

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.

SERMON by the Rev. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D., Edinburgh.
LECTURE by the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D., Glasgow.

THE MISERY OF THE UNJUST AND IMPURE, AND THE HAPPINESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE HOLY;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, GLASGOW,

By the Rev. THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.,

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"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy let him be holy still."—REV. xxii. 11.

OUR first remark on the passage we have very read is, how very palpably and how very it connects time with eternity. The character wherewith we sink into the grave at death, is the very character with which we shall reappear on the day of resurrection. The character which habit has fixed and strengthened through life adheres, it would seem, to the disembodied spirit through the mysterious interval which separates the day of our dissolution from the day of our account, when it will again stand forth, the very image and substance of what it was, to the inspection of the Judge and the awards of the judgment-seat. The moral lineaments which be graven on the tablet of the inner man, and which every day of an unconverted life makes deeper and more indelible than before, will retain the impress they have received unaltered by the transition to the future state of our existence. There will be a dissolution and then a reconstruction of the body from the same dust into which it had mouldered; but neither a dissolution nor a renovation of the spirit, which, indestructible both in character and essence, will weather and retain its identity in the mid-way passage between this world and the next, so that at the time of quitting its earthly tenement we may say, "That if unjust now, it will be unjust still; if filthy now, it will be filthy still; if righteous now, it will be righteous still; and if holy now, it will be holy still."

Our second remark suggested by the Scripture now under consideration is, that there be many analogies of nature and ex-

perience which even death itself does not interrupt. There is nought more familiar to our daily observation than the power and inveteracy of habits, insomuch that any decided propensity is strengthened by every new act of indulgence; any virtuous principle is more firmly established than before by every new act of resolute obedience to its dictates. The law which connects our actings of boyhood or of youth with the character of manhood, is the identical law which connects our actings in time with our character in eternity. The way in which the moral discipline of youth prepares for the honours and enjoyments of a virtuous manhood, is the very way in which the moral and spiritual discipline of the whole life prepares for a virtuous and happy immortality; and, on the other hand, the succession of cause and effect from a profligate youth or dishonest manhood to a disgraced and worthless old age, is just the succession also of cause and effect between the misdeeds and depravities of our history on earth, and our endurance of worthlessness and wretchedness for ever. The law of continuity between the different stages of life is also the law of continuity between the two worlds, which even the death that intervenes does not violate. Be he a saint or a sinner, he shall be followed with his own ways, so that when fixed in his own place of fixed and everlasting destiny, the one shall rejoice in eternity in the pure elements of goodness which here he loved and aspired after; the other, the helpless and degraded victim of those passions which lorded over

him in life, shall be irrevocably doomed to the worst of all torments—the torments of his own accursed nature, the inexorable tyranny of evil.

Our third remark suggested by this Scripture is, that it affords no very dubious prospective of the future hell and future heaven of the New Testament. We are aware of the material images employed in Scripture by which it embodies forth its representations of both—of the fire and brimstone, and the lake of living agony, and the gnashing of teeth, and the wailings, the ceaseless wailings of distress and despair unutterable, by which the one is set before us in characters of terror and most revolting hideousness; of the splendour, the spaciousness, the music, the floods of melody, the rich and surpassing loveliness by which the other is set before us in characters of bliss and brightness imperishable, with all that can regale the rejoicing senses of an imperishable creature rejoicing for ever in the presence and before the throne of God. We stop not to inquire, and far less to dispute, whether these descriptions in their plain meaning and to the very letter are to be realized, but we hold that it would purge theology of many of its errors, and guide and enlighten the practical Christianity of many an honest inquirer, if the moral character of heaven and hell were more distinctly recognised, and held a more prominent place in the regards and contemplations of men. If it indeed be true, that the moral rather than the material be the main ingredient, whether of the coming torment or the coming ecstacy, then the hell of the wicked may be said to be already begun, and the heaven of the virtuous may be said to be already begun in the breast of the good man. The one, in the bitterness of an unhinged and dissatisfied spirit has a foretaste of the wretchedness before him; the other, in the peace, and triumph, and complacency of an approving conscience, has a foretaste of the happiness before him. Each is ripening for his own everlasting doom, and, whether in the depravities of the one or in the graces of the other, we see materials enough either for a worm that dieth not, or for the pleasures that are for evermore.

But, again, it may be asked, will spiritual elements alone suffice to make up either the intense and intolerable wretchedness of a hell, or the intense beatitudes of a heaven? In answer to this question, let us go in detail over the different clauses of the verse now submitted to your consideration, and

let us first turn your attention to the former of these receptacles; and we ask you to think of the state of that heart, in respect of sensation, which is the seat of a concentrated and all-absorbing selfishness, which feels for no other interest than its own, and holds no fellowship of truth, or honesty, or confidence with the fellow-beings around it. The owner of such a heart may live in society; but cut off as he is by his own sordid nature from the reciprocities of honourable feeling and good faith, he may be said to live estranged in the midst of it: he is a stranger to the day-light of the moral world, and instead of walking abroad on the open platform of his fellows, he stands, a cold and heartless existence, in the hiding-place of his own thoughts; and you are in a mistake if you think of this creature that he knows aught of the real truth or substance of enjoyment, or, however successful in the wiles of his paltry selfishness, that a sincere or solid satisfaction has been the result of it. On the contrary, if you enter ^{into} ~~it~~ ^{it} ~~will there find a distaste~~ and disquiet in the lurking sense of his own worthlessness—dissevered from the respect of society without, he finds refuge nowhere; within he is abandoned by the respect of his own conscience. It does not consist with our moral nature that there should be internal happiness or harmony when the moral sense is made to suffer perpetual violence. The man of cunning and concealment, however dexterous or triumphant in his wretched policy, is not at his ease. The stoop, the downcast regard, the dark and sinister expression of him who cannot lift up his head among his fellow-men, or look his companions in the face, are the sensible proof that he who knows himself to be dishonest feels himself to be degraded; and the inward sense of dishonour which haunts and humbles him here, is but the commencement of that shame and everlasting contempt to which he shall awake hereafter. Now, this is purely a moral chastisement, and, apart altogether from the infliction of violence or pain on his sentient economy, is enough to overwhelm the spirit that is exercised by it. Let him, then, that is unjust now, be unjust still—and in stepping from time to eternity he carries in his own dis-tempered bosom the materials of his coming vengeance along with him. Character itself will be the executioner of its own condemnation; and instead of each suffering apart, the unrighteous are congregated together as in the parable of the tares, where, instead of each plant being separately

destroyed, the order is given to bind them up in bundles and burn them. We may be well assured that, when the turbulence and disorder of unrighteous society are superadded to those sufferings that prey within the heart of each individual member, a tenfold fiercer and more intolerable agony will ensue from it. The anarchy of a state, when its government is for a time suspended, forms but a feeble representation of that everlasting anarchy which ensues when the unrighteous are let loose to act and react with unmitigated violence on each other. In this fierce and fell collision between the outrages of injustice on the one hand, and the outcries of resentment on the other—though no pain were inflicted in this war of passions and purposes of violence, the passions and purposes of violence in one creature call forth the passions and purposes of keenest vengeance back again—though no sentient agony were felt in the war of disembodied spirits, yet in the wild tempest of disembodied passions alone, the hatred, the envy, the burning recollection of yet unfulfilled retaliation—in these and these alone do we behold materials enough of a dire and dreadful pandemonium; and, apart from corporeal suffering altogether, may be beheld in the full development of character alone enough for imparting all its corrosion to the worm that dieth not, enough for sustaining in all its fierceness the fire that is not quenched.

But there is another moral ingredient in the future sufferings of the wicked, besides the one we have now spoken of, suggested by the second clause of our text, and from which we learn that not only will the unjust man carry his fraud and falsehood along with him to the place of condemnation, but that also the voluptuary will carry his un-sanctified habits and unhallowed passions thitherward. "And he who is filthy, let him be filthy still." And here I take the opportunity of exposing what I fear is too frequent a delusion in society, who give their respects to the man of honour and integrity, and he does not forfeit that respect though known at the same time to be a man of dissipation. Not that we think any one of the virtues which enter into the composition of a perfect character can suffer without all the other virtues suffering along with it. We believe that the connexion between a habit of unlawful pleasure and the maintenance of strict, resolute, exalted equity and truth, is very seldom, we could almost say, never realized. The man of forbidden indulgence, in the prosecution of his objects

has a thousand degrading fears to encounter, and many concealments to practise, perhaps low and unworthy artifices to which he must descend; and how can either his honour or his honesty be said to survive, if at length, in his heedless and impetuous career, he shall trample on the dearest and most sacred rights of families? We think it has all the authority of an aphorism, that the sobrieties of human virtue never can be invaded without the equities of it being invaded also. The moralities of life are too closely connected with each other, as that one could be touched and the other could be left uninjured or entire; and so no man can cast his purity away from him without violence done to the moral consistency of his whole character. But be this as it may, we have the authority of the text for declaring, and oft-repeated affirmations of the New Testament for saying, of the voluptuary, that if the countenance of the world be not withdrawn, the gate of heaven is at least shut against him, that nothing unclean or unholy can enter there; and that, carrying his uncrucified affections into the place of condemnation, he will find them too to be the ministers of wrath, the executioners of a still sorer vengeance. The loathing, the remorse, the felt and conscious degradation, the dreariness of heart, each following in the train of guilty indulgence here—these form but the beginning of his sorrows, and are but the presages and precursors of that deeper wretchedness which, by an unrepealed law of our moral nature, the same character entails on its possessor in another state of existence. They are but the penalties of vice in embryo, and may give at least the conception of what these penalties are in full. It will add inconceivably to the darkness and disorder of that moral chaos in which the impenitent shall spend their eternity, when the uproar of the bacchanalian and licentious passions is thus superadded to the selfish and malignant passions of our nature, and when the frenzy of unsated desire, followed up by the languor and compunction of its worthless indulgence, shall make up the sad history of many an unhappy sinner. We need not to dwell on the picture, though it brings out into bolder relief the all-important truth, that there is an inherent bitterness in sin; that, by the very constitution of our nature, moral evil is its own curse, its own worst punishment; that the wicked on the other side of death but reap what they sowed in this, and that whether we look to the tortures of a dystempered spirit or to the countless ill-

of a distempered society, we may be very sure that to the character of its inmates—a character which they have fostered upon earth, and which now remains fixed on them in eternity—the main wretchedness of hell is owing.

Before quitting this part of the subject, we have just one remark to offer. It may be felt as if we had overstated the force of mere character to beget a wretchedness at all approaching the wretchedness of hell, seeing that that character is often realized in this world, without bringing along with it intolerable discomfort or distress. Neither the unjust nor the licentious man is seen to be so unhappy here as to justify the imagination, that these characteristics will have the power to effect such anguish and disorder of spirit as we have now been representing. But it is forgotten, first, that this world presents in its business, its amusements, and its various gratifications, a refuge from the mental agonies of reflection and remorse; and, secondly, that the governments of the world offer a restraint against those outbreaks of violence which would keep up a perpetual anarchy in the species. Let us simply conceive that these two securities against our having even now a hell upon earth are both taken down—that there is no longer such a world as ours, affording to each individual spirit innumerable diversions from the burden of its own thoughts, and no longer such a human government as ours, affording to general society a defence against the countless ills that would otherwise rage within its bounds—then, as sure as a solitary prison is felt by every criminal to be the most dreadful of all punishments, and as sure as upon the authority of law being suspended, the reign of terror would commence, and the unchecked passions of humanity would go forth over the face of the land to revel and destroy, so sure are we, out of moral elements and influences alone, might an eternity of wretchedness and despair be entailed on the rebellious. And only let all the unjust and all the licentious of my text be formed into a community by themselves, and that Christianity, which now acts as purifying and preserving salt on the earth, be wholly removed, and then it would be seen that the picture has not been overcharged, but that the wretchedness is intense and universal, just because the wickedness reigns uncontrolled, without mixture and without mitigation.

But we now change this appalling picture for a delightful contemplation. The next clause of the verse suggests to us the moral

character of heaven. We learn from it, on the universal principle, that as they that are unjust shall be unjust still, so also the righteous now shall be righteous still. We no more dispute the material accompaniments of heaven than of the place of condemnation; but still we must affirm of the happiness that reigns and holds unceasing jubilee there, that mainly and pre-eminently it is the happiness of virtue—that the joy of the eternal city is not so much a sensible, or tasteful, or even an intellectual, as it is a moral and spiritual joy—that it is a thing of mental, infinitely more than of corporeal, gratification; and, to evince how much the former has power and predominance over the latter, we bid you reflect, that even in this world, with all the defects of its materialism, the curse on its ground, inflicting the necessity of sore labour, and the angry tempest from its sky, often destroying or sweeping off the fruits of it; the infirmities of this feeble and distempered frame, often devoted to sickness and sore agony; yet, in spite of these, we ask, Whether it would not hold nearly, if not universally true, that if all men were righteous, then all men would be happy? Just imagine, for a moment, that honour, and integrity, and benevolence, were perfect and universal in the world; that each held the property, the rights, the reputation of his neighbour to be dear to him as his own; that the suspicions, and the jealousies, and the heart-burnings, whether of hostile violence or envious competition, were altogether banished from human society; that the emotions, at all times delightful, of goodwill on one side were ever and anon calling the emotion, no less delightful, of gratitude back again; that truth and tenderness held their secure abode in every family; and, in stepping forth among the wider companionship of life, that each could confidently rejoice in every one he met with as a brother and a friend, we ask of you if, by this simple change—a change, you will observe, in nothing else than the *morale* of humanity—though winter should repeat its storms as heretofore, and every element of nature were to abide unaltered, yet, in virtue of a process and revolution altogether moral, would not our millennium be begun, and a heaven on earth be realized? Now, let this contemplation be borne aloft, as it were, to the upper sanctuary, where, we are told, “there are the spirits of just men made perfect; where those who were once the righteous on earth are righteous still.” Let it be remembered that nothing is admitted there which worketh wickedness or worketh

ic; and, that, therefore, with every virulence of evil, detached and dis severed from the mass, there is nought in heaven but the pure, the transparent element of goodness. Think of its unbounded love, its tried and unalterable faithfulness, its confiding sincerity; think of the expressive designation given it in the Bible: "The land of uprightness." Above all, think of the revealed and invisible glory of the righteous God, who loveth righteousness, there sitting upon his throne in the midst of a rejoicing family, himself rejoicing over them, because formed in his own likeness; they love what he loves; they rejoice at what he rejoices in. There may be palms of triumph, I do not know; there may be crowns of unfading lustre; there may be pavements of emerald; there may be rivers of pleasure, and groves of surpassing loveliness, and palaces of delight, and high arches in heaven, which ring with sweetest melody: but mainly and essentially it is a moral glory which is lighted up there; it is virtue which blooms, and is the myrtle there; it is true goodness by which the spirits of the holy are regaled there; it is thus it forms the beatitude of eternity. The righteous dying now, when they rise again shall be righteous still—have heaven already in their bosoms; and when they enter its portals, they carry the very being and substance of its blessedness along with them—the character which is the whole of heaven's worth—the character which is the very essence of heaven's enjoyments.

The last clause of the verse is, "Let him that is holy be holy still." The two clauses descriptive of the character and the place of celestial blessedness, are counterparts of the two clauses descriptive of the character and the place of eternal woe. He that is righteous in the one, stands compared with him that is unjust in the other; he that is holy in the one, stands contrasted with him that is licentious in the other. But I would have you to attend to the full extent and significance of the term *holy*. It is not abstinence from outward deeds of profligacy alone; it is not a mere recoil from impurity in action. It is a recoil from impurity in thought; it is that quick and sensitive delicacy to which even the very conception of evil is offensive; it is a virtue which has its residence within, which takes guardianship of the heart, as of a citadel or inviolated sanctuary, in which no wrong or worthless imagination is permitted to dwell. It is not purity of action that is all we contend for; it is exalted purity of heart—the ethereal purity of the third heaven; and if it is at

once settled in the heart, it brings the peace, and the triumph, and the untroubled serenity of heaven along with it. In the maintenance of this, there is a conscious elevation; there is the complacency, I had almost said the pride, of a great moral victory over the infirmities of an earthly and accursed nature; there is a health and a harmony in the soul, a beauty of holiness which, though it effloresces in the countenance, and the manner, and the outward path, is itself so thoroughly internal, as to make purity of heart the most distinctive evidence of a work of grace in time—the most distinctive evidence of a character that is ripening and expanding for the glories of eternity. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "Into the holy city nothing which defileth or maketh abomination shall enter." These are distinct and decisive passages, and point out the consecrated way through which alone the gate of heaven can be opened to us. On this subject, there is a remarkable harmony between the didactic sayings of various books in the New Testament, and the descriptive sayings laid before us in the Book of Revelation. However partial or imperfect the glimpses there recorded of heaven may be, one thing is palpable as day, that holiness is the true atmosphere—it is the only element in which its inhabitants breathe, and it is their supreme and ineffable delight to breathe in it. They luxuriate therein as in their best loved and most congenial element. Holiness is the elixir, if I may use the expression, the moral elixir of glorified spirits; and in their joyful hosannas, whether of "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," or, of "Just and true are all thy ways, thou King of Saints," we may read, that, as virtue in the Godhead is the theme of their adoring song, so virtue in themselves is the very treasure they have laid up in heaven—the riches, as well as ornament, of their now celestial natures.

I would once more advert to a prevalent delusion that obtains in society. We are aware of nothing more ruinous than the acquiescence of whole multitudes in a lame standard of qualification for heaven. The distinct aim is to be righteous now, that after death and resurrection we may be righteous still; to be holy now, that we may be holy still. But we hold it not enough that you are free from the dishonesties which would forfeit the mere respect and confidence of the world, or from the profligacies which even the world itself would oppose, for there is a certain amount of morality

which is in demand on earth, but which is immeasurably short of the requisite portion for heaven. The holiness indispensable there is a universal and unspotted holiness, and withal a moral and a spiritual holiness. It is this which distinguishes the morality of a regenerated and aspiring saint from the morality of a respectable citizen, who still is but a citizen of the world—who has his conversation not in heaven—who has neither his heart nor treasure there. The righteous of my text would recoil from the least act of unfaithfulness, from being unfaithful in the least, as being unfaithful in much. The holy in the text would shrink in sensitive aversion and alarm from the first approaches of evil, from the incipient contamination of thought, and fancy, and feeling, as from the foul and final contamination of the outward history. Both are diligent to be found of Christ without spot and blameless in the great day of account, glorifying the Lord with their souls and spirits, as well as with their bodies, aspiring after those graces which, unseen by every earthly eye, belong to the hidden man of the heart, and, in the sight of heaven, are of great price, and so proceeding onward from strength to strength in this lofty path of obedience, till they appear perfect before God himself.

I feel that I have not nearly exhausted the subject of the text by these brief and almost miscellaneous observations. The truth is, it is a great deal too unwieldy for a single address, and I shall, therefore, conclude with a brief notice of one specimen that might be alleged for the importance of the view we have just given, of purging theology from error. If the moral character, then, of these future states of existence were distinctly understood and constantly applied, it would serve directly and decisively to extinguish antinomianism; it would reduce that heresy to a contradiction in terms. (You are aware that Antinomians are people who think they have obtained a gift through legitimaey; and, consequently, if they have but pocketed their title deed to heaven by that Son who justifies the sinner before God, think they may give themselves perfect relaxation from all moral and religious restraint, and impunity from all moral evil. They thus conceive Christ to have been the minister of Satan; and, because we are justified by faith, think they may sin, because grace may abound.) I have said that the view we have now given would, in fact, reduce that heresy to a contradiction in terms. There is no sound, no scriptural,

Christian who would ever think that his virtues constitute the price of heaven. This error of laying down virtue as the price and gate to heaven, is exceedingly noxious; and, therefore, Luther has well denominated justification by faith the article of a standing or falling church. It is important to know that we are justified by faith—that our meritorious claim to heaven is in the righteousness of Christ alone. It is very important that we should have a legal, a meritorious, claim—that we are gifted by it in Christ, and because of the righteousness of Christ, which is to, and upon, all that believe. It is of importance, however, that you should keep your own righteousness clear from that. It is important you should not count upon trifles, or suppose that you can make up a right to heaven by your own obedience. Keep in their respective provinces the two circumstances of justification and sanctification. Is it not looking to Christianity with half an eye, cutting asunder the testimony of God, to concentrate your whole view upon the justification, and keep your eye shut to the sanctification, which is laid along side of it, as it were, in the records of heaven? Well, then, keep your sanctification, by which your personal holiness is brought up as the absolute end, but not as the price of heaven, as your indispensable preparation for heaven, or as something still nearer heaven, the very essence, the very substance, of heaven's happiness, which lies in the exercise of good properties and good affections. There is no sound Christian who ever thinks of virtue being the price of heaven. It is heaven itself, the very essence, as already said, of heaven's blessedness. It occupies, therefore, a much higher place than the secondary and subordinate one ascribed to it, even by many of the writers termed evangelical, who mention it as the token, the evidence, that heaven will be their's; instead of which it is the very substance of heaven—a sample on hand of the identical good which, in larger measure and purer quality, is afterwards awaiting us. It is an entrance on the path which leads to heaven, or rather an actual lodgement of ourselves within that line of demarcation which separates the heaven of the New Testament from the hell of the New Testament; for heaven is not so much a locality as a character; and we, by a moral transition from the old to the new character, have, in fact, crossed the threshold, and are now rejoicing within the confines of God's spiritual temple. By the doctrine of justification through faith, we know that Christ pur-

chased our right of admittance into heaven, or opened its door for us. Is there aught antinomian in this? The obstacle, the legal obstacle, between us and a life of prosperous and never-ending virtue, is now broken down; and it is upon that event that we are to relinquish the path which is just opened to welcome and invite our approach upon it? The doctrine of justification by faith is not an obstacle to virtue, but the introduction to it. It is the removal of the obstacle—the unfastening of that drag which before held us in apathy and despair, and restrained us from breaking forth in that career of obedience in which, with the hope of glory set before us, we purify ourselves, even as Christ is pure. The purpose of Christ's death is only to stimulate our obedience. He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, to "purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The object of his promise is not to lull our indolence, but to rouse us to activity. "Having received this promise, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and

spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

I shall expatiate no farther, but shall be happy if, as the fruit of these imperfect observations, you shall be made to recognise how distinctly practical the business and the work of Christianity is. It is simply to destroy one character, and to build up another in its room—to resist the temptations which vitiate and debase, and make all the graces and moralities, which enter into the composition of perfect virtue, the objects of our most strenuous cultivation. In the expediting of this enlightened transformation, we have need of divine grace, of thorough renunciation of all dependence on our own strength, of a thorough reliance on the proffered aid of the upper sanctuary, of a deep sense of our infirmities, and a constant application for that spirit which is promised to help us. In the language of the Apostle, we must strive mightily—strive according to his grace, which worketh in us mightily. I add no more. May God bless his word, and to his name be the praise and the glory! Amen.

LECTURE

DELIVERED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE FORENOON OF SABBATH,
30TH JUNE, 1834, FROM 1 PETER iv. 10—14,

By the Rev. THOMAS BROWN, D.D.,

Minister of that Parish.

THE Apostle having exhorted to sobriety and abstinence from every sinful indulgence and engrossing earthly care, in a foregoing verse, and, in order to this, having urged those to whom he addressed himself to habitual watchfulness and fervent prayer, thereby uniting their own efforts in maintaining their purity with reliance on supernatural aid; and having urged them to this duty from the solemn consideration that, with regard to each one of them, the end of all things was at hand, recommends to them, as we saw last Lord's day, the virtue of charity—so uniformly inculcated on all the followers of Christ—so essential to christian character—so needful in their day, placed as they were as sheep in the midst of wolves, with so many bitter and malignant enemies surrounding them on the right hand and on the left. The primitive Christians by the practice of this virtue, gave open testimony to their zeal for their Master's cause, and forced their enemies to exclaim, "Behold how the Christians love one another." And, indeed, unless such a spirit had characterized them they would have disgraced their name

and would have had no pretensions to it. "By this," says Christ, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." This, therefore, was to be one of those badges by which the Christian was to be characterized in the present life; nor was it to be a cold and indifferent principle, but one strong, abiding, and fervent, consuming every selfish inclination, destroying every feeling of malice, and hatred, and revenge. Indeed, in all the requirements of the Gospel, there is a constant caveat put against all imperfection, all low degrees of virtuous principle. Every acting of the soul is to be strong, vehement, and efficacious. Every grace of the heart and every virtue of the mind is to be continued and abiding. The love of God is to engross the whole soul; all the heart is to be given up to God; all the strength of the mind is to be put forth towards him. It is an absorbing principle admitting of no rivalry. And the same in regard to the love of our neighbour. If it is that of a genuine Christian, it is any thing but a cold, dead, and lifeless thing, emptying itself in vain

speech, and fair words, and kind professions. Oh! no. Love, to be christian, my brethren—love, to be acceptable, must be fervent; and if you would judge of the degree of it, go to the command which says, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;” and if you would know what the extent of it involves, read the words, “Hereby perceive we the love of God because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” “Beloved if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” God’s requirements must be all like himself, perfect and uncompromising; and were it otherwise, men would just be explaining the divine precepts, and fashioning, and moulding, and forming the divine law in such a way as best suited their own view of things, and they would comment upon them and interpret them according to their own fancies.

This charity, the Apostle tells them, will cover a multitude of sins. It would not atone for their own sins; it would not cover their own transgressions from the eye of Omniscience; it would not shield them from the arrows of omnipotence, or prove the price of their forgiveness. No, no! They need to have another kind of sanction, another kind of shield, and another kind of robe for this. But if charity possessed your hearts, it would draw a veil of covering and concealment over many failings in your brethren. Many an offence in a brother, whether it were directed against yourselves or against others, would be concealed; many an offence would be covered which the keen eye of malice, of envy and of jealousy would at once perceive, which the heart of cruel pride would not brook, and which the tongue of malice would carefully magnify. How much more beneficial such a spirit in its existence, acting and effects, than the cold, and selfish, and unnatural spirit of the world! “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

Notwithstanding the various differences in qualifications and endowments among different individuals, every man, let his condition be what it may, has his own special sphere of duty and usefulness allotted him in the world. These qualifications and endowments, the disciples, as we learn from the 10th verse, were to regard as gifts of God’s own appointment and as the allot-

ment of heaven. Every thing was given them in trust for the benefit of others, not for their own individual advantage. Every man was to regard himself as a steward, as a good steward of the manifold grace of God. He was not to regard himself as proprietor at all, but as one raised up in the providence of God, and endowed with certain gifts and qualifications for the benefit of others, that in that circle in which he moved he might do good, as the Lord gave him opportunity. It is required of a steward that he be faithful. In the parable of the talents, the servant who had received one talent was found unfaithful, not because of squandering away his Lord’s money, but because of not turning it to good account—because he tied it up in a napkin and hid it in the ground. Every man acting on the principle suggested in this verse, and acting in the capacity of a good steward, was to direct his gift in its proper channel to the honour of his Lord and Master, and to the good of those with whom he was connected. If any man plumes himself upon his wealth, his power, his influence or his learning, and thinks that these can be used exclusively for his own personal benefit without any regard to the benefit of society; if he thinks that these are to be hoarded up or squandered away unprofitably, consider how such conduct can be reconciled with the doctrine here laid down. Every man is considered as a steward, and whatever distinguishing qualifications he possesses, whether intellectual, moral, or spiritual, all of them are to be improved and employed for the benefit of others. Would not this consideration, were it weighed and reflected on, and carried into effect by one and all of us, lead every one to consider his situation as appointed by God, and all circumstances as means and opportunities marked out by heaven for the purpose of doing his share of good in his day and generation, and to be habitually asking of himself, from day to day, How am I improving my health and wealth, my advantages and opportunities? what benefit to myself, what proportion of good to others has been effected by them? Now, let any one say, that there has not been conferred upon him wherewith to glorify God and benefit others. In the body politic, in the family of men, in the household of faith, I know of no individual so slenderly endowed that has not his sphere of duty, and his proportional means of doing good, and of benefitting his fellows. As no member of the body is independent of the rest, as the head cannot say to the foot I have

no need of thee, so no individual can say, from the lowest to the highest, I have no need of thee. In nature the spreading oak or the lofty cedar may afford a more ample shade and a more extended cover by its branches and its foliage, than the humble and lowly shrub, or the slender blushing flower; yet that lowly shrub affords a cover, and that delicate flower sends forth a sweet odour as essential, and as important, and as useful to its extent and degree, and in its place, as the other. And so it is in society. Men in great place, and men with splendid endowments, may benefit, and are required to benefit, to a greater extent than others; but men of humbler sphere and slenderer gifts may, by laying out these gifts, and improving these opportunities, do much of good to their fellow-men; yea, often more than others more elevated in situation and opportunity. The hand, and the lip, and the life, may be all directed for good to others, and must be so directed if we would fulfil the end of our being, and live agreeably to the will of God.

The direction the Apostle gives in general in the 10th verse, he exemplifies in the 11th, as to the gift of speaking and the duty of ministering. "If any speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth." The speaking here mentioned is, in all probability, meant to be public teaching and communicating religious instruction to others; and although private instruction is not excluded hereby, yet we think it means especially the duty of the public teaching of the word. Now, every one vested by God with this office and endowed with this gift, holds his office and possesses his gift for the benefit of others. It is for the edifying of the body of Christ; it is for the conviction and conversion of sinners, and for the comforting, and edifying, and building up of believers. Such are ordained by Christ the Head of the Church, for promoting his cause, and for advancing his kingdom in the world, and for the illumination and salvation of perishing sinners. Now the manner and rule of the speaking and conveying instruction by speaking and teaching is, to speak "as the oracles of God." The term oracle is applied sometimes to the place from whence intimations were made, as the tabernacle of old, and sometimes to the supernatural communications themselves. Among the Jews we distinguish several kinds of oracles. There were those delivered with audible voices, as when Moses spake to the Lord; dreams,

such as those afforded to Joseph and Daniel; visions, such as those afforded to Abraham and Jacob; and the responses of Urim and Thummim the breastplate of the High Priest—and these modes were used from the days of Joshua till the days of the temple. The oracles of God may, therefore, mean the sacred revelation of heaven—the whole of divine revelation given to man, contained in the books of the Old and New Testaments; and the speaking as the oracles of God relates not merely to the manner of speaking which he adopts, but to the words of eternal life which he utters.

The first clause of this verse implies, that he that speaks should preach the pure and uncorrupted words of truth to men; that his preaching should not be the fancies or figments of his own mind, or the traditions of men, but the words of eternal life—the oracles of the living God. Were men in speaking and praying, to consider that they are in the presence of God, and that it is to God that they address themselves, and that it is with God they then have to do, and not with men, how would their minds be solemnized and filled with holy reverence? Were God thus kept constantly in view, what an importance and solemnity would their words have; and no individual need to hope to benefit others, unless he does think as the oracles of God direct—unless his instructions are all based on the words of eternal life; unless he speaks as one who feels the truth and importance of what he utters—unless he speaks with all that fidelity and concern for souls that the divine oracles do inculcate.

"If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth." This ministration either refers to those who minister in holy things, to those who teach, or to the office in the Church, of those who minister to the wants of their poorer brethren, or to general offices of kindness, whether in a professional character or otherwise. Now, in all these ministrations, observe that the ministration is to be done according to the ability that God giveth; and the meaning is, that it is to be done diligently, and faithfully, and strenuously, as God's ministers ought to act, and as agents raised up for this very thing, not with coldness, and remissness, and indifference—with a spirit that means that we care not whether the work be done or not. If this refers to charity, it means that a person should act with the ability with which God enables him. If God has been bountiful to him, he should be bountiful to others, and give as the Lord has

prospered him. But it means that these ministrations, whatever they be, should be engaged in, in dependence on, and trusting to, God's aid and power. There is no language more befitting us than this, Who is sufficient for these things? The great effect, nay, the great acting, in the work of faith is to lead the person, under its influence, to renounce all self-dependence, and put himself wholly under the power and direction of God. There is a natural tendency in every one to attempt doing every thing without God, although we can do nothing that is truly good and acceptable of ourselves; and what, therefore, the Christian should ever aim at is, to minister in the strength of the Lord God; and that person who finds himself to be weak, and is humble and distrustful of himself, will ever find that, under the influence of this feeling, he can act most effectually. When under distrust of himself, and leaning on Omnipotence, he is relying on promised aid and on promised grace. "When I am weak," says the Apostle, "then am I strong: I can do all things through Christ strengthening me."

The great end that God proposes in the bestowment of all gifts, and the great fruit, in respect of God's bounty and application of his gifts and improvement of his mercies, that a man ought to propose to himself, is the advancement of God's glory—"that God in all things may be glorified." God created all things that he might be glorified in and by them; and that being counteracted the great end of his creation who does not glorify God. God is decidedly glorified, when his various perfections are illustrated, manifested, and displayed, to that portion of his creation who can admire and adore God in them; and God is actually glorified by his rational creation, when, viewing the divine perfections in their souls, their feelings, their affections, and desires, they are found to rise and call into active operation those duties which the creature owes to the Creator. God's essential glory can be influenced by none. He would have been ever independent, ever glorious, ever Lord, although men and angels had never existed. It is, therefore, his declarative glory of which we speak; and the glorifying of God is a tribute that all things and all persons owe to God, and should pay to God. Every thing is full of God; every thing bespeaks his power, wisdom, and goodness, and shows forth his praise. We cannot look to a single object in creation, however great or minute, that does not proclaim its Maker divine, and that does not manifest the majesty, and

power, and wisdom of the Godhead. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge of God; and the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood, by the things which God has made, even his eternal power and Godhead. But God wills his intelligent and rational offspring to do something more than what this mute and unconscious part of his creation can do. He wills them to seek his glory—to desire, to strive to promote it. He wills not merely that their wonderful structure, both in mind and body, should be silent demonstrations of the divine attributes, but that in their hearts, and lips, and lives, they should glorify him—advance the honour of his name—show forth his praise. And, if God is not directly and actively glorified in them—if his ordinances of grace are not valued, and exalted, and magnified by them, his power, and holiness, and justice, shall be awfully displayed in them. Devils and wicked men may do every thing to dishonour God; but devils and wicked men shall, in their condemnation and eternal destruction, exhibit to the whole universe of God, that God is jealous in his holiness, and inflexible in his justice. When, therefore, the Apostle says, If any man speak, let him speak so and so; and if any man minister, let him do so and so—he means, that they should employ all their talents, improve all their advantages and all their opportunities, and lay them out in every way, in such a manner that His name should be honoured, revered, and adored—that he should have the highest place in their hearts and affections—that his cause should be promoted—that the interests of his kingdom should be advanced in the world, and that we should so live, as that men seeing our good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven. Now, this is God's due. Till such time as a person is brought to subordinate every thing to God—till such time as he is brought to think nothing of himself comparatively, and to seek that God may be all in all, he is an actual rebel; he is guilty of high treason against heaven's high sovereignty; he is not acting up to the end of his creation. But it is the delight of a renewed nature—it is the delight of a heaven-born soul to have every thing brought into captivity and subjection to this holy principle. God with him is every thing: and the more the love of God rules in his heart, the more does God's glory rise to his view;

whether he eats or drinks, or whatever else he does, he does all to the glory of God. This is the ruling, the elevating, the animating principle of his thoughts and desires; this is the governing principle of his life and conversation.

The Apostle adds, that "God in all things may be glorified *through Jesus Christ*." It is through Jesus Christ, as the Midsman, as the Mediator between God and man, that the Christian receives that whereby he can glorify God: it is Christ that has received gifts to bestow upon men. We are not entitled to glorify God but through Christ; and all our praises, and adorations, and thanksgivings, rise with acceptance to God only through Christ, and as these are presented by Christ. A pure creature might glorify God without a Mediator; but impure, and sinful, and polluted, creatures could, in no case, glorify him but through a Mediator, who is Christ alone.

The Apostle having introduced the name of Christ, and having himself experienced Christ's interposition, condescension, mercy, and grace, and having himself been plucked as a brand from the burning, and the look of Jesus bringing the tear from his eye, and a groan from his bursting heart, he breaks forth in rapturous exclamation, "To whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." It is the will of God, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father; and it is the delight of the saints on earth and of the redeemed in glory, that while they fall down before Him that sitteth on the throne, they unite their ascription of praise to the Father alone, with songs of gratitude and adoration to the Lamb that was slain, but liveth now for ever and ever. And this doxology—this song of praise, addressed to the Redeemer, bespeaks Christ's equality with God the Father, who is God over all, and blessed for ever. Nothing could bespeak greater impiety than language such as this addressed to any creature whatever, however exalted. It is that which none but God could take to himself, and which angels and seraphs would tremble in applying to themselves. God is jealous of his honour; he will admit of no rival, and will not give his glory to another. "To whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Let the redeemed on earth and the redeemed in heaven—let all of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation—let the spirits of the just made perfect, and let the hosts that surround the throne *ou high*—all creation, angels, and men, ye,

sun, moon, and stars, unite in their hymns of praise to the Lamb that was slain.

The Apostle having reminded them of their duties, as Christians, to render mutual acts of charity and hospitality, in devoting all their gifts and talents to the advancement of the divine glory, and the promoting the spiritual and eternal weal of others, again adverts to the sufferings they might be, and were, called to endure in defence of the Gospel: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." But we will not enter upon this, and I would just draw a few inferences from what has been said. And, in the first place, it appears from this that none of us should think that we ought, or are permitted, to live for ourselves. Oh! there is with some a cold frozen selfishness, drying up all the streams of charity, and preventing them from flowing copiously upon others. Such are not fulfilling the will of God; they act in direct opposition to the requirements of heaven. While here, as the Apostle tells us, we are as stewards of God's gifts. Let us be as good stewards, and, therefore, faithful, and prudent, and beneficent stewards. Let every one think what God has intrusted him with, and let no individual say that he is intrusted with nothing. Where is the individual that can say that he has nothing that has been given him by God for the good of others? The hand, perhaps, may not be extended for the temporal relief, but may not the heart feel, and the tongue be employed, and may not the prayers of the soul be directed heavenward, in behalf of an individual; and may not these prove more serviceable to the individual, in behalf of whom they are raised, than offerings, yea, than whole burnt-offerings? As each has his appropriate sphere of duty, his means of usefulness conferred upon him, let him pray God that he may be useful in that peculiar sphere, and so serve God in his day and generation.

