it bursting the boundaries of the land of Canaan, filling Asia Minor, crossing the Hellespont, entering Macedonia, pervading Italy, reaching Spain, penetrating into the northern countries of Europe; while India, with her kings from Sheba and Seba, were offering him gifts, and Ethiopia was stretching out her hands to him. These predicted scenes, suggested through the power of association, by the incident which had just occurred, appeared at once before his omniscient view, and therefore he said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw" not merely the Jews, but "all men"—men of every country and clime, under the canopy of heaven, "unto me."

This prediction is not yet fulfilled, but it is fulfilling. It is, indeed, to be deplored, that Judaism and Infidelity, Paganism and Mahometism, still brood over such a vast portion of our world, and keep it under their dark, vicious and deadly influence. The wall of China has not yet been broken down, and that nation, which looks upon all others as but of yesterday, and compared to the populousness of which the most closely inhabited are but as deserts, contains its hundreds of millions of idolaters. In Japan, none but idolaters dwell. The castes of India are, indeed, breaking up, and christian temples are appearing here and there upon its boundless plains; yet still it may be said of its inhabitants, that they are a people wholly given to the worshipping "of birds and beasts, and creeping things." Over the immense regions of Tartary, ignorance, and superstition, and will-worship, prevail. In Asia Minor, the minarets of the Mahometan mosques now appear amid the ruins of christian churches. Africa also has had the same intolerant religion imposed upon her by the sword of the false prophet. If you pass over to the new world, South America has obtained her golden churches, but the Scriptures are excluded from her coasts, and her popish population are little else than pagans. All along the western borders of the North American States, how many native nations have melted away before civilized licentiousness, instead of being domiciled among their native oaks, and taught that there existed a Mediator be-

tween them and that great Invisible Spirit whom they adored. The few remains of the red men of the woods are only beginning even now to be christianized. Favoured Europe is the seat of the man of sin. I wish I could say it was as free from antichristian superstition, as it is from pagan idolatry. The inhabitants of its most ancient kingdoms and fairest regions have in their foreheads "the mark of the Beast." But a small portion, therefore, of this our world has hitherto received even *nominally* the faith of the Gospel, and the number of those who are Christians, *indeed*, are few when compared with those that are called by the name. It has been calculated, that nineteen parts out of twenty of this world of ours are still unchristianized, in the proper acceptance of the term, in the nineteenth century, after the Son of Man has left the bosom of his Father, to seek and to save that which was lost. What an afflictive consideration to a mind properly alive to the eternal destinies of the human race!

Let us not despair however. The cause of Christ is making progress. Christianity has long since spurned the narrow limits of Judea. It first converted, and then outlived, the fall of eastern grandeur. The kings of Europe might endow the Inquisition, and sharpen the axe of the executioner, and apply the torch to the stake, but Jesus had his followers in their dungeons, amid their flames, and in their seas of blood. There were still a few in the worst of times who looked to the Lamb of God, and not to papal penances. Luther swept away the accumulated superstition of ages. He pointed men's minds, not to Rome, but to Calvary. He proclaimed salvation by faith in the cross of Jesus, with a voice which reached through the most distant parts of Europe. At the sound of his Gospel trumpet, monks fled, cathedrals fell, cisterns for *holy water* were left dry, and thousands of anxious inquirers were seen seeking after the waters of life. Since his days, the doctrine of a crucified Saviour has been gaining friends in many a land. Missionaries have been drawing the attention of the world to the cross of Christ. Churches are forming in various climes, from pole to pole. The dark clouds of ignorance are beginning to break over the whole vault of heaven. The drowning waters of superstition are beginning to subside; and break they will, and subside they shall, till the Sun of righteousness shines forth without a cloud, and the green earth is again converted into the paradise of God. The predicted time is approaching when this world shall be inhabited by the sons and daughters of the Most High—when every

village shall have its church—when every person shall have his bible—when every heart shall be a holy shrine for the habitation of the Spirit—when the language of praise and of prayer shall be heard from every lip—and when the dominion of Jesus shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, and then it is that Jesus will fulfil his promise, contained in my text, in all its extent, and draw all men unto him.

Let us beware, however, of the folly of those who study prophecy, and forget themselves—who devise plans to meliorate the condition of our race, and live themselves in personal wretchedness. Jesus either is, or should be, lifted up before you. It is mine to tell you that he was wounded for your iniquities, and bruised for your offences. It is mine to preach the doctrine of Christ crucified. Yea, woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel. It is yours to hear, to believe, and to live for ever. And do you know, that to this Gospel way of salvation you are imperiously called, because there is no other. Do you know that the old serpent has stung you? Do you feel the poison in your veins? Are you sensible that the head is sick, and the heart is faint, and that there is no soundness in you, and that it has taken such fast hold of your heart, that you are ready to stagger, to faint, and to die? And now when you hear of this sovereign remedy—when you are told that the cross of Christ will deliver you both from the power and the penalty of sin—when you are assured, that if you look in faith, you shall live—do you feel your sinking heart revive, do you feel that you are disengaging yourselves from all other methods of salvation, and that you are pressing nearer and nearer to the cross, just as we can conceive the wounded in the camp of Israel pressed nearer and nearer to the spot where the brazen serpent stood? Fixing your eye steadfastly upon a crucified Saviour, and looking as if you were about to obtain something, silver and gold shall not be given you, but, in the name of Jesus, it shall be said, rise and live. His invitation and his assurance are, “Look unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else.”

But I must not forget that I am addressing an assembly of professing Christians,

many of whom have already believed. Though healed once, you may have been again stung. Believers are not angels. Corruptions cleave to the very best of men. Passions, inflamed by the agency of Satan, are continually bursting forth and impelling us to commit sin. And how are these daily sins to be forgiven? Why, by looking again to the same Saviour from whom we at first received ample and free forgiveness. If the Israelite was stung, he looked to the brazen serpent, and obtained a cure; if stung a second time, he looked to the brazen serpent, and obtained a cure; if stung a third time, he looked to the brazen serpent, and obtained a cure. And in the same manner, he who has been induced to look to the cross for the pardon of all his sins in a state of nature, must ever and anon revert to the same cross for the daily forgiveness of his daily sins in a state of grace. Hence Jesus taught all his disciples constantly to pray—“forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;” and David, long after his conversion, when he fell again into sin, entreated to have his heart sprinkled as in former times.

Of those before me, God knoweth them that are his, but I am warranted to declare those to be in the safest state who turn not the grace of God into a ground of sloth, presumption, or licentiousness, but who are living a life of continual faith, and penitence, and prayer; aye, and who live with this prayer upon their lips, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Whatsoever, therefore, is your spiritual state, I call upon you, at every fresh sin, to look afresh to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, and to implore its forgiveness with earnestness, (and with peculiar earnestness, if you have sinned as a believing disciple, for *your* transgression is aggravated by the consideration that you have been sinning against your reconciled Father, and your benignant Saviour,) and to implore pardon, with the confident hope that it shall be imparted; for you shall not be lost, unless you *refuse to look*, as Jesus is enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on High, for the purpose of giving repentance unto Israel, and the remission of sins.

When God's own Son is lifted up,
A dying world revives;
The Jew beholds the glorious hope;
The expiring Gentile lives.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN THOMSON, Shettleston.
SERMON by the Rev. JAMES GIBSON, A.M., Glasgow.

ON ASSURANCE OF SALVATION;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. JOHN THOMSON.—Concluded.

(1.) *It is contrary to the nature of the christian life.* The life of the true Christian, as the uniform experience of God's people incontestably proves, is very far indeed, from being characterized by perfect unvaried peace. Still exposed to temptation, and not unfrequently overpowered for a time by its repeated and much hated assaults, the progress of the genuine believer is ever chequered by the visitation of fear, of despondency, and of sorrow, as well as of the opposite emotions of hope, and confidence, and joy. Nay, indeed, such oppressive feelings are often necessary; at any rate they are in all cases subservient to his present advancement in his spiritual course and his final triumph over his spiritual foes. Of such being the fact all possibility of doubt is completely removed by the history of the saints of God, as delineated in the pages of inspiration. To mention no others, is it not fully demonstrated by the experience of the patriarch Job, who thus speaks to God under the pressure of his afflicting hand? "Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning but I shall not be;" or of the psalmist David when he exclaims in the spirit of dejection? "Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" or of Asaph when he puts forth the remarkable words? "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for

evermore?" or of Heman, the Ezrahite when he thus speaks? "Lord, why eastest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me? I am afflicted, and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." While such was the experience even of these peculiarly faithful and distinguished servants of God, we are not only warranted to expect that the progress of other and more ordinary Christians will be similarly characterized, but this legitimate expectation has been in all ages, and in almost every situation, most fully realized. On the supposition, however, that assurance is of the essence of faith, the diversity of emotion thus exhibited in the experience of God's people is utterly inexplicable. For it is very obvious that assurance of salvation, in its very nature, precludes the possibility of every kind of perplexity or alarm as to present condition, and every degree of anxiety or doubt as to future success. It follows, therefore, that the life of every individual believer, if necessarily distinguished by such assurance, must exhibit one unbroken course of comfort and spiritual joy—in short, that an alarmed, or doubting, or sorrowful, or dejected Christian, must be a glaring contradiction in terms.

2. While the doctrine, against which we

are now contending, is thus in obvious contrariety to the nature of the christian life, it is also, at the same time, very manifestly *inconsistent with the general bearing of Scripture statement and exhortation*. Nothing is more apparent, even to the most cursory reader of God's holy word, than the encouragement that is there given even to those whose state of mind and of heart is just the very opposite to every thing like security or confidence. Time, indeed, would fail to set forth the invitations of kindness and the promises of acceptance, repeatedly addressed to such as are "poor in spirit," or "broken in heart," "mourning in Zion," or "trembling at the word of the Lord." And most assuredly, if there be any thing more expressly declared than another, it is just that the humble, the fearful, the depressed, the feeble-minded, those who, in the language of the prophet Isaiah, are walking in darkness and have no light—that these, and all such as these, are peculiarly the objects of the Saviour's regard. If, however, assurance be essential to faith, then it is unquestionable, that since all such feelings and emotions utterly preclude the existence of that assurance, every individual, without exception, in whose spiritual state these are found to occupy any place at all, must of necessity be an unbeliever in the full meaning of the term. How, then, are we to account for the expression of approbation and regard so frequently addressed to them in the Sacred Record? Do they not rather, if the doctrine of our opponents be true, come under the Saviour's striking denunciation of wrath, when he declares so expressly that "he who believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Nor are the exhortations of Scripture less manifestly inconsistent with the doctrine under consideration. Instead of being directed, as the first step of the christian course, to confide in the certainty of our calling and election, and to rejoice in the possession of absolute safety, which is unquestionably with much reason to be looked for, if assurance of salvation constitute the very essence of genuine Christianity, we are uniformly called upon to receive and rest upon Christ for salvation, as he is offered in the gospel, and *then* to seek after that certainty and consequent rejoicing, not as a *necessary ingredient*, but as *THE NATURAL FRUIT* of such genuine faith. The unconverted are

never, in any instance, called upon, as the truth of the doctrine held by our opponents necessarily requires, to exult in the favour of God, or to rest satisfied on the ground of the security which they may, and actually do, not unfrequently indulge. On the contrary, they are uniformly exhorted to penitence and abasement, to mourning in reference to their pollution and consequent spiritual misery, and to fear in reference to their guilt and consequent danger. It is not till after they have *first sought* the kingdom of God *and obtained* his righteousness, that they are required to rejoice in the appropriation to themselves of the divine promises of grace and of glory. So that the assurance referred to, so far from being necessarily inherent in the first step of the christian course, must, to be consistent at all with the exhortations of Scripture, be regarded as dependent, even for its very existence, on the *previous conviction* upon scriptural grounds, that that first step has actually already been taken. The very fact, moreover, that (as must be well known to every one who is at all familiar with the Sacred Record,) while the *real disciples* of Jesus are frequently exhorted to aim at, and follow after, the full assurance of hope as an object *still to be obtained*, the *professing disciples* of Christ are not less frequently directed to *examine themselves whether they be in the faith*—the very fact that such is the case clearly overturns the position maintained by our opponents. For, in regard to the *real* disciples of Christ, if faith and assurance be mutually essential, where is the use, nay, where is the propriety, of requiring them to seek after the one when they have actually obtained the other? And, then, as to the *professing* disciples of Christ, surely the requisition from such of any thing like examination as to their christian belief, is, on the supposition of our opponents, as evidently superfluous and absurd; seeing that, according to them, the moment any doubt is found to exist at all, the question is at once and completely decided.

3. But not only do the contrariety of the doctrine, against which we are contending, to the nature of the christian life, and its inconsistency also with the general bearing of Scripture statement and exhortation thus clearly demonstrate its fallacy: *the consequences likewise to which it naturally leads* are sufficient, we apprehend, to convince every candid inquirer, that it is, at the same

time, MOST PERNICIOUS AND DANGEROUS. Of these consequences we have a very melancholy, and by no means indecisive, example in the fact, that not a few of its most zealous adherents have been led to adopt, as manifestly necessary to the completeness of the system advocated by them, the doctrine of UNIVERSAL PARDON, which proclaims the forgiveness of sins as already, by the death of Christ, secured for, and actually conveyed to, every individual of the human race without any exception—a doctrine of which we have not time, nor do we think it necessary at present, to take any further notice than just to remark, that its close connexion with the doctrine of assurance as essential to salvation, is enough to warrant the immediate suspicion as to the truth of that doctrine, if not the most complete reprobation of all that is implied in it. Without dwelling in particular, however, upon this deplorable specimen of its fruits, we have to observe that the doctrine has a *natural tendency to encourage*, if not to produce, *licentiousness*. For, however positively this consequence may be disclaimed by our opponents, it is quite undisputable that the moment we assume, as they do, the legitimacy of the sinner's title to rejoice in the certainty of his salvation, even before he has, or can have, obtained any unequivocal proof of the renewal of his heart and life, we *put an end to the necessity of holiness as an evidence of his interest in Christ*; and thus casting aside some of the most efficient motives to compliance with the injunctions and prohibitions of the divine law, we necessarily weaken, if we do not altogether break down, the power of moral obligation. And even granting that such may not be the *necessary* result, still its tendency to increase either the misgivings and fears of the humble on the one hand, or the false confidence and deceitful tranquillity of the careless on the other, leaves us little room, if any at all, to doubt that it is not, and cannot possibly be, “a doctrine according to godliness.” One of the earliest symptoms of a renewed heart is just the most overpowering conviction of sin, in reference both to its hatefulnes and to its danger. Indeed, it is very generally, by the production of such impressions, as to our natural state, that we are first led by the Spirit of God to embrace the gospel. While thus operated upon, it is quite natural for us to be oppressed by perplexity, and *anxiety*, and fear; nay, it is scarcely possi-

ble to avoid the intrusion of such distressful feelings. Nor is it only at the commencement of the christian course that these come forth to disturb us. Throughout the whole of our subsequent progress they make their appearance from time to time, according as we are weak or strong in the faith. And what, then, is the most probable effect of the doctrine under consideration, in regard to the emotions thus frequently prevalent? Is it calculated either to remove them, when first called forth, or to counteract their afflictive tendency when afterwards recurring? Is it possible—is it conceivable that any such doubt or alarm can be dispelled by the reception of a doctrine which tells us so plainly that the very existence of that doubt and that alarm is, of itself, the clearest proof of our insecurity? Alas! were there nothing else proclaimed for our encouragement and for our comfort, than this false and pernicious doctrine, our condition would be desperate indeed—our misery would be utterly irretrievable.

Nor is the tendency of this doctrine, in reference to the spiritual state of the careless and secure, less evidently pernicious and dangerous. For, let it be observed, that it directs them to the simple consciousness of faith, as the ground of spiritual peace. By obvious consequence, it turns them away from considering the inseparable connexion subsisting between character and privilege. Thus shutting up from their view, therefore, every thing in their hearts and lives which, if fully brought before them, might effectually open their eyes to the reality and the awfulness of their danger, the increase of their deceitful and fatal security must, as is obvious, be the inevitable consequence.

From the remarks thus submitted, it is the obvious conclusion, that assurance or moral certainty as to our calling and election, is not, and cannot possibly be, essential to a state of grace. It is not on that account, however, the less desirable. Being, as we have formerly seen, really within our reach, it ought unquestionably to be ever regarded as a very prominent object of pursuit. *Nay, indeed, whenever there is no wish or no effort to obtain it, there is always some ground to suspect that our spiritual condition is neither very prosperous nor altogether safe.* The inquiry, therefore, as to the means of satisfactorily arriving at it, is manifestly of no little importance. Here, then, we are brought to the consideration of the question as proposed,

III. *How is this assurance or moral certainty, in regard to our calling and election, really to be secured?*

The answer to this question is, by no means, attended with difficulty. Abundance of information regarding it, is set before us in the Sacred Volume. Indeed, scarcely any thing more is necessary than the language of the very chapter whence our text is selected. The Apostle, turning our attention to the virtues and graces of the christian life, very distinctly and unequivocally points to the exercises of such virtues and graces as the source of the assurance here more immediately referred to. In the preceding context, he puts forth to us this most important declaration, "If these things," (the holy dispositions and affections just before enumerated,) "if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." And then exhorting us in the text to "give diligence, to make our calling and election sure," he adds immediately as a powerful incitement to comply with this exhortation, "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." According to this language, then, of the apostle Peter, it is just by the cultivation of real christian principle, and by the exhibition of that principle in our external deportment, or, in other words, bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, that we can ever reach the enjoyment of any safe, because scriptural, confidence in regard to our final salvation. Nor does this conclusion rest upon the language of the apostle Peter alone. Our blessed Lord himself, exposing the false confidence

and spurious sanctity of the Pharisees, expressly declares to them, that the sincerity of the Christian's faith, and consequently his spiritual safety, is to be discovered by its effects. "Either," says he, "make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: *for the tree is known by his fruit.*" The same inference is manifestly to be drawn from the language of the apostle Paul, when he tells us that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*" And in the writings of the apostle John likewise, we find these remarkable words, "Hereby we do *know* that we know him *if we keep his commandments.*" From these passages of Scripture, as well as from many others which might be referred to, it is most abundantly obvious, that in order to ascertain our interest in the gospel salvation, we must look not merely to the conscious act of believing in Christ, but to the exercise also of such belief as displayed in the general character of our dispositions, and habitual course of our external deportment.

Let such then, brethren, be the evidence from which you seek to draw the confident and joyful anticipation of everlasting felicity. While regarding the "full assurance of hope" as not only of possible attainment, but truly desirable, and demanding your most active pursuit, beware of resting satisfied with the mere consciousness of faith in Christ, which, after all, may prove delusive and vain. Look to that "work of righteousness which," as we are told in Scripture, "shall be peace," and the effect of which shall be "quietness and assurance for ever." And bringing forth "fruits meet for repentance," see that, in compliance with the exhortation before us, you give "diligence to make your calling and election sure."

THE SERVICE OF GOD THE ONLY TRUE DIGNITY;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE COLLEGE CHURCH, ON THE EVENING OF AUGUST
25TH, 1833, ADDRESSED TO YOUNG MEN,

By the Rev. JAMES GIBSON, A.M..

Of the College Church, Glasgow.

"For them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."—1 SAM. ii. 30.

THIS chapter opens with a magnificent hymn in praise of God, uttered by a pious woman, in terms so uncommon, as clearly to indicate the inspiration of the Almighty. The principles of the divine government set forth in it, with such poetic sublimity and effect, are illustrated in the subsequent narrative, in the examples of Eli and his sons, and of the child Samuel; in whose respective histories, the majestic holiness of the Almighty, his inflexible justice, power, and infinite knowledge, "in weighing the actions of men," in blessing and exalting the righteous, and in prostrating the wicked, and making them "silent in the darkness" of destruction, are strikingly portrayed.

The young men, the sons of Eli, had entered into the service of the sanctuary, though "they knew not God," though they neither understood his glorious character, nor loved and revered his name, but "were sons of Belial," men serving the god of this world, and the slaves of their own selfish interests and lusts; and therefore prostituted the service of their Lord, to gratify their own passions, and were guilty of the most shameless oppression, and the most abominable iniquity, till men "abhorred the offering of the Lord;" in New Testament language, till "the name of God was blasphemed" by the wicked, on account of them. In such cases, the wicked triumph and blaspheme, and imagine most falsely, that such things are a reason why they should neglect God, despise his ordinances, and outrageously cry out for the destruction of the very office of the Priesthood, and, indulge, unrestrained, their own ungodly passions. God judges otherwise. He expresses his abhorrence of the iniquity, punishes the guilty criminals, but finds others to take their office, and serve him in the earth. So He did in the case of the young men, Hophni and Phinchas, who were slain

in one day; and Samuel, a priest after God's own heart, was raised up in their stead. The effects of their iniquity did not terminate in them. They reached their aged father, who "fell back from his seat, and brake his neck, and died," at the doleful tidings of the slaughter of 30,000 of his people; of the death of his indulged sons, and, above all, of the taking of the ark of God. It reached his descendants, the four-score and five priests, who were massacred by Doeg the Edomite, and Nob their city; "both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen and asses, and sheep, smote he with the edge of the sword," (xxii. 17—19.) It did not end, till it had degraded Abiathar from the Priest's office for his treason against Solomon, and reduced his family to the meanest condition—and thus was "fulfilled the word of the Lord, which he spake concerning the house of Eli," 1 Sam. ii. 36. 1 Kings ii. 27.