In the next place, it will lie heavy on the consciences of men when death and eternity lie before them, and when they look back on the past and forward to the future, and reflect on what they have been doing—what length of time has been measured out to them—what opportunities of doing good and receiving good from the hand of God they have enjoyed—what talents have been committed to them, that all these have been wasted, that all these have been squandered away, all unprofitably employed, and that it

may be said of them that they have remained all the day idle; for it will not do at the last to say, Lord, here is thy talent; I have laid it up; I have shrouded it up in a napkin. The language of heaven to such will be, Thou profitless servant, depart from me; take from him the one talent, and give it to him that hath ten talents. Let us consider that there will be a day of reckoning to our own consciences at the last; and, therefore, let us now be aroused from our lethargy, and be seeking and praying to be directed aright in the duties the Lord would require of us. Let each ask, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to speak and to do in my day and generation, for the weal and the benefit of others? I am not my own, and neither have been created, nor redeemed, nor placed in this world, nor had blessings conferred upon me, solely for myself. I am here as a steward, and O Lord enable me to be faithful.

In the next place, I observe, that ministers should see that they speak according to the Word. Oh! my friends, we will be like the chaff compared with the good grain, if there is any thing but the oracles of the living God proclaimed; we will be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, and will not preach to the salvation of a single soul, if it is not the Gospel that is proclaimed to sinners. We may, well knowing that we are intrusted with the manifold grace of God, seek to be directed and to feel the power and influence of grace in our own souls; and let young persons, looking forward to be heralds of salvation to perishing sinners, and it may be to future generations, when our tongues shall be mute, and our heads shall be laid in the dust, see the motives by which they are animated, how it is that they seek to be ministers of Christ. Let them bear in mind that they will prove unprofitable servants—that they will be unfaithful stewards—that they will not benefit one single soul, if they

do not speak the oracles of God. It is not the wisdom of the wise, it is not the learning of the learned, it is not the ingenuity of the ingenious, that is to bring sinners to God; but the Gospel of salvation preached in earnestness and simplicity. It is the Gospel of salvation brought home to the breasts of sinners that is to be the means of plucking them as brands from everlasting burnings. May they feel the power, the force of truth in their own hearts, that they may be able to speak a word in season, when the Lord gives them an opportunity!

But, while ministers should speak as the oracles of the living God, let me tell *you* also to take heed how you hear—whether or not you hear and read as the oracles of the living God—whether you hear as if God were addressing you. You do not assemble here that your ear may be pleased; you are not met together merely to hear human speech, that your fancy may be gratified; you do not assemble here merely that you may receive lessons of instruction, and that speculative knowledge, even of divine things, may be attained, and that you may receive knowledge of some new truths merely, but to hear the oracles of the living God. You come here, if you come with a right mind, to be told of sin, and of death as the consequence of sin. You come here to hear of sin and of reconciliation through the blood of Christ. These oracles make these things known to you; and if you are animated with a proper frame of mind, you will hear with reverence, and in order that your souls may be saved. The Lord give you to know the truth, and to feel its influence and power, that you may grow up as willows by the water courses; for, by waiting on God, you shall renew your strength; your souls shall mount up as eagles; ye shall run and not be weary; ye shall walk and not faint. May the Lord bless his word, and to his name be all the praise! Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

LECTURE by the Rev. JOHN BROWN PATTERSON, Falkirk.
SERMON by the Very Rev. G. H. BAIRD, D.D., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN WILSON, A.M., Irvine.

SUBMISSION UNDER AFFLICTION;

A LECTURE DELIVERED ON THE FORENOON OF SUNDAY, 25th MAY, 1834, BEFORE
HIS GRACE THE LORD COMMISSIONER TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

By the Rev. JOHN BROWN PATTERSON,
Minister of Falkirk.

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour."—JOHN xii. 17.

You remember, brethren, the circumstances in which these words were uttered. Jesus had entered the holy city with an enthusiasm of popular acclamation, hailed and applauded as the promised son of David and king of Israel, which had awakened in the breasts of his disciples, and of the multitude at large, the liveliest hopes that he was a prince about to enter on that course of victory and earthly splendour by which, according to their imperfect ideas, the kingdom of heaven, in the hand of the Messiah, was to be distinguished. For the purpose of precluding these idle dreams of worldly ambition, the Sovereign, whose kingdom was not of this world, had taken occasion to inform them, that though they were not mistaken in supposing his glory on the very point of dawning, yet they were mistaken, and grievously, in their ideas of the way in which he was to realize that expected exaltation. Figuratively, but most intelligibly, he told them that the path which was to lead him up to the joy set before him lay not among the laurels and sunshine of earthly triumph and felicity, but under clouds of deepest ignominy and tears; and that not He alone, but all his followers, especially in that age of martyrdom, must expect, through suffering, to be made perfect, and lay their account with partaking here their Master's sorrows, if they would share hereafter their Master's joys. The idea, however, which in this connexion had been called before the Saviour's mind from

the dark scene of suffering which lay between him and his crown, was an idea not so easy to be dismissed, as oftentimes ideas are with us, after having served the purpose of argument or exhortation, for the sake of which they were introduced. But a vision stood before him of vastly deformed and frowning countenance, holding fast his irresistibly arrested eye, directing forward his shuddering fancy through the successive stages of deepening and accumulating woe, which filled the space between him and his joy—the garden of Gethsemane, with its midnight shade less deep than that upon the Saviour's soul, whilst bloody dews were wrung from his sacred frame beneath the wine-press of strong agony; the traitor's lantern gleaming through the trees; the cause of perfidy, the flight of cowards, the pangs of bondage, and then the judgment-hall of the persecuting hierarchy; the Gentile governor, the Galilean tetrarch, with all the indignities and all the barbarities to be poured upon him, through the shame, the spitting, the mockery, the strokes of cruel hands and of dangerous tongues; the scourge, the thorns, and last, the hill of Calvary itself, crowned with that black and frowning tree, abhorred of man, of God accursed—the hill where he was to endure the curse beyond accustomed measures darkened with shame, and loaded with agony—where the earthquake and eclipse, which rent the groaning earth and veiled the shuddering heaven, were but the

symbols of those more terrible convulsions that tore his righteous soul; of that more ghastly gloom that enveloped his dissolving nature, when, for one unutterable moment, the man Christ Jesus experienced the condition of a creature as it was forsaken by its God, beheld, as it were, the light of the universe put out, and in that sudden and unutterable chill felt his spirit sorrowful unto death. All these arose before his mind in distinct and palpable array. Will you, therefore, be surprised to find, that, standing upon the very shores of that tempestuous ocean of calamities, and ready to plunge into the perilous conflict with its imperious billows, a corresponding storm of agitated feelings arose within his human mind, so that a pause of recollection was necessary ere he should decide what wish and what process it was meet for him to form and to express? "Now," he exclaims, "is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?" You must have had but little experience of human life and human feelings, if you are not prepared to enter, with some degree of sympathy, into the force of these pathetic words; if you cannot recollect occasions when some important and desirable result, deliberately chosen and approved by your feelings and your principles, lay ready to be realized before you, and yet in an experience of the previous sacrifices and sufferings, the amount, the force, the bitterness of which you had but very imperfectly conceived, till you stood upon the very shore, upon the very threshold, or were involved in the struggle of their actual endurance; where, for a moment, you had felt all your most deliberate convictions and desires unsettled and unhinged; and, in order distinctly to perceive and unfalteringly to pursue the path of duty, you had to fall back upon the fact that your present condition was the result of previous forethought and selection, that, for this very purpose, you have come to that hour. That a process, a feeling such as this, is not unnatural to mankind, I appeal to every one who is capable of observing the phenomena of man's mysterious heart. That it is not improper in itself, nor sinful in the sight of God, we appeal to the example of the Saviour in the place before us. He had advanced, with steadfast heart and resolute footsteps along the course set before him; but now for a moment the cool and settled purpose of his spirit, to die a voluntary victim for the sake of Jehovah's honour and man's salvation, seemed to be lost from his consciousness; and when the form and as-

pect of his bewildered senses increase, he looked abroad, as it were out from himself, for direction and help, and shrieked out, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say." The question was answered first by those instinctive feelings of recoil from immediate suffering, which, as all his history shows, he possessed in the fullest degree and most trembling sensibility, and which, so far from diminishing the grandeur of his character, as the man of sorrows, only rendered it an object more of admiration, and, at the same time, more of sympathy. The expression which first arose to the Redeemer's human lips, in answer to his question, "What shall I say?" was rapid, and contains a petition for deliverance from the approaching sorrow, "Father, save me from this hour;" for we can entertain no sympathy with the views of those interpreters who, anxious to escape from the true import of the words, as if they contained in them something inconsistent with either the piety or the magnanimity of our Saviour's human character, have adopted various devices, in order to represent them as something else than an entreaty that he might be spared the approaching agony, reading them, as some do, with an interrogation to this effect, "What shall I say?" Shall I say, "Father, save me from this hour?" or, understanding them with others as a prayer that he might not be subject to sufferings in prospect, but in due time delivered out of them, and exalted to the inheritance of proposed reward. Expositions, such as these, are so obviously adopted for a purpose, that, unless the direct sense of the words were seen to involve something absurd or contradictory, we can have no hesitation in rejecting them; nor will any one perceive, in the expression naturally understood, any thing unreasonable or improper, when he views it as comprehending, though not expressly stating, a circumstance quite common in human speech, under which all our prayers for deliverance from physical suffering must be offered up to be acceptable, *if the Father saw it to be possible and right*; just as when, on a similar occasion, probably the next succeeding evening, he prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." We take the expressions in their natural significance, and, as expressing on the part of the perfect man Christ Jesus the strongest possible reluctance in nature to the endurance of suffering merely on its own account, the profound-

est possible conception of the bitterness of that peculiar suffering, which was now about to descend on him as the substitute of man, and the deepest possible excitement of the natural emotions of apprehension in regard to the effect which the sufferings actually inflicted, were to have on the powers and sensibilities of his human nature. All these were innocent feelings, meet to be indulged in the circumstances in which he was placed, by him who knew no sin, in which, therefore, none may venture to write sin or blame in the case of his disciples, if only they are not permitted, in the case of Christians, as they were not in the case of Christ, to become usurpers and tyrants of the soul, refusing to obey the voice either of reflection or of conscience, and producing the abandonment or violation of duties deliberately undertaken and solemnly incumbent. Not such we see was the effect of these feelings upon Jesus. Thus, no sooner had he offered the heart-piercing prayer, "Father, save me from this hour," than, behold, he checks the outbreathing instincts of his humanity with the consideration that the hour so high with dread and agony, was the very hour, for the special purpose of fulfilling which he had come into the world, and had passed forward through three and thirty years so full of portent and promise—the hour expressed and expected, without which the grand design of his incarnation would be frustrated, and all his former labours and obedience would be vain. "Father save me from this hour, but for this cause came I to this hour." He needed not to have advanced so far upon the path he had selected for himself; he needed not to have entered it at all—from the moment he had first begun to act as the Lord's anointed for the salvation of men, from the period when the proposal was first made by him, if we may so speak, in the recesses of primeval eternity, he knew that in the progress of the undertaking he should have to confront the hour which had at last arrived. He knew with what that hour was fraught; he was fully aware of all that it unfolded; he had to encounter the work which at that point of duration reached its crisis, and had become pledged to fulfil it, fraught with what it might of sacrifice and suffering; and, therefore, after having felt as for one moment ready to be borne away upon the whirlwind of tempestuous perturbation agitating his human heart, we find him recovering his shaken soul into the attitude of firm resistance, reducing all the instincts of hu-

manity, which shrink from pain and anguish, under the power of that great principle which has influence in all circumstances or action and suffering to that known law of human thought, sentiment and conduct, substituting for the cry, "Father save me from this hour," the petition, "Father glorify thy name." He knew that the awful scene which lay outstretched before him was the chosen theatre on which Jehovah had determined to give the most conspicuous illustration which the circuit of the universe embraces, or the annals of eternity record of the perfections of his moral character—the perfections which, when revealed, are called Jehovah's name; and when he called all this to mind, when he recollected that the advancement of the Eternal's glory was the very end for which all created beings existed, and for which his own unknown and unexampled person as God-man had been constituted, straightway, with more than heroic resolution he spurned away the thought that his sufferings should for one moment he put into the balance against his Father's honour, that he should be spared one pang, even the bitterest, at the expense of illustrating the greatest of the attributes of the Eternal's character, and the principles of the Eternal's government. To effect this illustrious end, shame, and suffering, and death became illumined with a glory in his eyes that made them not formidable but attractive, the subjects not of deprecation but of petition. Distinctly conscious that the request he uttered included among its objects his own obedience unto death—even the death of the cross, he terminates the point; but, oh! how comprehensive and affecting the pleading with his Father, which the passage before us records: "Father, glorify thy name."

To conclude, how strongly ought we not to feel the incalculable obligation under which we all lie to love him who has so loved us as, for our interests, to consecrate himself to a deed of such bitterness, that in its very prospect that mighty soul of his was sore amazed and sorrowful, even unto death. How deeply should we not feel the force of his example on those occasions of our lives, when we shall be placed by an all-ruling Providence in somewhat corresponding circumstances. When in the agony of our regret for happiness departed, or our dread of calamity approaching, the swooning soul recoils from the path of honesty or of duty; when hemmed in with apparently inextricable perplexities it is in straits, and

what to choose it wotteth not, then does the Saviour's example teach us where the crushed spirit ought most readily to seek, and will most surely find, counsel and relief—by repairing to the ever open throne of grace, and there unbosoming its big and bursting sorrows to the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation. He who pitieth even as a father pitieth his children will not chide, if even in strong expressions you pour into his ears the emotions of apprehension which the prospect of mental endurance must awake; he will not turn his face offended or unheeding, when you say, "Save me, Abba Father, from this hour. If it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Only remember, even in the hour of bitterest apprehension and most earnest supplication, what he who suffered for us left as an example that we should tread his steps, that it should be your continual and permanent desire whether in delivering you from trials or in supporting you through them, that God may be glorified. In any circumstances whatever, a prayer for relief from any one calamity, guarded by no express and no understood condition, is unbecoming the Christian who would suffer as his Master suffered, that he may triumph

as his Master triumphed. Now, let us labour that what was by original destination may be by choice and practical pursuit the chief end of our existence, that we may glorify God and so enjoy him for ever; that we may be prepared to do it under any circumstances, so that if the honour of his name and the advancement of his cause may, in the slightest degree be promoted, we may learn to welcome pain of body and anguish of spirit, ignominy, and desolation, and death; that in His estimation who can perfectly discern the real bearings and tendencies of things, we may assume means for the accomplishment of an end so glorious and desirable—the only worthy end of the universe—the illustration of infinite majesty and excellence, that even in the hour when it is finished, he may exclaim, "Father save me from this hour," the conquering Spirit may subjoin, "Father glorify thy name," and the piercing cry of nature, "Father, if it be possible that this cup may pass from me" may subside into the chastened and placid tones of meek submission and humble acquiescence. Nevertheless, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink, thy will be done. "Abba Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Amen.

THE CHRISTIAN'S CAUSE OF REJOICING;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE TRON CHURCH, GLASGOW, AT THE OPENING OF THE SYNOD,

By the Rev. JOHN WILSON, A.M.,

Minister of Irvine.

"Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."—LUKE x. 20.

ON a particular occasion our blessed Lord sent out seventy disciples to preach the Gospel. To accomplish this purpose, he conferred upon them the power of working miracles. They returned after the execution of their mission with joy to their Master, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name; and he said unto them, 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. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." In discoursing from these words under the blessing of Him by whose author-

ity the Gospel is still preached, I shall direct your attention, in the first place, to the prohibition which is here given: "In this rejoice not." In the second place, I shall direct your attention to the object in which we are permitted, and invited, and commanded to rejoice, "Because your names are written in heaven."

I. I shall direct your attention, in the first place, to the prohibition which is here given: "In this rejoice not." The Scriptures inform us, that from our infancy in this world we are alienated in heart from God. Our own experience affords many proofs of this melancholy fact, in the pride, in the self-complacency, in the self-confidence which in some one or other of their various forms are characteristic of every

human being. They are different in kind and in degree, according to the peculiar circumstances, the personal advantages, or constitutional tendencies of the individual; but, in whatever form or degree these dispositions manifest themselves, they are unbecoming in us, because they are derogatory to the honour of God, and lead us to place our happiness in the creature instead of the Creator, who is God over all blessed for ever. This tendency in our fallen nature to rejoice in the creature rather than the Creator is so very strong, that when our blessed Lord empowered his seventy disciples to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, saying, "Nothing shall by any means hurt you," he thought it necessary to give the caution which is expressed in the words of our text. This caution we might have supposed was almost unnecessary, seeing it was for the express purpose of promoting their Saviour's glory that they were sent out commissioned with these powers, but he knew their need of the caution. After fulfilling their mission, they returned to the Lord and brought intelligence that the devils were subject to them. At that time the exercise of this power was needed, and it was exercised by them beyond their expectation. Under these circumstances they were the more inclined to ascribe the success of their agency to him who sent them; but our Saviour, in the exercise of a holy jealousy, cautions them against the indulgence of opposite dispositions when once they might become familiar with exercises of this kind. "Behold," says he, "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; notwithstanding, in this rejoice not." That his jealousy was not uncalled for, nor his caution unnecessary, we see from the statement of the Apostle concerning the abuse of these powers about the time to which we now refer. This he condemns in the strongest terms, and endeavours to point out to them the proper use to be made of these endowments, as being given, not to make the possessors of them objects of wonder and applause, but to render them efficient instruments in the hands of the Holy Spirit in the enlargement of the Saviour's kingdom. Such exalted privileges were not to be dissociated from a real and personal interest in the blessing of salvation. This blessing infinitely transcends every other, and the possession of it is to

be determined by the manifestation of a corresponding spirit, even the Spirit of Christ. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Understanding what is in man, our blessed Lord well knew that his disciples might be actuated by a spirit of superiority, because they were distinguished from other men by the possession of miraculous powers. These miraculous powers might be supposed, with some justice, to have warranted the primitive disciples in boasting; but mark, that in the most positive manner the Author and Finisher of our faith said, "In this rejoice not." And surely this may be said of the more common advantages of mankind—of the wisdom, and the riches, and the strength which are attainable through the ordinary course of providence. By this prohibition every one is called, however wise he may be, to guard against being elated by that superiority to which he has been raised by the exercise of his intellectual energies. Numerous instances daily evince the necessity of this caution. The wisest men meet in the walks of life with contingencies which their sagacity cannot foresee, and which their wisdom cannot prevent. They form plans with deliberation and execute them with caution, but meet with various circumstances which interfere with their purposes and counteract their hopes. They find, indeed, convincing proof that of themselves they are shortsighted, that it is not in man to direct his steps, and that upon God he depends entirely and constantly. Even the most enlightened of our race have no cause to exult—and in reference to their attainments, the Author and Finisher of our faith is now saying, "In these rejoice not." These are considerations which apply to all the advantages we enjoy, and to all the varied kinds and degrees of superiority which distinguish man from man; and they apply in a peculiar manner to the advantages which spring from health, strength, and beauty. These are advantages which lie at the mercy of sickness, or accident, or infirmity, or decay. The arrows of death, like the stone which David slung when he brought Goliath to the ground, are flying thick around us, thinning indiscriminately the ranks of so-

ciety, reaching the infant heart and striking the hoary head; but, while they fly around us, they are guided by Him without whose permission not a sparrow can fall to the ground, and carry with them conviction that of ourselves we are nothing and can do nothing, but that in God we live and move and have our being. Since all are liable to sickness and infirmity, and since all must speedily die, vain is the dependence any can place on themselves, and in reference to their advantages the Lord our Prophet and Teacher, whose servants we are, is now speaking to us, "In these rejoice not." But the delusions which spring from this source are neither so numerous nor so injurious as those which arise from the possession of wealth. It is calculated to swell the mind with arrogance and to increase the self-importance of man; and, inasmuch as it attracts the gaze of the multitude, it turns us away from that which constitutes our chief excellence. Besides, though useful, it is at best but a precarious and uncertain tenure. It cannot heal the anguish of a wound or assuage the tortures of a guilty mind. It cannot remain with its possessor, for either it will take wings and flee away, or he will leave it when he makes his exit from the present life. In addition to all this, it is communicated to various possessors as a trust for the benefit and happiness of those around them. We are told not to trust in uncertain riches, but to submit to the authority of the Lord, when he says, "In these rejoice not." It is lamentable and much to be deplored, how much men place their chief dependence upon their wisdom, or their strength, or their riches, for securing the happiness of which they are in quest. It is surely a sad proof of human depravity, that in every individual there is a tendency to be elated by any thing which may give him a real or imaginary superiority over others independent of the relation in which he stands to his God. The unconverted man either boasts of his descent, or riots in his abundance, or glories in his own display of his active powers, or is elated because in some respect or other he is not as other men are. My brethren, our affluence, our intellectual acumen, and our learning, seem in the estimation of the many to stand immeasurably higher than humility, and piety, and obedience to the will of our God. In opposition to all this our Saviour tells men, that whatever they possess is by the unmerited gift of God granted to them. He teaches them in the most emphatic manner

that the difference between them and others is extrinsic, and the result of the divine sovereignty. He assures them, that their various advantages are only so many talents for the employment of which, ere long, they must render an account to him who is now saying to each one of us, What hast thou that thou hast not received? On whatever earthly possession or personal advantage they may be disposed to plume themselves, in reference to it more especially he is saying to you individually, "In this rejoice not. 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 this, that he understandeth and knoweth me that I am the Lord who exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." It is the pleasure of the Lord that his people habitually anticipate that period when they shall know him even as they are known, that they shall extend their eye beyond the present scene, raise their affections above the world, and place their happiness where only it is to be found, in the fear of God and his love, which is better than life. In this then rejoice, not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

II. This leads me to the second part of the subject, in which I propose, under the blessing of our great Teacher, to consider the object for which we are permitted and invited to magnify the Lord. The loving-kindness of the Lord in which we are all called upon to rejoice, is from everlasting to everlasting. In it originated his eternal decree to save his people from the consequences of their sin because of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and to save them from the dominion, power, and influence of sin through the agency of the Holy Spirit, as the fruit of Christ's mediation, and the result of his death. He, from eternity, set to his seal, "All that the Father hath shall come unto me"—and we are told that their names are recorded in the Book of Life. Those whose names are there are now the objects of his divine care—at the same time heirs of an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, and that is eternal in the heavens. Those to whom the words of the text were originally addressed, rested their assurance on the express terms of the Saviour himself, that in this book were re-

corded their individual names. Here a question arises very naturally, whether individuals to whom no such express assurance can now be verbally given have it in their power to ascertain, by scriptural authority, whether they are numbered among the redeemed whose salvation is recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. We reply, that many individuals have gone far beyond conjecture on this subject, that many have attained real certainty here, and that all are invited to make their calling and election sure; many, we say, have gone far beyond conjecture, and obtained real certainty as to their names being written in the Book of Life. Job had this certainty when he said "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that in my flesh I shall see God." He tells us how he arrived at this conclusion, when he says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee." Here he tells us, that, in consequence of being enabled to see the glory of the divine character as exhibited in the work of redemption, he was enabled to have assurance of his personal interest in this: but, unquestionably, there have been multitudes who have not ascertained that their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life from the clear contemplation of God, as has been, is, and ever will be in the case of those who believe the testimony that God hath given concerning his Son. The assurance of such is the consequence of the workings of mental disorder, or the device of Satan, or misapprehension of the truth on some important points, or partial neglect in the use of the means through which faith is to be strengthened. Every one, however, is exhorted to aim at assurance; and every real Christian is longing, and waiting, and praying for this assurance of his interest in the promised salvation. When he can say, not only that there is pardon in Christ to every one and all that believe, but pardon and a right to heaven is mine, then it is that he knows what it is to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ; then it is that he knows what it is to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; then it is that he knows what it is to rejoice that his name is written in heaven. Longing, and waiting, and praying for assurance in this respect, keep before our eye the great object for which we are permitted and commanded to rejoice; in so doing, we behold every thing that is good in itself, every thing that is necessary for our peace, every thing that is suitable to our present condition, every

thing that it is calculated to promote our future happiness. Joy to a certain extent must be the result of continually contemplating the perfections of God and that covenant which is well ordered in all things and sure. Steadfastly beholding the glory of God in Jesus Christ, we are not only changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord, but we acquire a perception of spiritual beauty, a sensibility to spiritual discernment, and a foretaste, even here below, of that pure, and mental, and spiritual light which is discerned by those whose names are written in the Book of Life. In this we cannot rejoice too much; for rejoicing is the divesting the character of pride and vanity. If attained, it is inseparable from that humility which leads us to acknowledge that we are not worthy of the least of all the mercies which God has shown unto us. Under these circumstances we rejoice even in tribulation: for "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." The happiness of our minds springs from the humility of our souls; and our rejoicing, though exquisite, is at all times accompanied with a fear and trembling, lest, although we may not be doomed to final destruction, we should stain our characters, and grieve the Holy Spirit by a temporary relapse into the ways, manners, and maxims of the world. We are to fear, but not to be high-minded; we rejoice, but it is with trembling; we glory, but it is not in ourselves, for the language of our hearts is, pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and as we grow old, our prospects become richer, until released by death from our spiritual labours, we are introduced into the rest of the heavenly Canaan. Yes, God, and Christ, and eternity, are objects in which we are permitted, invited, commanded to rejoice. While many say, Who will show us any good? the language of our hearts is, "Lord lift thou on us the light of thy countenance. Whom have we in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that we desire besides thee." This joy is offered to you—is offered to all who are willing to accept of it through Christ Jesus our Lord. This is that joy which man cannot give, and, blessed be God! which he cannot take away. Our rejoicing in Christ implies an experience on our part of the important truth, that God is

the portion of the soul, is alone commensurate with the elevated desires of a renewed mind. It implies our rejoicing in times that are past, according to our heart's desire, in that proportion exactly in which we have delighted ourselves in God; and hence the pleasure of raising our contemplation to heaven, where Christ himself is present, in which we shall be allowed to taste of joy through all eternity. Rejoicing thus, we obey the command of Christ; we honour God to the highest possible degree, and accomplish the end of our being, which is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever. This, I presume, is the habitual experience of all christian people, and ought to be the experience of my fathers, brethren, and myself, as ministers of God's most holy will. The rejoicings of Christians may be different in degree; but there is a unison and experience of all God's people, that whatever may be the extent of their rejoicing, it is not in their external advantages, nor in their intellect, but in Christ Jesus their Brother and Saviour. If called to the ministry of his Word, they preach not themselves, but Christ crucified. Whatever they exhibit, bears the impress of Christ; and in whatever they say, they seek not the applause of men, but the salvation of their immortal souls. To ministers who look beyond time—who have the recompense of reward before their eyes—who

have the salvation of souls as the object of their ambition, to them it is less than nothing and vanity, and their words come home with the demonstration of the Spirit, in order that they may influence men's lives and prepare them for heaven. They know that their preaching must prove vain, unless it be in simplicity, and evidently for the work's sake, as labourers engaged in building themselves up through faith unto salvation, that pastors and people may rejoice that their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Yes, this is our hope and our crown, that we may rejoice in the day of Christ—that we, who have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain, hereafter may meet in that place, where is no sorrow nor sighing, with our fathers and brothers, the true and faithful of the Lord Jesus Christ—be numbered among those who have turned many to righteousness, and may shine as the stars for ever and ever. Under the impression of these truths, will we not open our ears in all their extent to the words of the sacred text; "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." "Therefore, let us be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord." May God bless his Word, and to his name be the praise! Amen.

THE QUALITIES OF ACCEPTABLE PRAYER;

A SERMON PREACHED

By the Very Rev. G. H. BAIRD, D.D.,

Principal of the University, and Senior Minister of the High Church, Edinburgh.

"Lord teach us to pray."—LUKE xi. 1.

IN my last discourse, it may be recollected that I stated my purpose of addressing to you some illustrative remarks with regard to the petitions contained in that form of prayer which follow the verses I have read; and I intimated my intention of submitting to you some general remarks as to the nature of prayer, and as to the qualities with which prayer must be accompanied, if he who offers it has any hope or just ground of confidence that his prayers will be accepted by the Almighty. I shall, at present, simply direct your attention, in two or three sentences, to one or two of the general remarks which I formerly made as to the nature of prayer

Prayer is an exercise which springs naturally from the constitutional feelings of the human mind. Prayer to God is founded in a sense of our weakness and our dependence, and it is directed to him as that Omnipotent Being who is able, and in all things ever present, to become the protector, and the guardian, and the guide, of those who make their supplications at his throne. Yes, prayer is the expedient which man adopts by his natural instinct, as it were, whenever he feels that his own powers, or the powers of those in whom he has confidence, and on whom he has been accustomed to rely, are unable to remove the evils and distresses under which he labours, or to obtain the

blessings which he wishes and desires to possess. But, my brethren, I called your attention in the former discourse to this view of prayer also, that that great Being, to whom prayer is addressed, is far above us, and entirely removed from the influence of human weakness or human passions. He never needs to be informed of the wants of his creatures, nor can he be moved by their entreaty to depart from the established and beneficent order of his great government of the world. The Being we address in prayer always wills that which is right, and what he wills must infallibly take place, whether we pray for it or not. It is not on Him, therefore, nor on the measures of his great administration, that the prayers of men can reasonably be expected to operate; but then the question arises, What, then, is the effect of prayer? or, Why are prayers addressed to the Almighty? The answer is, that the immediate effect of the exercise of prayer is upon ourselves, and prayers are addressed to God, that this effect may by him be rendered in his mercy effective, and complete, and permanent. I observed, that prayer produces in him who prays habits of devoutness, habits of holy living, arising from that sense of dependence on God, and that spirit of active diligence which the solemn expression of our desires before his throne can scarcely fail to inspire. Now, observe the consequences of this. In consequence of exercising ourselves in prayer, we become better men; and, by being better men, we become fitter objects of the divine beneficence; we become, through prayer, as men whom God has appointed to receive, in the common course of his providence, the blessings we ask. Though, therefore, our prayers be presented to God for immediate relief from some distress, or for the immediate reception of some blessing, the first effect of prayer is on ourselves—not by altering the determinations of the divine government, but by giving us, through his grace, the dispositions and qualifications which his government has connected inseparably with their attainment. Now, considered in this view, prayer appears to be an admirable means, approved and prescribed by the Almighty, for the improvement of his moral and rational creatures. It is prompted by the moral and natural evils we feel; and, lifting the soul in devout aspirations to God, it gradually corrects the principles from whence these evils come. Believing we have strength in dependence on God to exert our own powers, and animated with the hope that

the God we have supplicated will support us, what is the consequence? We are then enabled to advance with greater boldness to the warfare with our spiritual enemies; our passions, which were before turbulent and impetuous, are hushed into a calm; temptations have lost their power over our hearts; our spiritual enemies tremble to approach this holy ground, and we feel ourselves entrenched in the nobler dispositions of our frame, which, operating without disturbance over obstacles, raise us above the events of this earth, and prepare us for the purity and happiness of heaven.

But these advantages cannot be procured, unless prayer be performed in a proper manner, and in the dispositions of mind suited to it. I am, therefore, to lay before you a brief and plain view of the qualities requisite to acceptable prayer. Indeed, they may be easily collected from a consideration of the nature of this service itself, and from the purpose which I have shown it intended and fitted to promote. The qualities are, humility, fervour, and sincerity, perseverance, faith, and diligent activity, employed for obtaining the blessings we want. If our prayers are accompanied by these qualities, let us rejoice and draw confidence, in the hour of prayer, from the consideration that they will ascend as incense to the throne of heaven, and will not fail to procure for us ultimately whatever may be good for us.

I have said, then, in the first place, that our prayers should be accompanied with humility. Now, this is in itself an amiable disposition of mind. It depicts the imperfection of our present state, and it will be found to have a happy influence on all the graces of the christian character; but it is peculiarly essential to the acceptableness of our prayers, and in truth, may be regarded as the source from which our prayers flow; and it is obvious, that, without a just sense of our own weakness and insufficiency, prayer would be an idle and unmeaning ceremony, for why should we ask our Maker to do for us what we believe we can do for ourselves? Is not our application to him for mercy and pardon a solemn confession of our unworthiness and guilt? and when, with bended knees and uplifted hands, we implore from God consolation in trouble and grace to support our labours in the christian life, is it possible to conceive a more direct declaration that we are ignorant, distressed, feeble strangers to the true happiness of our nature, and unable, of our own strength, to maintain it? Prayer, therefore, has its

foundation in humility. It is the very conception of it that we have a deep sense of our own imperfection and sinfulness, and that we feel the absolute need of wisdom and power, superior to our own, for our direction and assistance. And, my friends, as the very nature of the exercise of prayer teaches us that we should be humble when we address our petitions to God; so the holy Scriptures inform us that this humble state of mind is of powerful efficacy, in recommending them to acceptance. "Blessed are the poor in spirit. The Lord is nigh to them that be of a broken heart and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. He heareth the desire of the humble, and forgetteth not their cry." Now, what is the inference from these remarks? It is that it becomes us, when we approach the throne of God's mercy, to consider the circumstances of our own feeble and sinful condition, and to feel in their full extent our danger and our want. We should never rush into the presence of our Maker with our petitions, before we are sensible and have the distinct heartfelt impression on our minds, that we are in dependence upon him—that we need his assistance. We should prepare ourselves, then, for the holy service of prayer, by reflecting before hand that we are here in a land of darkness, trouble, and sorrow—that we are here surrounded by a host of invisible enemies—that we are here, too, exposed to the deceitful workings of our own wicked hearts—that we are here troubled by the relentless forebodings of a guilty conscience—that we are here unequal to our present defence, and doubtful concerning our future prospects. With these impressions on our minds, our approaches to God will be reverential and respectful, full of humility and veneration, and marked with that entire submission—that tendersolicitude which soothes, and melts, and ameliorates the heart.

I stated, in the second place, that our prayers should be accompanied with a fervent and sincere desire to obtain the blessings we ask from God. Now, I am aware that at first sight it may appear unnecessary to mention fervour and sincerity as requisite to acceptable prayer, or to suppose that prayer will ever be presented without the presence of these feelings. The God to whom prayer is addressed knoweth the heart; and it cannot be supposed that He, who knoweth the heart, will pay attention to a mere empty sound, which he knows to have no intentional meaning, no inward

movement of the soul to which it corresponds. It is impossible, for a moment, to believe in speculation that prayers of this kind, which do not come from the heart, can either be acceptable to the Almighty or profitable to him who prays. Yet I fear that in practice it is too common to draw near to God with our lips, and to honour him with our mouths, when the heart is far from him. We never feel, as we ought, even the import of the petitions we present, nor the desire that the petition may be granted. The service of many is too often a mere bodily service, in which the spirit has no share, in which the words of devotion flow through our lips, and play upon the ear, as the passing breeze whistles through the leafless forest, and like it leaves no impression behind. Now, when we are conscious that our prayers labour at any time under this defect, from whatever cause it arises, whether from hypocrisy or from worldly cares, or from a habit of listlessness or inattention to spiritual things, it becomes us to place no dependence whatever on the issue of them, but rather to tremble with fear lest they produce a curse instead of a blessing; for in none of these cases are we free from aggravated guilt. Instead of being a rational service, our very prayer, if not accompanied with fervent sincerity, is sin; unacceptable it must be to God, and finally, hurtful to ourselves—hurtful, because we are performing a service which we know *in itself* to be right when accompanied with the suitable frame of mind; and believing we have performed that service properly, the very performance of it stupifies and hardens him who has prayed, and betrays him into unsuspected and irreclaimable depravity. The remarks I have made on this subject, relate chiefly to the warmth and fervour of desire which may prompt our petitions to God. Prayers which have not this quality, cannot produce any good effect on the character of the worshipper. They are given to be scattered on the wind in every hour of temptation, and cannot return to him a blessing. But to indifference we join insincerity in the act of prayer, if we permit improper motives to mix with the addresses to our Maker. If we come before him not for the purpose declared, and directly felt, as our conduct implies; if we permit improper motives to mingle with our prayers, and come before him, not for the purpose of obtaining the pretended objects of our request, but of enhancing our reputation in the

world, or lulling conscience asleep, or in the miserable hope that we can impose upon God: if any of these be our motives, we add insult to iniquity and provoke the vengeance of the Almighty—our hands are unholy and our hearts full of guile; and, therefore, when we hold forth our hands he will hide his eyes from them, and when we make many prayers he will not hear. When, therefore, we ascend to the hill of God and join in public prayer with our brethren, or on our bended knees in private address our heavenly Father, let us leave behind us every unworthy and sinister motive, that our spirits may be pure and sincere in his presence, and let our mouths never utter any but the dictates of the heart, that our prayers may come up before him like incense, and obtain mercy in time of need.

I observe, in the third place, that our prayers should be accompanied with consistency and perseverance. Our prayers must not be the transient effect of a momentary impulse of enthusiasm, nor a mere impression of the natural heart from bodily constitution. To fit them for producing their intended purpose, they must be frequently, and earnestly, and steadily repeated. Pray without ceasing was an exhortation of the apostle Paul to the primitive Christians; and our Saviour himself has shown us of what consequence importunity is to the success of our prayers. Nay, indeed, the same conclusion might be drawn from the manner in which prayer produces its effect. It operates on the temper of the soul of him who prays, and it forms the temper of his mind to habits of holy living. Now, habits are not produced by a single act. They are the consequence of frequent successive and uniform exertions continued through a length of time; and, therefore, whatever may be necessary to encourage these exertions must be continued along with them. If, therefore, we wish that our prayers should be heard with acceptance, we must not faint nor be discouraged, though our first request should not be followed by any visible change in our character or condition. We must evince the strength of our desire by the fervour, and frequency, and continuance of its expression. Yes; as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden look to the hands of her mistress, so must our eyes wait upon the Lord our God till he raise his eyes upon us.