Eli himself was a good man, and grieved for his sons' iniquity, and felt for the honour of his God. And though he dealt far too tenderly with such "atrocious offenders," and allowed parental feelings to prevail over zeal for the honour of God, yet he reasoned with them in such a way, as indicated that he knew the great truth, which men are so prone to forget, that a crime against God is far more heinous than what may be called a sin against man. And yet we every day see men acting on a contrary principle, and pleading tenderness to man as a reason for violating the most express commands of God, such as the observance of his Sabbaths and his ordinances; as if it were possible that the welfare of man could consist with disobedience to the Most High. Observe, then, how Eli reasons, verse 25, "If one man sin against another, the Judge shall judge him," shall assign an ordinary penalty, and, being paid, the offence to society may

be atoned for; "but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" No human authority must palliate the offence—and if he shall escape punishment from men, yet the Lord will not suffer him to escape his righteous judgment.

Though Eli thus *reasoned* justly with his sons, he did not *act* on his principles as High Priest and judge of Israel; and permitted them to retain their office to the dishonour of religion. The Lord sent a man of God, verse 27, to expostulate with him, and to warn him, that as he had chosen him especially for his service and to his high office, yet, as "he honoured his sons more than Him," he would visit him with His terrible displeasure, which, as we have seen, he did; "Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine Anointed for ever. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver, and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread."

God, in our text declares, the unchangeable and everlasting principle on which he acts in his dealings with the sons of men, as civil judges and rulers of the land, as Eli, or as priests and people, as Hophni and Phinehas, and the children of Israel who allowed their iniquity—a principle from which he will never swerve, "Them that honour me, I will hon-

our, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." And I intreat, my young friends, that you will observe this principle of the divine government, as declared by God himself, who can neither lie, nor change, nor deceive—and rest assured, that by this principle he will abide—and in accordance with this principle will you be dealt with.

For its further illustration, we propose, with an humble desire of the divine blessing, to state,

I. First, and very generally, what it is to honour God, and

II. A little more fully to illustrate the promise and the threatening contained in the words, "them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

I. What it is to honour God.

I need not, I trust, use many words to show you the sole supremacy of the God of heaven and earth, and to enhance in your estimation, the majesty of Him who is infinite in power, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, faithfulness, and mercy, by whom the universe was spoken into being, by whom it is unceasingly upheld, and all its inhabitants sustained, "by whom kings reign and princes decree justice," before whom the "nations are as a drop in the bucket," "who weigheth the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, who taketh up the isles as a very little thing," "in whose hand all things are as clay in the hand of the potter," "who stretcheth out the vast heavens as one stretches a curtain, and foldeth them up as a man doth a little garment," "of whom, in short, and through whom and to whom are all things, to Him be glory for ever and ever."

In order to honour this great Being aright, he requires—and he requires no more than is entirely reasonable, that we love Him with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind—that we entertain towards him, supreme reverence and affection, that, whatsoever we do, we do it to his glory. This is the great end of our being, and God and reason declare that no end can be higher—no end can be better. From this end, we all know that all men have fearfully deviated, and we among the number. It ceases not, however, to be still the supreme end of our being—the standard by which we must be tried, and to which we are bound to conform, on pain of God's righteous displeasure. If you know any thing of God, and the revelation of his will,

I am sure you will assent to all this; and I am equally sure, that you will assent to this, (and if any one will not, it is because he neither knows God, nor his law, nor his own character,) viz., that in yourselves, in your present sinful condition, naturally the creatures of ignorance, weakness, passion, of alienation from God, you are unable to attain to this high standard—still, however, it remains the same, and God will never change it. How then can we honour God as thus required, since we know and feel that we cannot do it of ourselves? It must be by faith in the Son of God—by laying hold on the Redeemer—by appearing before God through his Son Christ Jesus, who has undertaken for all those who feel that they cannot undertake for themselves, and are willing to repose their trust in him, as their surety, head, and representative. He has magnified all the divine perfections, upheld the dignity of God's government, magnified his law and made it honourable, and opened up a way for restoring man to his place in the favour of God, and in the service and the glorification of his Creator. To honour God then as a sinner, you must first do homage to his Son as a Saviour, and go to him in faith, and submission; for this is the new commandment of God, adapted to our lost and sinful condition, "that ye believe on his Son Jesus Christ." "Let all men," says he, "honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;" and farther, says he, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." It is the Spirit that sanctifieth. It is the Spirit that takes of the things that are Christ's and shows them unto us. If, then, you would desire to know how a sinner is to glorify God, to honour him, to accomplish the end of his being, in other words, how he is to be saved from eternal condemnation, (for this, in truth, is the fate of all who do not honour God, as it is declared by the Saviour, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven,") the answer is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You must believe in him as coming, not merely to procure the forgiveness of sins, but the sanctification of your nature, not merely as a Prophet and Priest, but as a King; for "he bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto God;" and therefore you must have a conduct corresponding to this faith as faith without works is dead—no faith at all. You must have a conduct characterized

by all the fruits of the Spirit of God, in purity, righteousness, and mercy, in all works of piety to God, benevolence and justice to men, and temperance and moderation in regard to your personal interests on earth; in one word, in offering yourselves unto God "living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Thus others seeing your good works, shall be led to "glorify our Father in heaven." Having given this short outline of what it is to honour God, I come now in the

II. Second place, and principally, to illustrate the promise and the threatening in the text—honour, on the one hand, to them who honour God, and contempt and dishonour, on the other, to those that lightly esteem him.

Many and great are the blessings promised in the Scriptures of truth, to the righteous, to them that fear God. We are told, that "godliness has promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come"—that "all things work together for good to them who love God, and are the called according to his purpose"—that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart"—"great peace have they that love the law, and nothing shall offend them"—with a multitude of similar declarations, all tending to show, that though the righteous are not exempted from the common evils incident to fallen humanity, yet they are taken under the special protection of the Father of all, who, since he hath not spared his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for them; who, since for the sake of his Son, he bestows upon them pardon and acceptance, adopts them into his family, sanctifies them by his Holy Spirit, and prepares them for glory, will most assuredly withhold no inferior blessing that is truly for their good, and will make the most formidable evils of their condition, which are marks of God's displeasure to the wicked, the very instruments of working out for *them* "a far more exceeding, even an eternal, weight of glory;" so that Paul says to the believing Corinthians, "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come, all is yours, because ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." And thus though we are taught in the word of God, and reason inculcates the same lesson, that all that we do, must be done with a view to the glory of God, as the great ruling motive, and that all the gifts of

nature and of grace alike proceed from the free and unmerited bounty of the Most High; yet, in consideration of our condition, as dependent and needy creatures, endowed with capacities and desires of good, and powers of volition and activity, capable of being swayed by a great variety of subordinate motives, all tending to form the same character of love to God, and to lead to the same practical results of devotedness to him, the divine wisdom addresses to us promises and exhortations calculated to affect our minds, and to fix them with greater certainty and constancy upon Himself.

Of all the subordinate principles of action in the human breast, there is perhaps none of more universal influence, or of more powerful efficacy, than the desire of honour. There is no class of men so high as to despise it, and none so low as to be incapable of feeling it. Princes and nobles, statesmen and warriors, lawyers and merchants, philosophers and poets, peasants and mechanics, are all sensible of its influence. To obtain it, they will submit to the heaviest toils, the greatest risks, the severest hardships, the most wasting anxieties, and the most alarming dangers. Under its influence have the most formidable obstacles been surmounted, and the greatest results effected. Even the love of gold, a passion deeply seated, and of great power in our degenerate nature, is weak, compared with the love of fame, honour, and applause. For it men will restrain their strongest passions, and exert their utmost energies. Its praises have been celebrated by orators, poets, and philosophers, and those who have affected to despise it as unworthy the regard of a wise man, express their contempt of it only as a more singular way of attaining it. In short, it seems to be an original principle of our constitution: so much so, that you will see it budding forth in infancy, and actuating the child, as the most powerful principle of his actions. It is particularly powerful in the minds of youth, before they have been narrowed and hardened by the feelings of selfishness and avarice—which too often become so exclusive and prominent in more advanced years, and often render old age so cold, repulsive, and even disgusting and contemptible to the more open and generous minds of the young—and sooner than any thing else, sours them at the difficulties and disappointments of this world.

A principle then so universal and so powerful, may justly be considered a principle

of our original constitution, and intended to serve the most important and beneficial purposes; and yet it is not to be concealed, that being directed—through the degeneracy of our nature, through the blindness of our understandings induced by sin, through the delusions of the devil, the god of this world, who blinds the minds of them that believe not—to foolish, vain, unsatisfactory, and forbidden objects, it has been productive of dissatisfaction, disappointment, regret, and bitter remorse to him who was actuated by it, as well as gross injustice, cruelty, and oppression to others. To gratify it, strange as it may seem, many have been guilty of the most contemptible meannesses, arrogated praises for what did not belong to them, and have even become so degraded, as “to glory in their shame”—and so thirsted for the possession of its object, as to go to it through seas of blood, and the desolation of nations.

Though a principle of our nature, then, and capable of producing the most extensive results, it is plain, that before these results can be beneficial or allowable, as means of acquiring honour, they must be such as the laws of God, the principles of justice, truth, and goodness will allow; hence God says, “Let not the rich man glory in his riches, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.” “God forbid,” said Paul, “that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world;” and in our text, “them that honour *Me*, I will honour.”

If you seek, then, the honour that cometh from God—if you seek it with the principles, feelings, and views which God can approve—in those pursuits which are agreeable to righteousness, truth, and mercy, which alone reason and conscience can commend, which promote the glory of Him who is all and in all, the good of mankind, and the salvation and happiness of your own immortal souls, then assuredly it is a lawful, and proper, and dignified, principle of action, and shall, on the authority of God himself, be amply gratified and rewarded; and who but a debased, and perverted, and grovelling mind, would seek it in any way that is contrary to God and reason, to the dictates of an enlightened conscience, to the welfare of

his race, and his own safety and happiness? There *are* such men, and such men in vast numbers, but they are the children, not of light, but of darkness—whose views are limited and confined—whose conceptions are low and earthly—and their affections and passions vain, capricious, light, sensual, and incapable of rising to God, or piercing into eternity; and being directed to those things that are as fleeting as they are worthless, must assuredly fail of their promised honour, as one who “sows the wind, will reap the whirlwind.”

But if the honour that cometh from God be the object of your desire, and pursued in the way we have pointed out, you cannot be disappointed. I believe there are few of the young persons before me who are insensible to the feeling of honour; if there are any such, they must be lower than the generality of the young—even with all the depravation which sin hath wrought in our nature. If, then, you will have the largest desires and aspirations after true dignity and honour gratified, direct them to God—the most glorious object—the centre and source of all excellence—the fountain of honour. The riches and splendours of the earth, the glories of all worlds, and the dignities of principalities and powers, of cherubim and seraphim, are all emanations of his bounty, feeble reflections of his ineffable glory, and it is his own declaration—his everlasting decree—“them that honour me I will honour.”

The word of the living God is thus passed, that if you honour him, in other words devote yourselves to a life of faith and holiness, he will honour you. And He who is God over all, almighty in his power, and infinite in his resources, cannot want the means of fulfilling his promise—“Riches and honour come of Him, for he ruleth over all: in his hand is power and might: in his hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.” Even the very act of honouring the God of all, to whom all creation does homage, and to proclaim whose glory, in prostrate adoration, is the employment and delight of the highest intelligences, is itself an illustrious honour. If men count it honour to serve an earthly prince, and to extend his name and renown, shall we not esteem it an honour to glorify God, by “whom kings reign, who is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords?”

It is considered an honour to be made associates of the illustrious great, and men

covet, even to a weakness, to be thought persons of illustrious extraction and rank; now God promotes those who honour Him to the rank of his children, makes them “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”—heirs of an eternal inheritance, of a kingdom that cannot be moved—and even amid all the mistakes and prejudices of this world, and the contempt and suffering to which the righteous are often exposed, still there is a majesty and loveliness in their character that infallibly secures the esteem of all whose esteem is worth the having—of the pious, the good, and the truly wise—and even forces an unwilling tribute of respect from the worthless and the vile; for God, as an author hath finely said, “hath made goodness a noble and a stately thing.” Even the wretched slave of the Devil, and the poor worldling who affect to hate and despise it, do it often through envy, and sink abashed and awed in its presence; and the Almighty so arranges his providence, that at the last, and often in this world, the character of the righteous is duly appreciated and honoured, and though clouds and obscurity may have veiled them for a time, they come forth pure and unsullied, and often rise to eminence and respect even in this life; and misjudging as the world is, perhaps there never was an old man who had passed his life in a consistent course of piety to God, and justice and benevolence to men, who did not at last go down to the grave full of honours as of years, with the testimony of his followers, that it is indeed a good thing to serve the Lord. In the cases of many Scripture saints, such as Job, Joseph, Samuel, David, Daniel, and others, how strikingly have the words of wisdom, Prov. iii. 16, and of Hannah, in the opening of this chapter, been verified, “Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour;” “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and he hath set the world upon them.” In our own day, in the case of the christian patriot Wilberforce, whose rule of public and private life was the law of his God, though he met with obloquy and reproach, and was sneered at by frivolous men as a saint and an enthusiast, and was often forced, even in the senate of a christian nation, to forego many of his designs for

God, through the opposition of irreligious men, yet, now that he hath run his course, all acknowledge that his path has been "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" and we know not that the breath of party, or of infidel malice, hath obscured its setting. And even when, in this case, party-passions, envy, or ignorance obscure the fair name of the good, the men of a future generation, except when the same causes may happen to be in operation to warp the judgment, usually accord to the faithful servants of God their due tribute of respect, and the "memory of the just is blessed."

And, my young friends, though we cannot all aspire at the fame which goodness may justly claim from men, when exhibited on the theatre of public life—though we cannot secure the honour of a David, a Paul, a Luther, or a Knox, or a Howard, and such other illustrious benefactors of mankind, yet a still higher honour have all the saints, and exhibited it shall be, on a nobler theatre, when they shall receive the approbation of the God of all, before the assembled universe—before angels and men. The obscurest individual, whose faith is strong, and love to God warm, and devotedness to the Redeemer sincere and active, shall be welcomed by the Judge of all, and rewarded with the incorruptible crown, the crown of righteousness that fadeth not away; declared incomparably more excellent than the loftiest and proudest of the wicked, by the judgment of the Most High, and in the according testimony of all holy creatures. He shall be placed on a throne at the right hand of God. "For," saith the Saviour, "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." Should we fail of the honour that cometh from men, there is One that searcheth and judgeth, who marks our path with the tenderest interest, and "will bring forth our judgment as the light, and our righteousness as the noon-day;" and though a good name is better and more to be desired than riches, yet should we lose it in the service of God, and, for the sake of Christ, we may esteem it a small matter indeed, to be judged of man's judgment, "for whosoever," says the Son of God, the judge of all, "whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father in heaven." Are you desirous, then, of honour? Seek the honour that cometh from God—

admire the condescension of that great Being who needeth not your homage, who is exalted above all praise, who hath all that is glorious, happy, and excellent in his own incomprehensible being, and yet solícits your honour, that he may give to you, the worms of the dust, his honour in return. Can you refuse? Then this great Being who created you and offers you happiness, declares on the other hand, that if you will not accept his terms, if you will not accept eternal honour and glory on the easy condition of honouring God, who is so worthy of honour, who asks none to serve him for nought, and so bountifully rewards his creatures for yielding what is his own, and justice demands that they should render—the loss shall be yours. "They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

This I cannot now illustrate at any length. A few things must suffice.

While there is nothing that men, especially the young, desire so much as honour, there is nothing they so much dread as disgrace and contempt—but this shall infallibly be the portion of all who neglect or despise God. But is it possible, we would ask, to despise God? Can the heart of man be so bold, presumptuous, senseless, and ungrateful? Let his conscience declare and it will tell that it can. Well might the prophet call heaven and earth to be astonished, and to wonder at such amazing depravity. But let him remember he cannot despise God with impunity.

In the first place, he forfeits the honour of God's servants as we have described it, and incurs God's righteous and eternal displeasure.

As God himself declares, "that He will honour them that honour Him," so, it is declared on an authority as sure, that "they that despise Him shall be lightly esteemed." None hath ever hardened himself against Him and hath prospered. It is impossible that they can in the nature of things. A man's life, his glory and his happiness, consist not in the things which he possesseth, but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. A man's goodness is his glory. God is the fountain of honour—the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift, and if he forsake this fountain, much more if he despise it, he cannot possibly be other than lightly esteemed. God, whose favour is life, holds him in contempt. Angels who

honour God, abhor his impiety and presumption, and the devils themselves will make sport of his folly. All good men shun him, or approach him with pity. His own heart is his enemy; and though he may be prosperous on earth—though he may arrive at high station, and receive external homage, though the good may honour his office in his person, or though the wicked and the vile and the interested may flatter and fawn upon him, and thousands may go at his bidding, and slaves tremble at his frown, yet he is indeed vile and worthless. His conscience will speak to his baseness, and there will be times, when the flattery of men will be as gall and wormwood to his own soul, and the humblest servant of God will exalt himself above him, and he will quail before the message of truth and of divine displeasure. Thus it was with the young men Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who nobly replied to the threatening questions of the Babylonish monarch, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known to thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Thus it was with Belshazzar, whose “countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another,” when he saw the hand from God that wrote upon the wall his accusation and his doom. Perhaps by sudden changes and reverses of fortune, by unexpected revolutions, his prosperity is changed into poverty and misery, his honour into disgrace, and his glory and exaltation into humiliation and shame. Many such instances we have seen in our day, short as it hath been, and that in every rank, from kings and emperors, down through all the gradations of human society. True it is, that such revolutions are not always the lot of the wicked alone—sometimes they visit the just—but to the just they are blessings—their happiness and their hopes are not affected by them—they have God as their friend, and, deprived of all else, their portion is only more complete: whereas to the wicked such changes leave him desolate indeed. All in which he gloried is taken away—his conscience is his scourge—his passions

his tormentors—and the vilest of men insult him. And if the wicked should escape all this, and their mountain stand strong till the day of their death, yet then their strength is brought down, like sheep they must be laid in the grave,—become the prey of corruption and dissolution—“say to corruption thou art my mother, and to the worm thou art my sister and my brother.” While the good are held in everlasting remembrance, “the memory of the wicked shall rot”—become a by-word and a reproach—the grave will not hide his iniquity and shame, for while the righteous shall rise to everlasting life, the wicked shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt. Brought before the tribunal of Him who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, the judgment set and the books opened, the records of his heart and the picture of his life shall be unfolded—his true wickedness and meanness exhibited—and he shall be driven from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, while a universe of spectators join in reprobating his iniquity and baseness. He hath dishonoured God, done despite to the Spirit of grace, and denied the Son of his love, and the Son of God will deny him and say, I never knew thee, thou worker of iniquity, depart from me, thou cursed, thou vile and miserable, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. This sentence being passed, the proudest of mortals who have exalted themselves against God, shall go away into everlasting punishment, and in the magnificent language of the prophet, “hell shall be moved to meet them at their coming,” and its miserable inmates derisively ask, “art thou become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?”

Such, my young friends, if the testimony of reason, conscience, and the unchangeable word of the Most High are to be believed, is the real condition respectively of those that honour God, and those that presume to despise him. Let me intreat you, therefore, not to be deluded by your own passions, nor by a vain world, to follow the path of the destroyer, or to swerve from the service of the living God. Let me intreat you ever to remember that “everlasting decree of heaven”—“Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” “Never,” said Richard Baxter, “never did man dishonour God, but it proved the greatest dishonour to himself. God will find out ways enough to wipe off

any stain cast upon him; but you will not so easily remove the shame and dishonour from yourselves."