I said that, in the fourth place, another qualification requisite to acceptable prayer

is, faith in God, and trust in the merits of the great Mediator he has appointed between God and man. This is essential to the acceptableness of prayer in every land of gospel light. Faith in God or a belief in his existence, and a steady trust, is that he is both able and willing, through the merits of the Mediator, to bestow the blessings we ask; this is the qualification that with all our prayers we ought fully to possess. "He that cometh to God," says St. Paul, "must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." "If any man lack wisdom," says St. James, "let him ask it of God, but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." Now, belief in God and faith in the Mediator lie at the foundation of every act of devotion, and the principles connected with them have a powerful tendency to sanctify and improve the heart and the conduct of him who prays. They become the relation in which man stands to God as his child, and are requisite to give to his prayer that modest confidence, yet that warmth which will render them effectual; for, adds the same Apostle, "Let not him that wavereth, that is unsteady in his faith, hope that he shall receive any thing from the Lord." Indeed, if we have no belief in the existence of the Being we address, or in the truth of the gospel doctrine of the mediation of his Son; if we have no hope that through that mediation the prayer which reaches the throne of heaven can revert to ourselves, what consideration could induce us to present our prayers? Why weary the Lord with ineffectual words? It is necessary that this impression dwell on our minds. It is, therefore, necessary that a rational worshipper approach the throne of his Master with faith in God the Father, and in God the Son, and in the hope of acceptance through the merits of that mediation. Scripture, both by declaration and facts, encourages our confidence, that if our prayers be with this spirit and this impression, they will be listened to favourably. Scripture says that God permits none of his children to ask him in vain, and calls on us to put them up in the name of Jesus, as a pledge that they will be heard. This is the pledge which the Gospel has given, that our heavenly Father is reconciled, in that he who spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, will with him freely give us all things. Yes! perfumed by the incense and the odour of the sacrifice of the Redeemer, such prayers rise as a memorial before God,

and obtain the blessing of his goodness. Let us ever, therefore, draw near to God with a true heart and full assurance of faith, and all things we ask, believing, we shall receive.

In the last place, I have to state, that another qualification that must accompany acceptable prayer is, that our petitions must be accompanied with intentional diligent exertions on our own part to obtain the blessings we ask. Prayer was not intended by God to encourage the negligence of his creatures, nor to supersede the active exertions of their minds. Prayer is not a substitute for industry in our spiritual calling. It is the reverse, for it must of necessity by the laws of our constitution, give additional energy to all our endeavours in the work of faith. If we are to rest satisfied merely with praying for the objects of our desires, without following these up with endeavours to obtain them, we would afford the most unequivocal proof that our desires were feeble, insincere, and ineffectual. I may remark, however, that in some instances our prayers relate to things which have no dependence on us; and, therefore, with regard to them, we cannot exert ourselves directly and immediately to obtain them; but, then, we can cultivate the dispositions of mind to which these things are annexed by the arrangements of divine providence, and thus we prepare ourselves for their reception. But with regard to all other instances where our own co-operation can promote our success, that co-operation is essentially requisite. If we ask wisdom of our heavenly Father, we must have recourse to the usual means of acquiring knowledge. If we expect any blessing from God on those means that we employ for temporal prosperity, we must

be frugal, industrious, enterprising. If we aspire after spiritual prosperity, we must join to our prayer the appointed discipline of sanctification. We are not to expect that heaven will pour its blessings into the lap of the idle or lazy, merely because they ask them, or that God will render man virtuous and happy against his own will, or in spite of his supineness or indifference. It becomes us, therefore, to second our petitions with active exertions in dependence on divine grace, to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; and, while we implore the assistance of heaven, to labour as assiduously as if the whole of our success depended on ourselves.

Now, to conclude, if our prayers possess these qualifications; if they are founded in humility; if they are presented in fervour, and sincerity, and perseverance; if they are supported by a lively faith, and followed by vigorous and active endeavours to attain their object, they will form an acceptable homage to the Almighty. They will impress, and exalt, and purify our souls, and draw down on us the love and blessing of our God and of our Saviour. But, then, is it every desire which arises in our minds that we may thus present before God in the confidence that he will hear us? No. Even a heathen poet could say that no request should be made to his gods, that it was unworthy of them to hear; and the Apostle declares that there were men in his time that asked and did not receive, because they asked amiss. We come, therefore, naturally to inquire, what are the things for which we ought to pray? But the discussion of these I reserve to some future discourse. May God bless his word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN GORDON, D.D., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. RALPH WARDLAW, D.D., Glasgow.

THE LORD THE SHEPHERD OF HIS PEOPLE;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, IN BEHALF OF THE
ORPHAN HOSPITAL,

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

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."—PSALM xxiii. 1.

It will readily occur to every one who is acquainted with the personal history of David, the writer of the psalm before us, that the language of the text was in his mouth peculiarly expressive and appropriate. The first time that eminent individual is introduced to our notice in the Old Testament history, he is brought before us as a shepherd; for when Samuel at the command of God went down to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse to anoint one of his seven sons to be king over Israel in the room of Saul; and when it was said, "The Lord hath not chosen these, Samuel said to Jesse, Are here all thy children? And Jesse said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep."—1 Sam. xvi. Subsequently, from this we learn that, in consequence of his being a cunning player on the harp, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and one of whom it was known that the Lord was with him, he was called to stand before the king of Israel and to play, whereupon the spirit of Saul was refreshed when an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. We learn, also, that he went after being so employed for a time, and returned to feed his father's sheep as usual in Bethlehem. In this operation he appears to have continued till that miserable event that rendered him at once an object of admiration to his countrymen, and of jealousy to the king of Israel. Being sent by his father to inquire after his brethren

who had followed Saul, he left the sheep and went as his father commissioned him, and came to their tents and met them on the eve of a great battle. There being informed that a certain Goliath of the Philistines had challenged Israel to send a man to fight with him, and had defied the armies of Israel, the holy jealousy of David for the Lord was awakened, and under the impulse of the Spirit of the Lord, he presented himself before the king, and thus addressed him, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight this Philistine." To this proposal Saul objected on the ground of utter insufficiency for the conflict; and it was in reply to this that David related the deliverances he had experienced, on account of which chiefly I have adverted to his history. "And David said unto Saul, thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered him out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God." When the Psalmist, therefore, would relate the great things God had done for him, or would express the confidence with which he reposed in the divine power, and wisdom, and faithfulness, there was no figure he

would more naturally, there was none he could more appropriately, employ than the figure in *ut re. t.* He knew experimentally what belonged to the office of a faithful shepherd, for he had himself attended a flock, leading them to pasturage and shelter, tenderly seeking for and restoring them that had strayed; and there was no term, therefore, whereby he could more emphatically express the tenderness of Him who keepeth Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps. Also the recollection of the time when he was a shepherd, must have been associated in his mind with some of the most interesting events of his life, to which I have already adverted, and which he could not but feel as shadows of those glorious triumphs in the church which he afterwards achieved when God brought him from the sheep-fold to guide Israel his inheritance; and we can easily conceive, therefore, with what careful remembrance of the past, and constant expectation of the future, David must have uttered the words of the text, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

Such were some of the circumstances in the external condition of the Psalmist which, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, might have suggested to him the expressive language of the text; and were we to confine the expression here employed to the character of God considered merely as Creator and preserver of his creatures, there are none of us, be our condition what it may, who might not say with truth, The Lord has been our shepherd, and therefore we have not wanted. There may be none of us, it is true, who have so eventful a history to relate as the Psalmist had—none who have had any very striking deliverance to treasure up and record, and in whose behalf any of these extraordinary interpositions have taken place by which even the most careless are compelled to acknowledge the immediate hand of an overruling Providence; but it would argue a most deplorable insensibility on the part of any among us, were he to allege that he has nothing to remember and acknowledge, and that the history of his life has not furnished thousands of distinct intimations of this superintending power. To say nothing of the provision made for our security and support during the helplessness of infancy, let any man take a general survey of the way by which he has hitherto been conducted through life; let him contemplate

what he can remember of the various circumstances that conspired to make his present situation what it is, and it is impossible to avoid the conclusion, that a determining though unseen Existence has accompanied him through every step of his journey. He will recollect some occasions in which his fears were disappointed, and others in which his hopes were more than realized, and both brought about by the intervention of means he could not have commanded, and the occurrence of events on which no human security could reckon. Periods in the history of his life will present themselves in which only an apparently accidental circumstance, which he thought at the moment trifling, did a great deal more to determine his future condition in life, and secure his future comfort through that life than all the exertions he or his friends ever had made. He will be able to trace in his most successful enterprises the operation of causes which he did not calculate upon when he undertook these enterprises, but without which they must either have utterly failed or come far short of what they were; and, if he draws fair inferences from this recollection, he will regard them as palpable manifestations of the unceasing agency which has presided over and directed every other event of his life. In ordinary language, indeed, men speak of these as instances of good fortune; and if they are so much out of the ordinary course of things as to attract particular notice, but not so much so as to overawe and astonish them, then they are too often set down as those rare occurrences which have nothing to do with any determining principle. But it is because men have rarely observed them that they have been so conceived of. Amidst the regularities of the established order of nature, we ascribe things to secondary causes, and forget that the whole combination of these has been determined by the immediate agency of divine power. It is by such events, therefore, as are somewhat out of the ordinary course of things that God is graciously pleased to remind us of this truth, intimating that notwithstanding the regularity with which the course of nature proceeds, and without disturbing the harmony with which secondary causes operate, there are combinations of these taking place to secure our safety, which we cannot, nay, which we are forbidden to account for, but by the direct operation of divine power. And we may assert, that there is no man living, whose his-

tory does not present many instances of such a combination, and even with regard to the man whose life has been the least fertile in striking events, what is the light in which he shall contemplate that very uniformity which may seem to furnish so little ground for an overruling providence? When he reflects what he is in himself and what the world is in which he lives, when he thinks of the perverseness of his own will and the blindness of his own understanding, whereby he is often led to pursue objects most ruinous to his own well-being, and surveys, on the other hand, the prevalence of wickedness around him, and the numberless interests perpetually interfering with his own, is not the very uniformity with which his wants are supplied, and his comforts provided in itself a most marvellous thing? And when he reflects that, amid all the disorder and havoc which sin has wrought, he has suffered so little, and enjoyed so much, will he not acknowledge that, if the language of the text were to be considered in reference to temporal circumstances merely, it is still true that the Lord has been my shepherd, and therefore I have not wanted?

But though all this be true, and though it be one of the many proofs of man's proneness to forget God, it is so seldom recognised as a truth, that none of the considerations now stated will warrant and enable a man to adopt the language of the text in the sense and in the spirit in which the Psalmist employed it. In his mouth that language was expressive, not only of gratitude for the past, but of confidence for the future: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." It referred to the spiritual blessings he had enjoyed and to the rich abundance of the same blessings yet in store for him. It implied a solemn surrender of himself to the divine disposal—and the assurance of his eternal welfare being secured, his temporal circumstances would be secured in a way consistent with his best interests. It expressed his sense of the divine favour, and his consciousness of being in a state of reconciliation and friendship with God. But in the present state of things where God is kind even to the unthankful, where he is waiting, so to speak, the result of that tender of pardon and reconciliation he is making to sinners in the Gospel, and where he permits all men to participate in the bounties of his providence, making his sun to shine, and his rain to descend, on the just and the unjust,

on the good and the evil—the regular and often abundant supply of temporal comforts the sinner is permitted to enjoy, is no proof that his controversy with God is set aside; nor can any man, from his past experience of his obedience, be emboldened to say, "The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want." He may, it is true, confide in the permanency of that constitution of things under which he has already enjoyed so much. Contemplating that combination of cause and effect to which he has been indebted for his past prosperity, he may reckon with something like a feeling of certainty on similar efforts being accompanied with similar success, and God may see fit to permit his expectations to be realized; but there is nothing in all this that bears any resemblance whatever to the sentiment expressed in the text. The confidence of such a man rests on a very different foundation from that of the Psalmist. If he recognises God at all, he is rather presuming on what experience has taught him is an established order in the constitution of the world, than conceiving the special protection of Him who ordains and upholds it; and whatever prosperity he enjoys, he enjoys by way of tolerance, not as an expression of the divine favour—he must be conscious that he cannot adopt the language of the text in the extent, or in the sense, in which it was by the Psalmist. To say nothing of the first, he will not, and cannot, deny that spiritual blessings have nothing to do with his great objects and pursuits. He must be aware that he cannot think so habitually of God as to connect the success of his worldly schemes with the direct agency of his Maker; and even if he could, it is not such confidence in God as can enable him to resign the disposal of his concerns unreservedly into his Creator's hand; for though, with reference to his past prosperity, he may be brought to some vague acknowledgment of the kindness of providence, yet it may be found, should adversity overtake him, that he has no such reliance on the faithfulness, and kindness of God, as shall enable him to say confidently, "I shall not want." Nor is it possible, in the nature of things, it can be otherwise. Man is a fallen, guilty, apostate creature, alienated from God; and until reconciliation takes place—till the sinner feels some sure ground of hope, and conceives towards his offended Creator a confidence not founded upon the general manifestation of the divine beneficence in creation and providence, but the

express declaration of God himself regarding him; until this takes place, there must be in the sinner's mind either a lurking suspicion that he does not yet stand in a friendly relation to his Maker, or there must be such a conception of the divine character as must be utterly at variance with all that God has revealed of himself; and either of these is at variance with the state of mind expressed in the text, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

It is obvious, I think, from the nature of things, and from the whole tenor of Scripture, that the language of the text necessarily implies, on the part of him who adopts it, a clear conception and a cordial acceptance of the method of reconciliation by the blood of Christ. It implies, that knowledge and belief of the truth are essential to the comfort that the language expresses; and that, just in proportion as the foundation of the believer's hope is distinct or obscure, in the same degree will the comfort which the text expresses abound or be wanting. It is in the character of a shepherd that Christ is set forth both in the prophecies of the Old Testament and in the writings of the New. The very first of his acts, in the execution of his office, that by which sinners are turned from darkness to light, is represented by bringing into his fold the sheep that had gone astray; and, therefore, the first moment when a sinner can say, "The Lord is my shepherd," is that moment in which he receives the testimony of God concerning his Son, and through faith in the blood of Christ, lays aside his enmity and distrust, and becomes reconciled to his heavenly Father. "All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "I am the good shepherd," says our Lord; "by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture." And the apostle Peter, writing to his converts, thus addresses them:—"Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

Nor does the believer require to wait till he shall have gone through a variety of changes and vicissitudes before he has experimental proof of the truth of the text, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;" because, if the Gospel which he has long heard with indifference and, it may be, with dislike, has come to him, not in word only, but with power and assurance, it will

not fail to place the events that have already befallen him in a new light and vested with a new interest, and he will see in the things that have conspired to turn his attention to the things belonging to his peace not only a display of divine wisdom and goodness he had never before appreciated; but, besides the comfort, will bring along with it a most intelligent meaning of the text. So long as he lived without God in the world, he must at times feel something like fear in the conviction that he is labouring in vain, and spending his strength for nought, and must have often experienced disappointment from gratifications that bid fairest to satisfy; but of all desires that ever prompted him to exertion, that which he found it most difficult to satisfy, was the desire to find a refuge from the fears and misgivings of an awakened conscience; and when he did find these in the Gospel, and when, by simple reliance on the truth of the gospel proclamation, he entered into the fold, he felt a source of consolation opened up for him, which the world could neither give nor take from him. He experienced a sense of security never before experienced with regard to any even of the most substantial of his worldly enjoyments; and in the very confidence with which he could commit his all to the Redeemer's disposal, he had an experimental pledge of the truth in the text, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall never want." Admitting the truth of these remarks, it follows that the believer must have in the experience of every day, if he is but careful to observe, new testimony that they who seek the Lord, and can say, He is my shepherd, shall never want any thing that is truly good. The very assurance that He is my shepherd—that his faithfulness is pledged to give unto me eternal life—that I will be kept by his mighty power through faith, and that every thing that befalls me here will be rendered subservient to his faithful purpose, this is, itself, a rich and inexhaustible source of consolation; and, if kept in remembrance, cannot fail to impart confidence in the wisdom of the divine appointments, altogether unknown to men of the world, even when their corn and wine do most abound. The temporal enjoyments of the believer, indeed, may not be more abundant than before, and some of these he once highly valued, he may feel no longer congenial to his taste; and, judging on the world's principles, it might be supposed, as to his case, that the only effect has been

to circumscribe his gratifications, and make him less happy than before. But there is a compensation for all this that the world knows not of. With all the comforts God bestows, he can confidently ask a Father's blessing—can regard them as so many evidences of the paternal care of his heavenly Father, and can say, in every one of them, I now take assurance that I shall not want; and contemplating them in this light, not only as temporal blessings, but special promises of future bliss, there is a charm added that never did nor could attach to any of his former gratifications.

Nor can he suppose that the promise of the text is falsified though many or all of his temporal comforts be withdrawn. It is on this fact, indeed, that his condition stands most strikingly contrasted with that of worldly men. Take from them the gratifications they have had, or deprive them of the capacity of relishing them, and they stand desolate, bereaved of their all; but let the Christian only hold fast the beginning of his confidence—let him only cleave to Christ as the anchor of his soul, and the very afflictions which have been sent him will give him “a taste of that heavenly inheritance to which he has been born again.” He will not think it enough merely to say, of the disappointments of life, that he finds in the Gospel abundant consolation to support him under them all. He will say a great deal more. Regarding every thing in his outward condition as connected with his inward concerns, he feels persuaded that every bereavement and affliction has some special purpose to accomplish in the economy of grace; and that, if this purpose could be as well done without as with the visitation, he would have been spared the affliction. It is because God is faithful to his people that he so afflicts them; it is because he will not withhold from them spiritual blessings that he sometimes bereaves them of temporal comforts; it is because he is a faithful shepherd that he sometimes hedges them in and conducts them by a rugged path to richer pasture; and, however paradoxical it may appear, true it is, that the lovingkindness of the Lord is never more manifested, as it frequently is in the experience of the Christian under the most trying dispensations of Providence, than it is while he is tasting the sanctified improvement of sorrows: than this there is no time in which he can say with more confidence,

The Lord is my shepherd, I know I shall never want.

It is thus that the faith of the Gospel never fails to throw a new light on the dispensations of Providence—a light which, if it does not render plain all the mysteries of the divine administration, gives an interest to these which did not before attach to them, and directs the eye of the believer to the ultimate objects of all, which are his own spiritual good—the manifestation of the divine glory, and the perfection and the permanent happiness of his own nature. Nor is it with reference to him, individually, that the allotments of God's providence assume this new aspect in the eye of the believer. While he enjoys the confidence of the Lord as his shepherd, and knows that he will not want, while he experiences every day new testimonies of this assurance in his multiplied comforts; and, above all, when he contemplates combinations of events and circumstances rendered subservient to his own welfare, he cannot fail to wish not only that others be partakers of security, but to feel convinced that as often as he can reasonably hope to be instrumental to the moral well-being of his fellow-men, he is bound, as opportunity is afforded him, to do for others that which has been already accomplished for himself. If he believes that the same grace is at work that gathers into that fold where he has experienced spiritual comfort in abundance, he must also believe that this grace employs in its service those that have already been partakers of it; and that the execution of God's designs towards those who have been the objects of his special providence, does involve in it the co-operation of those who have themselves tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious. Thus Christians are honoured to be the dispensers of the divine bounty. To them has been committed the trust of carrying into effect the purposes of divine mercy; and as often as the destitution of their brethren is brought before them, they should be constrained to inquire whether such a call may not be an intimation that then such design is to be carried into effect. On this principle, Christians may be urged to give the necessities of others their serious and affectionate consideration, inasmuch as they know that, in any circumstances they may be required to interpose, in behalf of some to whom the faithfulness of God is pledged, that they shall not want; and the demand

may be put to them, whether it is any concern of others, or whether they feel any interest that the promises of God should be carried into effect.

But I know not if this consideration can be urged better than in behalf of the institution, on account of which we are this day met together. Among the many endearing titles of Deity, the Father of the fatherless is one, and that not the least prominent; and Christians cannot require to be told that the fulfilment of the promise implied in this title must involve in it the exercise of benevolence on their part. I am aware that the majority of the young persons in this institution have the privation of a mother's tenderness supplied. I am aware that, through the liberality of the institution, those of them to whom I allude, have been placed beyond the general bounty of the public; but there are, I know, others in very different circumstances who have been received into the institution in the faith of being provided for by the liberality of such contributions as you are this day requested to make, and have been placed, from circumstances the most cheerless, where, through your bounty, they may, by the blessing of God, be rendered useful in this world, and meet for that

which is to come. All these are, in your institution, living testimonies of God's declaration that he is the Father of the fatherless, and many, more interesting still, have, in the course of his providence, been brought under the notice of its management, whose reception or exclusion it is now for you or the public to determine. In determining that question, you determine another, whether you are to be instruments in fulfilling the promises of your heavenly Father. How far this may go to secure the contributions of this audience I know not; but I am fully sensible that, to you who are spending your time and your strength in behalf of these orphans, it will afterwards be a rich reward, that you have been permitted to carry into effect a part of the promise of Him who has said, "Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me," that the dying supplication of their parents has been heard, and that many of those, for whose temporal and spiritual well-being you are labouring to provide, may be taught in the spirit and language of the text to say and feel, The Lord has been my shepherd, and, therefore, I have never wanted. May the Lord bless his word, and to his name be the praise! Amen.

LOVE TO CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED IN GEORGE STREET CHAPEL, GLASGOW,

By the Rev. RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."—EPHES. iii. 17.

THESE words are part of a prayer, the whole of which is contained in this chapter. The petition which immediately precedes the one in the text is, that they might be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man. Now, the Holy Spirit imparts vigour to the spiritual principle of the inner man through the force of divine truth, by bringing the discoveries of the divine word clearly and powerfully before the mind. This principle has its origin, and the commencement of its influence, in the perception of the truth; and in proportion as the perception is clear, and full, and strong, will the grace that enters into the character of the inward man be vigorous and lively. "The natural man," says the Apostle, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they

are spiritually discerned." In order to be spiritually discerned, I need hardly say that faith must be proportionally exercised. The very discernment includes faith. It is the discernment of divine doctrines as what they really are; it is the discernment of them as true and as excellent. Now, the discernment of these truths is the discernment of their excellence, and the discernment of their excellence is the approbation of them; and according to the extent and clearness of this discernment must, of course, be the firmness of faith, and the cordiality of approbation. In proportion as the truth is spiritually discerned, will the experimental evidence of its divine origin be apparent to the soul; it will be felt to be its own evidence. Accordingly, it is said of *faith*, the first of the christian graces, "he that believeth hath the witness in himself;"

and, according to the nature of things, *hope*, the second of the graces, must be in proportion to the faith. There can never be strong faith with feeble and languid hope, nor weak faith with strong hope. The reason is manifest:—the testimony, the object of faith, is of course the ground of hope; and therefore, the firmer the hold that faith has of its objects, the firmer the hold that hope has of its grounds. Faith regards the promise as well as the testimony; and as whatever is the subject of promise is the object of the believer's hope, it is true, that according as the faithfulness of the promise is believed, will be the confidence with which the promise is expected. Of faith, accordingly, it is said, it is the evidence of things hoped for. It is equally clear that love, the third and greatest of the christian graces, must be in proportion to spiritual discernment. Supposing the object beloved to possess qualities peculiarly amiable, the fuller the perception of these qualities the warmer will be the attachment; and this must be the case especially in regard to an object of love, in which there is nothing else than what is loveliness—in which there are no inconsistent and counteracting qualities. There are human characters of which it may be truly said, the more we know of them the more we love them; and yet how very seldom is it—nay in the present state it can hardly be, that when we come to know the character intimately, we do not discover what is fitted to damp as well as kindle affection—to repress as well as to awaken esteem. There is a mixture in all men; all have their defects, all their peculiar temper, all their failings; but when in the object of love every attribute is lovely, and the whole character the perfection of loveliness, it is obvious, that the more we know of that character the more we must love it. This progressive knowledge detects no blemishes; so that, if there be any thing that mars our complacency and gratitude, it is not in the object, but must be sought in the deficiency of spiritual discernment. Thus you perceive that the three christian graces will always be proportioned in their vigour to the extent and clearness of our spiritual discoveries of divine truth. It is to the first of the three that the text calls your attention—that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. The general meaning of the language is sufficiently plain. It may be illustrated by a comparison with two other passages. I refer particularly to the First Epistle to the Philippians, i. 7, “ Even as it

is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart.” And again, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, vii. 3, “ I speak not this to condemn you; for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.” These are evidently expressions of strong attachment. To *be in the heart* of any one is to be the object of cordial affection; to *dwell in his heart* is to be the object of that affection constantly and habitually; and to dwell in the heart *by faith* is to be the object of an intelligent and enlightened affection. What, then, is apparent from the passage? That though unfeigned constant and enlightened attachment to Christ is the blessing the Apostle seeks in behalf of the believing Ephesians, this enlightened attachment to Christ must be in their hearts; he must dwell there as the object of their love and faith.

In the first place, then, this is not the desire that Christ must be in their mind and understanding, as the object of simple, abstract, uninfluential knowledge. Many may be the persons and opinions in our minds that are not objects of attachment, but, on the contrary, of indifference, or even of aversion. We know merely that they are there, and what they are. Some of them we would rather have absent from our minds, and some of them we would banish from them altogether; but to be in the heart is to be admired, esteemed, loved—loved with cordiality and ardour. We cannot express fervent attachment in more energetic terms than in the language of the Apostle, “ I would that Christ might dwell in your hearts.” And what is expressed here, that we are in our hearts to do? Can any thing be stronger than the attachment which shares life and death with its object? “ Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.” The love, then, that Christ demands of his people is fervent love; not a lifeless indifference, a mere negation of hatred, a lukewarm, spiritless neutrality. No. He must be in the heart, and must have the chief place there. Mark his own words:—“ He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” And still more strong is the expression, though with the same meaning, “ If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his

own life also, he cannot be my disciple." The affection entertained towards our nearest relative is powerful. The self-love that cleaves to life is a principle of permanent energy. Satan spoke truth when he said, "All that a man hath will he give for his life." And yet without love above that cherished to father, or mother, or wife, or sister, or brother, yea, and to a man's own life also, the Saviour has declared, and his language is peremptory, no man can be his disciple. They are his own words, my friends, not mine. But what multitudes are there who abuse his sacred name—who call themselves and are reciprocally called by others, Christians—who never think of such a test of discipleship, and who, if tried by this criterion, if weighed in this balance, would be found awfully wanting. Our love may not yet be put to the trial, and, because not put to the trial, we are apt to forget that it may not be thus strong. We are apt to go on pleased and satisfied with our love, when the proof of its reality and strength is very little more than a mere negation of any thing to the contrary. We fancy we love him, just as a person thinks he has goodness of temper because it has never been tried. In the words of the Apostle, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." Christ, then, must he in our hearts. We know the meaning of the word when applied to earthly relatives; but he must have a firmer hold of our affections than even they. But was he not in the hearts of the Ephesians already? Certainly he was. Two things, however, may be desired by the Apostle in his prayer. First, not only that they should love Christ, but eminently love him. Secondly, that their love should be constant and fervent—that Christ may not only *be* in their hearts but *dwell* in their hearts. There are some who speak as if they had given Christ a welcome into their hearts; but it very soon appears he has been received only as a wayfaring man that tarries for a night. Love such as this is but temporary, like the morning cloud and the early dew, that passeth away. Such is the character of the stony-ground hearers, in the parable of the Sower. They hear the word, according to our Saviour's description, and with joy receive it. They seem all ardent. Christ for a time is every thing—all in all—but it is added of them, they have no root; there is nothing solid, stable, lasting, in their reception of Christ. When persecution arises because of the word, imme-

diately they are offended. The figure in the parable leads us to notice the words in the close of the text, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith—that ye being rooted and grounded in love." Rooted and grounded in love are meant to express in another form the same idea, firmly fixed in the experience and manifestation of this sacred affection. The figure is double, and is taken from a tree and a building. To the stability of the former a root is necessary, proportioned to the expansion of the branches; to the stability of the latter a foundation is necessary, corresponding to the magnitude of the superstructure. Great profession of attachment, without real firmness of inward principle, is like a wide-spreading tree with short roots, with little hold of the soil, that may stand for a little and be admired, but is in danger of falling from every blast that assails it; or like a house with little foundation, built on the sand or on soft ground, presenting a very imposing appearance to the eye, but when the rain descends, and the winds blow and beat violently against it, immediately it comes to the ground, and involves its inmates in ruin. And what is the love that promises that stability? It is love that is rooted and grounded in knowledge—that has not been the product of a hasty examination or of a superficial observation. In the case of the stony-ground hearers, the seed was sown on a soil that lacked moisture, and the quickly-springing blade was scorched before the sun, and withered away. I do not mean to say that superficial knowledge is to account for every declension in love. There may be much knowledge exposed to the deadening influence of riches, and the cares of life. There was no want of soil in the case of the seeds that were sown among the thorns; but the soil was impregnated with other seeds, and, circumstances favouring their growth, they sprung up and choked the good seed; so the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, even when there may have been no inconsiderable measure of knowledge and fairness of promise, may produce a temporary declension or entire cessation of spiritual life. Thus Christ complained of the church of Ephesus—"I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love;" and still more grievously of that of Laodicea, "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. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." There was no lack of knowledge, and even of a very discriminating knowledge, in these two cases; for what says our Saviour in describing their character? "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." And yet he adds, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." It is against this that the Apostle prays in the text. He desires that their love might be stable, rooted and grounded in spiritual knowledge, and maintained in vigour.

And this leads me to the third feature of love, that it be intelligent and enlightened, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. It is very obvious that there must be knowledge in order to faith, and faith in order to love. That cannot be believed which is not known; and that person cannot be loved, the qualities of whose character, fitted to attract affection, are not believed. It is only by faith that Christ can enter the heart; it is only as the object of faith that he can be the object of love, and faith will be in proportion to spiritual intelligence, and spiritual intelligence in proportion to faith. It is an enlightened attachment that can show good cause for its ardour and its glow. These are not unnatural and temporary excitements of a mere fever heat, but the health and warmth of a sound and vigorous constitution. The true knowledge of Christ must be knowledge of him as the Redeemer in the view the inspired record gives of his person and work. So faith must be the faith of what God has attested concerning him; and so when the love of Christ dwells in the heart by faith, it must be by sustaining the character and fulfilling the function he is described as sustaining and fulfilling in the Gospel. Christ cannot be loved unless loved as he is there made known. Love

to Christ as a fellow-man, merely commissioned to give us assurance of the reality of a future state—to give us an example of virtue, and to die a martyr to its testimony, we cannot admit to be love to Christ at all, if the Bible represents him as sustaining the infinitely higher character of God in our nature, and of having in that nature atoned for our sins by his precious blood and his mysterious sufferings. The two sentiments must be entirely different. The terms used to express the latter must be extravagant in the highest degree when applied to the former, and those used in the former must fall infinitely short of what are required in the latter. Christ is not beloved; and if he dwells in the heart by faith, he must be in the same view loved from what he is and from what he has done. This leads me to notice that love is two-fold, according as it is excited by what the object is in himself, or by what he has done for us. In the former case, it is the love of complacency; in the latter it is the love of gratitude. Now, these are not always in union; we may feel complacency in excellencies of character, when the person in whom these excellencies are found has never come into contact with ourselves; never sustained, in respect of us, the relation of benefactor. On the other hand, we may feel lively gratitude for benefits bestowed upon us, when the individual possesses few or no qualities in his character on which we can dwell with complacency. They are not always, therefore, combined; but, in the present instance, these two unite in the highest possible degree. The love, like the faith from which it arises, and to which it is proportioned, regards Christ in the full extent of his character. Now, in his character, there is all that is lovely, unassociated with any thing of a contrary nature. This is not visible to the carnal eye however,—the prophecy has always been fulfilled, "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. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." But, to the eye of the believer, to the spiritually enlightened and renewed mind, he appears, indeed, brighter than the sons of men, and the chief among ten thousand. There is in his character a perfect union of love, and of

purity, and of grace—a combination of all the excellencies of Deity with all the beauties of sinless humanity. What must that heart be that loves not the Lord Jesus? Follow him from Bethlehem to Calvary—from the manger to the tomb—what is there that is not calculated to engage, and fascinate, and delight the heart? I know of nothing whatever better fitted to fix its residence in our hearts, to confirm and increase affection to him, than the contemplation of his character, as in all its divine excellencies, it is there developed. If we can trace his history without a glow of delight, we have good cause to suspect the genuineness of our affection; we have good cause to doubt whether our minds be open to the perception of the excellencies of his character, and our hearts be under the influence of spiritual guidance.

Connected inseparably with love to Christ for what he is, is love to Christ for what he has done; and this, too, is founded in knowledge: “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.” It is when this grace is known that love takes possession of the heart, and it is by the faith of it that he continues to dwell there; and as knowledge grows, and faith is strengthened, love is invigorated. That love to Christ, as one of the great principles of all active obedience, is founded in knowledge and rooted in faith. “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

Thus have I endeavoured to show what the nature of the principle is which the Apostle prays for in behalf of the believing Ephesians—that it is a fervent, constant, intelligent, and enlightened attachment to the Lord Jesus, that Christ might dwell in their hearts.

In conclusion, allow me to remark, in the first place, that the prayer implies, that this state of heart must come from above—from the Spirit of the living God. It is he that has given us to see Jesus in the excellent glories and beauties of his character, and in the wonders of his grace. It is he who hath made us to believe in his name, and it is he who has won over our hearts to him; to that Spirit we must all look for knowledge; knowledge establishes our faith and increases our love. Come Holy Spirit and

kindle a flame of sacred love in these cold hearts of ours; come Holy Spirit and enliven our gratitude and devotion. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to take of the things that are Christ's, and show them unto us; and thus he maintains and carries forward right dispositions of heart towards God. He introduces Christ into the heart, and dwells in the heart along with him. “Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Secondly. The heart in which Christ dwells must be a purified heart. Jesus Christ is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; he is the holy one and the just. An un-renewed and unholy heart would be no fit residence for him. When the Holy Spirit introduces himself into any heart he purifies that heart from dross and corruption. Christ has said, “Blessed are the pure in heart.” If any heart remains impure and shows itself so by what proceeds from it, it is quite evident that Christ has no hold there. Christ dwells in the heart by faith; and faith is a purifying principle. “Sanctify them through thy truth—thy word is truth.” God that knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost even as he did unto us, and put no difference between us, and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Indeed, the true love of Christ for what he is, is the love of the very perfection of excellence, and where it is loved purity dwells. And let it be remembered, that the love of Christ in the heart is love that must appear in the life. He does not dwell in any heart when he is not obeyed and followed in the life. The character of those who truly love him and in whom he makes his abode, is drawn by himself in John xiv. 15:—“If ye love me, keep my commandments.” There is no love of Christ without keeping his commandments:—“He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode

with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Let no man fancy, then, that Christ is in his heart as the object of love, if Christ be not in his life as the object of his obedience and imitation. And there is one commandment by which he tells his disciples they are to show their love to him:—

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples."

When Christ was on earth, love could be shown to himself personally, and which he was graciously pleased to receive; he is no longer within the reach of our personal attention, but his brethren have they a place in our hearts, and have they a place because they are his? This must appear practically, for all evidence of love is practical evidence.

You read in 1 John iii. 15—21, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me not."

Thirdly. I would just notice, that the heart in which Christ dwells must be an undivided heart. He has said, "No man 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." He cannot dwell in the heart that divides its affections between himself and the world. The love of Christ must be the lasting principle, the ruling passion, and wherever it is so it will shut out the world, it will dispossess the heart of its predominating power, and bring it into subjection. What is the victory that overcometh the world but our faith, and the declarations of the Word are peremptory: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." I ask each of you, then, here, have you experienced what has been termed the expulsive power of this new connexion? When Christ takes possession of the heart, the love of him drives out the love of the world. He will not have a rival, and especially will not have a rival with aught that is evil. The love of Christ will subject every thing to himself; there will be a renunciation of all on earth that is evil, and a subordination of all on earth that is lawful and right. What says Christ? "Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple." What evidence have you that were you called on to part with all for the sake of Christ you would comply with the requisition, if you will not now give your substance to him who gave his life for you, you must love the world more than Christ? If you will not part with the world, and if the world is in your heart, remember the world must be your portion; if the world be in your hearts, you have your portion on this side of time, and are unprovided for the other side, and to you must be applied the words, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" May God follow his word with effectual blessing, and to his name be the praise! Amen.

ACCOUNT

OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE NORTHWEST OF ENGLAND.

THE success which, under the divine blessing, has attended the Presbytery's labours calls for unfeigned gratitude, and presents encouragement to persevere in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom over this his district of the country. Expressly for this purpose the Presbytery have all along had a Home Missionary Fund, to which many friends in Scotland as well as in England, have generally contributed.

Encouraged in their attempts to extend Christianity, as they have been, the Presbytery consider that their principles only require to be better known, in order to be more extensively embraced. While, then, the clerical members of the Presbytery are all licentiates of the Established Church of Scotland, and ordained in strict conformity to her acts and formula, they and their congregations retain and profess the doctrines, worship, government, and discipline of the English Presbyterians of the seventeenth century. The standards of faith and practice which they have accordingly subscribed, are the Confession of Faith, catechisms, directory for public worship, and the form of Presbyterian church government, and of the ordination of ministers, AGREED upon by the Assembly of Divines, at Westminster. Differing, therefore, in nothing essential from the religious sentiments of the old Orthodox Presbyterians in England, "they hold in great abhorrence the tenets of the sect generally styled English Presbyterians, whether Unitarians, Socinians, or Arians; and disagree with the whole Dissenters, by upholding the vital importance of a National Establishment for the maintenance

and increase of pure and undefiled religion."

The qualifications, not less than the scriptural sentiments of the ministers of this Presbytery, furnish the people with grounds of confidence in them. The course of study prescribed by the Church of Scotland, requires every candidate for the sacred ministry to attend at least EIGHT YEARS upon some University; and, prior to his obtaining license to preach the Gospel, he must, upon examination by a Presbytery, give satisfactory proof of his attainments in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; in philosophy, church history, and divinity. This curriculum for mental improvement, and the evidence demanded of moral character, present irresistible proof that her ministers are not novices in religion, uneducated men, nor devoid of moral, literary, and christian qualifications.

These remarks naturally lead us to notice the PRELIMINARY MEASURES observed by the Presbytery, before the licentiate receives from them ordination to the work of the holy ministry. The Presbytery, having obtained an extract of the candidate's license to preach the Gospel, put him again on trials, as to literature, philosophy, and theology, and require him to deliver, in their hearing, a homily, lecture, exegesis in latin, exercise with additions, and a popular sermon; they demand also a certificate of his having qualified to Government, and insist upon his having a harmonious call from the congregation, over whom he is to be ordained the pastor; as they likewise require from the elders and managers of the Church a pledge for the minister's temporal support.

FORM OF THE CALL,

As adopted at the Ordination of Mr. Nicol at Longtown.