Among the numerous important topics that present themselves for consideration, as suitable to be addressed to youth—such as the importance of early piety, the good that the young may do to mankind, their obligations to society as its hope and stay, the shortness of life, the danger of delay in the formation of religious and virtuous habits, the displeasure of the Almighty who may leave them to themselves or cut them off in the midst of their days, and such like—I have preferred the present subject of address, because I know that the desire of esteem and honour is strong in the breasts of youth, and I have thus pointed out a way in which it may be lawfully and properly directed, and fully gratified. I have preferred this subject, moreover, because I know that it is a foolish delusion in the minds of many young men, that a life of religion is ignoble and mean-spirited, and unworthy of an aspiring, generous, and independent mind—that there are many shallow young men in these times, who talk flippantly of freedom of opinion, of liberality of sentiment, and rights of man, liberty of judging and acting, and such like, "neither understanding what they say nor whereof they affirm," thinking themselves something, while indeed they are nothing, "promising themselves liberty, while they are the slaves of corruption," and pretending to laugh at the youth who hath sense, and judgment, and courage enough, to submit to the restraints of religion, to walk in its good old paths, and to "hold fast the form of sound words." What has been said, will enable you to estimate their character and their judgment at their true value, and will teach you, that in being religious, in devoting yourselves to honour God, to benefit your fellow-men, and to improve yourselves in useful, and especially in saving knowledge, in the knowledge of Christ, for which Paul who was not

behind the chief of men in genius and ardour, counted all things but loss, you are truly honourable; that you have chosen a good and a noble part—that you are far exalted above the common herd of worldly and grovelling men—that you are pursuing an elevated path, and the end shall be glory everlasting: while those who would affect to despise you, are in reality debased, following the pursuits of a sensual nature, as if there were neither a God, nor virtue, nor an hereafter—saying, like the degraded Epicurean of the lowest degree, "let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die"—in other words, emulating the beasts of the field. Oh! how unworthy, how unlike the noble aspirations, the divine contemplations, the magnificent hopes of the servants of God—"hopes that will never make ashamed."

Hold fast then the profession of your faith. Be not turned aside from your path. Remember that your temptations are many and strong, and yourselves weak. Be humble. Rely on the strength of the Redeemer; seek the guidance of his Spirit, and the wisdom that cometh from above. "Seek wisdom from him who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Beware of spiritual pride. Let zeal be tempered with discretion and modesty. Such a deportment becomes the young, and while fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, be diligent in business, faithful in the relations of life, for nothing so soon discredits religion in the eyes of men, as an opposite conduct. Never let it seem as if you think religion will sanctify the neglect of the common duties of life. Act as you may, the gospel and the conduct of the saints of God will appear foolishness to them that perish; but if you make your light shine properly before men, you obey the command of your Saviour, you glorify your Father in heaven, and save your own souls, and, through his grace, secure an eternal reward. Amen.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN MUIR, D.D., Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN EDWARDS, Glasgow.

THE CHARACTER, PRIVILEGE, AND DUTY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD ;
A SERMON PREACHED IN ALBION STREET CHAPEL OF EASE, GLASGOW, ON THE EVENING
OF FRIDAY, 9TH AUGUST, 1833,

By the Rev. JOHN MUIR, D.D.,
Minister of St. James' Church and Parish, Glasgow.

" Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion : for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."—ISAIAH xii. 6.

THE words we have read make part of the prophecies of Isaiah. A prophecy properly signifies the foretelling of things to come ; and because our text is one of these, we are to expect it, in connexion with the context, to tell us of some things to happen after Isaiah's day. Accordingly, in the beginning of the previous chapter, we find a prophecy of the coming of Christ : " And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him," &c. Now this is a prophecy of the coming of Christ, who, in regard to his human nature was indeed to be " a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots," for Jesse, the father of David the king, was one of Christ's progenitors. While the 11th chapter contains a prophecy of the coming of Christ, the next chapter is a prophecy of what would happen in the world on the souls of men individually, in consequence of the coming of Christ ; and the prophecy runs in these words : " And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee." Individuals now begin to drop their former language, which was, " O Lord, I fear thee ; my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments," and, in consequence of the new views they get, they say, " O Lord, I will praise thee : though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." They begin to perceive that though God had just cause to be angry with them, because they were sinners, yet as they are now, by the permission of God, looking unto Christ, the divine anger is turned away from them, and God can now come near to them, and comfort them. Their language, therefore, now is " Behold, God is my salvation ;" that is, wonder my soul at this, that God is to become my salvation. The very God whom the individual had offended by sinning against him, is now revealed as the first to make offers of salvation. They say, " Behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song ; he also is become my salvation." One happy consequence of getting this view of the divine character is, that with joy this people come and " draw water out of the wells of salvation." The means of grace are here called " wells of salvation," to which they now come with joy, whereas before they used to creep to ordinances, or come to them as to a piece of drudgery, and for some low reason. And then in the 4th verse we are told what this people, now enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, say and do among their fellows. They call on them to see God in Scripture light, as revealed in Christ, and reconciled in him. We say generally, however, that this twelfth chapter gives us an account of what would happen in the world on the souls of believers in consequence of the coming of Christ, and the whole comes to be summed up in the language of our text, " Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion : for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." In this text there are three things that demand attention. First, the character here given of the people of God, couched in Old Testament language, in that they are called

inhabitants of Zion, Thou inhabitant of Zion." Next, we are bid attend to the privilege here connected with the possession of this character, "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." And third, the effect which the apprehension of this privilege is expected to produce on their temper and conduct, that is, "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." So that to speak shortly, the text tells first the character, second the privilege, and lastly, the duty of each and every one of the people of God. The character, "Thou inhabitant of Zion;" then the privilege, "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee," and the duty contained in the apprehension of this privilege, "Cry out and shout." Now, God willing, we shall turn our thoughts to these three particulars.

First, the character of each and every one of the people of God, given out in these words, "Thou inhabitant of Zion," for the text says, "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." Now remember that these words are describing the character of the people of God in Old Testament language, therefore require to be explained, because though the Old Testament contains the very same things in substance with the New, these things are revealed more darkly in the Old Testament language, and in the New Testament more clearly. The reason, indeed, that the one is called the Old Testament and the other the New, is that the one is the more dark, the more ancient, and the other the more clear, the more modern way of God giving out to men the knowledge of the covenant of grace. To understand the meaning of the words, "Inhabitant of Zion," as describing the people of God in every age, we should first remember that Zion was literally a hill in the land of Judea. There was a hill in the southern part of the promised land, on which, or on part of which, the city of Jerusalem was built, and this hill had two peaks, the one called Zion proper, and the other called Mount Moriah, and while Jerusalem stood on one of these peaks, or Zion proper, the temple was built by appointment on the other of these peaks, or Mount Moriah, but the whole together was called the Hill of Zion, or Mount Zion, and accordingly in the second Psalm we read, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy

Hill of Zion," and again, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion," plainly showing that this was a hill in the land of Judea. But, as I have said on one peak or top of this hill the temple of Solomon was placed, and hence the word *Zion* came by a common figure of speech to be transferred from the mountain to the temple, the most prominent feature on the mountain, and in this sense I think we have it in the 87th Psalm, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." By *Zion* here is meant the temple itself standing on the hill, because the words have no meaning when applied to the hill, though a very plain meaning when applied to the temple standing on the hill. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion [what hill has gates? The temple, however, has gates] more than all the dwellings of Jacob," intimating that the Lord has more delight in the worship of the temple than in the worship offered up in the individual houses of his people. Understanding, then, by the word *Zion* the temple, an—"Inhabitant of Zion" now calls up the idea of a person who lives in and about the temple; and indeed the will of God was, that all his ancient people should live as much as may be in and about the temple, for it was one of the peremptory orders of God that three times in the year all their males should come up from the utmost parts of the land to worship on the holy mountain of Jerusalem, thus intimating his wish that all the people of Israel should live in and about the temple, and thus they were all called by the name of inhabitants of Zion. But we must remember that the temple was intended to be a type of the human nature of our Lord, or of God in our nature. We have no doubt about this. That the temple which stood on Mount Zion was intended to be a representation of the human nature of Christ, of God incarnate in the person of Christ, appears from what is recorded in the 2d chapter of the Gospel by John. When Christ was at one time standing in the temple the Jews, cavilling at our Saviour's actions and words, gathered around him, and put this question—"Tell us by what authority you do and say these things,"—upon which he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." One would have thought he meant the temple of Jerusalem in which he was then standing, but a parenthesis says, "He spake of the temple of his body." His using these words in reference to his

body, at a time when he was standing in the temple of Jerusalem, is a plain indication that he meant the temple to represent his human nature; and well did it do so, for as that temple was adorned with beautiful masses of gold and silver, and precious stones, so the man Christ Jesus, though appearing a man, was adorned with all the beauties and graces of the Holy Spirit, because God was in Christ, reconciling men to himself. Thus was the temple a fit emblem of his body, of God incarnate. We have now got the length of understanding by the word *Zion* Christ in his human nature, and therefore an inhabitant of *Zion* is one who is much versant with Christ, one whose thoughts are going out much upon Christ. Just as the inhabitant of *Zion*, in the Old Testament sense of the word, was one whose thoughts were going out very much towards the Temple of Jerusalem, so in the New Testament sense it means one whose thoughts are very much going out towards Christ, as revealed to us in the Scriptures.

If you ask in what sense Christ is revealed to us in the Scriptures, I refer you to what Paul says in his Epistle to the Philippians, (Phil. iii. 8—12,) where he speaks of a three-fold knowledge of Christ, after which he coveted much. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." The intelligent reader of these words finds out three kinds of knowledge of Christ, which this man did, and which all Christians do covet after. First, the knowledge of him as the Lord our righteousness; second, the knowledge of him as the Lord our strength; and, third, the knowledge of him as the Lord our pattern or example, while we remain here below. These comprehend all that knowledge of Christ which Paul says may well be coveted after, and in comparison with which all things should be counted loss and dung. The inhabitant of *Zion*, then, is one whose thoughts go out after Christ as

the Lord our righteousness. This word *righteousness*, which I hope your minister makes use of often in preaching to you, conveys, I believe, to many of our hearers, as being of very common occurrence, no strict or definite idea. Perhaps if we call it rightfulness or rightness, they would understand it better. Now we have nothing rightful about us—every thing is wrong in the sight of God; though, in our own sight, we may be disposed to form a very different opinion. If we are to be judged by rightness, we shall never be able to have the peace of God, either in this life or in the next. Where, then, shall any of us find righteousness such as the law requires? Christ is the Lord our righteousness. We are told in Romans iii. 20—23, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Now the inhabitant of *Zion* is just the person who is taught of God to see no rightness in himself, and yet rightness in Christ, and to know how by the Gospel this rightness is placed to his account. Christ became the Lord our righteousness, and we, by believing, become the righteousness of God in him, and our thoughts then go out much to Christ. When men come to apprehend this matter, they find they have got the answer of a good conscience toward God, and now they can draw near to God therein every hour of the day, having the heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and the body washed with pure water. The inhabitant of *Zion*, then, is one who is much conversant with Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, and whose thoughts go out very much towards this glorious subject and object—Christ, the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes in him.

But further, the people of God obtain a knowledge of Christ, not only as their righteousness, but also as their strength. It is said, Phil. iii. 10. "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection;" the power there is to give a man confidence before God, in understanding the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember, then, that the resurrection of

Christ, or his rising again from the dead, was the information hanging out of heaven to the whole intelligent world of angels and men, but especially men, that Christ, our Lord and surety, had really finished the work given him to do, really paid every man's debts, and paid them to the uttermost farthing, and in testimony of the debt being paid the prison door of the grave was opened after three days, and God the Lord allowed him to go free. There is nothing, therefore, left for sinful men to do but just to take the good that God provides for them—just to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and take hold of his merits. This is called the power of his resurrection, or the power that is to strengthen a man for his duty, Christ's finished work; because if all debts be paid and we have not a single iota of debt put to our account, provided we believe, then we may go to God boldly, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in every time of need. The inhabitant of Zion spoken of, is just a person whose mind and heart is going very much towards Christ, as the Lord our strength. He is perfectly convinced that he has no strength for the most common duties of himself, but that all strength is laid up for him in Christ, and he just learns to be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let his requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep his heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

But further, in that afore quoted place from the Philippians, we find that the Apostle thinks much of the Lord as his pattern or example in life, for he says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." He knew that Christ is the pattern of life and experience to all his people here below, and that they must be conformed to him in the matter of suffering, before they be prepared for the other world. Last of all, then, the inhabitant of Zion is the person whose thoughts run out much to Christ in this view. He is thinking how Christ got the crown he wears now in heaven—that is by bearing the cross, and as he obtained it in this manner, so will his followers get it also by bearing the cross; they find the cross lying down, and they just learn to take it up and follow Christ. They have learned that, if conformed to the matter of suffering here, they shall be conformed in the matter of glory hereafter.

So much, then, for the character of the people of God. We come next to speak of the privileges spoken of in the text, as connected with their character. It is "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." Now one branch of the privilege, couched in these terms, is that all those who are in Christ, or all who are inhabitants of Zion, have a very glorious one for their new covenant head: "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." Perhaps we ought to observe here that the Holy One of Israel, or the God that went out and in among the people of Israel, the God that brought them out of the land of Egypt, and through a variety of vicissitudes, landed them at last in the Canaan of promise, was no other than the Lord Jesus Christ. We are sure of this from 1 Cor. x. 9. "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." You know that it was ancient Israel, the Israelites who tempted the Lord and were destroyed of serpents. Now the Lord that was tempted was Christ, not as born of the Virgin Mary, but as God, in which capacity he was alive. God the Father is too holy to hold any kind of correspondence with our race since the fall, except through a Mediator, and therefore all communication was maintained by Jesus Christ, who was the Holy One of Israel. Now this Holy One of Israel was a Glorious One. A part of the privilege of God's people is this, that they have a very Glorious One to be their Head. That must be one of the ideas contained in these words, because the God of Israel is called One. It intimates that God is pleased to treat all mankind as one man, that one being Adam. Now he treats all the Redeemed as one man—that one is Christ: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Observe that the one spoken of here, the Holy One of Israel, in the mind of the Church is just the Lord Jesus Christ viewed in the capacity of the covenant head of his people—the distinguished One to represent the many who were brought in due time under the covenant of grace. This Holy One is greatly holy, "Great is the Holy One of Israel." Yes, this is an idea which the word of God contains clearly. By holiness we mean the keeping the commands of God. The word always is, that the commands of God are never kept without love on the part of him who keeps them. Love is the fulfilling of the law. The

end of the commandment is charity or love, and it is just the want of this love that condemns all mankind. The law condemns all men to their face, because they are devoid of love. The kind of love which the law requires, with a view to our being holy, is love to God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength; more than this we cannot give, and I do not say we give this, but this does not prove that God deserves no more love than just all that the heart, soul, and strength of the creature man can give. The infinite excellence of God requires infinite love, but he cannot find this in a finite creature. Christ rendered it to God because he was the infinite one. That infinite one was influenced in all he did by infinite love. All the heart, soul, and mind of God was in Christ's love. Therefore "Great is the Holy One of Israel." He who stands up in the midst of the Church, as the covenant head, is not only holy, but greatly holy, and the greatness of this holiness God, the Judge, puts to the account of unholy creatures, such as we, who honestly believe in his name. This is one of the privileges Christ came to give unto his people—not only the life they lost, but greater life. They have the privilege of having a very glorious one standing in the midst of them, as their covenant head and representative.

But farther, it is particularly the privilege of all the inhabitants of Zion, or of them who believe in Christ, that they have the protection of Him at all times who is the Almighty, and who is, therefore, able to prevail against all opposition. "Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." These last words call up the idea of the Holy One being ready to run out as from a centre to any quarter, in behalf of his people that require his aid. They convey the idea of a garrison, which, being in the very centre of a place fortified, contains armed men ready to run out from this central point, whenever they are called or required. So Christ, the Holy One, is in the midst of the Church, in the midst of the believer individually, because quite prepared to run out from the right hand or from the left, from above or from beneath, from behind or from before, to any point where his people are weak and unprotected. If any of God's people be poor in this world, as many of them are, they need not have recourse to unlawful methods to secure for them and their families bread to eat, and raiment to put on, as some people do, for their heavenly Father

knows they need these things, and he will give them to them, in the use of the lawful means put in their power, and which they are commanded to use. Christ is in the *midst of them*; he stands always in the midst of them, individually, and rather than allow any of his own people to starve for bread, or want necessities of any kind, he will move the heart of some griping miser to afford them supplies, as he moved the raven to feed Elijah, during the time of famine. They have never cause, therefore, to have recourse to unlawful means, for Christ, the Holy One, is in the midst of them.

It intimates farther, God reconciled in Christ to provide for their souls. God will not be so unfaithful to his promise, as first to give life, and then to withhold his protecting hand from that life, so as that it should want sustenance. Whenever he gives life, he gives the means of supporting it. Whether it be temporal or spiritual life, we may equally commit our souls to him as unto a faithful Creator. He will provide for them the means of grace. He will either bring them, in the course of providence, to those means of grace, or he will bring the means of grace to them, and along with the means of grace most fit for that end, he will send them his own enriching blessing.

But once more, it makes part of the privilege of God's people, called the inhabitants of Zion, that they are to see the greatness of the glory of God ultimately. By the glory of God is meant just the bright shining of his perfections. God's perfections are his wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, and every one of these exists in God in the very highest degree. There is a glory, a brightness, a greatness, about them. Now God says that the very greatness of his glory shines out in the work of redemption—that there is more of that great invisible God brought out to intelligent creatures, by the work of redemption, than by any work which God created, and made, as the angel intimated, when singing, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men; showing that the birth of Christ would give the highest display of God to intelligent creatures, glory to God in the highest would arise out of this wonderful event. Now each of these is destined to take in the greatness of God's glory. To take an example of it, we admire the wisdom of Solomon appearing in his giving forth judgment in a most difficult case that came before him. The case was this:

Two women produced a living child before the king, and each claimed to be the mother of that child, though neither had any proof except her own bare assertion, and the question for the king was, which of these two women was the mother? It came into his mind that he could bring out the fact of the real mother. He desired a sword to be brought. He then ordered a man to divide the child in two, in order to end the controversy, upon which the false mother said, "Yes," and then the true mother said, "No; give it to her, though the false mother." Then the king said, I know now the true mother. The true mother is she who cannot witness the death of her child. We sometimes admire the king's wisdom in determining this point, much more may we admire the wisdom of God, who—when he found the children of our fallen race going down to endless perdition, because, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"—found out a way whereby he might not only arrest the evil of death, but even make some of our fallen race more glorious and more happy than ever—found out this plan to substitute his own co-equal and eternal Son, and by the expedient of substituting him for the ungodly, he found out a way whereby Satan is made his own destroyer. Now there are in this wonderful expedient revealed in the word of God, brought out into view the greatness and the glory of God's wisdom, insomuch that that great light of his day, Dr. Owen, declared that he could never get his mind off from the wisdom of God, as appearing in this glorious plan of redemption. Now the text bids us understand that this is one of our privileges, if we belong to Christ—that we are destined to behold with our own eyes, the greatness and glory of the invisible God. "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." The infinitude of glorious justice and mercy, contained in this plan, shall be made known to our astonished eyes, either in time before we die, or at all events after death, and this is part of our privilege.

Let us now look to the duty that God expects of his people, in consequence of their understanding this. The duty is expressed in these words, "Cry out and shout." And here we are taught first of all that courage is our duty—boldness. What else is meant by "Cry out and shout." The

most obvious idea contained in these words is that we be bold. It belongs to those who practise deceit to peep and mutter; for example, our Roman Catholic priests peep and mutter, because they know they practise deceit. The people who lived in our Saviour's day wondered because he spoke with authority, and not as their Scribes. Their Scribes peeped and muttered, because they were not sure of what they uttered. I say, to "Cry out and shout" means to be courageous. Why? Because there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The reason that Adam had no courage was, because his own conscience condemned him. He was stripped of integrity and innocence. What makes some men forget to pray is a guilty conscience. They will never pray, or if they do pray, they never understand what they say. They just learn some form of prayer, and mumble over these words, but do not understand what they express. The reason that they do not pray with understanding and the Spirit, is that their consciences tell them they ought to be afraid of the living God. Conscience, however, tells believers that though they may have sinned yet Christ is holy, and that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, and walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; and because there is no condemnation, nay because God puts to our account the most perfect righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore we are bid "Cry out and shout," or be courageous, and cry to God before God's throne. Nay he bids us, when under trouble, if we belong to Christ, not to be afraid with any amazement, because there is no wrath and curse in those troubles that affect believers in Christ. If so, then the curse could not have been taken away by Christ. But when Christ, the Lord of Glory, suffered the just for the unjust, just because he was the Lord of Glory, the whole wrath and curse due to sin were taken away, and there is no wrath and curse in any of those afflictions sent to the people of God—no wrath and curse to those who honestly believe in Christ Jesus. It is declared that all things work together for good to them that love God. We ought, then, to "Cry out and shout," to be courageous, to take heed that we be not afraid when God visits us with any of the common afflictions. Further, the duty incumbent on those who are now in Christ, is the duty of cheer-

fulness. I think so much may be gathered from the language "Cry out and shout." Be not only courageous but be cheerful; and good reason have they to be cheerful, because they are destined ultimately to be the very happiest of the creatures of God. In proof of this it is their nature, in particular, which now exists in the person of Christ, nearest to the nature of God in heaven—not the angels' nature, but the human nature Christ took to himself; not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, and he has carried this nature into heaven, and he claims for himself a glory like as he had with the Father before the world was, and the glory which is given to him he intends to give to each and every one of his people. Thus they are destined to be the very happiest and noblest of creatures through all eternity, and ought not, therefore, to hang down their heads, and allow their knees to smite against each other with fear. They should rather cry out and shout, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of them.