WE, the trustees, elders, and seat-holders of the Presbyterian Chapel, at Longtown, being destitute of a fixed pastor, and being most assured by good information and our own experience of the ministerial abilities, piety, literature, and prudence, as also of the suitableness to our capacities of the gifts of you, Mr. Walter Nicol, preacher of the Gospe., have agreed, with the advice

and concurrence of the reverend Presbytery of the Northwest of England, to invite, call, and intreat. Like as we by these presents do heartily invite, call, and intreat you to undertake the office of pastor among us, and the charge of our own souls. And, further, upon your accepting of this, our call, promise you all dutiful respect, encouragement, and obedience, in the Lord. In witness whereof, &c.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. A. BRUNTON, D.D., Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM FRANCE, Paisley.

THOU ART THE MAN;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. A. BRUNTON, D.D.,

Senior Minister of the Tron Church, Edinburgh, and Professor of Oriental Languages in the University.

“And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man.”—2 SAMUEL xii. 7.

THE first appearance which David makes in sacred history is extremely prepossessing. With deep interest we behold the youthful champion of Israel when he stands in the presence of Saul—the blush of modesty glowing on his cheek—the fire of heroism flashing from his eye—the spirit of true piety breathing in the fervour with which he ascribes all the praise to God, and puts his trust in the future in God alone. Sympathizing in his victory and in the rewards bestowed on his intrepid and ingenuous nature, with abhorrence we mark the growing jealousy of his king. Our applause and our wishes attend him amidst misfortune and exile, and we wait impatiently for his final triumph. At last the expected tidings come that he who sought the life of David is himself removed. The choice of the nation is guided by Samuel, in the name of the Lord, to David in Hebron. The youthful hero becomes the king of Israel. What excellencies may we not expect him to display in the station to which he now is raised! He has been trained in the school of adversity; never then, surely, will he abuse his power which he now enjoys! never, to gratify his selfish passions, will he sport with the welfare of his subjects, or doom them to sufferings which he himself hath known! From his youth up, the spirit of devotion hath animated him, and he hath received many a proof of the protection of God. The crown which he wears is given to him of God. Surely, then, the power which he now enjoys will be hallowed by piety and employed in usefulness! The purity, long

habitual to his soul, as it graced his obscure state, will adorn his splendour! Alas! my brethren, there is no perfection on earth! Fond, but vain, is the hope that trusts with implicit faith to our own or to our brother's purity. The throne which opened to David so brilliant a prospect of usefulness—which promised so noble a scope for the improvement and display of his worth—presented also the temptation which wrought his fall. His mind had withstood the fascinations of youthful vanity. It had remained unshaken in misfortune, but it yields to security; it is vanquished by pleasure.

As the text presents him to our view, he is no longer the ingenuous youth on whose cheek glows the blush of modesty; he is the hardened voluptuary, blind to his own failings and his own crimes, careless of the welfare of his subjects, guided and engrossed by selfishness alone. The prophet of God, as we learn from the beginning of the chapter, was come unto him no longer to bless, but to rebuke and punish; for the thing which David had done displeased the Lord. The prophet speaks to his royal pupil no longer as to the candid and obedient disciple. He probes him first with fictitious distress, and veils his meaning in parable ere he states his real errand. The use of the parable was common in all the eastern countries. It was of admirable service to the teacher when prejudice or pride was likely to withstand the success of his instructions; for, stating a supposed case where the interests of the individual are forgotten, and where conscience is left to decide unbiassed—as-

resembling every circumstance that can touch the feelings, it fixes the passions in the interest of a cause against which otherwise they would have arrayed themselves. One of the most ancient, and certainly one of the most beautiful, instances of its power is exhibited in the context. The parable which Nathan relates is a simple and most interesting narrative which begets all comment, and speaks to every heart. "And the Lord sent Nathan unto David: and he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city, the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought, and nourished up; and it grew up together with him, and with his children: it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man; and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him." Although David had sinned deeply, the influence of better principles was not extinguished within him; although he had in part resisted its power, in part it swayed him still with unchanged ascendancy. To his own transgression he was blind; but he was keen to perceive, and righteous to punish, the iniquity of another. Selfish and merciless as his own conduct had been, the selfishness of another rouses his indignation; the cruelty of another provokes his vengeance; his soul pants to vindicate the injured and chastise the oppressor. No cold hesitation, no prudential fears, retard his judgment. "And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man: and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

While the accents of justice thus rushed to his lip, did no hidden pang tell him of his own unworthiness? While he commanded punishment to be inflicted on the guilty, did no inward terror shake his own frame? While he spoke of restitution to be made fourfold by the injurer, did not memory and conscience tell him of the irreparable wrong which he himself had done? While he kindled in the cause of helplessness oppressed, and affection wantonly wronged, did no avenging angel whisper to him Uriah's name? Wretched Uriah! as

he lay on the plains of Rabbath, faint and expiring, vain were the dreams which hovered round him in the hour of death. They turned to scenes of domestic eudæment—to the remembrance of one whose happiness was precious to him. His parting moments were embittered by anticipating the misery which his fate will cause her; they turned to the prince for whom his blood was flowing. Remembered with ardent gratitude were the condescension and favour so lately vouchsafed to him, and bitter was the feeling that his gratitude could no longer avail him to his sovereign—that his arm could no longer guard the happiness of the throne of the king: with the dearest wishes of his heart the interests of his king are mingled in the last prayer which he breathes; that prayer was for his murderer; cruel was his merey, and treacherous his favour. He himself hath guided the sword that laid Uriah in the dust.

This was the enormous transgression which even now hung, unconfessed and unrepented, upon the soul of David. He sinks not beneath its weight. He seems scarcely to feel the pressure. His countenance glows not with the blush of shame, but with the indignation of virtue. On his lips is the language of proud and conscious worth. Astonishing as the fact may seem, it would appear that the thought even of this enormous transgression never entered his mind, until Nathan brought it home to him with these words of terror, "Thou art the man."

The sacred Scriptures have not informed us by what artifices David had concealed this wickedness from himself, or so palliated it as to prevent in such a remarkable degree the power of conscience from exerting its authority. The experience of ordinary life may, in part, unfold the mystery; for though I trust it will not often present instances of self-deception so enormous in degree as that of David, yet something of the same kind all of us may have felt, all of us must have witnessed. When we find men unconscious of their own defects, detecting these very faults in another, and censuring them with unsparing severity; when we find the vainest eager to expose and deride the foibles of vanity; when we hear the ambitious declaim against the folly and the wretchedness of ambition; when we hear the miser loud to censure an avarice less conspicuous than his own, or the common swearer reprobating with an oath the practice that enslaves him; it is obvious that these men have either hid from themselves the knowledge of their own transgressions, or have, by some sophistry,

explained their sinfulness away. It is obvious that, in so far, their case resembles that of David. From the arts by which we know that they are misled, we may conjecture what were the means by which the king of Israel was become blind to his own crime. It is of essential advantage to our spiritual welfare that we attend to them carefully, in order that we ourselves may, through the grace of God, escape from their power. The king of Israel's ignorance of his own crime may then, in one view, have been wilful. When a subject is disagreeable, we naturally avoid it while we can. The spend-thrift feels at times the presage of approaching ruin; but he flies from the thought while he may, and opens not his eyes till ruin is inevitable. Self-disapprobation then being bitterly painful, the same infirmity makes us wish to escape it—makes us to indulge the dangerous palliative of hiding our sin even from our-elves. What avails it that the means of information are in our power, if we obstinately refuse to employ them? We may be furnished with ample means of discriminating between right and wrong; but, if we refuse to employ them, their usefulness is in vain. Good and holy principles may remain uncontroverted within us; the voice of conscience may remain unbiassed on every subject on which it is permitted to speak; but if we strive, and strive successfully, to conceal from our conscience the real state of our own character, it is safe from censure, until the terrors of a greater than conscience are felt, and the refuge of lies is swept away for ever. Bright and varied, to the attentive gaze, are the charms of external nature; but he who shuts his eyes against the light, cannot distinguish even deformity and loveliness. Strong are the attractions of music to them who court their power, but to him who stops his ear against their melody, the voice of the charmer can never reach. David many at times have had transient glances of his crime, but if he eagerly fled from them to subjects more attractive—if he expelled them by the cares of empire, or drowned them amidst the riot of gaiety, while prosperity smiled on him, their impression would become ever fainter and fainter. The antidote was always in his power, and while prosperity smiled, its influence was always increasing. Had not the voice of rebuke or the stroke of adversity reached him, he might have lost all knowledge of his own character for ever.

But the king of Israel's ignorance of his own crime may also have been in a great

measure involuntary. The prejudices which various situations inspire, and the sophistry with which passion argues, have incredible power in perverting our views of good and evil. Even the most candid cannot view in precisely the same light, the same action committed by himself and by another man. A thousand little selfish considerations blind him. On criminality in the abstract or even on any particular instance of criminality in another he can easily decide, but his own is admitted with much reluctance and with many limitations. From the invincible propensity to justify ourselves and to survey our own conduct with a partial eye, we learn the admirable wisdom of our Saviour's precept, "that we do unto others as we would that they should do unto us;" a precept which places us in our brother's stead, and arms every interested principle of our nature in the cause of justice and charity.

Had David followed such a precept as this, he could not have fallen into that transgression which will for ever stain his name. The very emotion which roused him against the oppressor whose history Nathan had told, if permitted to operate fairly, would have guarded himself from committing an act of cruelty yet more atrocious. But when self-interest mingled its enchantment, we see how totally his perceptions were changed. The situation which he filled in life was one of those which are the most peculiarly trying, unfavourable to disinterested and impartial views of conduct. The possession of unlimited power hardening the heart, David upon the throne forgot the sympathy which he once would have felt with the lowliest. That one subject should oppress another was what still he could not brook; but he was not prepared to enforce the law with equal strictness between the subject and the sovereign. Exalted so far above his brethren, he seems at times to consider them as made only for his pleasure, and to estimate actions only by their tendency to promote it. If he applied his standard only to the ease of Uriah, he would find in it little to regret. The means by which his object was gained were, indeed, harsh and disagreeable, but the object *had* been gained. Suspicion pointed not the finger at *him*. No one arose to avenge the fate or vindicate the wrongs of his victim. The happiness of the king was increased, and all was well.

In the particular case of David, too, the pleadings of passion would exert all their artifice to blind the conscience and judgment. For the first guilty act he would

plead, as every succeeding voluptuary has pleaded, the natural force of passion, unmindful that the passions were given to be the handmaids, not the tyrants of reason and conscience. For every succeeding step in his guilty progress, he had something like the plea of necessity to urge. He had stooped, indeed, to dissemble with his servant, and by flattering caresses had endeavoured to win him to dishonour; but, then, according to the law of Moses, the adulteress must die when her crime is discovered. The interests of the woman who had sacrificed more than life to him, made him a dissembler, that he might, if possible, heal in silence the wound which his treachery had given. When foiled in this mean artifice by the honest though unsuspecting roughness of the soldier's heart, other means must be resorted to. "And it came to pass in the morning that David wrote a letter unto Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter saying, Set ye Uriah in the fore-front of the hottest battle; and retire ye from him that he may be smitten and die." If, before he had been guilty of a deed like this; nay, judging by the effect of Nathan's parable, if after he had been so guilty, such a transaction had been brought before his judgment-seat, he would have called it by its real names—the vilest ingratitude, the meanest treachery, the foulest murder. If, ere his soul was stained with kindred sin, Nathan the prophet, had related unto him such a history as this, would he not have exclaimed with tenfold indignation, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die?" But now, by the sophistry of passion, the circumstances of the case were entirely changed. What would otherwise have been seen to be the foulest murder, was now an act of self-defence; what would otherwise have been seen to be the meanest treachery, was now interpreted as considerate and merciful tenderness—softening the blow which it was forced to inflict; and, since the victim must fall, kindly allowing him to die a soldier's death. What would otherwise have been seen to be base ingratitude, was now interpreted as an unavoidable though painful effort to screen the fame and the life of a helpless confiding woman. Uriah must fall, or Bathsheba must die. The choice is too clear for hesitation, and David almost imagines he does a wise and a generous deed, when, to screen the guilty, he devotes the unsuspecting to sure and speedy destruction. By whichever of these delusions David had permitted himself to

be blinded, its power seems to have been strongly fixed in his mind. A whole year had elapsed since the foul deed was done. Bathsheba had become his wife; a son had been born of the unhallowed connexion; the judgments of the Lord seemed to sleep and the conscience of David was still. His danger was dreadful. If God had not interposed in mercy, what was to rouse him from his fatal dream? Would not the sleep of death have found him unconverted, and horror inexpressible attended his awakening? But it pleased God to interpose, and by the mission of Nathan the prophet, to send him rebuke and chastisement. Nathan, as we have seen, with skilful and happy art raised first the better feelings of David into action, and then tore the veil of self-delusion at once asunder; taxing him loudly with his guilt, upbraiding him with those mercies of heaven which he abused, and denouncing against him the judgments of the Lord. That sentence which he himself had pronounced was not, indeed, inflicted upon him. He did not surely die in the hour of conviction. His own guilty head was spared for repentance and amendment; restitution was beyond his power; the purity which he had stained he could not restore; the honour which he had tainted he could not recall; the life which he had basely taken he could not reanimate. But there was foretold to him that wreck of his peace and his affections which was wrought by his beloved Absalom. By the death of a favourite child, the son of his beloved Bathsheba, he was made to feel in his turn what it is to have the bonds of domestic endearment hopelessly rent asunder. He was made to feel what it is to brood over conscious guilt in the hour of deep affliction, in the hour when misfortune lies heavy on the soul. Severe but useful lesson! Its impression abode with him through life. His repentance was as unfeigned as it was bitter. Henceforward there is recorded of him no heinous transgression. In every future hour of temptation, the remembrance of his foul offence stood before him, and he shrank from the touch of evil.

Thanks be unto God, we can profit by the sufferings of David, without feeling their pain! These things are written for our edification. The graces of the saint are recorded that we may imitate, and his sins that we may shun them. Let us lay to heart the instruction which this history is intended to convey.

We have seen the king of Israel a prey to the arts of self-delusion; calm under the

pressure of enormous sin, treading on the brink of perdition with a security which we shuddered to behold. By every means, then, which God hath put into our power, let us endeavour to avoid the danger. Especially, let me recommend to your most attentive performance the duty of self-examination, not merely when you are called to join in the solemn festivals of religion, but at regular and frequent periods. At the close of every day recall its history, and search diligently into the motives by which your hearts have been influenced in all that they have witnessed, and in all that they have planned. If, after the most serious inquiries, you trace any marks of the christian spirit, render unto God the glory, but beware, I entreat you, of the arts of the deceiver. Search with jealous and unsparing diligence into every sinister influence that may have guided what is outwardly fair. Examine, with keen and prejudiced suspicion, every excuse that is offered for acknowledged defects. Think nothing trivial that misleads from duty. Who can tell where the labyrinth of sin shall end? One impure glance was to David the beginning of many sorrows. The beauty of Bathsheba inflamed his passions. Their force burst every restraint of piety, justice and honour. That he might conceal his sin he stooped to dissemble. That he might screen himself and his partner in iniquity, he shed innocent blood and stained his soul with murder. Think of these things and tremble. When strict self-examination hath shown you an impure desire, a malevolent wish, or a selfish purpose lurking in your soul, think not, I beseech you, the danger small. Remember the fate of David. When the judgments of the Lord had enlightened and humbled him, with what confusion and shame, with what self-contempt and detestation would he look back to the petty source from which such enormities flowed. "The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The path of iniquity is progressive also. It is like the departing beam of twilight. It sinks by slow but sure degrees; no pleading can retard, nor regrets can stay the progress; tint after tint it decays, and the blackness of darkness spreads around. "Enter not, then, into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it; pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away." For those transgressions which an impartial examination of the heart will reveal, and to

whom, alas! will not many thousand such present themselves, let us, like David in his better frame, humble ourselves before God. Let us take to ourselves in so far as the circumstances of our case require it, the language in which David himself bewailed this foul transgression: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit: Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offering, and whole burnt-offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar." Let us also say, "We have sinned against the Lord." Let us receive his chastisements with meekness, and implore his forgiveness through the Son of his love. Then will he look upon us in mercy, for the Redeemer's sake, and the wholesome lesson of our shame will guard us by his grace amid future temptation. Amen.

THE GOSPEL INVITATION AND ARGUMENT FOR ITS ACCEPTANCE

A SERMON

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“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.”—ISAIAH xlv. 22.

Most commentators concur in the opinion, that it is the Lord Jesus Christ whom the prophet in this passage personates. The terms by which the speaker designates himself are characteristic of the Messiah, and are applied to Christ in almost every page of the New Testament. Besides, to enforce the consideration that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, the apostle Paul undeniably quotes and argues from the verse immediately succeeding the text, Romans xiv. 10: “We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” Of this intentional application of the passage to Christ, we have a strong corroboration in Philippians ii. 10. “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” To inquire whether, in these instances, the Apostle wrote under the deliberate conviction that the passage had an original reference to Christ, or whether he introduced it merely in accommodation to his present purpose, is not now necessary. We have adduced evidence sufficient to warrant the assertion, that it is the Lord Jesus Christ who addresses us in the language of the text, saying, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else.”

The text is naturally divided into two parts: the first, containing this invitation, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth;” the second, the argument by which acceptance of the invitation is enforced, “For I am God, and there is none else.”

1. In considering the invitation, our attention shall be directed to the three following things successively:—

1. The blessing offered.

2. The exercise to which sinners are called, that they may participate in the blessing; and,

3. The persons to whom salvation is of-

fered, and who are warranted to believe in Christ, that they may be saved.

1. The blessing offered is salvation.

Salvation, my brethren, is a relative term; and our primary ideas regarding it are obtained, by considering the evils from which deliverance is needed. Let it be remembered, then, that the Gospel constantly addresses men as sinners. It teaches us that, in consequence of sin, man is excluded from God's gracious presence, and estranged from him in his affections. The curse of God's violated law overhangs him, and the pervading power of sin fetters down his spirit in the most abject slavery. Guilt interposes a barrier to his intercourse with God; depravity would restrain him from approaching to his Maker, should the barrier to his access barely be removed. The one condemns him to eternal death; the other renders him hostile to the nature and insensible to the joys of spiritual life. A violator of God's law, he is the object of his wrath; and because he is a sinner, he beholds God only as a consuming fire, and, like devils, trembles and hates him.

Our first notion of salvation, therefore, is, that it contains the forgiveness of sin—that is, deliverance from the penalty of the law. It rescues a man from the positive suffering which is implied in the curse, which, however, cannot be conceived, much less defined, and which is only adequately described by the *wrath of the Almighty*. It cancels the sentence that doomed him to dwell with everlasting burnings. It guarantees him against that indignation and wrath—that tribulation and anguish, which shall be measured out to every man that doeth evil. It does more. The whole sentence passed against him is revoked. The curse is not partially, but entirely, taken away. Man, when he obtains salvation, is not only freed from the direct suffering which his sin had merited, but regains that good of which he had thereby been dispossessed. The out-cast object of the divine displeasure is restored to the favour of God and all its consequent advantages.

Our second observation is, that, to be

saved, a man must be freed from the dominion of sinful principles, and restored to the image, as well as the favour, of that God whom he had offended and forgotten. Freedom from the condemnatory power of the law is far from constituting entire salvation. It is natural, indeed, for corrupt man to regard sin as an evil, only in so far as it is the procurer of his woes. He is prone to think deliverance from its penal consequences sufficient for his welfare, regardless of the havoc it has wrought upon his soul; but, did not salvation comprehend deliverance from the power, as well as from the guilt, of sin, it would be chargeable with a capital defect. The ruin of the creature is inseparably linked to its deviation from the divine law; and though it is difficult for us to apprehend the evil which the slavery of sin necessarily implies, this does not alter the fact, but is only a consequence and illustration of sin's pernicious power. To allude to the comparison of an old divine, if the laws of nature, though but for a short while, were altogether disregarded, we are all sensible what disastrous consequences would ensue. If the matter of which the world is formed should lose the properties which it now possesses; if the frame of that heavenly arch were broken and dissolved; if the celestial spheres, which now with so much order perform uninterrupted revolutions, were suffered to roll in irregular confusion; if the moon should wander from her course, and the sun grow "dim with years"—is it not clear that an awful catastrophe of that nature would destroy the beauty of the planetary system, and reduce the universe to chaos long before time should have run its course? In like manner, man in his natural state is a moral chaos. That being, once so noble, so godlike, is now a mass of imperfections, and exhibits the most dismal incongruities. You behold him despoiled of his integrity; and, instead of being invested with the splendours of holiness, weltering in the grossest impurities. That ethereal spirit, who soared into the highest heavens, conversed with angels and communed with his God, now cleaves to the dust, and claims kindred with the worms. His quick apprehension, clear judgment, and comprehensive intellect, have been displaced by dull stupidity and almost total ignorance. The favourite of heaven, and the lord of the lower world, has become the servant of sin and the slave of Satan!

Hence, it is obvious that deliverance from the guilt of sin merely would be only partial salvation. What would the acquittal of a prince avail the culprit who is groaning un-

der the deadly distemper of the dungeon? In order to complete salvation, then, the clouded mind must be illumined; the distempered will moulded to the divine law; new principles of action instilled into the soul; the image of God, in one word, must be reinstamped upon the man.

When a man has been freed from the condemnatory power of the law; when he has been restored to the favour of God, and delivered from the thralldom of sinful principles, salvation might, in some sense, be said to be complete. The ruin of the fall would then be thoroughly repaired. The prisoner would be released from his fetters, and cured of his mortal malady, entitled and qualified to exercise the privileges of a free-born citizen. But the salvation of the Gospel is a great salvation, and promises greater things than these. It entitles to a place among the sons of God, and will be consummated in the instalment of the entire person in a throne of unfading splendour. Of this state of perfect salvation we can form no adequate conception. Till we can tell what exquisite felicity is wrapt up in the enjoyment of God; till we can measure the amount of the tender communion of that family, whose members are angels, and the "spirits of just men made perfect," of which God is the Father, and Christ the elder brother; in one word, till we can gaze without rapture on the splendours of that place, where the glory of God's majesty is most effulgent—all attempts to describe it must prove utterly abortive. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God hath laid up for those that love him."

2. The exercise to which sinners are called, that they may participate in the blessings of salvation, is to look to Christ:—"Look unto me, and he ye saved."

Man is so constituted, that the attitudes and appearances of the body indicate the emotions of the mind; and the former is differently affected according to the various passions that work within the soul. The eye, in particular, is with vast propriety designed the index to the mind. Like a lucid mirror, it vividly reflects the features of the inner man, and gives expression to the wants, the wishes—all the affections of the heart, with a pathos and rapidity which tongue was never made to rival. It is only by attending to this sympathetic affection between the mind and the body that we can arrive at the true import of many expressions which are common in all languages. "He blushed," "he quivered," we all know

to be metaphorical expressions for a man's shame and fear; and they become so, because shame clothes the cheek with the blush of modesty, and because fear diffuses a trembling agitation through the entire system. When a man regards any object with complacency, he smiles upon it; when a master intrusts any business to his servant, he looks to him for the execution of the trust; and when a person, under embarrassment, places reliance on a friend who had promised him assistance, he looks to him for relief. When, therefore, sinners are called on to look to Christ for salvation, we easily understand the exhortation to mean that they should cherish towards him that state of mind which is intended, when we say an insolvent debtor looks to his surety to liquidate his debt; in other words, we understand it to mean, that they should repose in Christ unsuspecting and exclusive reliance for salvation. We are not ignorant that looking to Christ is sometimes illustrated in some such way as the following:—"The language, it is said, implies a particular notice and distinct knowledge of him, an importunate eagerness for relief from him; an humble dependence on him for salvation; a hearty approbation of him as a Saviour, together with joy and gratitude for his delivering goodness. In this enumeration, dependence upon Christ, it will be observed, holds a central place among a great many other exercises, which are either antecedent to, or consequent upon, such a trust. In different connexions, the expression may very properly signify all of these exercises. As it occurs in the text, however, the duty to which we are enjoined is evidently one, and that one is, as we have seen, exclusive and unsuspecting reliance on Jesus for salvation. This is beautifully illustrated in the prayer of the king of Judah, when Ammon and Moab had invaded his dominions: "O our God wilt thou not judge them; for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but *our eyes are upon thee.*"

It immediately occurs that it is the same duty to which we are enjoined, when we are called on to come to Christ, to receive him, to hear his voice, and to flee to him for refuge. These are all different metaphors, expressive of the same thing, and are used indiscriminately with the injunction, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." In strict logical precision, it is true, the belief of the truth is an act of the mind antecedent to trust in Christ; but the latter is uniform-

ly and necessarily consequent upon the former. This necessary sequence of the one upon the other originates in the nature of the gospel message. He who believes that salvation is of the last importance, and that it is to be had through Christ, and through him alone, from the very constitution of his being, cannot but renounce all self-dependence, look to Christ, and, with the most unhesitating trust, leave his salvation in the hands of that glorious Redeemer. This appears to be the reason, and it is obviously a very satisfactory one, why faith and trust in Christ are in the Scriptures used synonymously.

From the very fact, however, that they are interchangeable, it is obvious that, in order to an interest in the blessings of salvation, something more is requisite than a bare speculative admission of the fact, that the Bible contains a revelation of the divine will. Neither must we merely believe that such and such doctrines are revealed in the Bible; but we must believe that these doctrines possess all the importance which they claim. A man must deeply, very deeply, feel that he has great personal interest in the tidings of salvation, and make a particular application of them to his own individual case. The Israelite who had been bitten by the serpent, and whom the poisoned virus was hurrying to the grave, would have received no relief from the bare acknowledgment of the fact, that the brazen serpent was lifted up, that "whosoever should look upon it might live." He must himself look, that he might live: so also sinners must individually look to Christ, that they may escape the impending ruin.

Faith in Christ, then, and salvation are inseparably connected. We must beware, however, of regarding faith as the ground on which salvation is obtained. It is not something to be done by us in order to merit eternal life, but the divinely established means by which we become interested in it. The metaphorical expressions with which faith alternates are of considerable advantage in illustrating the truth of this observation. In order to escape otherwise certain death, the offending Jew must flee to a city of refuge. His fleeing, however, was only the means by which he became interested in the protection it afforded. It had no merit in procuring the establishment of such an asylum. Faith in Christ is just fleeing to him for refuge. That we may have eternal life, we must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man. It is the meat, however, that nourishes. The

actions of eating and drinking are only the necessary means by which the food yields nutriment to us. To the stung Israelite, looking to the brazen serpent was the certain and the only means by which he could escape instant death. There was, however, no merit in the act of looking. In like manner, faith in Christ is the means, not the ground, of man's salvation.

3. The persons to whom salvation is offered, and who are warranted to look to Jesus that they may be saved, are "all the ends of the earth." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Anterior to the time of Christ, as the plan of God's mercy was only partially developed, and the observance of his worship encumbered with many burdensome ceremonies, so also the knowledge of salvation was circumscribed within very narrow limits. What use the Spirit of God might make of the feeble glimmerings of revelation which were still visible amidst the heathen darkness, we want the means of ascertaining, and would manifest our presumption by attempting to determine. Still, however, it may be affirmed with truth, that the means of mercy were confined to one nation—that Judea was the Goshen of the moral world. According to the uniform tenor of prophecy, however, its preclusive advantages disappeared with the introduction of the gospel dispensation, and the glad tidings of salvation were proclaimed to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. This, then, is the first idea suggested by the language of the text.

We are desirous, however, to fix down your attention on the consolatory fact, that the offers of salvation are made in terms of unmeasured universality. The invitation in the text is fettered by no limitations—is addressed to no favoured individuals—is restricted to sinners of no one class or character. In its proclamations of mercy the Gospel recognises not those artificial distinctions which are dear to the human heart, but prostrates the pride of man, and concludes all under sin, whilst it offers a salvation which is alike free to all—to the abandoned profligate, as well as the decent moralist—to the outrageous and inveterate offender, as well as the peaceful citizen and generous benefactor of his fellow-men—which is free to all as the atmosphere by which they are surrounded, and which all will assuredly enjoy if they only believe on our Lord Jesus Christ. Its language is, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine

and milk without money and without price." "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." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." The invitation to look to the brazen serpent in the wilderness was given to every son of Israel, without respect to the depth of the wound or the progress of the mortal malady; and the serpent was raised upon a pole, that every individual, without exception, might look and receive the sovereign antidote. In like manner, to whatever child of Adam the Gospel is proclaimed, it is the voice of infinite mercy offering *him*, even *him*, salvation. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so also hath the Son of Man been lifted up, that *whosoever* believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life.

These unfettered invitations, the godly, in all ages, have regarded as sufficient warrant for them immediately to flee to Christ. They did not adopt the absurd, not to say presumptuous resolution of waiting till they had ascertained whether or not their names were enrolled in the Book of Life. They did not attempt to fathom the depth of the divine decrees, or ask, Am I one of God's elect, and, therefore, warranted to come? Neither has it been their practice to defer their approach till they had undergone some previous undefined process of self-preparation, till they had attained certain imaginary sanctified feelings, which some think they must possess before they are warranted to appropriate the call. To do this is to depend on something else than Christ. When they heard the invitation to the gospel feast, "Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely," they did not sit down to analyze the operations of their own minds, or ask, Have I will to come? but feeling themselves described by their necessities, and the proffered relief being most exquisitely adapted to their wants, forthwith on the ground of the general call rested their eternal all on the all-sufficient Saviour.

None need look for more definite descriptions. Special invitations are what God has nowhere promised; and the conduct of him who rejects the general offer, in expectation of a special message, results from a pernicious delusion, and may lead to the most heart-appalling consequences.

II. We come now, in the second place,

to consider the argument which the benignant Saviour employs to urge guilty sinners to accept salvation. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for *I am God, and there is none else.*"

The word translated "God," is a term of power, and signifies mighty. So it is translated in the 50th Psalm. The *mighty* God, even the Lord hath spoken. The argument, then, is twofold. In the first part, the Saviour presses the consideration of his omnipotence, that he may secure our trust; in the second, he asserts the inability of all the universe besides, that he may dispossess us of every other confidence. Sinners may trust him without suspicion, for he is mighty; they should trust him alone, for there is none else.

The ability of Christ to save is seen in the perfection of his atonement and the power of his grace.

To pardon sin without adequate satisfaction to divine justice, comes not within the power of Him who can do all things. When we say this, it must be distinctly understood, that there is no limitation of the power of God. That is not an object of power which is either contradictory to the nature of things, or repugnant to the essential perfection of the agent. We believe that God cannot make a thing to be and not to be at the same time, because there is here a contradiction in terms. We believe that God cannot die because he is essentially immortal. We believe that he cannot lie because he is essentially true. In like manner, we believe that God cannot pardon sin without satisfaction, inasmuch as it is essential to the nature of God, to hate all unrighteousness; to his holiness, to manifest his displeasure against sin; and to his justice, to vindicate the honours of his law. Hence, it is clear, that, as was typified by the Mosaic law, "without the shedding of blood there is no remission."

But Christ hath removed every obstacle to the egress of divine mercy. By the sacrifice of himself he "hath finished transgression and made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness." That his sufferings were sufficient to atone for sin arose from the divine dignity of his person; and of the perfect adequacy of his blood to cleanse from all sin, we have the amplest demonstration in his release from the fetters of the grave, in his ascent to heaven, and in his glorious session at the Father's right hand. It is true, that he is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto

Israel and the remission of sins. He that was dead is alive—alive for evermore—hath the keys of hell and of death, and is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. There is no room, therefore, to distrust him—no sin so black that the blood of the Son of God, cannot wash away its guilt. He whose law was violated hath himself endured its penalty, and in virtue of his blood offers pardon and acceptance to all. And there is no superior authority in earth, heaven, or hell, to contravene his decision. "If God be for us, who shall be against us? If God justify, who is he that condemneth?"

Farther, Christ is not only able to remove the transgressions of his people as far as East is distant from the West, but by the power of his might can present them faultless in the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy. He hath not only merited heaven for them by his death, but hath omnipotent power in his arm to bring them to its possession. Their ignorance may be great, their lusts strong and their affections grovelling; but that power which brought light out of darkness, overmastered the deformity of chaos and set bounds to the ocean, can illuminate their darkened understanding, quell the tumults of passion, and turn the currents of the heart. He who called the world into being, who established the foundations of the earth, and lit up heaven with all its glory, can, by the energies of his Spirit, quicken those that are dead in trespasses and sins, and is able to adorn those who trust in him with the "beauties of holiness," investing them with fresh glories and increasing splendours, making them shine like the "Prince of the light of heaven," brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Their enemies may be numerous and powerful; but though powerful as hell, and numerous as its legions, Christ hath strength to restrain and power to punish them. In the days of his flesh he commanded the inconstant winds, stilled the ragings of the sea, and expelled legions of devils by a word. Now that he is seated on his throne and sways the sceptre of the universe; now that the bright burning seraphim and all the heavenly hosts bend before his throne in prostrate adoration, and are ready to fly at his command, who is there that can disannul his purpose, or turn back his hand when it is stretched out? "Hast thou not heard, hast thou not known, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth

not, neither is weary?" He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. The youths may faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; "they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

Christ, then, is a sure Rock on which to rest for salvation. The all-sufficiency of his atonement, the efficacy of his grace and his resistless power constitute an immovable bottom on which sinners may cast the anchor of their hopes; and every true Christian may say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."

The second part of the argument is, that none else than Christ is able to save.

To illustrate this position we observe, first, that no other mode of salvation has received the sanction of the supreme Lawgiver. It does not now need to be proved that the salvation which the Gospel offers is by Christ only. Its constant warning is, that if we neglect this great salvation, we shall all inevitably perish. And the works of creation and providence, though they abound with proofs of the infinite goodness of God, furnish no data from which we can reasonably conclude that he is disposed to pardon. The promiscuous diffusion of the bounties of the Preserver, afford no ground of hope to the self-condemned. These bounties, on the contrary, only serve to enhance the intensity of his forebodings. The fact, then, that God hath recognised no other mode of salvation, may be assumed. The legitimate inference from the fact is, that none other than Christ is able to save. It cannot have escaped the observation of any of you that the Scriptures, while they uniformly ascribe infinite merit to the sufferings of Christ, as constantly remind us, that it is by the express appointment of the Father that his death becomes available for us. His office as Mediator, they teach, was not self-assumed, but the constitution of his Father. The design of this is, to remove all our fears arising from the recollection of the undisputed principle, that it is only the Supreme Legislator who can commute the punishment due to a breach of his laws? Destitute, then, of the approbation, or concurrence, or concession at least of the Lord of all, any other attempt to save must be presumptuous invasion of the divine prerogative, and can be fruitful only of increased misery.

But, secondly, let it be supposed that God is ready to pardon, provided that satisfaction be made for sin, no matter how, is there any object within the whole extent of created existence, "from the circumference to the centre" of the universe, that could stand in the gap and abide the terrors of the Almighty? Is there any creature who could sustain the pressure of that wrath under which the eternal Son of God bowed his head and gave up the Ghost? Is there any being besides him who is not bound to obey for himself, or whose righteousness exceeds the requisitions of the law? The thing is utterly impossible. The "redemption of the soul is precious," and exceeds the reach of all the efforts of created wisdom and created power.

It is not the habit of man, however, to look beyond himself for salvation. Naturally proud, he is blind to his defects, and imagines that his own righteousness will acquit him at the divine tribunal. He spurns at the simplicity of the Gospel, cannot brook the idea of being indebted to sovereign grace for his salvation, and like the haughty Syrian, exclaims in wrath, "Are not Abana and Parphar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" The thought is horrid blasphemy against the holiness of God. Even were it possible for him instantaneously to renounce his enmity to God and to yield perfect obedience to all the requisitions of the divine law, still he would be an unprofitable servant, and nothing that he could do, could atone for his past transgression. Every sin carries with it an infinite evil, and nothing short of an infinite satisfaction can avert the thunderbolts of the divine vengeance. How, then, shall man who drinketh up iniquity like water, presume to appear before the infinite purity of Him in whose sight the very heavens are not clean, and who chargeth his angels with folly? Can the obedience of man, who worketh uncleanness with greediness, elaim acceptance with God, or stand his scrutiny when he shall search Jerusalem as with lighted candles? Is a mortal man as just as God? Is a man pure as his Maker? If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who, O Lord, could stand? "There is none righteous; no, not one."

The inability of all besides Christ, to save, is farther seen in their want of power to change the heart of man. To detach man from his long and fondly-cherished pleasures; to eradicate the love of the world in all its forms, which had struck its

roots so deep into his heart, and wound them round its very fibres; to turn the heart from the love of sin to the practice of holiness; to make desires of self-advancement give place to zeal for the glory of God; in one word, to reimpress the image of God on one who formerly bore the likeness of the devil, is the province of Him alone, who "can subdue all things to himself." "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil."

From all these observations, it is clear that none but Christ is able to save. They, therefore, who trust to themselves entirely, or but in part, for their salvation, are guilty of a fearful self-delusion. Instead of throwing themselves into an impregnable fortress, they are entrenched in a citadel of ashes, which the breath of Jehovah's mouth will scatter to the winds.

If, then, salvation is of the last importance; if it is to be had through Christ, and through him alone, it certainly is the duty of all immediately to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ that they may be saved. And if there is any other consideration that could induce sinners to accept the invitation in the text, what should be more powerful than this? It is the voice of infinite love that entreats us to be saved. It is the voice of Him "who though he was rich, yet became poor for our sakes, that we through his poverty might be made rich." It is the voice of Him who for us hungered, and wept, and watched, and prayed, and at last expired on the ignominious tree. Shall we, then, turn away from the invitation of such a Saviour? Shall we stop our ears against the groans of Calvary, or resist the appeals of his bleeding heart? It is his voice speaking to us from heaven. Although invested with all the honours of universal Lord, and the object of the ceaseless acclamations of the heavenly hosts, behold, he bends, as it were from his elevated seat on the Father's throne, beseeching us to come! Shall we, then, remain cold and unmoved under the influence of such entreaties? Can we be guilty of such base ingratitude? "With what pious horror would the blessed angels regard such a sight!" Were that blue expanse one grand whispering gallery, would not the indignant

reproaches of these perfect spirits fill the ears of hardened hearers of the Gospel, and brand them with a crime which hell has never had it in its power to perpetrate?