Once more. It makes part of the duty expressed in the text, as incumbent on those who know and enjoy their christian privileges, that they hold forth the word of life, that they be not ashamed of Christ and of Christ's work before men. These words, "Cry out and shout," intimate, do not be afraid to acknowledge among your fellows that you have been in difficulty about sin—do not be ashamed, but hold forth the word of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. There is, indeed, no obligation lying on God's people indiscreetly and injudiciously, to obtrude their ideas on people who love not the truth, for we are bid not to cast pearls before swine, and to answer a fool according to his folly. It is only before those who fear God that we are to speak boldly, but after asking counsel of God we are not to be ashamed before those among whom we dwell, to own that verily we have been in difficulty about this evil, sin, but that we have got over it, and hold ourselves under obligation to Christ, who died for us and rose again. Christians are to be courageous, they are to be cheerful in duty, they are bidden hold forth the word of life, and not be ashamed of Christ among men, but to cry out and shout, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of them.

Thus then we have learned from this text, first, the character, second the privilege, and lastly, the duty of the people of God. Their character contained in these words "Thou inhabitant of Zion;" their

privilege, which God connects with their character, expressed in these words, "Great is the Holy One of Israel, in the midst of thee;" and then the duty of those who know and enjoy this privilege, "Cry out and shout." Allow me now to make some concluding remarks. First, looking over this matter I am constrained to make this reflection, in which, no doubt, many will go along with me,—How very far below their privilege do some professing Christians live! They do not seem to know or to be anxious to know, what great things God has done for them. They think that Christ has made some atonement for sin, but who Christ was they cannot tell—some great man, perhaps, but it does not come home to their minds that he was the great God. The notion is that he was some very wonderful man, who came into this world and gave up his life, and that through him we have forgiveness of sin. Whereas the gospel doctrine is, that Christ is the Holy One of Israel, in the midst of the Church—that Christ not only appeared in the midst of the Church, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, but to bring in everlasting righteousness by obedience to the divine law. Do any now hearing me think that all that Christ has done was suffering the condition of the covenant of works? Are you aware what was the condition of that covenant? Was it suffering? Did God say, in the day ye shall suffer such and such things, then you shall confirm yourselves in God's sight? He said, "Eat not the forbidden fruit, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." It was obedience to God's command that God made the condition. Thus obedience was the condition of the covenant of works.

It is the greatness of Christ's holiness that emboldens us to cry out and shout, to go to the throne of grace, to ask whatever we may stand in need of—it is our understanding that Christ was the Holy One of Israel, one who wrought righteousness, who fulfilled all righteousness, whose righteousness being divine is unto and upon all who honestly believe. You have ample encouragement to draw near to God in confidence, for strength in all kinds of duty, and you are bidden, on that account, to serve God in joyfulness. We would call on the people of God to draw near next Lord's day, and claim their christian privilege.*

* Preached before the dispensation of the Sacrament.

But further still, we see from this text how privilege always goes before duty. Therefore privilege must be preached by Christ's ministers, in order to duty. God bids his people cry out and shout, because great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of them. Observe, then, how privilege is always before duty. Under the covenant of works duty went first, and privilege and reward came after. It said, "Do and live," but, it being now broken, the tenour of the new covenant is the very reverse, live and do—take life as the gift of God free through Jesus Christ, who wrought righteousness for it, and then go forth in the strength of it. You ought to bear with those ministers in your day who find it incumbent on them to preach the Christian's privilege, because it is the way to make them endeavour after new obedience.

I would say further from the text, that the words are spoken to individuals as such, and not to companies of men as we are met here. "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." The word is in the singular number, as grammarians say, so that God calls on each individual believer to come near and claim his privilege, to be

courageous, to be cheerful in his duty, not to be ashamed of Christ and his cause. He says to each individual believer, cry out and shout—come near and claim your privilege—you are entitled to be courageous, to be cheerful, not to be ashamed of Christ and his works before men, but to be joyful in duty—and then, again, others who know not these things experimentally, are spoken to now by God individually, and God bids them yet turn and live. There are who think they could live very well without Christ. They do not see that there should be any establishment in the country whereby the religion of Christ is kept up. They might live as well, they think, in some Popish, Pagan, or Mahometan country. But these are spoken to by God individually. He says, Turn ye, turn ye, prisoners, to the stronghold. If there be any of us, then, whose consciences tell us we do not know these things, as matters of experience, and are not made to be jealous over ourselves, this night we are yet unfit to come near and enjoy the perfections of God, and his favour through Christ, for only those become the objects of his favour who honestly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

EARLY PIETY ENFORCED;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, BRIDGETON, TO THE GLASGOW YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY, ON SABBATH, 7TH JULY, 1833,

By the Rev. JOHN EDWARDS,

Minister of the Relief Church, Bridgeton.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."—ECCLES. xii. 1.

THE importance of knowing those truths, of cultivating those dispositions, and performing those duties which are designed and fitted to prepare us for a higher and holier state of being, is confined neither to the young nor the middle-aged; neither to the man who is just entering on the trials and temptations of the world, nor the man who is standing with one foot in the grave and the other sliding from its brink. All are alike concerned in possessing the hopes which religion inspires, in discharging the obligations which it imposes, and acquiring that character without which it solemnly declares, "no man shall see the Lord." All are travelling to eternity—all are accountable to the God that made them, and each is liable, at any moment, to be removed from this land of forgiveness and to be ushered into that world, in which "he that is holy shall be holy still, and he that is filthy, filthy still." Be our age or engagements what they may, the moment that now fleets past

us with the speed of lightning, may be planting in our constitutions those seeds of disease which the next may ripen in death. To every member of our fallen family the declaration of Scripture is alike applicable, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

Though there is no class, then, who can plead exemption from the duty of seriously, and without delay, directing their thoughts to religion, and preparing for that world on which they are so shortly to enter; and though there is none to whom salvation is not in the highest degree suitable and necessary, yet, in the circumstances of the youthful, we can discover a multitude of considerations which impart a peculiar force to the claims of religion on their attention, and give an emphatic energy to the words of Solomon in our text, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Religion, indeed, addresses itself to the young by all the arguments by which it seeks to enlist

the matured or the aged on its side. To both it says, "escape for your lives." On both it urges the question, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" To both, believing, it holds out the prospect of unmingled happiness; and to both, remaining faithless and impenitent, it unfolds no prospect but blackness and darkness for ever. But over and above these general arguments, addressed indiscriminately to men of all ages and classes, it presses its claims by a variety of specific considerations which cannot, without a violation of truth and propriety, be addressed to any other class than those who are just standing on the threshold of life. I have, therefore, humbly and earnestly to solicit your attention, whilst, in dependance on the divine blessing, I proceed to illustrate and enforce a few of those considerations which enhance the claims of religion, when it seeks to place under its hallowed dominion the hearts and habits of the young.

I. *The state of feeling in youth is better fitted for receiving religious impressions than in more advanced life.* Religion is more intimately connected with the heart than the head: and its authority is not established in the soul till it has made a conquest of the affections as well as the understanding. Its great principles of action are love to God and love to man. These constitute the moral power by which it binds the faculties of the mind to the obedience of the faith—sinks the old and perverse dispositions of the soul, and brings forth into prominence and action an entirely new class of moral elements; by which, out of the dross and corruption of our fallen nature, it moulds an image of beauty, the contemplation of which is refreshing to the heart. We may easily succeed in making a man *see* the wisdom, the harmony, and the fitness of the truths of religion, but till we have made him *feel* them as well as see them, we have only accomplished the half, and the least half, of what is necessary to constitute him a new creature, a lover of holiness, and a child of God.

The distinction to which we refer is of the highest practical importance. It is no unusual thing to meet with multitudes of men who have carefully studied the system of revealed truth—who are familiar with the Bible—who can quote its contents, and follow out its doctrines and precepts through all their bearings. They can speak with fluency of its mysteries, and dwell, in the fervour of eloquence, on the beauty of its morality and the niceness of its adaptation to the circumstances of man. They are orthodox

men, and their opinion has the weight of a law in matters of polemical and speculative theology. But what is the worth of it all? They know but they do not feel! Their religion is all in the book! They have studied the Bible as theologians but not as sinners. We may have all knowledge and understand all mysteries—we may bear the palm on the arena of controversy; but, aye, and until the gospel has come home to our hearts, and has taken our affections captive, it has done nothing more for the moral regeneration of our souls than the philosophy of Bacon or the poetry of Milton.

Religion, we admit, uniformly begins with the understanding, but the important distinction to which we refer is this, that its end is lost if it stops with it. In every instance in which it acts on the judgment, we find that it is only opening up a path by which it may travel forward to the heart. Thus, if it unfolds the Almighty clothed in the beauty of holiness, invested with omnipotence, and possessed of the riches of wisdom, it is that we may bow in reverence and adoration before him. If it reveals the Most High in the amiable light of the guardian and protector of his creatures, yearning over his children with the tender solicitude of a parent, supplying their wants, pitying their weakness, and pardoning their sins; it is that we may be induced to love Him who hath first loved us. If it come to tell us of Christ coming down to the lowly condition of our being—bearing the sorrows which we should have carried—propitiating the justice which we should have met, and dying the death which we should have died; it is that the love of Jesus may constrain us—that this moving exhibition of compassion may draw us with the cords of love as with the bands of a man, and bind us by the ties of gratitude to live and to labour for him. If it draws aside the curtain of eternity and reveals to our view the bliss and the beauty of heaven, the darkness, and the chains, and the fires of hell; it is that the revelation of the one may enlist our desires, and that of the other our fears, in the service of heaven and the pursuits of righteousness. If it traces up the race of man to one common stock, marks all as possessed of the same attributes of existence, and, however different their conditions, moving onward, to the same end; it does so, that it may teach men the brotherhood of man; excite in our breasts the common sympathies of our common nature; clothe us in "bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." What

is the man who has submitted his judgment and his heart to the dominion of this system of heavenly truth? He may be a man rich in the treasures of knowledge and erudition, possessing an intellect that can brighten the darkest subject, and penetrate far into the hidden things of God. But the peculiar glory of our religion is this, that it is not necessary that he should be so. Let his heart be devoted to the love of God and the good of his fellow-creatures—let him “do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with his God,” and heaven claims him as its own—has stamped him a subject of grace and an heir of glory.

The history of religion then is a history of the affections: the province of its dominion is the heart: and you will readily perceive the drift of all I have been saying, if I can convince you, that the affections in youth, are in a more favourable state for receiving the impressions of piety, than they will be at any future period of our lives.