There is yet one other consideration which should induce sinners to comply with the invitation in the text. It is not merely a gracious offer of salvation and an affectionate entreaty to receive an invaluable boon, but an authoritative command to us to do our duty. Now we may reject the offers of a treacherous friend or trifle with the command of a usurper; but it is outrageous folly to trifle with the injunctions of the King of heaven. "We were his enemies, and he has mercifully proposed reconciliation; we were dead, and he has prepared a resurrection for us; we were plunged into an abyss of misery, and he has kindly stretched out his hand to help us. If these things will not move us, oh! let not the terrors of the Lord pass by unheeded. Ah! my brethren, we may break his laws, but cannot impair his arm; we may slight his mercy and his love, but cannot resist his power, cannot grapple with his omnipotence. Although the Lamb had blood to shed for men, and hath patience long to bear with them, he hath wrath also to punish obstinate unbelievers, and assuredly he will avenge the outrages done to his meekness. Flee, then, from the wrath to come.

To those who have cast all their cares upon Christ, the text is fraught with the richest consolation. He is able to save you. Look to him for holiness as well as pardon, and your comfort as well as your salvation is secured. When the world makes its strongest appeals to your senses, and solicits your heart with its loudest importunities, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. If afflictions roll in upon you wave after wave, in thick and sad succession, you know "that all things work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpose." "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms."

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. GEORGE HISLOP, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN BROWN PATTERSON, Falkirk.

THEFT, THROUGH NECESSITY ;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. GEORGE HISLOP,

Chaplain to the National Jail, Edinburgh.*

“Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry: but if he be found, he shall restore seven-fold; he shall give all the substance of his house.”—PROV. vi. 30, 31.

THERE is no subject more worthy the serious consideration of man than the deceitful and perverting influence of sin. While, as yet, it is only a principle in the mind, and not ripened into an external action, it draws into its service the various powers of imagination, invention, and even reason itself. By these powers, the forbidden object is represented as a source of peculiar enjoyment; or it is invested with features of external attraction; or it is exhibited as fitted to gratify curiosity at least, and to extend the sphere of natural knowledge. “The tree is good for food; or it is pleasant to the eyes; or it is to be desired to make one wise.” Gen. iii. 6. How many are thus led away by “the deceitfulness” of the principle; and it is not till the fatal experiment is made that they perceive the bitterness of that which lately appeared sweet, the odiousness of that which appeared

attractive, and the blinding influence of that which held forth the prospect of knowledge and wisdom.

Nor is it even here that the delusion, in every case, is found to terminate. Even after the principle is matured into action, and its fatal consequences begin to be felt, it employs the same powers to find excuses and apologies for the act. This is done with the view of relieving the mind from its feeling of guiltiness, and of placing it, if possible, on its former position of innocence and honour. The real effect, however, is, that only of preventing faith, repentance, and returning to God; and thus, while it brings into a state of disease, it effectually prevents recourse to the remedy.

This operation of the principle may be seen in all its different forms and degrees. Whether it be “the lust of the flesh”—concupiscence; or, “the lust of the eye”—cove-

* We understand that the chaplain of the Edinburgh Jail was lately led to speak with some severity on the crime of stealing, when, towards the close of the address, one of the inmates, a very young man, respectfully asked permission to quote a passage of Scripture. On receiving permission, the passage proved to be Prov. vi. 30. “Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry.” In all probability, the sentiment intended to be conveyed by these words, which were evidently used as an apology for theft, was the sentiment of the rest of the inmates, and of a much greater number outside. Besides giving an immediate answer, the chaplain took up the subject in the Pulpit, and we hope that this has not been done without effect. We gladly avail ourselves of the opportunity of inserting this discourse in the Scottish Pulpit, which is a vehicle as well for discourses on general christian duties and doctrines, as for discourses preached on great public occasions, and on subjects of peculiar, and affecting private, interest such as the present. The discourse, now given to the public, is as singular as it is important; nor do we know of any one extant upon the same subject, and preached upon a similar occasion. It was composed with the view of counteracting an opinion which, we fear, prevails to a much greater extent than is commonly supposed—that men, from necessity of circumstances, even though occasioned by their own vices, may, under the authority of Scripture, commit a criminal act. We trust this discourse will prove a corrective to the prevalence of so dangerous an opinion, and that it will be perused by the unfortunate inmates of prisons, and by those deluded creatures in society who, bent upon the commission of crime, rush upon it without thinking of their real guilt, or of the penalty to which they must of necessity be subjected.

tousness; or, "the pride of life"—ambition and the like, it produces the same state of sentiment and feeling in regard to its object; and, after the appropriation and enjoyment of it, finds the same excuses and apologies for the deed. Every thing which can free the sinner from self-reproach, and save him from the accusation and condemnation of others, is readily resorted to, and eagerly put forth. How many an injurious argument is, for this purpose, drawn from time, place, companionship, and even the arrangements and doings of God himself! "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Gen. iii. 12.

The sources from which apologies are drawn, are thus exceedingly numerous. But this is the striking peculiarity of sin, that it seeks, with greatest eagerness, to draw them from the character, the providence, or the Word of God. The evil seems to lose its demerit, in proportion as these may be drawn in to palliate and excuse it. The very opposite is, in truth, the fact. It acquires a character of deeper desert on this very account. Far less guilty is he who leaves the demerit of his sin to rest exclusively with himself, than the man who virtually takes even God himself into participation in it. There cannot be a clearer proof of its deep malignity than this very effect—the disposition to render even Him a party to it, and even the occasion and the author of it. But such its effect is found to be. The graciousness of His character, the indulgence of his providence, and the statements of his Word, may all be made not only an occasion of sinning, but even an excuse and apology for it. Hence we read of those "who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness." Jude 4.

Of those portions of His Word which lie peculiarly exposed to this perversion, the passage under consideration is evidently one. It seems to hold out an excuse for the practice of stealing; or, at least, to take off the odiousness and criminality of it. In the following remarks, we shall point out the erroneousness of this opinion, and the extreme folly and danger of acting upon it. For this purpose, let us carefully attend to the act as it is exhibited in the passage, namely,

I. In the estimation of man.

II. In that of God himself.

I. *Its aspect in the sight of men.*

The text implies, indeed, that, by men, this act is considered as venial or excusable—that they do not regard it with that "despise" or contempt with which they regard

an immoral and criminal act. This, however, is the act under special limitations only, which the text also clearly marks out. Let us notice, then, first of all, that this act is limited exclusively to *food*. The thing, supposed to be stolen, is not money, apparel, furniture, or any other of the numerous things which come under the general name of property. No. It is that thing which is seldom coveted, and never for its own sake except under the influence of hunger. Now, this can never be drawn into an excuse for stealing in general. Although the individual might meet with commiseration in the stealing of this, he would meet with no commiseration in the stealing of any other thing. Although there might seem no criminality in the taking of the first, there would seem criminality in the taking of the last. Though despite might not fall upon him in the one case, it would certainly in the other.

But, to food itself, a special limitation is affixed in the text. It is supposed to be taken by the thief only when he is "*hungry*." The act is conceived to be committed under the influence, not of covetousness, but of hunger. This is a very important limitation. Food may be stolen with as much criminality as any other thing. It may be carried away, not to satisfy the cravings of hunger, but those of some other desire. When thus appropriated, it may, by being sold, be converted into money; and this may be made the instrument of gratifying vanity, sensuality, the propensity to drunkenness, or some other improper and immoral principle. Here, then, there is all the criminality of the act of stealing. In appearance, food only has been stolen; but, in reality, money has been stolen. Actually food has been carried away; but, in effect, all those things have been taken which food, by being sold or exchanged, may be the means of procuring. Apparently hunger has been gratified; but, in truth, covetousness has been gratified. By the limitation, this principle is distinctly precluded. The abstract feeling of hunger is the only thing which the language will admit. If the thief take away even food, for the purpose of gratifying any other desire, he stands exposed to the despite of men, and all the consequences which such a violation of the law infers.

But this is not all. The feeling of hunger itself is restricted by the text. The purpose for which it supposes food to be stolen, is simply to "*satisfy*." The thief must take no more even of it than is necessary to extinguish present hunger. He is not permitted to carry any away, either

to provide against future necessity, or to procure any thing which he may be anxious to possess. No. Present use, and this merely till hunger be satisfied, is all that the language of the text will allow. Gluttony, excess, or eating beyond the extinction of natural appetite, is plainly precluded.

There is another limitation still, to which, in faithfulness to the text, it is necessary to attend. Food is supposed to be stolen merely "to satisfy *the soul*." The object of natural hunger is the taking of sustenance; and the object of this, again, is the preservation of life. By an arrangement of providence, the vital principle, which must here be understood by the "soul," creates this sensation, and, by it, leads to this act for its own preservation. To "satisfy" the soul, then, is simply to preserve life: and the thief, to come within this limitation, must be in a very peculiar situation. He must be at that point of extreme necessity, at which, if he did not commit the act under consideration, he would actually surrender his life.

These are the plain intimations of this portion of Scripture; and, surely, from this no argument can be drawn in favour of the practice of stealing in general. Does the thief steal nothing but food? Is he always hungry when he steals it? Does he steal no more of it than is necessary to extinguish present hunger? And does he steal it merely to preserve life? Does he break one precept of the law, only that he may not transgress another—the eighth only that he may not violate the sixth? Then, then only, can he expect to meet with the sympathy of men, and to escape the despite and retribution which follow in the train of a criminal act. A case of such necessity does very seldom, indeed, occur; and yet the act, which is committed under it, retains a character of real criminality; for, turning from this, which is merely the view of it in the sight of men, let us attentively consider the other view of it which the text presents, namely,

II. *Its aspect in the sight of God.*

This the text most distinctly exhibits. Its language is, "*Men* do not despise a thief." It does not state that *God* regards him with such indulgence. No. Although the act may appear venial to them, it does not appear venial to him. Although it may seem pardonable to them, it does not seem pardonable to him. Although by them it may be regarded as no violation of the law, since one of its precepts seems to be set aside, only to avoid the violation of another—by him it is regarded as a violation of the law, since the breaking of one precept is, in truth,

the breaking of all. James ii. 10. The word, "*Men*," is, indeed, supplementary; but every one who is competent to judge, must be satisfied that the translation conveys the spirit of the original.

Of this point, however, the immediate context is quite decisive. "But, if he be found, he shall restore seven-fold. He shall give all the substance of his house." This injunction plainly implies, that this individual has incurred the penalty of the law. If, notwithstanding the necessity of his case, he is to be punished, he must be guilty; and, if he is to be punished under the authority of God, he must be guilty in the sight of God. If, indeed, he be not found, no punishment can be applied to him by civil magistrates: and they, whose office it is to maintain the authority of the law, cannot, in that case, be accountable for not inflicting it; but if he be found, it is quite otherwise: they would be chargeable with neglect of duty if they failed to do what the law commanded. They may, indeed, pity him; and this, if it do not pervert their judgment, is a most dutiful, amiable, and praiseworthy feeling—a principle raising them above all malignity in the discharge of their office, and preventing them from using greater severity than the law requires. But mercy, which sets aside the demands of the law, is only sin, and, if generally acted upon, would be attended with the most ruinous consequences. Such mercy would be found cruelty only.

Here, then, is an estimate of the act, which is very different indeed—a decision which may, at first, excite our surprise, and even transcend our belief. Following the dictates of our own short-sighted intelligence, we may be disposed to say, Shall the mercy of God be inferior to that of his creatures? Shall he not pity where man pities? Shall he not pardon where man forgives? There cannot be a more delusive process of reasoning. The mercy of man is a very inadequate medium for contemplating the mercy of God! The principles which guide the movements of the one, are very different, indeed, from those which determine the movements of the other. The mercy of man is directed by a finite intelligence, which seldom looks beyond deserts and interests of the present moment, and of the individual who is the object of it. The mercy of God is guided by an infinite, all-comprehensive intelligence, which forms a full estimate of demerit from first to last, and takes into view the interests, not merely of the individual, but of all other beings at the same time. Besides, human mercy is frequently not regulated by moral principles;

and even when it is, the principle is, at best, very imperfect. Hence, even although these interests are, or may be, distinctly perceived, they are frequently disregarded, and no means are employed to further and secure them. Its object, very commonly, is mere relief from temporal evil—the removal of suffering, not the removal of sin—improvement of condition, not improvement of character—the extension of a benefit, without considering how it is to be conferred, so as to operate beneficially on the moral condition of him who receives it, and of other moral beings at the same time. The divine mercy is exercised in a very different manner. It is governed by the most perfect rectitude; and it attains its high designs, by extinguishing the guilt and renovating the character of its objects; while it secures both ends in perfect consistency with the integrity and authority of the law. When these, and other circumstances, are duly considered, we shall cease to wonder at this injunction, and be fully prepared to admit that, though the act under consideration may seem perfectly innocent to man, it may appear highly criminal and dangerous in the sight of God. The justice of this estimate may be clearly perceived, by attending to this case of necessity in these two aspects—when it is, and when it is not, attributable to the individual himself; or, first, when it is the result of his own misconduct; and, second, when he has been placed in it by the providence of God.

1. If the thief has been involved in this necessitous condition by his own misconduct—by idleness, intemperance, or any other immoral habit, he is plainly guilty; not only on account of this habit itself, but of the act which he has been led to commit from the necessity to which the habit has reduced him. From having indulged the habit, he is chargeable with one sin already, or rather a course of sin; and from the condition into which it has brought him, he has been led to commit another. Instead of being innocent, then, he is doubly guilty. He is an object of mercy to man, indeed; but he is, nevertheless, an object of displeasure to God.

The very necessity to which he has been reduced is a sinful necessity, since it has been occasioned by his own misconduct; and this is the character of every condition of the same description arising from the same cause. The drunkard, for example, puts himself in a state of temporary insanity; and, in this state, he can neither entertain a judicious purpose, nor perform a dutiful action. This is truly an incapacity for duty,

in respect both of principle and practice. Here, then, we find two different offences. The antecedent act of intemperance is one, and the subsequent incapacity for duty is another; and, accordingly, the proper description of sin is not only “any transgression of the law of God,” but any want of conformity to it. This want of conformity to the law of God is a physical incapability, or indisposition to act conformably to it, together with that omission which results from it. Inability to obey, arising from our own misconduct, is as much our sin as the positive disobedience which proceeds from it.*

It is painful to reflect how many are disobedient and guilty in this very respect. There are thousands over whom immoral habit has acquired such ascendancy, that they find it at last almost impossible to pursue any other course. Their condition is like that of the individual who has been carried smoothly down a stream—a stream gaining new accessions at every stage of progress, and, therefore, ever increasing in velocity and power. At length perceiving his danger, he makes a laborious effort to return; and, while his strength remains, he so far succeeds. Soon, however, his strength gives way; and again, for a little, he yields to the current. The effort is renewed with additional difficulty, both from his own diminished strength, and the increased energy of the power, against which he contends; and, at last, in utter despondency and recklessness, he surrenders himself to the destruction which lies before him. But in addition to this, which we may call the necessity of character, there is another naturally accompanying it—the necessity of condition. There are many who, in the progress of vicious habits, have reduced themselves to a state of the greatest external wretchedness—a state in which they are impelled to commit crimes to procure even a temporary subsistence. In this condition they are pitied by their fellow-men by whom their previous offences are not known, or, amid their present wretchedness, overlooked and forgotten. And, by themselves, a similar and still more lenient opinion is formed of their deplorable situation. They conceive that the necessity to which they have been reduced, although occasioned by their past sin, takes away the sinfulness of the act which they commit

* To our natural inability to fulfil the law of God, this remark is equally applicable. The cause of this is not, indeed, personal. It is found in the first sin of our original progenitor; but this, in being the deed of the representative of the species, is the deed of the species itself.

under the pressure of it. In the estimation of God it is far otherwise. By Him their past offences are neither overlooked nor forgotten. And one of the designs of his wisdom in ordaining such wretchedness to follow in the train of them, is to recall the faded image of them to their own recollection, or, in the language of Scripture, to "set them in order before their eyes." Ps. l. 21. He is, indeed, infinitely merciful; but his mercy is never exercised at the expense of his law. For this would be to put aside his moral perfections—wisdom, purity, equity, benevolence and truth—and to subvert the righteousness, order, peace, stability and blessedness of his moral empire, essentially dependent upon them. His law must be obeyed to the very utmost, before pardon can be extended. Matth. v. 17, 18. To be interested in his mercy, then, it is necessary that the sinner believe in him by whom the law has been fulfilled, and, to avoid future offences, that he be actuated by the spirit of repentance and new obedience. Up to this period in his personal history, he stands exposed to the wrath of God, although he may be an object of compassion to man. But beyond it the aspect of his condition is entirely changed. The divine forgiveness is extended to him. The renewing power of divine grace is exerted upon him. His "want of conformity to the law of God" is overcome. And he acquires the ability "both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philip. ii. 13.

At this period also, he becomes a proper object of mercy to man. As soon as he exhibits evidences of the spirit of faith, repentance and new obedience, it is their duty, in accordance with the divine example, to forgive him, and to extend to him all the relief which his circumstances admit. This, however, does not necessarily imply the remission of the temporal penalties of the law. This passage enjoins, without qualification, that "if the thief be found he shall restore seven-fold." This, it is to be noticed, is not the penalty of the *moral* law; it is that of the *judicial* or the law of the state. The penalty of the first is in every case death—death moral, and, therefore, spiritual and eternal. The penalty of the last is varied according to the aggravations of crime, and never can exceed temporal death.* From the former penalty, faith, accompanied by repentance and new obedience, is, on our

part, the means of deliverance; but not from the latter. The salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ is a spiritual salvation; it is deliverance from the penalty of the moral law, but not from that of the law of a civil community; it is deliverance from moral and spiritual evils, and moral, spiritual and eternal death, but not from temporal evils and temporal death. These fall upon the righteous as well as the wicked, although to the former they are overruled for correspondent good—good, moral and spiritual; namely, sanctification and its result, or progressive excellence in principle, practice, and character, and that external blessedness here and hereafter, by which it is accompanied. One end, indeed, for which these evils are permitted, is just to teach this important lesson. It is to prevent the unworthy and dangerous opinion, that the salvation of the Son of God in our nature is a temporal salvation—that the object of this high achievement, the highest which this world perhaps the universe ever beheld, is mere sublunary good! The man who is believing and obedient on this principle, will soon become unbelieving and disobedient. The thing which he believes he will soon learn by experience to doubt; and his practice resting on such a foundation, will soon become unsettled and immoral. Thus, grasping the semblance of salvation, he will lose the reality, and sink at last in perdition and misery.

It does not follow, however, that temporal good does not result from this spiritual deliverance. This it does most naturally and certainly. Though that be not its object, it is its natural effect. That spirit of rectitude, which is its primary result, presents criminal and vicious habits of every description; and the prevention of these is the prevention of all the evils which proceed from them. How many, from the want of this high attainment, forfeit the dearest temporal interests. Had this spirit entered into them through the medium of a christian education, and been fostered, enlarged, and confirmed by the word and ordinances of God, thousands had been saved from the loss of reputation, liberty, country, and even life itself. Besides, the character of general excellence, of which that spirit is the germ and first principle, confers innumerable temporal benefits. It lays a foundation for the esteem, respect, friendship, and confidence of our fellow-men; and these are the natural passport to places of trust, honour, influence and emolument. It is thus certainly found that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that

* For theft, it was in some cases double, in others fourfold, in others fivefold restitution. Exod. xxii. 1-4. In this case it was sevenfold, perhaps because it implies the aggravation of house-breaking.

now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Nor does spiritual salvation merely *prevent* temporal evils; it serves to remove or to counteract them after they have been incurred. And even those which are the fruit of vices or crimes, form no exception to this remark. The springing up of this spirit and formation of this character in the midst of these evils, propitiate the favour of our fellow-men. That esteem, respect, friendship and confidence which our offences had forfeited are, in due time, restored to us; and, in the train of these, the other temporal benefits naturally follow. The enmity of our brethren is thus at length overcome. And we experience the truth of that other declaration of Scripture, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Prov. xvi. 7.

To these evils, even when the law requires the prolongation of them, and to temporal evils in general, this remark is fully applicable. These, while they serve to teach us that the deliverance achieved for men is a spiritual salvation, point the views of the mind beyond temporal to spiritual objects, beyond the region of sense to the region of faith, beyond "the things which are seen," to "the things which are not seen." 2 Cor. iv. 8. They are thus calculated to further and secure the highest interests of man. A character of spirituality is thus formed, in which all the features of excellence are gradually unfolded. In connexion with this, the most pleasing experiences of the love and favour of God are realized. Prospects of coming glory the most animating and delightful, are gradually laid open. And thus these evils, although permitted to remain, are neutralized, and even transformed into grounds and reasons of rejoicing. Hence the Apostle has said, "We glory in tribulations." Rom. v. 3. There is thus, in every view, a visible connexion between spiritual excellence and temporal good. The one is the antecedent, of which the other is the natural consequent.

Nor is this a merely contingent relation; it is established in the divine purpose. The Saviour himself has said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Matth. vi. 33. The things spoken of are, "What we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed," verse 31. These words place the matter beyond all reasonable doubt. When the order when they mark out is truly estab-

lished in the mind, and the character of righteousness internal and external truly possessed, absolute destitution is not once to be apprehended. It is impossible for the purpose and promise of God ever to fail. The righteous may, indeed, be left to extreme poverty and the pressure of other evils; but absolute want they have no reason to fear. Even "in the days of famine they shall be satisfied." Ps. xxxvii. 19.

It would be well if, under or in the prospect of such evils, men would institute and observe this order; if they would put spiritual deliverance first, and temporal deliverance last, never entertaining the hope of the one until they have the certain experience of the other; if they were anxious to realize the righteousness of God, and then temporal comfort or health. But with many, alas! it is far otherwise. They invert this order—giving the preference of the inferior to the superior, of temporal to spiritual, of worldly comfort even to the righteousness of God itself! The consequence is, that they either do not attain the blessing they desire, or if they do, find it only a judgment for their unbelief and ungodliness—a means of enlarging and confirming their unsubdued depravation, and of exposing them to heavier evils than those which have hitherto been applied to them. Such is the first view of this case of necessity—when the individual has been drawn into it by his own misconduct. The other is,

2. When he has been involved in it by the providence of God.

Even in this view, the act under consideration is decidedly sinful. Guided by the light of revelation, what can we consider it in the estimation of God, but a serious misimprovement and abuse of his providence. We behold in this individual the total absence of faith, a mistaken conception of the character and intentions of God, a false conviction proceeding from that conception, and a criminal act arising out of this conviction; it is impossible to take any other consistent view of the case. Can any one really believe that, by the providence of God, men are laid under the necessity of violating the law of God? No one can entertain this belief without, at the same time, believing that he is the author of sin! Under his providence, indeed, necessity may and does frequently occur. And this may, in some instances, be so peculiar that, under the urgency of it, men may be brought to the very point of death. But can it be conceived that the purpose of this emergency is to involve them in a state of unbelief and sin? The very opposite can only

be its intended effect, to draw them into a state of genuine faith and obedience, or to bring to the test that on which they are presumptuously disposed to depend. To this purpose the dispensation is peculiarly adapted. That faith must be genuine which will stand such a fiery ordeal as this—which even to the surrendry of life itself retains its firm hold of the power, the wisdom, and the faithfulness of God. And that obedience which is yielded at the expense of this dearest of temporal blessings—the tenure by which all others are held, must be of a similar character. A man to whom faith and duty are dearer than life, must be regarded as a genuine believer.

Of this ease we find a striking exemplification in the history of the patriarch Job. Under the providence of God he was brought to the very last point of temporal destitution. Of all that he possessed, nothing was left to him but mere physical existence. And yet in the prospect of being deprived even of this he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Job xiii. 15. And was this faith and obedience utterly in vain? Did the Lord allow him to sink under the affliction to which, for the trial of his faith and obedience, his providence had subjected him? No. We learn from the history that he not only came forth out of it, but stood on a much higher position in respect even of temporal prosperity, than that on which he had stood before. Job xlii. 12. Faith and duty are the true wisdom and interest of man.

Hence we may see, that even the most extreme case of necessity will not warrant unbelief and the commission of sin; that it is better to surrender even life itself, than give way to an immoral and criminal act. By this act, a temporary and transient benefit may indeed be secured; but a spiritual and eternal evil may, at the same time, be incurred. And, accordingly, the Saviour has said, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life" (namely, at the expense of principle and duty,) "shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life," (in the retention of the one and observance of the other,) "shall preserve it." Luke xvii. 33.

Hence, also, it may be seen that a case can never occur in which one precept of the law may be set aside, in order to avoid the violation of another. The ease in which life is in danger is evidently the most extreme; it plainly comprehends every other. For the surrendry of this involves that of every temporal or present possession. If then, the law is not to be broken in the superior, it is not to be broken in the in-

ferior case; if it is not to be violated when life is at stake, it is much less to be violated when any inferior benefit is at stake.

The thing supposed by those who hold the opposite opinion, is not admissible; it is not true that when one precept is violated for the purpose of obeying another, the law is fulfilled. For the declaration of Scripture is, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James ii. 10. The breaking of one precept, even for this object, involves the breaking of all.

This remark is of general application. Under whatever pretence, and for whatever purpose the law of God is infringed, guilt is contracted and condemnation incurred. The object in view may be the most moral and praise-worthy; still the act comes under the general description of "doing evil that good may come." And concerning all who are chargeable with this practice, the Apostle has said, their "damnation is just." Rom. iii. 8. When these considerations are duly estimated, (and many more may easily be added,) we shall not wonder that, though this act may appear sinless in the sight of men, it does appear sinful in the sight of God.

Let no man erect into a standard of duty, either his own views or those of others; let him not attempt to separate its penalty from the law of God. Nor let him act in the delusive belief that there is not a necessary connexion between them—between the immoral act and the death of principle and of spirit by which it is succeeded. He may not be able to understand or perceive the connexion; but that inability does not dissolve the connexion. In regard to even the natural laws of the Creator, he may find himself beset by the same difficulties. For example, he cannot understand the connexion between the element of fire and the sensation of heat, or the effect of consuming which it naturally produces. Apart from experience, he cannot ascertain the fact by even the most elaborate process of reasoning. For any thing he antecedently knows, it might as well produce the opposite sensation. During the heat of summer, it might as well be kindled up for the purpose of cooling, as amid the cold of winter for the purpose of warming. But how strikingly infatuated would he appear, if, disregarding this natural law and disbelieving its effects, he should actually throw himself into the devouring element. Death would be the certain result, whether he should antecedently believe it or not. No better, however, is the conduct of that individual who acts inconsist-

ently with the superior law of the Creator—a law not of natural but of spiritual beings—believing that its penalty of moral, spiritual, and eternal death will not follow. In this case, indeed, he has not the same amount of experience for his guide, the full endurance of that penalty being reserved for a future state of existence. But the testimony of God ought to be with him and all moral beings, paramount to experience; and nothing can be more explicit than that testimony is, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Gen. ii. 17. “The wages of sin is death.” Rom. vi. 23. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Ezek. xviii. 4. What an appalling evil is embodied in these words—the death of the soul, the extinction of all moral feeling, the erasure of all spiritual excellence, and the consequent incapability of elevation, honour and blessedness, its inseparable concomitants! What a poor compensation is this for the life of the body, and even the greatest amount of temporal enjoyments! Math. xvi. 26.

The operation of this evil, in regard to the future destinies of man, is easily conceived. Although there were no other obstacle, the penalty of the law itself will effectually preclude the blessedness of heaven. That penalty is, as we have now seen, moral death, (Eph. ii. 5.) the want of moral feeling, (Eph. iv. 19.) the absence of spiritual and moral consciousness, or “*alienation from the life of God.*” Eph. iv. 18. Now the want of moral sensibility is the incapability of moral enjoyment; and this is the

only enjoyment of heaven. Rev. xxi. 27. Incapability of feeling is incapability of bliss.

But the most alarming aspect of this penalty is, that it is not a negation of the power of feeling in every sense of the term. No. While it is the extinction of *moral and spiritual*, it is not the extinction of *physical* consciousness. When the former is gone the latter remains. Hence, we read of those who are “dead while they live.” 1 Tim. v. 6. Here, then, is the power of enduring pain without the power of enjoying pleasure; the capability of suffering, without the capability of enjoying. Appalling thought! The wicked, would they only consider, carry about with them, even in the world, the elements of their future misery; their capability of future wretchedness in that very consciousness which is preserved to them even in the most of their unhallowed enjoyments; and their incapability of future blessedness in their insensibility and positive “hostility to moral excellence, and the ordinances, exercises, and means by which it is conveyed.”

Such is the testimony of God. And on this it is manifestly the highest wisdom of man to act—to act, not on ordinary occasions only, but even the most trying emergencies, when even life itself is to be surrendered; and not occasionally only, but during the whole period of his temporal existence. For this is the solemn admonition of the Saviour himself, “Be thou faithful unto death; and I will give thee a crown of life.” Rev. ii. 10.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE FORENOON OF SABBATH, 25TH MAY, 1834, BEFORE
HIS GRACE THE LORD COMMISSIONER TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

By the Rev. JOHN BROWN PATTERSON,

Minister of Falkirk.

“*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church.*”—EPHES. i. 22.

I do not propose, at this time, to enter into any thing like a complete and formal exposition of these words; but, observing generally that they represent Christ Jesus, our now-exalted Redeemer, having been constituted by Jehovah supreme over the whole existence and order of creation, and, more especially, over all events relating to the history and connected with the interests of the Church, I purpose to lay before you a general summary of the scripture doctrine on these subjects—a brief connected view

of the revelations which the Bible contains respecting the sovereign royalty of Jesus, as displayed in his administration of the universe, and in his administration of the Church.

First, then, let us endeavour to gather from the Bible the views we are to take of Jesus Christ, as Sovereign of the universe. That Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, has actually, and as Mediator since his ascension, the rule of all creation, is very frequently and strongly asserted in Holy Writ.

He is, no doubt, described as having a peculiar charge of one department of the universe—this world in which we dwell—the system of human affairs; as, when it is said, “The Father hath given him power over all flesh, and that both in the present and in the future state; for, to this end, he both died and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” But not to those in this world, or of the world to come, is the exercise of the Redeemer’s sovereignty confined. His sceptre is stretched forth over all the provinces of the vast universe. “All power,” he says, “is given unto me in heaven and in earth;” and, in the text, we read that the Father “hath put all things under his feet.” There is no exception. The noblest of creatures, not less than the lowest, both angels, and authorities, and powers, immortal spirits of every rank, we are assured, are all made subject to him—to Him whom God has raised from the dead, to set him at his own right hand, far above all principality, and power, and dominion—every name that is named not only in this world, but in that which is to come; so that we find his high style and title proclaimed as King of kings, and Lord of lords; the Prince of the kings of the earth; the first begotten; He to whom the dignity and authority of primogeniture belong, as the first begotten from the dead, the risen Lord, the first-born of every creature, the Prince of the whole creation, the beginning, the original source of greatness, and glory, and dominion, the heir of all things, the Lord of all. Yet, when the Bible ascribes to Jesus, in most peremptory terms, dignity, majesty, rule, it communicates to us few details of the manner of its administration; yet all believe that over the universe of existences and of events, Christ exercises a rule and powerful superintendence; holding in his hand the helm of creation; working all things according to the counsel of his own will; determining the condition of all beings; regulating the action of all powers; controlling, combining, harmonizing, the whole complexity of causes and effects; running on in a million million lines of endless length, all meetly interweaving into that immeasurable tissue of things we call the universe: but, in regard to inconceivably the greater portion of the universe, the fact is almost all that is declared respecting the might of the Redeemer’s agency in the affairs of the other world; the results with which that agency is fraught to their unknown inhabitants, the parts of homage and obedience they yield to his throne and monarchy, and many similar

questions, the holy oracles yield little satisfaction. But is not the fact itself an overwhelming one, and fraught with practical influence, that over all worlds and orders of creation the Christ, the same who humbled himself to the dust of death for man, is now vicergerent of the absolute divinity. The million suns which emblazon the firmament, within the horizon embraced by human eyes, with the ties and sisterhood of worlds rejoicing in its radiance, the innumerable hosts of unknown stars encircling his mighty throne with true sublimity, suppose that all these are but provinces of the Anointed’s empire, and all these far-stretching provinces, in all places of his dominions, whatever exists, lives, and moves, are the subjects of his crown; and as all the regions of physical nature, so every order of intelligent beings, and every individual from the infant of a day, in whose bosom reason is yet a scarcely kindled spark—from Gabriel who stands in the presence of God, with an archangel’s intellect, improved by the experience of long millenniums, spent in the regions of beatific vision, the whole moral, as well as the whole natural, universe are under his royal authority—the good adoring and obeying; the wicked resisting and opposing. We cannot but realize this fact, although we can understand no more than the mere fact so plain, yet so loftily told in Scripture, that we feel constrained to that holy movement of wonder, which it is the end of this august revelation to produce; that, at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.

A somewhat greater amount of information, than is afforded in regard to the details of the Redeemer’s government over the various orders of creation, is communicated in regard to its actual administration in reference to man. The history of this administration is represented as divided into two great periods: one, the period of preparatory arrangement; the other, that of final consummation; during the one of which Jesus is gradually promoting the happiness of his friends and the subjugation of his foes; while, in the other, the salvation of his people is accomplished, and the ruin of his adversaries completed. During the first of these, his sway is not to be supposed less real and powerful than when the latter is ushered in with the pomp and acclamation of crowning victory. It is true there are many things connected with a present administration of Messiah’s kingdom in our world, which, did we walk by sight and not

by faith, might greatly perplex our feeble minds. The long delays in the accomplishments of these great objects; the partial and often interrupted success; the frequent and, to our apprehension, disastrous reverses that have attended the cause which we know he counts and calls his own; the apparent triumphs of his foes; the humiliation and oppression of his friends—these things, and such as these, might seem fitted to inspire doubt and despondency in our minds, did we not reflect that what we believe of the supremacy of Jesus in this mysterious history, rests upon the unerring statement of God, and did we not remember that the government of our world has all along been conducted on principles beyond the reach of human comprehension. Meanwhile, if we consider well, we shall find in this very circumstance a proof of the security which the Mediator feels in the firmness of an everlasting throne; or, as has been well observed, it is by no means the least striking exhibition of the sovereignty of Jesus, that he is not obliged to inflict immediate punishment on the rebellious, but for so long a period as suits his other purpose—even to them, the rebellious, the purpose of mercy. “Rule thou,” the Lord has said to him, “at my right hand; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies, and in the midst of them be ruler constant;” so that it can never be that they should dethrone him from his seat, or that he should lose the opportunity of baffling their attempts, and turning them to the ultimate advantage of his own cause and people. We know, moreover, that the future history of this first period of the Redeemer’s reign will, in the course of ages, present far more conspicuous proofs of his royalty than now, when he shall take to himself his great power and reign, and “the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of God and his Christ.” At last, however, the first period of Christ’s dominion shall reach its close; for the solemn termination of that great era is the solemn introduction of the next. God hath appointed a day, a day of days, the mightiest and last, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. “Then shall the king come forth in visible majesty before the whole vast congregation of his assembled subjects, to exercise the royal function of supreme and sovereign Judge.” Oh! how all the spacious displays of majesty, which earthly kings have ever exhibited, will sink into insignificance, dark and discountenanced in the memories of men when “the Lord’s Anointed cometh with clouds, and every

eye shall see him in the glory of his Father, and in his own glory, and in the glory of all the holy angels; when the shout of the celestial armies shall shake the rending earth, and the wakeful trump of doom shall thunder through the dome; when, diademed and robed for judgment, he shall sit on the throne of his glory—his throne the fiery flame, his wheels the burning fire—before him shall be gathered all nations, his repentent and obedient spirits, his impenitent and still rebellious foes: assembled on that day of everlasting decision to experience the consummating proof of the Mediator’s sovereignty, the power of the great Law-giver, now the God to save and to destroy.” From that illustrious day of Messiah’s triumph to all his friends and over all his foes, when his supremacy has been acknowledged by all the hosts of beings—the new-born, the rebellious, the reconciled—when every knee shall have bowed to Jesus, and every tongue confessed to him, a period of consummation and final arrangement shall begin to roll—then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom unto the Father—when he shall have put down all rule, and authority, and dominion; for he must reign till his enemies are made his footstool; the last enemy, death, shall be destroyed; for he hath put all things under him. But when he saith, “All things are put under him,” it is manifest he is excepted who put all things under him: when all things are subdued unto him, then shall the Son be subject to the Father; then God shall be all in all.

The passage is so mysterious, so hidden from mortal penetration, that we must hold it in conscious feebleness of understanding; yet it is a passage that we may venture to submit to those capable of judging in the original, whether the opinion of a great continental Divine may not, perhaps, be just, that so far from intimating the termination of Christ’s mediatorial reign, it expressly declares a continuance of it on an interminable principle. But is not the Son, as Mediator, as a subject now? Is it not the very principle of the whole mediatorial arrangement and economy, as stated by our Lord himself, that the Father is greater than the Son? The Father has not resigned the throne to the Son, but has placed the Son upon the throne at his own right hand, and as that now is the plan, so it will be to all eternity. When it is said all things are put under him, he is excepted who had put all things under him. It seems, then, according to this opinion, that when it is declared that at that time, at the con-

summation, the Son shall be subject to the Father, it is declared not that the former shall bear a new relation to the latter, but that the same relation which now exists between them shall remain unchanged. Certain it is, that however this passage may be interpreted by the event, the day shall declare it. There is a sense in which the royalty of Jesus over the universe is a thing eternal and unchangeable, for in regard to the Son it has been said, "Thy throne, O God is for ever; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

So much sufficeth to have been said of the scripture doctrine in respect of the sovereignty which Jesus exercises over the universe at large. Let us now, in a few words, speak of the sovereignty which Jesus exercises respecting the Church in particular—confining our attention at present to what we may call his external administration of that holy commonwealth to the charge and preservation of the Church as a society. That these are the objects of Jesus as Head over all is plainly indicated by the commission he gave to the Apostles immediately before he ascended to sit down on the throne of God. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It was in truth no trifling demonstration of the Redeemer's sovereignty which was afforded by the facts connected with the propagation of his religion in the earlier ages of the Church; so refreshing its rapidity, its extent, its course abounding as it did in such magnificent testimonies of the power of Him its founder and Author, subduing so many thousands of all nations, and ranks, and languages, to the acknowledging of him as Lord of all, and triumphing over such formidable foes, the malice of Jew and Gentile, the resistance of the mighty wiles of superstition, and the eager hostility of those in whose hands the resources of earthly power were deposited. Nor must we allow ourselves to think that during the dark ages which ensued any interruption had taken place in that care, which, as head over all things, he exercises over the Church. The rise, and progress, and dominion of the great apostasy form, no doubt, the most mysterious passage in the history of the exalted mediatorial reign; yet it did not fall out unexpected by him or unallowed, for it was predicted from the beginning, and was therefore provided for in the counsel and plan of his administration, and cannot form any ground of suspicion in

regard to him of wisdom not foreordained, or power misapplied. The dawn of the Reformation might well be hailed as a fresh proof of the superintending care and power of our exalted Lord. The commencement and progress of deliverance from former thralldom we owe entirely to him; and to his wisdom and power we look for the fulfilment of the recorded promise that the Church of Jesus is built upon a rock, and though the waves may beat, yet shall they not prevail against it. We trust in the promise, "Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession." There is a time approaching of more glorious prosperity to the Church than earth has yet beheld, when the limits of the Saviour's kingdom shall be those of the habitable globe, from sea to sea, "from the river to the ends of the earth." All people shall rejoice beneath his sceptre; men shall be blessed in him, and all men shall call him blessed. There are intimations in the roll of prophecy, that after this period the enmity of his opponents imprisoned long shall yet break forth; but that at length the struggle shall be finally terminated at that great day when all his enemies are made his footstool, when, delivered from every fear, the whole ransomed Church shall be presented to the Father without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

These are the grand outlines of that plan of government which history and prophecy declare to be the plan adopted by the anointed Ruler of the world in respect of the external history of his beloved Church. That it is not the plan, in many respects, which human wisdom would have selected, but that it is, indeed, the scheme which of all possible schemes is best adapted to promote the great ends for which the Church exists, we are assured by the things already so largely provided. Jesus, who knows what is best, and loves what is best, is not controlled or limited in practically pursuing what is best by any deficiency of power, but has at his command all the resources of creation, and at his selection all the possibilities of things.

Now, in regard to the practical result flowing from this meditation, if Jesus be thus the appointed Ruler of the Universe, and especially of human affairs, it is most meet that this consideration should be always present to the minds of those to whose hands the administration of earthly power and dominion is intrusted. They are bound continually to remember that they are subject, that they are responsible to him who

is head of all principality and power. They are bound in their departments of administration as his delegates and servants to pursue the same great end he pursues, and from a boundless store of majesty and rule to guard the true interests of his true Church, which are no other than the highest interests of society, the interests of man, the interests of truth and righteousness, of order and of peace.

It is our happiness to live in the circumstances of our present meeting under a government which recognises and acts on these important principles—principles which the oracles of the Most High urge with most solemn sanction on all the rulers among men. “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”

In the second place, mark how strong a sense of peace and security, how ample an assurance of triumph the Church of Christ may entertain amidst all the opposition of her enemies. I speak of the true vital Church, and of every christian church in proportion to its conformity to the charter contained in the oracles of God. Not that the Church of God may not be exposed to fierce and fiery trial, to a day of blasphemy, trouble and wrath, but that through that day we shall be supported by knowing that all is arranged by that mysterious wisdom of Him to whom we know our cause is dear—that wisdom which we cannot fathom, but in which we may always confide. Men must feel how futile are the fiercest efforts of the enemy to obstruct the progress or frustrate the triumph of the Anointed's kingdom, and mark with high emotion of anticipated victory how his trysail, rides on unshaken over the crushed and shivered fragments of hostile might. So, if we may take up the prophet's lofty defiance, associate yourselves and ye shall be broken; gird yourselves and ye shall be broken in pieces; take counsel together and it shall come to nought; speak the word and it

shall not stand. Thus the Lord has spoken and he will not repent. “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.”

Finally, let me implore of every one to consider well what relation he occupies to that universal government, as its friend or as its foe. That really must determine the place he shall occupy before the King on the day of everlasting decision—whether on the right hand or on the left, most blessed or accursed. Hear the description given of the latter's character. “They that know not God and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.” Oh! if ye would avoid this fearful consummation come out from those who know not nor obey the Lord. Acquaint yourselves with God and be at peace. Show that you believe the Gospel by obeying it—proving in your experience and example how faith purifieth the heart and overcometh the world. Let not your words alone but your conduct testify that you are Christ's and on the side of the Most High—so that when to those his enemies who would not that he should reign over them he speaketh in his wrath and sore displeasure, to you he shall speak words of welcome and benediction; when the threatened rebel shrinks from the view, ye shall arrive before the walls of the eternal city, you shall join your voice to the herald angel, saying, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.” When they that keep ward within shall ask, “Who is this King of glory?” he shall resume the strain exultingly, “The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle; lift up your heads, O ye gates, lift them up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in.” Yet once again they shall inquire, understanding well of whom you sing, willing once more to hear your lofty cries, “Who is this King of glory?” and once again he shall reply with a most mighty voice, “The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory!”

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. NATHANIEL PATERSON, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. EBENEZER HALLEY, Leith.

THE DUTY AND BLESSING OF WAITING ON THE LORD;

A SERMON PREACHED ON SABBATH, 30TH JUNE, 1834,

By the Rev. NATHANIEL PATERSON,
Minister of St. Andrew's Church, Glasgow.

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint.”—ISAIAH xl. 31.

THE text sets before you, as spiritual blessings, the renewing of your strength, the rising above the world, intimated as mounting with the wings of an eagle in the never-ending progression of a heavenward course, till this mortal pilgrimage shall be over, and the crown be won. These are the spiritual blessings; and for whom are they prepared? The text says, “For them that wait upon the Lord, for them all.” There is no exception made in the text, and we have no right to make any. It is the Word of God, and, therefore, the truth and power of God are pledged to make the promise sure to every soul out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation, who doth in reality wait upon the Lord. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” Here we have two things set before us—the promised blessing and the means for its attainment. These two stand in a certain relation to each other. We do not say that they strictly stand in relation of cause and effect. We dare not affirm that our waiting on the Lord is of itself sufficient to raise us up to heaven. It is God that worketh in us; but we slacken, in no respect, the connexion of these two things. They may not strictly appear in the relation of cause and effect, but they stand before us in the relation of means to an end. The means are appointed of God, and are, therefore, by the power and truth of God, just as efficacious to the end as if they stood before us in the relation of cause

and effect. In consequence of this connexion, if I value the end, I must apply to the means. You come to this personal application, if I apply not to the means, the promised blessing cannot be mine. If I have the right spirit, and with due diligence apply to these means, then, because God is true, I am sure of the end, and go on persevering until I appear before God perfect in Sion. Now, much of this discourse must depend on our persuasion that, in the law and work of God, there are means to an end; and it will contribute to your diligent use thereof, if you first learn of the will and work of God, that there are means appointed to an end, without which it is impossible that end can be attained. Throughout all nature God works by means, and requires the observance of this law from every creature that lives. God cannot be dependent upon any means. He made them all, and can be dependent upon no creature. There are no means but such as God has appointed. There must have been a time in the view of eternity when God stood alone, and there were no means, no instruments, to take into God's hand; but now that they are made, God doth use them; and while there was the power to make, there was the prescience of the use; and, no doubt, in making, there was a design to produce, and for which all things made are employed. We see, then, that God doth work by means. It is his gra-

cious purpose that blessings spring from the earth—and they now do so; and, in order to this, he maketh the warm sun to draw up vapour from the sea, and the soft breezes to spread it over all the land; he maketh the earth soft with showers, and blesseth the springing thereof. Take one instance in the moral world, and see if there be any exception to the general law of means to an end. “He looked down from heaven and beheld the iniquity of men; he used the element of water as one of the instruments in his hand, and by it swept away an ungodly world.” Again, “he looked on them, and beheld them under that disease, the leprosy of the soul, and sent forth his Word to heal them.” Without this he could have effected his purpose; but he uses means, and, accordingly, sent forth the Word to heal them. We just take in all nature, and say, that God works by means. He enjoins this as a law on every creature that lives and breathes—the law of means to an end; and, in subservience to this law, the ways of providence and creation are both of them wisely conducted. We speak of things that are different; but the argument is the stronger, if there be still the same law of means to an end. Take any piece of God’s works, say sea and land, there follows a constitutional difference in every creature that lives in the one and that lives in the other, corresponding to the difference of element in which they move; but, at the same time, there is no change of the invariable law; for, in every creature inhabiting the earth or the deep, there is the law of life, death, and reproduction; and in the case of every creature in which a supply of food is demonstrated as necessary, the means must be used by it. The means must be used, whether it be to gather the needful aliment, or to find safety amid the casualties of life. In the material world there is no shifting of this universal law common to all creatures. Now, from this great design in the material world, let us rise to that which is spiritual, and in this case, also, we perceive great differences. The life of every man that is spiritual will differ from that of every man that is carnal—as much as the creatures that live in the sea differ from those that live on the land. There is the use of the appointed means in the spiritual, as in the natural, world. In both there is life, and a supply of food suited to, and necessary for, different creatures. The means must be put forth. There are babes in Christ

with the weakness of a begun spiritual life. There is a maturer period of life when spiritual food comes down from heaven just as bread springing out of the ground. The means, however, must be used, otherwise the creature dies, be they spiritual or natural. We read that God heareth the young ravens when they cry, that they do not cry in vain, that God giveth to parents such instinctive love that they toil in behalf of their offspring. It is farther said, that what he giveth they gather. We know of no other way by which the existence of one single being could be preserved on earth. To save time and needless illustration, we descend to the lowest tribes. You behold the sea rocks covered with living shells, and there you see the lowest species of life. We have the hand of God there conspicuously displayed. We can trace the operation of this law from the greatest strength down to the greatest weakness of this world. Among the rocks we behold one which has a speciality, having no shell on one side; but once fixed on the rock, it has the strength of a pyramid. Left to itself, as in seeking its food, it takes but a slight hold of its place; but let the slightest touch be given to its dome, and it becomes one with the rock. And what can it do? Much is done for it, and what *it* is required to do is the least of all. It has the munition of rocks for its strength, but it has not built the rock for itself; it can no more be said to construct its shell than we can be said to construct our bones; nevertheless, when the slightest danger threatens, it manifests activity, though its action is the smallest that can be—merely the contraction of its body. The contraction of its little sphere makes an empty space in its shell, and it is fixed to its home by the law of atmospherical pressure; and wherever the creature exists, it cannot exist without the operation of this law. Fulfilling this its little work, it has nothing to fear; the tooth of the destroyer and the surge of the Atlantic assail it in vain. This is the power of God; and we save your time by carrying you from the greatest power of the strongest of beasts down to that of this little animal. You there behold the entire use and unvarying steadiness of that law, that, for the life of every thing that lives, there must be employed the means of God’s appointment and of God’s providing.

We would look up higher. We read that angels are ministering spirits to do his plea-

sure. And have they any means to employ? We may have few sympathies with them; but Scripture makes this appear, that, when the great mystery of the Gospel became known, the angels of God desired to look into it. Going thus from the highest down to the lowest, why should man be an exception from this law? He is not. Go to the very lowest state in which man appears, roaming at large in the woods. In this savage state of man, the state in which his numbers are comparatively few, his toils great, his privations dreadful, his countenance melancholy, his days few and evil—in this state what do you discern but the failure of appointed means? Let these be more wisely used, and the character of man is instantly exalted; the earth is cultivated like a garden; the sea becomes a highway for ships, and the various products of the most distant climes are brought to every door; hospitals are erected for the cure of disease, and seminaries arise in which the powers of the mind are cultivated and improved; man's nature is exalted, and his days are prolonged; and what do you discover in this but just the better use of those means God hath appointed? Let these once more fail, and the assured consequence is, that man returns to the savage wayward way I have described. Did we cease to plough, plant, sow, and reap, we must be thrown back on a different sort of provision from that now made for us, or we must die of want. Through the whole of nature's compass, there is no exception; in regard to our race, it is just according to the observance of the law to which we have now referred, whether we shall be degraded like the brutes, or whether we shall come to the highest enjoyment of which our nature is capable. From the beginning of life up to its close, all depends upon the use of means put forth from the time that we are babes in Christ, till we advance up to the stature of the full and perfect man in Christ Jesus. Do you reverence the means? Learn that such is the steadfastness of God's law from which he will not swerve, and without the observance of which there is no advancement in the divine life, and no hope for eternity. I would not have you dwell on the sternness of the law. Praise God! because the law is good. He has created the means, and requires the use. Most of us would dispense with the means; but the law is good, and thus consults for the happiness of all the creatures for whom God

has made it. We see, for example, a strange collection of living things made up for show. The owner feeds them; they eat because they are hungry; while the law of nature is, that which God provides they gather. In this case their food is not what they would themselves choose, because they do not gather it; they are not putting forth their instincts and powers to gather that which is their food. Thus the law, under which they gather their food, implies a desire to find, and the desire of finding makes the finding sweet; and thus while the law of God is imperious, and has a stern necessity, you see that the law is good, and that God thus consults for the happiness of all his creatures. The law has no exception, and must now bear on the spiritual part of our rise and progress, just as it is essential through every grade of life, in every state and capacity of man, from the lowest of savage life up to that which is most refined.

Consider, then, the spiritual blessing promised, that we apply our hearts to the means, namely, waiting on the Lord. In the first place, we observe, it is promised that they who do so shall *renew* their strength. In the simple meaning of the words, there is implied some strength before. This is not supposed to refer to those who are enemies to God in their minds by wicked works, for it is said, God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. We say, by the word of the Spirit, "Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." He is all-sufficient, even to the very uttermost, to raise those who come to him from the dead. The promise, then, implies that those who are yet in the present state of this spiritual life, have need of renewing their spiritual strength, just as the natural man, though strong, has need of a renewal of strength, otherwise he shall soon be weak. For, let us suppose of one arrived at the maturity of human strength, and powerfully refreshed by the nourishment of the body, that his exertion continues, and that privation is for a given time enjoined, and he will soon sink into the weakness of death. And so here in the case of spiritual life. If we have it by Christ Jesus, and have been refreshed at the fountain of that spiritual life, we feel a temporary strength, but if we become alienated from these ordinances by which spiritual life is renewed, we shall be like men in circum-

stances of famine, sunk into that weakness which is a symptom of death.

But next, it is said, by a beautiful climax, that they shall mount up as on eagles' wings. This is a beautiful figure, for first the strength that is mentioned makes us strong to resist temptation, but, then, this rising carries us swift out of the sphere of temptation; we cleave less unto dust because we are nearer to heaven; the attraction is weakened because we are more distant from it. Observe the beauty of the simile here. Of all birds the eagle is the most remarkable for strength of pinion, quickness of eye, and soaring flight. It is called the bird of Jove because near to heaven. It is called the bird of the Sun, because its eye can bear its rays, because it still holds on its course, though lost to mortal eye, high amidst ether and the dazzling splendour of the Sun. No other creature, indeed, enjoys its elevated power. Does its spirits droop in fogs, or does it dread the thunder-cloud? it goes not to the neighbouring tree or rock for shelter, but, soaring above the clouds, seeks the clearer light in that elevated region whence in calm serenity, from its vantage ether, it can look down on all the troubles of a world beneath. And not more sublime than eagle's flight is the progressive state of those who wait upon the Lord. These rise towards heaven till being filled with the love of God they dwell in the light of his countenance, and are safe from those fears and perils which attach to the world. It is thus that, like our Saviour, in faith we overcome the world.

The next promise implies that they that wait upon the Lord shall walk and not faint; we must tread on earth till earth receive its own, but the promise of the text is sufficient to encourage us in our pilgrimage. "They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint," and just as the eagle's flight, so is the Christian's faith which is progressive but dependent on means, and he must come back to humble ordinances, and must be on his knees in prayer, and must carry it from the closet to the heavens in his flight. The promise is good, Ye shall rejoice according to renewed strength and not weary; or, if the feebleness of old age should come on, it is well, for as their day is so shall their strength be, and God shall perfect their strength in their weakness.

Such are the blessings promised in our text. According as you value these, remember the law we have laid down, and apply your hearts to the means. I am in-

titled to make this practical inference, if I would have the blessing, I must apply to the means; if I apply to the means the blessing will be mine, because God is true. The first concerns you, the second is the gift of God. You thus perceive what it is to wait on the Lord, for they that wait on the Lord shall have this blessing sure. What is it to wait on the Lord? Would any man say, How can I wait upon the Lord, if the Lord is not present? True; for though you had the wings of the morning you could not for one moment be out of the hands of the Lord. God is present whether you will or not. The waiting on the Lord in the text implies a desire such as the Psalmist expresses when he says, "As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God;" and the desire of finding out God is thus expressed, "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" It is through the ordinances of God which he will bless that we find him. I shall, but with brevity, state how these ordinances are just the circumstances in which you meet with God and find him to your heart's content. Remember the Lord Jesus has said, that "he is the Word," and when we are diligent in the use of the Word, it enlightens our understandings; and this is just waiting on the Lord, whose power is as evidently manifested in the blessing of his own Word, as in the showering down of dew or rain in the blessing of the fruits of the earth. Has he not said, "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father who is in secret?" in this ordinance you are waiting on the Lord, and the blessing follows, "and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Supposing every one of you to be praising God in his own family, here is God's promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Is not this waiting on the Lord? You wait on the Lord also in the more public ordinances of the sanctuary. Remember that although the Shechinah or visible glory filled the whole temple, God now dwelleth not in a temple made with hands—God is everywhere present. Wherever there is incense there is the same cloud. Is it not clear, then, that in these ordinances you wait on God? And is it not far-

ther clear, that by the use of these ordinances these spiritual blessings promised are in every case realized? I believe this because I believe the Word; because I see one unvarying proof that wherever there is a soul of man growing in grace, meet for glory, I find that is the man who with all dependence is waiting on these ordinances; and wherever a man experiences the death of the soul there, as often as that is exhibited, is the forsaking of God or neglect of the ordinances of God. And what is contempt of these but contempt of God himself. It cannot be otherwise. It is so in the text as in the world; your experience corresponds with what you read; and you could not in your hearts wish it were otherwise.

We trust we have now brought home to your conviction, that as you value the promise you will value the means, otherwise you can entertain no hope that the promise will be realized. Now, we would have you come to this reflection before retiring this night to sleep. Let us never doubt that the means in the text are the way to the promised blessing. I will never doubt that by the use of these means, I will find the only way to renew my strength and to maintain an unvarying perseverance to the end of my course. I will never doubt that I will use the one without obtaining the other. Then be careful to renew your strength by waiting on the Lord, trusting in the influence of the Spirit, in the faith that wavereth not, and in much continuance in prayer. Never doubt that these are means to an end, and then will your hearts rejoice. Who that has a soul to be saved

would use other means than those to which God has attached his promise, and neglect this great salvation? Why labour to plant and sow for the meat that perisheth, and not plant, and sow; and reap for that meat which endureth to everlasting life? Why labour in repairing to the remotest seas and most noxious climates in quest of uncertain riches, and neglect the means of securing what is within your reach and which God will surely bless? Why have faith in those means to which God has given no promise, and have no faith in those means which God will surely bless? But what if there are means to an end, and you have failed in the application of these means? Oh! beware lest you thus provoke him to say, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." Now, I say, you do not resist the conviction of failure, when you say, "Renew a right spirit within me." You will resist this conviction in returning to your weekly labours, if you go forth to put into requisition all the means your God has appointed for advancement in the world, while you go on neglecting those by which alone your strength can be renewed. It is a great sin to resist conviction; but wait on the Lord that you may renew your strength, that you may find pleasure in that greatest blessing, that your souls may be filled with marrow and with fatness, and when this poor life you uphold is becoming weaker and weaker till nothing at all remains, then, though heart and flesh faint and fail, God will be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. Which may God grant to us all, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

RELIGION THE ONLY SOURCE OF HAPPINESS;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, ROSE STREET, EDINBURGH,
AT THE REQUEST OF THE YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY,

By the Rev. EBENEZER HALLEY,

Kirkgate Congregation, Leith.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: but his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither: and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."—Ps. i. 1—4.

If there be any of our feelings that exercise over the mind a more sovereign and unlimited dominion than another, it is the

desire of happiness. This is instinctively the first feeling that we cherish, even when perhaps unconscious of its exercise; it is

certainly the last that we retain in the moment of dissolution. The wide and extensive influence it exerts over the energies of our nature, the emotions it excites, the feelings it brings into play, and all those bright created visions over which the beam of hope throws a magnificent and kindling radiance, show how intimately this feeling in its exercise is connected with the wishes and prospects of humanity. Yet, like the generality of our other feelings, it is hasty and violent in its exercise, often hurried away into its estimate of objects by that which secures to it a present good, rather than that which promises a distant advantage, and, while thus impatient of being gratified, will rather snatch at what is present than wait for what is future. This is almost invariably the conduct of men whenever the two are placed in opposition and presented to the review of the mind. The present stands out in visible attitude invested with a distinct and palpable form, and carrying, therefore, an influential appeal to our feelings, while the future is seen only through a distant medium, and produces but an indistinct impression. You may, indeed, inform the individual that his choice is injudicious, that the present good is as nothing to the future which he sacrifices, and that, therefore, the part of a wise man would be to forego his present enjoyments in lieu of those that are future; but the moment you do so, you throw him on the inefficiency of abstract principles, all which are easily overborn, as there is a voice within him summoning him to the enjoyment of the world around him. In the Word of God religion comes recommended by those wide and comprehensive views that embrace the welfare of man in their more remote and ulterior consequences. It makes the most urgent and alarming appeals to our wishes, and our hopes, and our fears. It points to the superior felicities of heaven both in duration and enjoyment to those of the world, and then it exposes that folly and infatuation that can prefer the temporary pleasures of the one to the more enduring realities of the other. These are powerful considerations, and carry with them every thing calculated to awaken our fears; but the feeling to which we have adverted by inducing man to embrace that within his reach, induces him to throw a veil over the future world, and forget the things belonging to his future and everlasting welfare. Every man carries in his bosom a desire of happiness, restless

too, and impatient of being gratified, and unless we can identify religion with the present constitution of nature, unless we can show that even in the present life religion administers greater pleasure and enjoyment to the individual than the enjoyment of the present world, all our reasonings may be very plausible, and the individual may listen with much seeming interest, but no sooner does he leave us and speed his way back to the world, and mingle among objects that administer gratification to his favourite feeling, than all our reasonings and expostulations are forgotten. We must convince him, that even in the present world his interest is identified with his duty, and thus by an appeal to his favourite feelings obtain the way to the citadel of his heart. The verses of our text enable us to take this high ground. They incorporate religion with the strongest feelings of our nature. They tell us that even in the present life the pursuit of religion is necessarily associated with happiness, while misery and remorse are the legitimate consequences of profligacy; for "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: but his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither: and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." Though the verses we have now read had not been of divine inspiration, they are entitled to considerable credit from the authority from which they come. They are not, for instance, the declarations of a man who lived in a cloister and declaimed against pleasures which he never tasted—they are not the splenetic effusions of a melancholy recluse, they are the declarations of a man who, from the various spheres in which he moved, and the opportunities he enjoyed, is the best entitled to be heard in the controversy at issue. David, when a shepherd, had led his flocks along the valleys, and had tasted the sweets of a rural life. From this he had been elevated to a throne, and to sway the sceptre of Judaea in one of the proudest eras of its national history; and this individual acquainted both with the sweets of piety as well as the intoxication of worldly prosperity, tells us that

godliness is profitable unto all things; that Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. I shall proceed to illustrate the verses in the order in which they stand, and endeavour to bring out this principle, that religion produces happiness from the very moment that you take it in the present life; and, on the contrary, that the moment a man diverges from the path of duty, from that very moment does his bosom become the mansion of remorse and misery.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." The first circumstance to which our attention is here directed, is the deceitful tendency and progressive character of vice. With this view the royal Psalmist enters into an induction of particulars, and illustrates the deceitful tendency and character of sin from this circumstance, that when we begin in its career, it is impossible to say where we may stop. With this view we are presented in the verse before us, with the gradual deviation of a sinner from the paths of rectitude, until at last he is enslaved in the bondage of ungodliness. He is represented as first walking in the counsel of the ungodly. Evil example is thus shown to be the first fatal starting point with which men always begin a career of depravity. Evil example gradually hurries the sinner into a compliance with the evil practices of his companions, and thus he stands in the way of sinners until having stifled the convictions of conscience, having drowned the risings of reflection, and thrown off the obligations of religion, he arrives at last at such a daring climax of impiety as to deny the God who made him, and sit down in the seat of the scornful. In illustrating this idea in a practical way, we propose addressing those more especially who are entering on a course of life and are speedily to be introduced into the world, to be involved by its cares and distracted by its pursuits. We will, therefore, suppose a person born under the roof of piety, and trained up from his earliest years in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to be removed far away from the superintendence of parents, and thrown, it may be, amid the cares and temptations of a metropolis. The first thing he will meet with to shake the efficacy of his religious principles, will be the tendency of evil example; for "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly." This

has been the fatal rock on which thousands of the rising generation have made shipwreck of their faith. Lingerings on the threshold of vice, they are assailed by those who employ every mode to entrap the unwary and inexperienced, men who by the splendour of their conversation and the vivacity of their wit, can throw a seductive brilliancy over vice, and employ every mode to darken the present comforts and dissolve the future prospects of thousands of their species. And what are some of the means they employ to entrap the unwary and inexperienced? They will begin by tempting them to the commission of small sins, such as will not startle the delicacy of their feelings, and which pave the way for sins of a more aggravated kind. They will gradually introduce them into amusements where every thing is calculated to throw a dangerous and seductive brilliancy over vice. They will put into their hands licentious and immoral books which inflame the imagination, and yet where vice is so disguised as to wear the appearance and ape the very language of piety. They will hurry them into conversation which is far from being governed by the fear of God. They will tell them that the design of man is to be happy, that God has planted within us certain instincts, and why should not these be gratified; and that religion, though a very good thing for the old and inexperienced, is totally useless for those who are entering upon a gay seductive scene where every thing around them calls on them to taste the pleasures that are around them. Such are some of those temptations that will be thrown out to you by the more wary and dangerous in the path of life; and we call upon you to resist temptations at the very outset, for the way of sin is like the letting out of water. Whenever we begin to deliberate, we are easily perplexed by our ignorance, easily flattered by our vanity, and easily fall a prey to the depravity of our hearts.

But evil example must be always taken in connexion with the dangerous consequences to which it invariably leads; for the man who walks in the counsel of the ungodly, is next represented as standing in the way of sinners. This is a step higher in the career of vice. It traces the progressive nature of iniquity from its first symptoms upon the heart to its future influence upon the practice. It implies that the counsel given in the company of the un-

godly, is followed in life by the unlimited indulgence of the depraved desires of the heart. Let us, then, suppose the individual to have given a loose reign to the indulgence of his passions, that he sacrifices his time and his health at the shrine of dissipation and in the haunts of extravagance and riot, until, hackneyed in the ways of guilt, from the votary of depravity he is converted into the bold and unblushing libertine, where, inured to all those scenes that put the last stamp on human character, he can lay waste without remorse the promising virtues of the ingenuous mind, or ruin the yielding softness of an unsuspecting heart. And what is the happiness that arises from indulgences such as these? confess ye who best can tell, what misery, disquiet, bitter anticipations of the future, awful reflections on the past, while all is dark and desolate within. We see, indeed, the sons of vice, but it is only in the hours of gaiety and mirth, when, maddened by stimulants, their nerves are braced and their spirits are elevated; but could we penetrate into the heart and pursue them back to their retirement where they are corroded by the most poignant feelings of remorse, and see them who appeared the happiest and loudest in the hours of dissipation, and cheered on their fellows in vice by those bursts of levity and wit that used to animate every countenance and enliven every heart, now a prey to all the phantoms and horrors of despair, then would we say of his laughter, What is it? and of mirth, that it tendeth to heaviness; and of the way of sin, in the end, that it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder! I wish, said one who was afterwards an illustrious monument of divine mercy—I wish, said he, in his hours of guilt when he came into the room, I were that dog; and it was extorted from a hound which felt the bitterness of sin, for that irrational animal had neither a God before whom it was to appear, nor a judgment before which it was to be arraigned. There is, indeed, one expedient usually resorted to by workers of iniquity—suppose him, then, to drown the risings of reflection in all the extravagances of inapety; suppose him to go deeper and deeper into the polluted spring of worldly enjoyment, still there will be some solitary moments when this salutary monitor will be faithful to his trust, will pursue him to the pillow of sleep, and haunt him like a ghost in the stillness of solitude, and plant within him the stings of remorse like the first

gnawings of that worm that never dies. The experience of every individual will have convinced him that there is an intimate connexion between misery and vice. The reason is not a difficult one, though it has missed the discernment of many a philosopher. The Almighty has placed us his moral beings under his divine jurisdiction, and as moral beings has given to us a law intimately connected with the revelation of future judgment. But as men are liable to be influenced more by the intervention of sensible objects than by an anticipation of revealed truth, the Almighty has implanted in the bosom of every individual a high and mysterious principle that acts with all the authority of a judge, and thus warns him of the consequences of transgression and the certainty of future punishment. This is conscience—that mighty mysterious principle that can recall the past, anticipate the future, people the invisible world with all the phantoms of despair, dash the cup of enjoyment from the lips, and cause the sinner to see the hand-writing come upon the wall, and see his fearful doom denounced, “Though hand join in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished.” “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.” Oh! it is difficult, very difficult to lay this faithful monitor asleep; but mankind have on this account imitated the example of the heathens who compelled their oracles to speak in their favour, and treat their consciences as the monarch did the prophet. “Get thee hence,” &c. Now whenever we destroy the authority of conscience, from that moment we deny all moral obligation, and thus impugn the existence of God. This is the last stage mentioned in the verse, namely, sitting in the seat of the scornful. Some of you who have been ready to agree to every step in the preceding illustration, may yet startle at the conclusion to which it is brought, and imagine it not to be likely that an individual commencing with evil example will attain to such an awful result as to think that man would go to deny the God who made him. There is nothing, however, mysterious in the process. Can he who lives in the most wanton contempt of the authority of God, entertain any regard for his perfections? Can he who mingles in society, where religion is treated as the offspring of credulity or the dream of superstition, entertain, notwithstanding, for it all that respect and reverence which its exalted origin should in-

pire? Can he who disowns in every part of his life every claim to the authority of God, who profanes the sanctity of his name, the solemnities of his Sabbath, and every other precept which he has given, have any regard for religion? What satisfaction can it yield to him to know that there is a God who governs the world in righteousness and judgment—that his eye watches all the designs and actions of his creatures, and that he has appointed a day in which all shall receive the desert of their actions, whether they have been good or bad? In this case, the man is not so much approximating to infidelity as already its victim—or, should the influence of early impressions still have hold on his mind, let him just read infidelity as represented by its advocates; let him imbibe the speculations of Paine, Hume, or Voltaire; and, in an instant, all which throws a grandeur over his moral being is dissolved, and he now lies at the mercy of every element in the moral world—the sport of accident, and the child of fate; and when he dies, as die he must, he has only the bare and possible consolation of a long and cheerless night in the grave, over which the light of the morning shall never break, to relieve its gloom and dissipate its horror.

And to affirm that such a man is happy, is like the contradiction of an intuitive truth. What is there in such a system to recommend it to the mind? It cannot open an asylum to the unfortunate; it has no balm to pour into the wounded heart. What are its consolations in seasons of affliction, and on the bed of death, and in the near prospect of dissolution? Oh! how does the infidel feel the awful misgivings of his system, when, assailed by the horrors of a guilty conscience, and haunted by the visions of the past, and distracted by awful apprehension of the future, he is hurried into the presence of an incensed Judge and avenging God! Such is the tendency of infidelity—inimical to every hope and enjoyment of humanity. What language, then, can sufficiently paint the baseness of those men who would carry such execrable doctrines into the details of life and into the bosom of families—who would remove from the eye of affliction the only solace of its woe—who would pluck its little treasure from the bosom of poverty—wrest its crutch from the hand of age, and undermine those principles that give to society all its stability, and to the affairs of life their freshness and consolation?

We have thus endeavoured to illustrate

the several clauses of the verse, by showing you that there is an intimate connexion between the several stages of depravity, and that every stage is attended with positive unhappiness. The declaration of the Psalmist, that “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful,” follows from it as a necessary consequence. Yet we feel that, in thus restricting the influence of this principle, we would be both doing injustice to our argument, and advancing what we cannot be borne out in by the verses before us. It would be presumptuous to say that all this blessedness is enjoyed by the man who is merely free of neglecting any of the ostensible duties of Christianity, or who, in other words, does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful. These are not decisive criteria of a renewed heart. They are, no doubt, exemplified by the Christian, but so they are also to a considerable extent by him who is utterly destitute of religious feeling. We can suppose a man constitutionally mild and temperate in his habits, whom prudence might restrain from walking in the counsel of the ungodly; whom the pursuits of ambition or science have given a distaste for the gross pleasures of sense, and whom a conviction of the utility of religion, as a check on the passions of mankind, would thus, as a matter of mere political expediency, induce to support it. We can suppose all this, and yet no man would adduce this as proof of an individual’s Christianity. They have no necessary alliance with Christianity. They may, and often do, flourish independent of it; they are the mere effects of constitutional feeling, and have as little connexion with the principle of godliness, and the authority of the Gospel, as with an experiment in physics or a theorem in geometry. We are referred to a positive test, by which the character of the good man is ascertained. “His delight is in the law of the Lord day and night.” By the law of the Lord, we understand here the whole system of revealed truth as embracing its doctrines, and precepts, and duties. It is styled a law, because it is of imperative obligation, enjoining us, by arguments and motives, to believe these doctrines, fulfil these precepts, obey these duties. But a law always refers us to the agent who promulgated it. Hence, the delight which we feel in those regulations and enactments which embody the principles

of an existing administration, arises from the harmony and concord that exist between our views and opinions and those of the ruling power. Where this sympathy of principle is wanting, the individual may conceal his dislike, by cherishing it in his bosom; but, even here, his temper will be irritated by the continual encounter of opinions and habits opposed to his own, and his happiness impaired by every measure which is adopted, because in direct opposition to his own will; or, he may throw off all allegiance to the existing government, and violate some of its most sacred and authoritative commands, and spread the cry of revolt and sedition around the neighbourhood where he lives, and thus convert the whispers and suspicions, entertained of his disaffection, into the execution of the law in all its rigour and all its severity; but, in either of these, the unhappiness which he feels arises from the want of concord between his views and opinions and those of the ruling power.

Now, if the law of God is in direct contradiction to the ways of ungodly men, there is no wonder they dislike it; but if the law of God be the law of the Christian, then it is no less matter of wonder that his delight is in that law, and that he meditates on it day and night. Various are the statements in Scripture expressive of this delight. "O how love I thy law," says David, "it is my study all the day. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are pure, rejoicing the heart." The Christian has ever found his delight in the law of the Lord. It was the monitor of his youth, is still the guide of his coming years, and will be the staff of his old age. It is his physician when afflicted; it is his instructor under difficulties; it is his great directory to which he looks in all the duties he engages in; it is a light unto his feet, and a lamp unto his path. The martyr, when called to suffer on the scaffold, has borne his testimony to the law of God. "Farewell," said he, "sun, and moon, and stars—farewell, this world in which I live, for it contained many things dear to me—farewell, ye friends of my heart, with whom I often took sweet counsel together—farewell, ye ordinances of God, that were as rivers of water in the valley of Baca, for my oppressed soul; but, farewell, most of all, blessed and best of books—thou hast been my comfort, my physician, my guide! I now take farewell of thee; for, in that world where I go, all mysteries shall

be unveiled, and there shall I know, even as also I am known." Would to God that each of us could give the same delightful testimony to the duties and doctrines, and to the Saviour's promises in all things pertaining to life and godliness—that we could rejoice over it more than they that rejoice over great spoil!

In the two succeeding verses, our attention is directed to the influence of religion, and irreligion on the lives of their several votaries. Two metaphors are employed to represent these: "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." What a beautiful comparison! how full of rich and pleasing imagery, suggesting every idea calculated to soften the heart, expand the feelings, or exalt the imagination! It presents an object among the loveliest that we meet with in the magnificent scenery of nature, and has ever been considered as carrying along with it, and as suggesting the finest materials for the pencil of the artist, and the glowing descriptions of the poet. Under this metaphor, we are furnished with the *utility*, the *fertility*, and the *stability* of the Christian; for, while the wicked are useless, and resemble the chaff which the wind driveth away, the Christian is represented as a tree planted by rivers of water. I shall content myself with a hurried sketch of these ideas.

First, then, his *utility*. Under the influence of christian godliness, he studies to be useful in his day, and in the generation in which he lives; while others are employed in acquiring riches, and following eagerly after the pursuits of ambition, he is more happy if he can be the means of advancing the glory of God, and promoting the spiritual welfare of his fellow-men. Hence, in every scheme in which philanthropy enters, in every scheme which goes to the clothing of the naked, the feeding of the hungry, the instruction of the ignorant, the Christian will ever be active in his sphere, it may be, instrumental in relieving the misery and promoting the happiness of his fellows.

In the second place, we have here represented the *fertility* of the Christian; for, while the chaff is totally unproductive, the godly are represented as "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season." I apprehend that this metaphor is intended to point out those graces which the Christian exercises in the

various situations in which he is placed by Divine Providence. Does he, for example, receive the bounties of God's goodness? then he bringeth forth the fruit of gratitude in his season, exclaiming, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me be stirred up to bless and magnify his holy name, that crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Is he placed in a conspicuous situation in the world? then he desires to bring forward the fruit of christian utility, letting his light so shine before men, that others seeing his good works to others, may glorify their Father who is in heaven. Is he in prosperity? then he desires to bring forward the fruit of a grateful heart, by receiving all his mercies as the gift of a reconciled Father. This gives a zest and relish to these to which ungodly men are entire strangers. Witness the Psalmist: "The Lord is my shepherd," &c. Is he in adversity? he brings forth the fruit of resignation unto God. "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight. Though the fig-tree should yield no leaf, and the field should yield no meat, yet will I be joyful in the God of my salvation."