It is a matter of the most unlimited experience, that the impressions made on the youthful heart, whether for good or for evil, are more deep and indelible than any which can be made in subsequent years. As we advance in life, and have proved by bitter experience the guile and dissimulation, the treachery and disappointments, which meet us at every step we advance through the world, our feelings gradually become more blunt, our affections more dead and unimpressible. And though there were no external circumstances thus constantly operating to sear and deaden our hearts, yet the very lapse of time, our progress onwards to the infirmities and inactivity of age, the tendency of our mortal constitution to its ultimate dissolution, gradually dry up the streams of affection, and leave the heart less susceptible than before. Who is ignorant of the friendships of youth? Who has not heard how they have survived amid all the vicissitudes and accidents of after life—how neither distance of place, nor lapse of years could obliterate them—how they have warmed the bosom in seasons of adversity, and been remembered and cherished amid the scenes of pleasure and the intoxications of power—how they have remained like the engraving on the rock, whilst the thousand feelings and affections, which have sprung up at a later period in the soul, have been swept away like the figures on the sand, which the tide of the ocean is washing? Have you never witnessed, and rejoiced in witnessing, the old man dropping the tear of joy, his countenance lighted up with the anima-

tion of youth, and his memory back amid the recollections of other years, when he has suddenly and unexpectedly been introduced to the long-lost, but never-forgotten companion of his early joys? Such is the strength and durability of early affections.

It is just with religious, as with other emotions. When entwined with the opening powers of the youthful mind, they have seldom been known to lose their hold of the heart. Frequently, indeed, do we witness youthful piety apparently forgotten; the restraints which a sense of religion had imposed recklessly broken through; and conscience, amid the allurements of pleasure, and the vitiating influence of evil companions, stifled and silenced. Such cases are frequent, too frequent, we admit; but the worst of them is accompanied with the consoling probability, that former religious convictions may yet recover their ascendancy; that at some interval in the career of folly, conscience, which has been stifled, but not extinguished, may be heard, and heard with such force, as to be obeyed.

As things are best understood by examples, allow me to produce a very striking illustration of the principles I have been stating:—where the allurements of power and affluence appear for a season to have obliterated the impressions of early piety, and cast a dark cloud over the bright morning of the soul's communion with God. The case to which I refer, is the case of David. Whilst he tended the flocks of Jesse, in the capacity of a shepherd boy, he had trained his thoughts to make frequent excursions into an invisible world, and had laid deep and strong in his young spirit, the basis of a life of piety and usefulness. But the time came when the Lord was not in all his thoughts. In this most dangerous of all conditions, he was hurried into crimes of the most aggravated description, which afterwards cost him many a bitter tear, and in my a painful prayer. But the time also came, when the spell which iniquity had thrown around him was broken. A recollection of what he had been, compared with what he now was, stole like the ghost of a murdered friend on his memory. Conscience recovered her usurped dominion. The sentiments and principles of piety, which had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, started into new life and vigour; and, watered by the tears of repentance, and nourished by the dews of prayer, waxed stronger and fairer than before. In this example, read the value of early religion. Mark the difficulty of entirely de-

stroying it, when once its tangled roots have shot themselves down through the affections of the heart; and let the contemplation give emphasis to the exhortation of the text, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

II. If religion obtains not a place in your heart when you are young, there is *an awful probability that it never will*. When I recollect the confidence with which many of my young hearers, who are not at present religious, may be looking forward to some period in their future lives, in which they persuade themselves they will most assuredly lay the concerns of religion to heart, I fear that some of you may be disposed to under-rate this probability. At present you are strong in the belief of your own decision; and, ignorant of the difficulty of changing the bias of the heart, you fancy that at a bidding you may stay the whole current of your passions, burst the fetters of long established habit, and give a new direction to thought and feeling, to word and action. Delusive thought! Go bid the river of the valley roll its waters back to the summit of the mountain, where its springs are placed! Go bid the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots; and then, having made trial of equal difficulties, consider what it is to make the heart, which has once "learned to do evil, learn to do good."

You will readily perceive the dangerous tendency of this confidence, and the strength of the probability, that religion, if neglected in youth, will also be neglected in maturer years, if you reflect for a moment that our sinful propensities grow with their gratification. We falsely imagine that we may keep our point of distance from God fixed—that we may go on for a few years in the ardent pursuit of the world, though not having accepted Christ, yet without increasing our principles of aversion to him. In short, we imagine that we may remain for a season indifferent, without becoming hostile. But it is impossible. Whilst we live in conformity to the world, the native aversion of the heart to the things of salvation is every moment becoming stronger. A continual process is going on, assimilating the soul more and more to the world; rendering it less and less capable of religious impression, and reducing more and more its relish for communion with heaven. If we are not for Christ we must verily and indeed be against him. There is no such thing as indifference in matters of religion—no neutrality—no middle domain which you may occupy. Every Sabbath you spend, and every sermon you hear, if not elevating you nearer to God, is bearing you farther from his presence

and favour. Every year that rolls over your heads, nay, every feeling that passes through your bosoms, must either be increasing your qualification for the happiness of holiness, and the life of heaven, or imparting to you a new and higher character of preparation for the misery of sin and the death of hell. The current of passion is swelling, the force of evil habit is confirming, and he who imagines that he may easily stem the one, or break through the other, discovers a dangerous ignorance of the constitution of his own mind. He forgets that his love of sin and his aversion to holiness, are becoming inveterate, and that soon it will baffle his utmost efforts to overcome them. A thought of repentance may occasionally steal athwart his mind; but feeling the difficulty of obeying the impulse of that thought, he delays repenting, in the foolish expectation that it will become easier by the delay. Thus, by a deceit which his heart acquires a facility in practising on itself, the period which should have been hailed as the season of forsaking sin and turning to God, is shifted backwards and backwards, till it is for ever lost in the shadow of death.

If there be any before me, who are disposed to cling to the probability of their becoming sincerely devoted to God, after they have grown old in the neglect and violation of duty, I would ask them, on what are they founding their hopes? You cannot do so on the scripture record; for there is but one solitary instance—one insulated case of this kind in the Bible—the case of the penitent thief: and there "is but one," observes the judicious Henry, "that none might presume, and none despair." But perhaps you are disposed to appeal to the many happy changes which the sickbed is producing around you. Far be it from me to circumscribe the operations, or limit the riches of divine grace. But we fear that most of these cases are nothing better than pious frauds; and even of the best of them we entertain our doubts. We can never divest our mind of the lurking possibility, that the weakening effects of disease, and the decay of constitution, may subdue the pride and stout-heartedness of the transgressor, and superinduce upon the mind a composure and placidness, not at all the softening effects of sincere penitence, or the peace of a well-grounded hope in Christ. And this possibility gathers strength, when we think of it, that many a sickbed saint, whose progress through the dark valley has been arrested at the very gates of death, has afterwards lived to be a more hardened transgressor than before.

In delaying the business of religion to the end of our days, we are calculating not only on our own strength, but God's willingness to help and receive us. We have shown you the probability that we are overcalculating the former; and we would now, in closing up the argument, point you to the possibility of overcalculating the latter. We know that in dealing with sinners, God's "ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as ours." But still we may ask, is it reasonable to expect that God will be pleased to accept as his portion, the shreds and fragments of a life, whose vigour has been given to the service of the world, or the pursuits of pleasure? Is it reasonable to expect, that God will esteem our inability any longer to follow the bent of our sinful desires, as self-denial, or the mortification of the lusts of the flesh? Is it reasonable to expect, that God will consider our inability any longer to mingle with the busy crowd of the world, as seclusion from it—as aversion to its character and practices? Is it reasonable to expect, that God will accept the penitence and the last despairing prayer, which the terrors of death and approaching judgment have called forth, as a turning from sin unto God? If reason be competent to pronounce any judgment in the case, must not its verdict be this—that God will reject the heartless and extorted service, and leave the man, who has thus abused his mercy, to seek support and consolation from that master to whom he has given the prime of his days, and the opening affections of his heart?

But we take higher ground. Conversion is the result of grace. And what if God, wearied with our impenitence, and grieved at our abuse of privilege, should withdraw his Spirit from us, and leave us to harden in our iniquity? Because he finds that we have "nothing," what if he would "take away even that which we have?" Be assured that the Spirit of God long resisted, ceases to strive with the spirit of man, when repentance becomes not only difficult and improbable, but absolutely hopeless—hopeless as the conclusion of eternity, or the reversion of doom. "Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.—Then shall ye call upon me, but I will not answer; ye shall seek me early, but ye shall not find me."

Laying all of these considerations together then:—recollecting that there is a

continual process going on in the heart of him who has not embraced religion, which is every moment diminishing his capacity of doing so; that there are no grounds either in the Bible, or observation, for supposing that deathbed repentances are at all numerous: and finally, that there is a period in the life of man, when the Spirit of God ceases to strive with him—when all influence shall be withdrawn—when the Spirit shall be silent—and conscience cease to reprove;—recollecting these things, with how much force may we now address to you the language of our text, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

My appearance here this evening, implies my approval of the Glasgow Young Men's Society, on whose account you have been called together. The most critical period perhaps in a man's whole life, is at that moment when he steps from under the parental roof, and enters society to make his way through the world. It is like the first step in a journey, which determines the direction of all that are to follow. A false movement then, may send him in a wrong and calamitous direction, both for this world and the next. Inexperienced—impetuous—and unsuspecting—he may form associations, and acquire habits, which shall involve him in poverty, disgrace and misery among his fellow-men, and draw down on him the everlasting displeasure of his God. In all circumstances this period is important and perilous: but in a city like ours, crowded with men of all characters, abounding with every species of temptation, the danger rises in magnitude; and the necessity for some expedient to secure the safety of the young, becomes more urgent and pressing. Such an expedient is the Society for which we have the honour of pleading. It proposes to raise a shield above the head of the youthful and inexperienced, that shall serve as a partial substitute for the shadow of the parental roof. And it does so, by endeavouring to cast the circle of their acquaintanceship among those who are "remembering their Creator in the days of their youth;" to strengthen those principles which are the safeguards of virtue; and to foster those tastes for moral and intellectual pleasures, which alone can lift the soul above the grovelling pursuits and pleasures of sensuality. Of such an Association, then, no friend to his race can fail to approve—and no Christian refuse to implore on its behalf the blessing of Heaven. That that blessing may rest on its members, and its operations, is our earnest prayer.

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* This gentleman formerly belonged to the Relief Body, but afterwards, with his congregation, joined the Church, and the Sermon on Christian Beneficence was the first, we believe, he preached on a public occasion, after that event. He died, 23d September, 1832.

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