But, finally, these words point out to us the *stability* of the Christian; for, while the ungodly are like the chaff, as for the godly man his leaf shall not wither. Though religion is intended for the hour of prosperity, yet it is in the season of adversity that it displays its greatest triumph. In those moments when the riches of the ungodly are deserting him—when they take to themselves wings and flee away as an eagle towards heaven—when, like the Prophet, he exclaims, "They have taken away my gods, and what have I more"—in these moments when he sees nothing but a violated law, an avenging God, a heaven into which he cannot enter, and a hell from which he can never escape, the prospect to the Christian is associated with solid happiness and future glory; his sighs, and groans, and struggles, shall soon cease, and his emancipated spirit shall find itself amid the glory and felicity of the celestial world; and, closing his weary eyes on this vain and sorrowful scene, he shall open them in the Jerusalem above, where is no more sorrowing, nor sighing, nor fear, and where tears are for ever wiped away from all eyes.

From these verses, my young friends, permit me, first, to impress on you the dangers of evil. There is no season that is so critical as the season of youth. It is like a

ship that has been launched into the tempestuous ocean, without the aid of a compass or a skilful pilot to enable her to shape her course amid the dangers of the deep; the inexperienced youth often sails down the stream of time in treacherous security, and never awakens from his security until dashed on the quicksands of destruction. Endeavour, therefore, in the season of youth, to make a peculiar selection of the companions of your heart. Remember that he who walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Not many years will pass over your head when you will find that the world will present a very different scene to you from what it now does, when your eye sparkles with anticipations of pleasure, and your pulse beats with the flattering aspirations of hope. Remember there are voices singing around you, but their strains are singing your destruction; a couch is spread out for your repose, but to slumber on it is death; a banquet is spread out for your enjoyment, but to taste of it beware, for there is poison in every dish; a broad gate and a wide way welcome you to walk in it, and it has been trodden by thousands; but it is the way to hell, leading down to the chambers of death. We brought before you, in our illustration, the history of youth from the earliest scene of depravity into which he was initiated, till he attained to the very climax of impiety, and it was no imaginary picture; it has been realized in the experience of thousands. Like you, their mornings once arose in innocence, and their evenings went down in gladness and tranquillity. Like you, their early footsteps were directed to the house of God. Like you, they assembled, drawn morning and evening around the domestic altar, and they heard the praise of God and the regular parts of his worship administered. Like you, they were once the pride of a mother's heart, and their father's eye met them with approbation and delight. A discerning world already pointed them out as possessed of a sagacity far above their years, and the church of God hailed them as among the most promising ornaments of religion. But, alas! in an unguarded moment they were led to associate with the unworthy and ungodly—with men whose polite, and courteous, and fashionable manner concealed the dangerous principles they inculcated. They forgot the God of their fathers; they launched from evil into worse, until now they are seen in our streets the very pictures of wretchedness and depra-

vity—have brought down the grey hairs of their parents with sorrow to the grave, and are looking forward, without one ray of hope, into that eternal world into which they must soon be plunged. “My son, my daughter, enter not the path of the wicked; go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” Make no individual the companion of your heart, the associate of your years, unless his good habits are based upon religious principles. Without that, he is only like the serpent—the more dangerous for the variegated hues of his skin, and will, in the end, entail upon you destruction too disastrous to be despised, and too fatal ever to be repaired. But how are you to guard against the seductions of pleasure and against ungodly men? Have you your delight in the law of the Lord day and night? If you make the law of God the standard of your conduct; if you make this the directory of your actions; if you make this the high principle after which you desire to aspire, the world may throw its seductive enchantments around you; but you are shielded against their influence, and will turn neither to the right nor to the left. Think of the doctrines it teaches, of the precepts its developes, of the examples it contains of such as a Moses, a Timothy, an Obadiah, who, having obtained a good report, call upon you to be followers of those who now, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises. Do not say that religion is a dull and melancholy exercise. This is an allegation brought against it by the ungodly; but every metaphor of the Word of God, as well as the experience of believers, shows the reverse. “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.” It is not the design of religion to damp the ardour and repress the vivacity of youth, nor to shroud the morning of life in a cloud of perpetual gloom. “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

And now, my young friends, to conclude. Ponder on the statements you have this evening heard; weigh well the results of the two systems which I have thus unfolded to you. I have set before you life and death—the blessing and the curse. Just think of the great results of man, not merely as he is in the present, but as he shall be in a future time; and, according as you judge,

it will fill eternity to you with joys or with sorrows. Just think of that bed of affliction on which you will soon be laid down, and say whether you would then wish to experience the consolations of religion, or be stung with the perturbations and agonies of remorse. And just think of that death that will come to all of you, and to some of you, young as you are, you know not how soon, and say whether you would die the death of the righteous, and your latter end be like his, or be like the wicked, who are drawn away in their wickedness. And just think of that grave that must be soon dug for all of us, and to some of you the summer sun may yet shine on your turf, and say whether you would wish to rise from it in the hope of a joyful resurrection, or to everlasting shame and contempt. And think of the judgment-seat before which all of you will soon be arraigned, and say whether you would have God pronounce on you that sentence: “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;” or that other sentence: “Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” And just think of that eternity that follows the grave and the judgment, and, oh! how does every object, compared with eternity, dwindle into insignificance, or fade away into very nothingness! A good name, you know, that has been lost may be retrieved; a fortune squandered away may, by habits of industry, be recovered; a vessel shattered by the rocks may be made to sail the seas again; but a soul once lost, is lost for ever; and say whether you would spend this eternity in the presence of God, enjoying the unending communications of his love, or in that place where he hath forgotten to be gracious, and will be favourable no more?

I conclude, with the advice of David to his young son, Solomon, when about to intrust him with the cares of an extensive empire, and introduce himself to the temptations of the world: “And thou Solomon, my son, know thou thy God, and serve him with a perfect heart and willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and knoweth all the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart. If thou ask him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.”

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. HENRY GREY, A.M., Edinburgh.
LECTURE by the Rev. HUGH HEUGH, D.D., Glasgow.

ON THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN THE BRITISH COLONIES;

A SERMON PREACHED ON SABBATH, 3d AUGUST, 1834, IN ST. MARY'S, EDINBURGH,

By the Rev. HENRY GREY, A.M.

' Then the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.'—EXODUS ix. 1.

AMONG the evils which sin has introduced into our fallen world, there is none which each of us would more heartily deprecate for ourselves than a state of slavery: that state which consigns one human being to be held as the property of another; to be employed, during every moment of our lives, under coercion, for another's benefit, and as a master's choice may direct; to have no interest awarded us in the produce of our own industry, in the exercise of our own talents, in the use of our own limbs, or of any endowment, intellectual or physical, that may have been bestowed upon us; to have health and strength, if we have them, intelligence and skill, only for another's good; to have no power of spontaneous action; to be fed or hungry, clothed or naked, in pain or at ease, as the caprice of another shall direct; to be without that universal stimulant to laudable exertion—the hope of rising in society—of bettering our condition in life, to have no means of gaining the esteem of the worthy, or the approbation of the discerning; to have no allowed object presented to desire, nothing held out to hope, no right to think for ourselves, to plan or form any project for the future! What should any of us think of a state that should deprive us completely of civil rights and of political existence; of the term *country*, as applied to the land of our labours, and of all share in its name and prosperity! To have such an interest in it only

as is possessed by the beasts of the field that have no choice in the master who provides their pasture, or whose harness they wear; and to have our children born under sentence of this hopeless degradation, claimed as a possession by one whose right in them abrogates ours, and from whose tyrannous abuse of power we can yield them no protection; and, finally, to have no means open to us of ever rising out of this misery, no solace of an hour of happiness, except by a faith, difficult of attainment under such circumstances, so elevated as to obliterate the sense of present wrong in that of future glory, or, what is more promoted in persons in this unhappy condition, a brutal apathy of mind that closes itself against the acuter pangs attendant on forethought and reflection.

As this condition, then, is allowed universally by civilized men to be the basest and worst to which human nature can be permanently reduced; as it is one prolific of moral and physical evil, entailing vices on the two classes connected with it, which obstruct the work of grace and render salvation difficult; as it is a state, in short, which, with our heavenly Father's will, we would sooner die than incur for ourselves and our offspring, and which, in consequence, by all the laws of christian obligation, we are prohibited from inflicting upon our neighbour; can we do otherwise, my friends, than rejoice, at this moment, that such a state of things, in

reference to our own country, is at last to come to a close? Of all the sins by which we have incurred national guilt and burdened our country with crime, this has been the most crying and most flagitious. It began in open undissembled wickedness—in rapine, violence, and murder; it carried no pretence or apology along with it to cloak its deformity. The cravings of rapacious avarice were the impelling motive; instruments of torture, and weapons of death, were the means by which its purposes were carried into effect. The inhabitants of the African shore were innocent with respect to us, when we began to prey upon them. They levied no war against us; they offered us no molestation on our own coasts; they were no competitors or rivals of ours in any quarter where we chose to hoist our flag, or extend our commerce. If we found them low in civilization and unrefined by gospel illumination, what have we done to elevate them? What science or religion have we conveyed to them? What arts have they learned during two centuries of British intercourse, but those of treachery and slaughter?—But we cannot now retrace the times, not yet long gone by, when our public, authorized, shameless traffic in slaves stamped a stigma on our country, a character of diabolical ferocity on our countrymen who abandoned themselves to it. We have not yet forgot the struggle by which that abomination was abolished, nor yet the lengthened conflict that was still to be sustained ere slavery itself could be cast out. Many of us remember yet, from infant years, the pungent griefs, the harrowing recitals, the incredible enormities that came to light, from time to time, in the annals of slavery, running parallel with the existence of that giant iniquity. Facts have been recorded in connexion with that subject, formed to wring the soul with anguish; to mingle gall in our bread on the day we heard them, and to agonize the slumbers of the night with thoughts of horror. At least I have felt it so. Many pages of true narrative have met the eye on this subject that we would shrink from encountering a second time; facts that the lips refuse to utter, books that are laid aside, lest the eyes of those whom we would protect from pain should come in contact with them. And how remote at times appeared the period of restitution! How far from the places of power seemed those principles that asked for a deliverance! The Christianity of the land groaned under its

burden, but had not yet strength to shake it off. The writhing population of our colonies were “minished and brought low, through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.” Hope was expelled from their hearts, crushed with unvarying oppression. Like the children of Israel under their taskmasters, they hearkened not to the voice of the comforter, for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage. “On the side of their oppressors there was power, but they had no comforter.” What a blessing, what a mercy, for us to outlive this state of things; to see this heaviest stone of our national reproach rolled away in our times; to see the system itself, incorrigible and irremediable by all intermediate enactments, finally and imperatively brought to an end! The fact almost surpasses our hopes, and claims our highest thanksgivings. This victory is the work of prayer, of fervent, persevering, undeniable importunity; for in no cause has the national conscience been so strongly excited; in no cause, since the time of our religious struggles, has christian principle been more strenuously called into action, or has the spirit of martyrdom more signally instigated the efforts of those who gave themselves to the work. In spite of our national sins, so many and so various; in spite of our ungodliness and ungodly dissensions; in spite of the haughty scorn of the worshippers of mammon among us, our God has heard our cry, and has accorded this vast, this earnestly besought, blessing to the prayers of his believing people. “Bless the Lord, O our souls; yea, all that is within us, bless his holy name; for he hath triumphed gloriously.” The weakness of God hath approved itself stronger than man; and, in the things wherein the sons of pride dealt lightly, he has shown himself to be higher than they.

But we must not yet relax our endeavours. Vigilance is still wanted to guard against a failure; christian assiduity to turn the happy crisis to full account, and to bring about the good that, by God’s blessing, may yet be elicited from so long a course of evil; to raise to the Lord glory in the conversion of many souls, and to yield to the wronged children of Africa at last such reparation as may be made for the ills endured, by their fathers. What happiness is it for a land when the voice of the christian people prevails in it, and when governors are constrained, by a just necessity, to yield to righteous demands!

I trust we shall now hear no more of

those sophistries by which self-interest beclouded the subject in attempting to secure a party for herself. As it proved after the abolition of the trade in our fellow-creatures, there was no more spoken of all the mischiefs, injuries, and dangers, that had been threatened to follow from it; so, in this case, the benefit will be found to be infinite, and the injury to be none. We shall have no more among us, and in our congregations, those who will take offence when they hear slavery spoken against. The offence in time to come will be when any are thought so base as not to rejoice in its termination, in the welfare of their species, and in the enlargement of mankind. The law was strong even when it supported error; but how much stronger now when it establishes right! Gideon of old time was afraid of his father's household, and of the men of his city, for Baal's party was strong in it; and, therefore, when he would fetch a stroke against the reigning idolatry, and found that he could not pull down the idol's altar by day, he did it by night. The thing that was so formidable to undertake, proved easy to be maintained; for, when all was done, the altar demolished, the grove cut down, and an altar erected to the Lord, and sacrifices offered thereon in due order, the danger had all passed away; truth was its own vindicator, and stood in need of no inferior advocate. "Will ye plead for Baal," said Joash to the men of Ophrah; "will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet noon; if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one has cast down his altar." The hero received from this the name of *Jerubbaal*—that is, "let the shameful thing plead." Are any here among us now so wrong in opinion, so degenerate in sentiment, as to plead for slavery? Will they call it now an institute that God approves, a state of things beneficial to mankind? If there be, let them make haste to part with such sentiments now, in the morning of this auspicious change; for, ere long, they will stand alone, and will be ashamed, if not of the vileness of their way of thinking, at any rate of its singularity.

We shall not hear much, in time to come, of *slavery like that of our colonies as countenanced by Scripture and allowed by heaven*; as if the Almighty Ruler sanctioned all that he has tolerated, and approved of all that he has suffered to take place in the world; or, as if a sentence inflicted by di-

vine authority, in a particular instance, on the guilty, might be lawfully adopted by us, the avaricious nations of Europe, as a rule of proceeding toward the less cultivated inhabitants of another zone.—A servant bought with money, in Old Testament times, seems to have been a person adopted into the family, and amalgamated with the nation, or which he became a member, acquiring thereby privileges above a hired servant, and sharing as a brother in the religious institutions of the country. These were not predial bondmen, but domestic inmates, sharing in the occupations, and, it would appear, in the property and enjoyments of the family to which they were united by more lasting ties than those of temporary compact. In the land of Israel there were no labours carried on under the lash; no profitable but life-exhausting manufacture, of which the toil was endured by one portion of the population and the profit reaped by another; no gold coined out of the sweat, the blood, the tears, of a prostrate race. Their agricultural labours were light in that delightful region, as Providence designs they should be, more especially, in a torrid clime and in a fruitful land. They were interrupted by regular Sabbaths, and frequent festivals, when all daily labour was intermitted, and when they were enjoined a special regard to the stranger, the fatherless and the widow. "Ye know the heart of a stranger," says their divine lawgiver, "for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

We shall not hear much, probably, in time to come, of *the native inferiority of the inhabitants of the African continent*, given, as some have alleged, by their Great Creator, to be servants to the prouder tribes of Adam's descendants. We shall not, as we have done, hear their misfortunes stated against them as crimes, their squalid figures, their staggering attitudes, their filthy, cattle-like appearance when first cast ashore from that tomb of gasping humanity, the hold of a slave-ship. We shall not hear their broken accents in our foreign tongue, their exclusion from all education and liberal arts, their imperfect application of arts to which they have not been accustomed, imputed to them as defects and marks of inferior understanding; and their addictedness to sloth and lying, the vices of slavery rather than of slaves, ascribed to them as inseparable traits of character. With their shackles, they will throw off the apathy, the cunning, the dissimulation, the cringing fear, that na-

turally characterize him who has no interest of his own to care for, who is vilified with stripes and contumely, who can suffer no way but in his person, who has no honour to win, no credit to lose. The occasional wild and uncouth merriment, the affectation, the childish imitation of other people's manners ascribed to them, will be found to be mere accidents of their condition, laid aside when important personal interests engage their assiduity, and call forth powers of thought and reflection. They will not remain with them when no jealous eyes watch to find out traits of inferiority, or rejoice in making them subjects of ridicule.

The time, we trust, will not be long when the *colour of the skin* will not render human beings objects of antipathy and disgust, contaminating, by the stigma attached to slavery, all that has come in contact with it, and repudiating the child from the one parent, if the other be of sable hue. Strange that a small mixture of *negro blood* should be held so to contaminate *ours* as to render posterity impure for a series of generations! Strange that we should so despise *our own* as to impute to it no refining efficacy! This prejudice goes to the utmost length in the United States; where even persons of piety speak of entire and interminable separation as an indispensable arrangement.—Can any thing be more conclusive as to the barbarizing effect of slavery than the fact I have heard stated, that ten thousand slaves now in the West Indies are the sons of Scotchmen; and were left without any token of parental tenderness to all the degradation and wretchedness accruing to them from the condition of their mothers? They are now happily free; without obligation to their fathers, whom even this first of ties could not reconcile to the liberation of their slaves!

We shall be less prone, also, in time to come, to *explain Scripture, in connexion with the subject, as suits our private purposes*, and to take a directory of conduct from our misconstruction of prophecy, instead of from the plain, preeptive, universal dictates that enjoin us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and to do to others as we would they should do to us. We may well leave to God the execution of his judgments and fulfilment of his decrees with respect to the distant nations of the earth; and look to ourselves, lest we be incurring, by our presumption, covetousness and barbarity, severer judgments than were anciently pro-

nounced against the degenerate descendants of Canaan. The curse prophetically denounced, by the second progenitor of the human race, against his grandson, the son Ham, in the 9th chapter of Genesis, and specially executed by the sword of Joshua in the destruction of the Canaanitish nations, is assumed, by some slave traffickers, as applying to the whole posterity of Ham, whose destiny they hold to be accomplished, in modern times, by their instrumentality. Now this is certainly great *impiety* added to *sin against our fellows*; for who entitles us so to interpret, or rather so to invent prophecy? If the express sentence against Canaan might reasonably encourage the Israelites who had a direct command to make war on the Canaanites and to destroy them, with many promises given to their fathers that they should come to the possession of the Canaanite's land; have we any charter from that, for the possession of the persons of those who never sprung from Canaan; whom we have no reason to consider as devoted to destruction, and with whom, if God have any controversy, we know surely that he has never commissioned us with the execution of it? If the purposes, or even the prophecies of God, are fulfilled in the chastisement he inflicts on many nations, are any, on that account, exempted from the obligation of the laws of charity and justice in their own case? If the pride and cupidity of conquering nations have fulfilled his purposes, are these qualities thereby changed into virtues; or do those who are governed by them in what they do, escape the righteous judgments of God? Babylon was triumphant over Israel by God's express appointment, for Israel's apostasy and sins; but the sword of the Persian, equally by divine appointment, soon avenged Israel's quarrel, and fell back on that desolating city, the pitiless destroying of the infants of Judah.

That is doubtlessly very false reasoning that would ground its moral proceedings on the presumed purposes of God; and in this instance includes also a rash and unauthorized application of prophecy. For the descendants of Ham have not been, in former times, inferior and degenerate tribes, analogous to the negroes of our days. The nations sprung from that root, separated themselves from the Church, and have not as yet been persuaded, as Japheth, to embrace spiritual privileges, and to "dwell in the tents of Shem;" and the western tribes,

to whom our question particularly relates, have had no opportunity of doing so; but the earlier descendants of Noah's younger son were not certainly behind in point of temporal distinctions; and though despotic in the exercise of their own power, were very far from the condition of the people from whom we take our slaves. The first powerful states and great empires of the early world were of their founding, where the talent, enterprise, ambition and fame of heathen antiquity, had their mightiest display. Nineveh and Babylon, crowded with a wealthy and luxurious population; Egypt, the emporium of arts and riches; Tyre with Sidon, the mistress of the sea and of the commerce of the world; and subsequently Carthage, owe their parentage to the younger son of Noah. These were all worldly and idolatrous nations, servants of him who claims the disposal of the kingdoms of this world and of their glory; and allied, in their spirit of pride and oppression, to those who, according to their means, in our day seek for wealth by the subjugation and suffering of their brethren; and were in no way objects of their contempt.—I need not mention, besides, in opposition to the false sense put upon the prophecy concerning the posterity of Ham, that there have been eminent converts and christian churches formed among these nations; and that the general scope of prophecy teaches us to expect their entire gathering in and aggregation to the Redeemer's family, with the fulness of the other Gentile nations; among whom "Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts, and Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands to God."

Shall we take upon us to be executors of God's supposed declarations in the degradation and chastisement of a portion of mankind, and shall we despise his express authoritative injunction to "do good to all," and to "preach the Gospel to every creature?" What have we, the christian world, been doing, since he put India, western Africa, and the other hemisphere within our reach, by the extension of navigation? Have we proportionably extended the empire to Christ; and taught mankind that love is the principle by which God reigns, and unites his children to one another? Rather, has not a base and selfish policy characterized all our relations with them, treacherously dishonouring to God, delusive and destroying to men; rivetting on them their chains of ignorance, and binding them over, with ourselves to the coming indigna-

tion? The righteous are still but a handful on the earth, a precious seed, powerful with God, and the ministers by whom his mercies are continued to the world. The rest are as chaff, unprofitable though abundant, waiting the doom they will not be warned to shun. Even the christian world has its Babylon, ripe for the sickle of destruction, and God's own Jerusalem its Pharisaical lukewarmness, apathy and pride calling for the scourge of persecution, the quickening stroke of some exemplary chastisement. God has granted this great boon, which we this day commemorate, to the intercession of his faithful children in the land; and for their sakes withholds the punishment invited by the sins, and sinful resistance in this matter, of others. But let us see that his mercy be faithfully applied, and productive of the good fruits intended to those who by our past injurious conduct, overruled by the inscrutable providence of God, have been brought within the reach of gospel influence. There has been "war in the mystical heaven" for this favourable event; Michael our prince has fought for us; and, on the other hand also, "the devil has fought and his angels;" for the work of grace had already begun; many souls among our African captives had found mercy of the Lord, and were rejoicing, with hearts full of thankfulness, even in the hard lot out of which they saw a way open to them to everlasting felicity. Their kind instructors, the missionaries, were the consolers of their distresses, giving them patience to endure, hope to bear them up, fidelity to act the part of faithful servants placed under unfaithful masters, and called to follow Christ in a low estate.

But this work could not long go on in peace. Pure religion, persecuted everywhere in the world, was here peculiarly obnoxious and insufferable. For, in the first place, the degree of education and general knowledge conveyed with it, might open the eyes of slaves to the injurious disparagement of their condition, to the origin of their owners' rights, to the possible attainment of a reversion of their circumstances. Then again, but a very small and partial view of christian duty could with safety be unfolded to slaves; for, while it seemed well to inculcate on them universal subordination and non-resistance, patience under buffetings, hardship and injustice, forgiveness of injuries, obedience not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh and

froward; it seemed altogether unallowable to enlighten them on the general duties due between man and man, to tell them that God was a strict and impartial judge, who puts no difference between the black man and the white man in his decisions on character, to tell them that covetousness and sensuality, wrath and violence, were sins by whomsoever practised, or to enjoin obedience to God which human power might at any time render impracticable. Was it meet to enforce chastity on those whose persons were the unrestricted property of lawless masters? or to speak against vices which every white man openly indulged in? Were fidelity and protection to be enjoined in the conjugal and parental relations, where human laws came in to abrogate all that God had enjoined, and to require whatever he had forbidden? How unreasonable to require a consecration of the Sabbath from those who were often compelled to work the one half of that day for their master; and, except they were to die by famine, the other half for themselves?—It began to be found out that Christianity and slavery did not coalesce together. All the caution that missionaries endeavoured to use could not always guard them from difficult inquiries and inexplicable subjects; still less from the malignant suspicions of those who rightly supposed that these men did not, as they did, love slavery in their hearts. The missionary Smith, who fell a sacrifice to the persecutions he underwent in Demerara, was charged, as with a flagitious crime, for reading, in the course of his scripture prelections, some part of the history from which our text is taken. He spoke with caution, and did not read the whole; but the subject was soul-stirring, and gave rise to thoughts not easily set at rest again in the bosom of a slave. Another missionary who underwent a severe examination, relinquished a text he had desired to preach from; the words were, "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed;" he meant to carry their views to *spiritual liberty and emancipation from the thralldom of sin*; but the subject was too capable of misconstruction, the terms he must have used too affecting to be ventured upon. Dear as the words, "freedom," "liberty," are to our hearts we cannot tell how they thrill the heart of a slave, especially when their attainment begins to seem possible to him. You know the issue of this conflict; the ferocity and

rage with which the preachers of the Gospel, and the houses of God were attacked; with the demolition of the one and the expulsion of the other that ensued. You know also, glory be to God! the blessed revolution that has followed these events; which these events, Satan having overworked in his own cause, mightily expedited. There are many thousands of christian converts among the black and coloured population of our West Indian Islands; thousands, I trust, of truly changed, heart-converted Christians. It was not in the nature of things that they should be longer kept in bondage; for the yoke of Christ dissolves the baser bond; the Lord's freedmen, emancipated in soul, rise in the moral scale to a natural ascendancy. The call of God is, "Let my people go, that they may serve me;" and he makes no compromise of his demands; his service requires the entire being. Mind, body, soul, spirit, will and affections, are all comprehended in his claim. Slave and slave-holder, captive and oppressor, the one bowed down by his circumstances, the other by his passions, are equally disqualified for the discharge of this universal allegiance. "Let my people go, that they may serve me;" not for a day's journey, but for a lifetime; not with a part of their substance, but with their whole possessions, "with flocks and with herds, with young and with old, there shall not a hoof be left behind."

We all were once slaves, my brethren; and are so still if the Spirit of Christ have not given us liberty; if he have not come with his royal mandate, summoning our vices and our passions, our evil habits and our prejudices, to yield us up to our rightful owner. Man is often an unfeeling master; therefore, we desire not to be under his sway; but Satan is still more barbarous. Who would trust himself to his mercy! Better to be a suffering slave than his brutal master; better to be without power or will, thought or action, than, deeming ourselves free, to be, without knowing it, "the slaves of corruption." Let slave-owners seek emancipation from their unrighteous gains and unauthorized possessions; let all seek enlargement from the power of besetting sin. It is not till our tyrants yield us up, and drive us out, that we are really at liberty; they must relax their hold, ere the Lord will acknowledge us as his real disciples.

THE IMMUTABLE STABILITY OF, AND COMFORT ARISING FROM
THE WORD OF GOD;

A LECTURE ON PSALM cxix. 89—96,

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THE general scope and design of these verses are evidently to commend the Word of God. Considering its origin in the mind of God himself—considering its unfailing stability—worthy of the increasing confidence of men in all generations—considering its gracious adaptation to man in the most trying and afflicting circumstances—and considering the inexhaustible fulness of its materials for all the purposes for which it had been intended by its author, the Psalmist again praises the Word, partly from gratitude to that God from whom it had proceeded, and partly from benevolence to his fellow-saints and fellow-men whom he would thus lure to the devout and habitual study of the holy oracles. Calling to mind that we have not only that portion of Scripture which the Psalmist commends, but in addition the writings of prophets, and evangelists, and holy Apostles, let us bear in mind how much more strongly we may affirm all these things of the Scriptures as possessed by us, than they could be affirmed of the Scriptures as possessed by David; and let us endeavour to make that improvement of the Scriptures as we have them which he made of the Scriptures as they then were. I shall, in explaining these verses, arrange them under the three following particulars:—First, The Psalmist praises the unfailing stability of the Word of God. “For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.” Secondly, The Psalmist praises the Word for its admirable suitableness to us in trying and particularly afflicting circumstances, as illustrated in his own experience in the two following verses. “Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction. I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.” Thirdly, There are some concluding appeals arising from these views of the Word in the three concluding verses. “I am thine, save me: for I have sought thy precepts. The wicked

have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies. I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.”

In the first place, then, the Psalmist praises the Word of God on account of its unfailing stability in the first three verses. Before explaining these verses farther, I would remind you of an observation I have found it necessary often to make in considering the preceding parts of this psalm, that the various terms *word, law, precepts, judgments, &c.*, are used interchangeably and are applied in common to the oracles of God for reasons it is unnecessary at present to mention. It is enough to make this observation now. You will bear it in mind as we go on with the explanation of the verses, “Thy word,” says the Psalmist, “is settled,” fixed, established, as the word means, in opposition to its being superseded, falsified, or set aside. Its doctrines are never invalidated, its promises, its threatenings, its predictions never fail to be fulfilled, the purposes which it discloses shall most certainly be accomplished. This is the meaning of “Thy word is settled.”

He says that Word is settled “in heaven.” The Word of God was on earth; it was there intrusted to the keeping of good men by whom through the grace of God it would be preserved and transmitted through succeeding ages. It was treasured in the temple on earth, and was, indeed, the most precious part of the treasures with which the temple of God was enriched. But, says the Psalmist, “Thy word is settled in heaven.” We may say it was but as it were a copy of the Word of God which was sent down to earth; its great original was in the mind of that God from whom it came. He is represented as dwelling in heaven, and his mind as dwelling there fixed, unchanged, and unchangeable in his own eternal bosom; and although it had been possible that the copy that had been sent down to earth had been mutilated or destroyed, its bright original had remained unalterable, stable, eternal, even as its author. “Thy word, O God,

is established in heaven"—and it is so "for ever;" or as some read the verse, "Thou, O Lord, art for ever, and thy word is established in heaven." It is as impossible that what God declares to be for ever can be altered, as that God himself can by possibility change.

The Psalmist adds, "Thy faithfulness is unto all generations"—thy faithfulness or truth as it is the guarantee of the faithfulness or truth of thy Word. The faithfulness of God is the foundation of our belief in the truth of his word, because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, that word which is proved by evidence to be the Word of God must be truth and no lie. Its doctrines must be true, its historical narratives must be true, its miracles must be true miracles, its promises, threatenings, predictions, all of them must be fulfilled. "Now that faithfulness," says the Psalmist, "is unto all generations." Truth is one and indestructible; what was true in past ages is true now, and no lapse of time can by possibility alter and destroy it—it is like its author eternal and unchangeable. At the same time, the Psalmist may here have two things in his eye—for example, that the truth of God in his Word serves for the purpose of all generations; that the doctrines which enlightened former ages serve to enlighten us; that the promises to which the saints in preceding ages trusted, suffice to establish a foundation for our trust; that the predictions which were true and which cherished their hope then, are true and nourish ours at this day. The other idea to which I allude is this, that the plans disclosed in the Word of God are large, vast, and include a great space of time, and are slowly developed, slowly fulfilled. The promises God gives to one age frequently have their fulfilment reserved for a very distant age, and the meaning in this view is, that God never forgets his word; but, however long the space may be between the giving of his promise and the uttering of his predictions or threatenings, and of their fulfilment, they will all be fulfilled by him with whom it is impossible to lie, and who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We often find this delightful truth brought before us in Scripture. It was long before the flood came—long after it had been threatened. It was long before the promise respecting the inheritance of Canaan was fulfilled; but when the iniquity of the Amorites was full, in that precise time did

the posterity of Abraham get possession of their promised inheritance. Oh! how many ages intervened between the promise of the advent and the advent itself; but when the fulness of time had come, at that precise time God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law. And we may apply the same thing to all unfulfilled predictions respecting the millennial glory of the Church on earth—respecting the downfall and ruin of her antichristian opponents—respecting the second advent, the judgment of the great day, and the eternal destiny of the just and of the unjust. This we apprehend to be the sentiment in the 89th verse and first part of the 90th, "the immutable stability of the Word of God for ever, and its faithfulness unto all generations."

Now the clauses that follow are the second of the 90th verse and the first of the 91st. We know that the Psalmist is appealing to nature in illustration and confirmation of revelation; he is appealing to the plans of God in his providence, in confirmation of the unfailling certainty and truth of his own word. "Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances." We may remark, here, before entering into the meaning of these beautiful expressions, that in the first verse the Psalmist specifies only the earth, "Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth;" but, in the first clause of the 91st verse, he speaks as evidently of some other subjects of God's creation and providential power, "*They* continue this day according to thine ordinances." It is enough to remark here, that in the account given of nature by revelation the earth is considered only as part of a system, whereas in the second clause, the Psalmist evidently refers to the other parts of the system with which the earth is connected—as in Genesis, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." The heavens and the earth are represented as one great host arranged and marshalled by the Almighty, and to this one host he refers in the second clause, "for all are thy servants."

I would also remark, in explaining this passage in this holy song, that it is one of the many examples of the simple and inimitable sublimity of divine revelation. What a thought is it, that there is one Being and just one to whom, without the least reserve, these words may be applied with truth, "Thou hast established the earth,

and it abideth," nay, the whole host of them—the heavens and the earth continue this day according to thine ordinances, for all are thy servants! When we think of the vast mass of this sublunary ball; when we think of the many centuries during which it has already existed in undecaying freshness, and grace, and usefulness, and grandeur; when we call to mind its vast but daily revolution round its axis, and its annual circuit around the sun; when we think of all these movements being performed with simplicity, with regularity, with ease; and when we lift up our eyes, although we can in reality do little more, to the prodigious hosts above and around, which night and day disclose to us, and think that the existence, and preservation, and order of all this huge host are to be ascribed to one Being and one only, how well may we say in the language of the Bible, "Let all the earth rejoice for the Lord reigneth; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him, for he but commanded and the whole stood fast. All are his servants. He established the earth, and because of this it abideth. This day it continues according to his ordinances which are the true laws of nature, and they are all thy servants!" This is the sentiment brought forward in the following sublime passage:—"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their hosts by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth."

Another remark I would make for explaining this passage is, that the Psalmist is particularly struck with the sameness of the created universe. It was the same then as it had been ages before. He says, "They continue this day according to thine ordinances." And the Psalmist by inspiration recorded his emotion as he was evidently much struck with the stability and uniformity of nature as contrasted with the transient character of man, its chief inhabitant and observer—"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever." This is the same earth on which our first parents trod. The sun which shone in Eden is that which enlightens us; and that glorious spangled canopy on which they looked with admiration overhangs us still, and all this because the Eternal remains immutable, because he spoke and it was done, because he commanded, therefore it thus stands fast.

I go on farther to remark on this beautiful passage, that the Psalmist evidently wishes to rise from nature to revelation, to lead us to the inference, that the same God who has established the course of nature has established his Word, and that it will be found as vain to alter the course of nature, as it will be to falsify any part of his all-faithful declaration. Much is done by the opponents of revelation to falsify it. They attempt to place nature against revelation, to bring from the book of nature arguments to falsify revelation. In proportion as they are followed by well-informed minds, it is possible even for nature to overturn these arguments which are brought by the enemies of revelation; but it will be just as easy for the wit and power of man to reverse the laws of nature as it will be to overturn the truth of revelation. He may extinguish the sun in the heavens as truly, as easily, as he will be able to extinguish the better light of divine revelation; and this is, undoubtedly, the truth the Psalmist introduces. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants." Let the people of God take comfort from this; let them never fear to trust the Word of God with a confidence true and implicit; let them not be shaken in the confidence of God's word, because a long time may intervene between the giving and fulfilling of its predictions and promises. Although they tarry long, let them wait for it, and never be abashed by human ridicule, nor shaken by human sophistry, in giving their firmest confidence to what the word of the Lord has spoken. He is of one mind, and who can turn him? And let them praise God, that they have this very individual word, which has been intended for all generations. "He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." And ere I leave this first part of the passage, let me remind those who hear me, that the Word of God consists not only of doctrines, or predictions, or precepts, or promises, but contains threatenings also; and if it be true that God will keep his word of promise, he will not allow his word of threatening to fall to the ground. He never uttered a threatening that it would not be worthy of him to fulfil. As the destruction

of the cities of the plain took effect from God's holy threatening, and as the destruction of the old world took effect as God had threatened, so such threatenings as these shall not fall to the ground unaccomplished, "He that believeth not shall be damned." "Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." "Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away. Verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."

Let us now proceed to the second particular in the 92d and 93d verses: "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction." I have denominated this the Word of God to his people in afflicting and trying circumstances, as proved by the experience of David—as proved by the experience of all who have been enabled to improve it. First of all, the Psalmist affirms here that God's law was his delight—language which it is easy for men to use, but which never comes with enlightened sincerity except from a renewed heart. "I delight," says Paul, "in the law of God after the inward man;" and the Psalmist gave the character not of all men, but of the renewed man, when he said, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." We must not conclude that this delight in the law of the Lord is something purely mental; it always shows itself by the conduct; the person who delights in the law copies it; the person who delights in the law hates what is opposed to it; he receives its doctrines, obeys its ordinances, copies its commandments, for the same man who said, "His delight is in the law of the Lord;" added, "I have sought thy precepts." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." But the Psalmist delighted in the law of the Lord. It appears, from the 92d verse, that he had affliction. "Unless," says he, "thy law had been my delights, I should have perished in mine affliction." We know he had many afflictions; many more, in all probability, than the sacred writers have been directed to record. He refers to a very common class of afflic-

tions in the affairs of men. "The wicked," says he, "have waited to destroy me." He was the object of rancorous and long-continued persecution, partly by devoted Saul, and partly by unnatural and guilty Absalom. He had other afflictions also, we know, to bear; and let those who delight in the law of the Lord never imagine that, on this account, or on any account, they can be altogether exempted from affliction; and let not the people of God wonder at affliction in any form emanating in kindness, which it may please their heavenly Father to send them for correction, for instruction, or both. But the Psalmist had in his eye two things, which people in affliction exceedingly need—comfort, and quickening, or revival. The afflicted need very much consolation. Affliction is very often of such a character as to diminish or exhaust the external sources of enjoyment. Affliction one while takes lover and friend away, and removes our acquaintances into darkness. One time affliction frustrates those plans and arrangements on the prosecution of which we have set our hearts, and then at another time it takes away that substance by which the individual was not only, temporally speaking, comforted himself, but enabled to derive gratification from doing good to those around him. Sometimes affliction lays the individual helpless, a bound victim of disease, a sad expectant of speedy dissolution; and surely, in such cases, comfort is needed—pleasure, of some kind, to alleviate these pains—light from some quarter to cheer that darkness. Now, this was what David experienced; and, I believe, no Christian ever wanted consolation; nay, very generally, as trouble abounds, consolation is made to abound more. At all events, God will never leave his afflicted people altogether without delights in their afflictions. It was quickening that the Psalmist experienced; and this is very much wanted in time of affliction. In affliction the mind languishes as the body does, the mind loses its tone as the body gets weak, and the person is obliged to say, "I am afflicted and ready to die." In such cases, mental, if not corporeal revival is exceedingly wanted, and, in some degree or other, generally enjoyed by the people of God. Now, see from what source David's delights and quickening came. The enjoyments and comforts of the Bible are reasonable in their origin, and those who have them are able to tell from what source they

draw them, and by what means they are supplied. David said they came from God always, and in this way it is that God delights and quickens his afflicted people. All of them see his hand in their affliction, and all of them bear testimony to his faithful Word. Much good has been done by the kind and wise discourse of some christian visitant, who knows he can do nothing better, nothing so good, as administer wisely and judiciously, and in season, that Word which is at once good and cordial to the afflicted and sinking spirit of God's afflicted people. He may tell you, for example, how well the Word is adapted for this. Take such sayings as these: "Fear not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee." "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore, will not we fear, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, and though the waters thereof roar and be troubled. The Lord of Hosts is the God of our fathers, our Creator, our Redeemer, our friend, our God. The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

But I would have you specially to remark, that while the Psalmist was thus delighted and quickened by the Word, he not only ascribes it to God, as it was God's Word that did it; he not only ascribes it to God, as we ascribe healing to the medicines we employ, but to God, as it was by God's Spirit that that healing moral medicine had its effect. We must remember that we are not only dependent on God for getting the Word, but for getting good by the Word; and if we have the Word in our possession, we must bless God who gave it to us; and if the Word of God be effectual in our experience, we must bless God in that efficiency. It was God who opened our eyes to the wondrous things in his law; and, therefore, he says, not simply, "Thy precepts quickened me, thy law was my delight," but "with thy precepts *Thou* hast quickened me," ascribing both kinds of efficacy to the God of all consolation; and, perhaps, we give too much to the hearing and reading of the Word as independent means—as means which will have effect by themselves, independently of the grace of God. We must remember that we are as much dependent upon God for the efficacy of his grace, as the husbandman is depend-

ent upon the light of heaven for the springing up of the fruit after he has ploughed the soil and scattered the seed.

I have only to add, that the Psalmist says here in the language of praise, "I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me." Some speak of getting much good by preaching and by reading, but they are not able to remember any thing that did them good, either heard or read. We apprehend such a thing is mere delusion—that you may as well expect the person will forget the sort of medicine that healed him, as those portions of the Word of God blessed for his revival and quickening. I know that, to use the language, somewhat quaint, of a good writer, "impressions may remain where expressions are forgotten;" but we know, that often where the expressions may be forgotten *generally*, they will not be *altogether* forgotten, nor will that expressed be forgotten if that which is impressed be retained. "Unless thy law had been my delights, I should have perished in mine affliction." Is any afflicted then? Let him understand that Word, and he will have what may give him comfort. Is any afflicted? Let him pray, and for these two things especially, to be directed wisely in his use of the Word, and to have his use of the Word made effectual for his reconciliation and healing.

I now call your attention to the last part of the passage: "I am thine, save me: for I have sought thy precepts. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies. I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad." "I am thine." In what sense? Not simply as God's creature, but as one of his redeemed people. The language of God's saints is the proper explanation of such words as "I am thine:" "I will be unto you a God, and ye shall be unto me a people." The brethren and sanctified people of God are they only who, in the language of this verse, can say, "We are thine;" and, oh! sad is the condition of those to whom the opposite word must be applied, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "I am thine: *save me.*" It may be said, none may present this prayer to God, "Save me," except those who can previously say, in the proper sense of the expression, "I am thine." Now, the worst sinner may pray not only for salvation, but for redemption; the people of God have begun to enjoy salvation:

they need to receive more of its blessing; they require continual teaching in this deliverance from error, continual keeping in this deliverance from temptation, progressive holiness in this salvation from indwelling sin, deliverance from death and the grave, and thus they require salvation perfect after salvation begun. Therefore, they who say gratefully, *I am thine*, may add trustfully, *save me*. "Remember me, O Lord, with thy favour. O visit me with thy salvation." The Psalmist adds, "For I have sought thy precepts." As an evidence that "I am one of thine," I have sought to know and to do them; and it would have been presumptuous in David to have said the first, if not able to appeal to God and say the second. Oh! let not one say, *I am thine*, unless he be able also to say, *I have sought thy precepts*. "The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies." I have alluded to the first clause already. How well might David call them wicked who had attempted to destroy him, and waited to do it like an assassin who waits till the victim draws near, and then pounces on him for destruction. This applies to many who were hostile to David. If, then, we are exempted from these things, let us ascribe it to the goodness of God; and if ever we should be in the circumstances of David, let us imitate David, who said, nevertheless, "I will consider thy testimonies." Oh! temptation will not draw me from thee; peril will only lead me to thee; and I will rely in thy testimonies, expecting, if Thou accord with the purpose, deliverance from the wicked in the shadow of thy wings, that thou wilt be a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

Lastly. "I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad." Some understand the Psalmist to mean in these words, Were I ignorant of thy law, I might imagine I was, morally speaking, perfect; but, in consequence of understanding thy law, I see that, after all I have obtained, I come short. Those alone imagine they have obtained sinless perfection who are ignorant of the law, of themselves, or of God. Those who know the breadth of the law will see how far short of the breadth of its commands they are. I rather think, however, the meaning is this:— In all human circumstances, I have seen nothing perfect but in thy law: I find the provision so exceeding broad, as to be more than commensurate to all my necessities. To refer to the writer we formerly quoted, when David had seen in his day Goliath the strongest overcome, Asahel the swiftest overtaken, Ahithophel the most cunning overreached, and Absalom the most beautiful deformed, so, in the same manner, let us judge of creatures, and we shall soon find they are empty or broken cisterns; but, if we go to the Word of God, we shall find there what is inexhaustible and all-sufficient for us. Yes; the Word of God is perfectly suited to man, and its materials for his happiness can never be exhausted, but are suited to him in mind, in heart, and in life; in youth, in adult years, and in old age; in the brightest hours of prosperity to moderate him, in the darkest hours of adversity to cheer him; it guides him through all the vicissitudes of this changing life; and as it is hope in life, so through all eternity he shall have from it direction. "I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad."

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES FOOTE, A.M., Aberdeen.

WISDOM TO BE OBTAINED FROM GOD ALONE;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ROXBURGH PLACE CHAPEL, EDINBURGH, AT THE
INTRODUCING OF THE REV. MR. FOWLER, AUGUST 10TH, 1834,

By the Rev. JAMES FOOTE, A.M.,
Minister of the East Parish of Aberdeen.

"If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."—JAMES i. 5.

THE author of this epistle was not James the son of Zebedee, and the brother of John, for *he* was killed with the sword, at an early period, by Herod Agrippa; but James the younger, the son of Alpheus, or, as some say, of Joseph by his first wife, and the brother, that is, the near relation, of our Lord. This Apostle was ranked by Paul among the "pillars" of the Church, and was so distinguished for piety and integrity that he acquired among his countrymen the surname of the Just. His martyrdom, which is stated by Josephus as one of the causes which provoked the Almighty to destroy Jerusalem, took place in the following manner:—The unbelieving Jews alarmed at the rapid progress of the Gospel, and resolving on decisive measures for its check, fixed on James as the chief object of their vengeance. It was at the season of the Passover that they placed him on a pinnacle, or one of the outer galleries of the temple, and insisted on his addressing the immense crowd below, in opposition to the doctrine of Jesus; when, to their enraged astonishment, the intrepid Apostle exclaimed, "Why do ye inquire of Jesus the Son of man? He sits on the right hand of the Majesty on

high, and will come again in the clouds of heaven." On this, those who were standing by his side cast him down headlong. Though dreadfully bruised, he recovered sufficient strength to get upon his knees, and pray for his murderers. While thus employed, those below attacked him with stones, "till one, more mercifully cruel than the rest, with a fuller's club, beat out his brains."* If the singularly affecting end of this man of God has now been mentioned, it is, that admiring his fidelity, you may with the deeper interest listen to this exhortation which he addresses to you, not indeed from the gallery of the temple, but from this affectionate letter, in which "he being dead, yet speaketh." Though more immediately addressed to the Jews of the dispersion, and with a particular view to their afflicted state, the words now read are of universal application. Is man in the dark as to true wisdom? If so, how can he be enlightened? Amid all the reveries of imagination, all the uncertainties of conjecture, all the intricacies of reasoning, all the contrarieties of human opinion, all the

* Josephus, Eusebius, Lives of the Apostles.

errors even of those who have the Bible in their hands; how can a man be safe from every mistake involving danger to his soul, and infallibly led to the knowledge of truth, and duty, and salvation? These are questions of the highest interest to every thinking mind, and to these the text furnishes a plain and satisfactory reply.

In pursuing the subject, we shall consider the three following points:—

I. The case supposed, “If any of you lack wisdom.”

II. The direction given, “Let him ask of God.” And,

III. The promise held forth, God “giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

May we be enabled to preserve throughout the exercise a spirit of devotional humility; that, sensible of our ignorance and anxious for light from heaven, we may receive the fulfilment of the promise. Through the tender mercy of our God, may the day-spring from on high visit us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace! Let us consider,

I. *The case supposed*: “If any of you lack wisdom.” Here it must be observed that, although the case is stated hypothetically, it contains an exact description of the real situation of every human being. Let not self-conceit lead us astray in a matter of the first importance: the philosopher and the peasant, the infidel and the believer, all, in a more or less extensive sense, lack wisdom. It is true that men are far from being on a level as to learning and natural ability. There are who are familiar with the history of nations, who can speak or read many languages, who can expatiate on the sublimest sciences, who can philosophize on the causes of natural appearances and on the principles of the human mind, who are versed in almost every department of human knowledge; and yet are strangers to those simple truths, an acquaintance with which is necessary to their final happiness. How ready are men of literature to overlook the most essential points of knowledge, and, wrapped up in the fancied importance of that acquisition, to forget their need of any other instruction! Hear how Augustine, that celebrated father of the Church, expresses himself, when addressing his God, in reference to his applauded acquisitions, but real blindness in early life. “I was

fond of learning, not indeed the first rudiments, but such as classical masters teach.” But “I attended to the wanderings of Æneas, while I forgot my own. Of what use was it to deplore the self-murdering Dido, while yet I could bear unmoved the death of my own soul, alienated from thee during the course of these pursuits—from thee, my God, my life? I loved thee not, and (such the spirit of the world) I was applauded with, Well done, on all sides. Alas! the torrent of human custom! who shall resist thee? How long will it be ere thou be dried up? How long wilt thou roll the sons of Eve into a great and tempestuous sea, which even they who have fled for refuge to the cross can scarcely escape?” Let it not be supposed that this is improperly to undervalue a learned education. Augustine had no such intention, as is clear from what he subjoins, “*That literature which they wished me to acquire, with whatever intention, was yet capable of being applied to a good use. O my King, and my God, may whatever useful thing I acquired “serve thee. Still, O Lord, in my youth I have much to praise thee for. Many, many were thy gifts; the sin was mine that I sought pleasure, truth and happiness, not in thee, but in the creature.”* Be it, therefore, steadily kept in view by all who have had the opportunity of such an education themselves, or who wish well to others who are enjoying it, that whatever purposes of minor importance it may serve, still, if there be nothing more, there is an absolute lack of every thing which can survive the present scene, there is a lamentable blank in all those studies which now chiefly engage the prying looks of angels, and which, through endless ages will furnish glorified spirits with subject of increasing delight.

But let us not overlook the far greater number who can make no pretension to a learned education, and yet fancy they have no lack of wisdom. There are your men of *prudence*, who escape the difficulties which perplex others, and whose well-laid schemes for worldly prosperity succeed to their most sanguine expectation. Every such person is commonly reckoned wise; but surely his wisdom, if thus limited, will not stand the test. The issue will prove his folly; for when he dies, he shall carry nothing hence, neither shall his glory descend after him into the grave. Many, it is true

"will praise him when he does well to himself;" but he is like the rich man in the parable who said to his soul, "Take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry," but to whom the Lord said, "Thou *fool*, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" This is a just representation of the wisdom, or rather of the folly, of him who "layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

There are, again, in every class of society, men of *ability, good sense and natural shrewdness*, who are often in danger of forgetting the necessity of a higher species of wisdom. But who, on reflection, does not perceive that mere mental ability is neither religious nor irreligious in itself?—that it is simply a foundation on which opinions the most spiritual or the most impious may be reared? simply a powerful engine, which may produce effects the most useful or the most destructive? Nay, who at all acquainted with the scriptural view of human nature, does not perceive that fallen as we are, darkened as is our reason, and corrupted as are our affections, mere natural ability, if left to its own unrestrained influence, will certainly lead men astray from the path of truth?

Again, there are your *minute reasoners*, who either profess themselves to be already wise, or, if they allow their ignorance, expect light only from their own minds: these form another class who with many pass for wise men, but who are altogether destitute of the wisdom of salvation. Far be it from our intention to express any disrespect for the right use of reason; we speak of those who expect more from it than it can give, who forget that it is under an eclipse, who are wise in their own eyes, and who think they can conduct themselves in safety through the various topics of a sublime theology. Mark how lamentably this principle displays its baneful influence. Having first of all resolved that they will admit nothing but what they fully comprehend, and having fixed on certain principles with which they dogmatically declare that every thing which comes from God must harmonize; some of them reject revelation altogether, and embrace what is called deism; others admitting the general truth of revelation, reject the grand and interesting peculiarities of the Gospel as a method for saving condemned and depraved creatures.

Pride, my friends, is one very general cause of the rejection of salvation. This works in a variety of ways; but the two most striking are the pride of self-righteousness, and the pride of intellect. The former fortifies the soul against the doctrines relative to pardon and regeneration by the flattering idea of the previous possession of some moral excellence which renders them unnecessary: the latter, with which we are now concerned, effectually evades these doctrines by the irrational shifts of preconceived opinion, of irrelevant sophistry, and perhaps of profane banter. Alas! for those, who, thus walking in the light of their own fire, and compassing themselves about with sparks of their own kindling, carefully shut out the beams of the Sun of Righteousness! "Vain man would be wise, though he be born like a wild ass's colt." While men continue under the influence of this delusion, there is no prospect of any saving impression being made on their understandings or hearts. "Wo unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit; there is more hope of a fool than of him."

All these descriptions of persons, then, lack wisdom; but they are not all sensible of it. A great point is gained when men are brought to a knowledge of their own blindness, for those who know this are already in part taught of God. "Let no man deceive himself: if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain."

But, are those *who truly know, love, and serve the Lord*, to be exempted from the list of those who lack wisdom? No doubt they are translated from darkness to light, they are really wise unto salvation: yet they are far from being perfect in knowledge. They have their difficulties and their darkness. "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." The more enlightened any man is, the more humble he invariably becomes.

We are all included, then, in this description, either as being entirely destitute of any true wisdom, or as having still much to

learn. Let us attend, therefore, to what also concerns us all.

II. *The direction given*, "Let him ask of God."

Man's natural ignorance of all true religion being ascertained, the inquiry suggests itself, To whom shall he apply for instruction? Granting that we are generally in that state of darkness, it may be asked, Have there been no uncommonly able and enlightened men whose discoveries suffice to lead to safety and true goodness? The answer to this latter question must be given in the negative. In vain has it ever been to apply to philosophers, or to the priests of heathen temples. They did not so much as know the true God; how then could they lead others to his knowledge? "The world by wisdom knew not God." "They became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." The consequence was, they were given up to vile affections, to a reprobate mind, and to all manner of actual iniquity. As to any way of restoration to the divine favour, they were totally in the dark. As to any change of heart, they knew not their need of it. In many other things of the plainest kind they erred most palpably. And would there be more success in applying to sceptical writers of modern date? Not the least. They, too, are utterly devoid of what is necessary in our fallen state: and if, from the days of Seneca, they exhibit views of morality superior to those of their predecessors, it is only because they have decked themselves with some of the ornaments of Christianity, while they have not the honesty to confess whence they have borrowed them. "I testify it, (says Laetantius, after a triumphant exposure of the vanity of all human researches into religion,) I proclaim it, I declare it as loud as I can. This is that which all philosophers during their whole life have sought, but have never been able to investigate, to comprehend, to lay hold of. Let them, therefore, all retire, who do not improve but confuse human life. For what do they teach? or whom do they instruct who have not yet instructed themselves? Whom can the sick cure? whom can the blind direct? Hither, then, let all of us who regard wis-

dom betake ourselves. Shall we wait till Socrates know something, or Anaxagoras find out light in darkness, or Democritus draw up truth from the bottom of his well? Lo! a voice from heaven teaching the truth, and showing us a light brighter than the very sun. Why are we so unjust to ourselves as to hesitate to adopt this wisdom?—a wisdom which learned men have wasted their lives in seeking, but never could discover. He who wishes to be wise and happy, let him listen to the voice of God.* If we lack wisdom, we must apply to God himself; we must go to him in whom there is no darkness at all, who is the Father of lights, and from whom every good and perfect gift cometh down. But he dwells in light which, though full of glory, is inaccessible: how then are we to know what his will is? He speaks to us in his *Word*. "His testimony is sure, making wise the simple." "The Holy Scriptures," says Paul to Timothy, "are able to make thee wise unto salvation."

Yet this is not to be understood as if the mere perusal of Scripture would of itself bring to true practical wisdom, or even necessarily lead to the formation of correct theoretical opinions. It is evident that some, notwithstanding of a laborious study of the Scriptures, have thought they found in them sentiments very opposite to those generally entertained by serious inquirers, and to those which the Scriptures seem to bear prominently on their very face. Witness the denial by some of the divinity of the Son and Spirit, of the depravity of human nature, of the atonement, of free justification, of divine influences, of the endless punishment of the wicked, and the like: nor can it be said that this arises from ignorance of the letter of the Word, for whole volumes have been written consisting chiefly of quotations from Scripture supposed by them to be favourable to some of these heresies. What then? are we from this fact to suppose that the Bible is a riddle at the meaning of which we are left to guess, or a great collection of disjointed and contradictory assertions which may be fairly made to bear any meaning? Far be from us the impious idea. The fault is not in the Bible, but in those who consult it. We affirm (what will be acquiring additional

* Lact. Instit. l. iii. 20. "Quanta itaque vece possum," &c.

evidence as we proceed) that these errors arise, not from any ambiguity in the statement of the leading doctrines of revelation, but from the pride of an unsanctified understanding, from the influence of preconceived and baseless opinions, and above all, from the neglect of humbly seeking the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Human teaching and the reading of the Scriptures in a spirit of self-dependence, may lead to orthodox notions; but they may lead far astray from them. Divine teaching is the only certain way of leading even to a correct line of thinking.

But to proceed,—let it be kept in mind that the wisdom of which we are speaking is that of those who shall be found to be wise at last—that of those who receive the Gospel, are ripening for glory, and in due time shall shine as the brightness of the firmament. If, then, men who lean to their own wisdom may err in the formation of ineffective opinions, it will follow, by still more evident consequence, not merely that they may, but that they must come short of sanctified and saving knowledge. Thus the apostle Paul states the case, that a man may “have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge,” and yet be “nothing;” and every such man will, as to personal religion, be but nothing, unless he be taught of God by the ordinary influences of the Spirit. God “hides these things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes.” This revelation is not a miraculous discovery of new truths, for in that sense they are all already revealed in Scripture: but it is the enabling of humbled persons to understand, to believe, to love, to obey, and to take a personal and lively interest in these truths. It is a work on the mind itself. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.” It is as vain to hope that a man will see the excellence of evangelical truth without this discernment—without this faculty of spiritual perception, as it would be to expect a man with jaundiced eyes to admire the verdure of the lawn, or the man who has no musical ear to enjoy the sound of the most exquisite harmony.

If, then, we allow the necessity of this teaching, we ought next to inquire how it is to be obtained. To this inquiry the an-

swer is direct,—“Ask of God.” *Prayer* is the grand mean of attaining this wisdom. Of general prayer for this instruction, Scripture furnishes many excellent models. David thus prays, “Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy, and teach him thy statutes.” “Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God: thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.” Conscious of the insufficiency of our own minds in every instance, we should be habitually earnest for *general* direction. But the principle being established, it is necessary, in order to reap suitable benefit, to apply it to *particular cases*. Of these cases, which are very numerous, a few may be noticed.

Comply with this direction in order to obtain just views of *doctrine*. Are there any of you in doubt as to the leading doctrines of the Gospel? Any who have not made up your minds as to the divinity of the Son and Spirit, the depravity of the human heart, the method of justification, the necessity and nature of regeneration, the sovereignty of divine grace, and the like? Do not lean to your own understanding in the decisions to which you are to come, but go to God, and ask him to send his Spirit to cause the truth to preponderate in your minds. Or if you have distinct opinions on these subjects, still consider whether your opinions will stand the test of Scripture, and particularly inquire how you came by them, whether in a spirit of self-dependence, or in the course of an humble sense of your own ignorance, and earnest prayers for divine guidance. If these inquiries be not capable of a satisfactory solution, either your opinions are radically wrong, or, however just they may be in themselves, you are not properly influenced by them, your faith is dead.

This suggests the use of this method to *ascertain your religious state*. You are enjoined to examine yourselves. But your hearts are deceitful. Ask, then, of God that he would be pleased to guide you to the right conclusion, and say unto him, “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.”

Again, follow this direction that you may know your particular duties, both as to what you should avoid, and what you should do. Ask wisdom of God *to know and to avoid whatever is wrong*. Here it is to be observed that, with regard to those things which are glaringly sinful, it is hardly to be supposed that any doubt can be entertained.

Yet, however irresistibly the conviction of the sinfulness of certain practices may force itself on the mind, prayer for wisdom does not on that account become unnecessary. Men often see and approve what is good, but follow evil. Hence the necessity of the prayer, "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins." Indeed, if in the hour of temptation, men are enabled to bring the contest to the issue of sincere prayer, the victory is already gained. There are also several other practices (these it would seem improper at present to name, unless we were to enter into the peculiarities of each, but many of you will be at no loss to know to what I allude) there are several practices which some strenuously defend as lawful, others as decidedly condemn as sinful, and still others view as at least suspicious. How ought such of you as wish to be conscientious to do in these cases? Examine, by all means, with as unprejudiced a mind as possible, the arguments on every hand: consider if there be any texts of Scripture which refer directly to the subject in question, or which by just inference involve it: attend on the one hand to the precept, "Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made you free;" and, on the other, to the precept, "Be not conformed to this world;" or to "Become all things to all men," and to "Do all to the glory of God:" endeavour to ascertain precisely, on the one hand, what weight there is in the arguments which would fix on those who cannot countenance these institutions and customs the charge of needless scrupulosity, of gloomy melancholy, and of injuring the cause of virtue by clogging it with encumbrances, and on the other, what force there is in the reasoning which goes to prove that these compliances are in whole or in part positively sinful, or are a waste of precious time, or have a deadening effect on the spiritual state, or, to say the least, are improper because offensive to some, and to be avoided, as lowering to the tone of their character, by all who wish to be eminently useful to others: give these arguments, particularly such of them as have most of a scriptural complexion, a fair hearing, and then make the inquiry a subject of prayer. You will probably come to a decided conclusion. But should you only be brought to a state of hesitation, remember the apostolic rule, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," and "He that doubteth is condemned

if he eat," that is, he who does any thing of the lawfulness of which he is not fully persuaded, is therein guilty of sin.

Attend to this direction, too, that you may be led to the practical knowledge of *positive duties*. Even those things of the incumbency of which you are fully persuaded, should be attended to in your prayers; that the reasons on which the obligation rests may be properly impressed on your minds, and that you may be led to corresponding action. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin:" but, "if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." If there be some things on which you have never been brought to a firm persuasion; if, for example, you doubt as to the incumbency of the *regular observance of all the ordinances of religion, of family worship, of liberal charity according to your income, of encouraging plans for the diffusion of the Gospel, and the like, I wish for nothing more than that you fairly study the subjects, and on your bended knees ask wisdom of God.*

In a state of uncertainty, as to the steps you should take in the important *pursuits and changes of life*, implore providential direction. "I will instruct thee," saith the Lord, "and teach thee in the way that thou shouldest go; I will guide thee with mine eye."

If blessed with *prosperity* and affluence, you have the utmost need to pray that you may not forget God, but may attain wisdom to render your salvation certain, which would otherwise be impossible.

If pressed with severe *afflictions*, it is only when they are accompanied with divine teaching, that you can so bear and so improve them as to reap any benefit from them. Our Apostle, in the previous context, had exhorted the believing Jews of the dispersion, to "count it all joy when they fell into divers temptations," and to "let patience have her perfect work;" and that they might be enabled to comply, he directs them to "ask wisdom of God." "Blessed," says the Psalmist, "is the man whom God chasteneth," and, at the same time, "teacheth out of his law." Ps. xev. 12. In such a case, "surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

Nay, the direction itself cannot be pro-

pcrly complied with, unless we obtain, in the very attempt, wisdom to comply with it; for we cannot pray aright of ourselves. Let us, therefore, say with the disciples, "Lord teach us to pray;" and, with Job, "Teach us what we shall say unto thee; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness."

Such, then, is the direction—a direction simple, comprehensive, and gracious. Let us now consider,

III. The encouraging *promise* held forth to every one who will comply with the direction, God "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraieth not; and it shall be given him."

God is here represented as "the hearer of prayer;" yet with a particular reference to his answering of prayers for saving wisdom. As he alone *can* effectually teach, so he does, in fact, teach those who apply to him. "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God, who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." The encouragement, therefore, is an express promise, that if any man ask wisdom, it shall be given him. Let us here remember the well-known, but most encouraging and appropriate words of the Saviour; "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a son ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or, if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or, if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father *give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!*" In short, there is an express promise, that whoever applies to God in cases of doctrine, or duty, shall be guided aright.

But some will be disposed to say, "Is not this to set aside common sense and rational argument, and to open up the floodgates of fanaticism? or, if it must be so, how can these things be? Tell us precisely in what way this overruling influence is exerted." To this we reply:—So far is this promise from setting aside sober inquiry, that it is given only with that inquiry being presupposed. We beg, also, that the distinction

may be correctly noticed between what is really fanatical and what is merely called so by careless and unimpressed persons. This promise disclaims all regard to extraordinary voices, visions, impressions, and, in short, every thing apart from the written Word. It calls on men to be found in the use of the ordinary means, and, sensible of their own liability to error, to implore that God would guide them. Now, how God's directing the mind should be considered as impossible, or involving any absurdity, we are at a loss to conceive. We pretend not, indeed, to explain the precise manner of his operations; nay, we readily confess our inability to do so; but we ask whether this difficulty be not common to almost every inquiry of a similar nature. It meets, with equal force, all who allow a providence, but who are obliged to confess that they cannot unravel its mysteries. However, we see that matter acts on matter, in the sense in which action can be ascribed to matter. Why, then, should not mind act on mind? What more irrational than to exclude the eternal Spirit himself from all access to those spirits which owe their very being to his will? Those, therefore, who do not assent to the plain truth, nor avail themselves of the benefit of this promise, are actuated, not by reason, but by blindness and pride.

That God has made this promise, should of itself convince us of its certainty; yet, perhaps, the best illustration of it which can be given is to show its *fulfilment in fact*. And here it may be remarked, that many of the most celebrated characters in Scripture have left evidence of its being fulfilled in their cases. Hear the *royal Psalmist*: "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth." "I have not departed from thy judgments, for thou hast taught me." Ps. lxxi. 17, and exix. 102. A most striking instance is furnished in the history of *Solomon*. "God said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee." Availing himself of the direction, the monarch prayed, "Give thy servant an understanding heart:" to which the Lord answered, "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee." 1 Kings iii. Thus, under the teaching of the Almighty, in answer to prayer, he became the wisest of men. When the apostle *Peter* uttered the believing declaration, "Thou art Christ, the

Son of the living God," our Lord answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Matt. xvi. 17. That this teaching, which makes acquainted with all necessary truth, was common to all true Christians in the first age, appears from the language in which they are addressed by John, 1 Ep. ii. 20: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

Nor has this teaching, in so far as it relates to a personal apprehension of divine truth, been confined to the ages of inspiration. In proof of its reality, at the present moment, there is abundant evidence. How else comes it to pass, that many who have had no other means of information besides those which are common to almost all in these lands, clearly understand, correctly distinguish, and highly relish the doctrines of the Gospel; while many who have had the most varied and the most expensive means of cultivating their minds, continue to misunderstand them? How greatly superior the spiritual understanding of the most learned and the most polished persons, after they are humbled and prayerful! Not only so, but those who have the opportunity and the desire of becoming acquainted with the Lord's people, however lowly their lot, will bear witness to the truth of the assertion, that, in the humblest stations, there are found those whose minds divine wisdom has wonderfully expanded—who enter on the pleasing theme of redemption with an alacrity truly delightful, and who discourse on the various topics of christian faith, hope, duty, and experience, with a correctness and fullness truly surprising. Let us acknowledge the heavenly origin of such wisdom; let us dismiss doubt and fastidiousness, and not hesitate for a moment to exclaim with Elihu, "Who teacheth like God!"

Another proof of the fulfilment of this promise is exhibited in *the uniformity of sentiment, of practice, and of heart, among truly humble, praying persons of every name*. It is evident, that those scholars who follow any one master who understands the science he professes to teach, will resemble each other in their ideas of that science. There may be shades of difference in their views of some of the niceties of the subject; but the leading, the pervading principles will be the same in all: so, if there be any truth in the doctrine we have all

along been endeavouring to represent to you, all who are taught of God must have similar views of religion. It is true that many are disposed to dwell on the differences which prevail in christian countries, as if they were subversive of the Gospel altogether, or, at least, of the idea now supported. But, let it be observed, that we do not say that this promise extends to those who continue merely nominal Christians; nor ought any one to expect that it will be fulfilled in those who neglect the distinctly marked and the absolutely necessary prerequisites. It requires humility, a disposition of implicit submission to the dictates of Scripture, and dependence on divine instruction. The lamentable aberrances of some, from the peculiar doctrines of revelation, are, therefore, capable of being accounted for in a way not only consistent with this promise, but illustrative of its truth. If men proudly think they do not want wisdom; or if, seeking it in the Scriptures, they torture and twist them into a thousand forms, rather than suffer them to speak what they have previously determined cannot be there; or if, in the use of the Scriptures, in the ordinary way, they lean to their own understanding—what can be expected but error? How is it possible that those who ridicule all dependence on the Spirit's teaching as enthusiastic, who deny the office, nay, the very existence of the Holy Spirit, how is it possible that they can have the teaching of the Spirit? Such an exception, then, strengthens the rule.

I have said there is a remarkable harmony of views among truly humble, praying persons. Do not oppose to this the differences of various denominations. As in the scholars of the same master we expect only a general agreement, and not a complete identity of sentiment; as in the children of the same family we expect to see only a general likeness, and not an absolute sameness of features; so it is among the disciples of the Lord Jesus—among the children of God. It would certainly be wrong to yield up any thing which we ourselves may judge to be scriptural; but let us beware of that contracted spirit which would represent every iota of our opinions as of equal importance to be held by others. What though there be Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Independent? Does any of these names exclude the possibility of the knowledge of the truth, or of the possession of the divine image?

Nay; how very remarkable is the coincidence between the individuals of these denominations, who are serious, and who are not ashamed to have it thought that they have sought their wisdom from the Lord! They have been all convinced of their natural depravity; they all rest their hope of pardon and acceptance on the atonement; they all acknowledge the necessity of regeneration; they all hate sin; they all follow holiness; they are all distinguished from men of the world: they all delight in the ordinances of religion; they all long for the universal dissemination of the Gospel; they all love God and man—to all of them Christ is precious; and, whatever be their attainments, they are all clothed with humility. They may vary in name, in forms, in rank, in fortune, in bodily appearance, in temper, in natural ability, in literary acquisition, in spiritual progress: their praise may be wafted over the world on the breath of fame, or their name may be cast forth as vile; their countenance may exhibit the bloom of health, or the paleness of approaching dissolution; they may speak in languages the most polished or the most barbarous; they may be like the Ethiopian swarthy, or the European fair; mountains may rise and oceans roar between them; but, on such truths as the above, their views exactly harmonize; to the sound of Redemption their hearts beat gladly responsive.

How, then, my friends, is all this to be accounted for? Only on the supposition that the promise in the text is daily fulfilling. These disciples are not only studying the same science in the same book, but they are studying under the same Master: they are seeking wisdom of God, and he is giving it them. Even in the present state of religion, there is much harmony of sentiment; and were this direction generally complied with, there would be still more. Were there less angry disputation, but more simplicity in the study of the Word, and more earnestness in prayer, the most opposite parties would soon exhibit, in things of vital importance, a rapid approximation. It is impossible to say how far this method would bring men to agree even in the smallest matters; but it is most certain, that those who follow it shall be preserved from all fatal errors, and shall be led to embrace every thing necessary to salvation. To doubt this, would be to doubt the veracity of the Most High in the uniform declara-

tions both of the Old and New Testaments. God says to the Church by Isaiah, chapter liv. 13, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord;" and the Lord Jesus, in his farewell discourse, John xvi. 13, declares, that "the Spirit of Truth shall guide" his disciples "into all truth." If, in some things not endangering their souls, they are left to differ, this gives an opportunity for the exercise of discrimination and mutual forbearance; and there is still an union of *heart*; for, as the Apostle says to the Thessalonians, 1 Ep. iv. 9, they are "taught of God to love one another."

But there are some *peculiarities of expression* in this promise well deserving of attention, as directly calculated to remove every sentiment which would discourage you from applying to God. One may be ready to say, "It is true that the Lord thus instructs those who serve and honour him; but it would be vain presumption, in so unworthy and sinful a creature as I am, to make application." In reply to this, none are excluded but those who think themselves too wise to need his aid; but *you* are sensible of your need; therefore, you are by no means excluded; for God "giveth to all men"—to all who ask.

A second may be ready to say, "Were there only a few things in which I needed guidance, I could expect to be heard; but I am so very ignorant, there are so many questions which I need to ask, that I fear God would be offended with my importunity." Hear, however, the encouraging declaration: God giveth "*liberally*." All his communications are on a scale of liberality worthy of himself. David testified that the Lord had "dealt bountifully" with his soul. Sinners are called on to "return to the Lord, who will abundantly pardon." Jesus came not only that his people "might have life," but "that they might have it more abundantly." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," says Paul to Titus, "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." Be not afraid, then, to multiply your requests to God, but "open your mouth wide, and he will fill it."

And, finally, there are some who, if they do not speak out their minds, yet feel in this way; conscious of their ignorance, they are kept back from availing themselves of in-

struction by a fear that, in the very application, their ignorance will be detected, and that they themselves will be exposed to ridicule and contempt. There may be reason to apprehend such treatment from some of their fellow-creatures; there may be some who reproach when they should pity, who rail against ignorance when they should be exerting themselves to remove it; but there is no reason to fear such treatment from their heavenly Teacher, for God "*upbraidedh not.*" In so gentle, and condescending, and kind a way does he impart instruction, that those who learn of him, though they must feel humbled, can never feel hurt, but advance in happiness and in attachment to him, as they advance in wisdom. "His doctrine drops as the rain, his speech distils as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." "If any of you lack wisdom," then, "let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraidedh not, and it shall be given him."

To sum up the whole in a few practical exhortations,

1. See that you all use the external means of acquiring saving wisdom. It is a general rule that blessings are promised only when you are in the way of corresponding exertions. Let, then, the Word of God be your daily study. Search it with discriminating inquiry, with close reflection, and with persevering diligence. Attend on the preaching of the Gospel, because it is enjoined, and because experience proves it to be one great mean of enlightening the mind. You may avail yourselves of works of human composition, but it must be with caution, and with a constant reference to Scripture as the standard. Were a man entering on any civil employment, he would not only *read* on the subject, but would wish to have the benefit of intimacy with some who were already experienced in his way: so, if you really wish to become wise unto salvation, cultivate the acquaintance of those who give evidence of true religion, and are already advanced in spiritual wisdom; for, "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise." And if you are persuaded of the propriety of these means, do not defer the adoption of them; for time is flying, opportunities are passing away, and "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither you are going."

2. Let me expostulate with you who have

not followed the direction in the text. It is to be feared there are some of you who have never been brought to an humble dependence on divine teaching, but are under the lamentable deception of trust in your own minds. If so, whatever be your attainments in other respects, this subject should teach you that you as yet know nothing to any saving purpose; for, while "the Lord fills the hungry with good things, he sends the rich empty away." Surely you cannot, on consideration, think this unreasonable or hard. If a parent were to assure a child of a most valuable gift, provided he would ask it, and were he even to encourage him by every possible inducement to apply, and yet should the child refuse to do so—where is the parent who, in such a case, would not say, Since you are too proud to ask it, I will not give you it? Is it not also altogether worthy of a wise and a gracious God to proceed on the same principle? It is very true that some of you may continue to dispute the point; but your obstinacy does not alter the nature of things: God is not the less just and gracious that you refuse to acknowledge him; but you are acting a most inexcusable and ruinous part. If, however, (which may the Lord of his mercy grant,) any of you shall be happily convinced of your blindness, or if you already truly long for light, if it be the most earnest wish of your hearts to find the path of life; then let this precept be welcomed, remembered, and obeyed, "Ask of God;" but "ask in faith." Let your prayers be founded on the reception of, at least, the first principles implied in the precept, namely, a sense of your own insufficiency, and a conviction of the ability and willingness of God to help you. Take, in good part, the advice of the wise man, which I would now affectionately leave with you, and all will yet be well: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths."

3. Improve whatever light you already possess. This advice refers to you who are sincere in your inquiries, on whose minds light is beginning to dawn, but whose views are still confused and destitute of that decision which can give them any commanding effect. Now, do not neglect what is already manifest to you, because you cannot yet distinctly see the whole. You are aware of the importance of religion; treat it, there-

fore, with that attention which its importance deserves. You know something of the first principles of christian doctrine; consider them still more closely, and embrace them not only as notions to be understood, but as blessings to be enjoyed. You know somewhat of sin and of duty; give up all manifestly sinful, and even all doubtful and deadening practices; and while you look to God for more light, comply with all duties you have already seen to be incumbent. In this way, you will have an interest in the promise: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." John vii. 17. Your progress will be sure, if trust and obedience go hand in hand. "Whatsoever we ask," says John, 1 Ep. iii. 22, "we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." To the same purpose are these other promises: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance:" "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord; his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto you as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Yes, my friends, did we but know that you were thus proceeding in humility, in prayer, and in determined submission to your own convictions, we should pronounce you fairly within the circle of the attraction of the cross; we could, in every thing of vital importance, confidently predict where your inquiries would end, and all that is painful in our anxieties about your eternal state, would forthwith be dispelled by the pleasing conviction that you were, slowly, perhaps, but surely, "feeling your way to the truth." "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe!"

Lastly, I would offer a word both of encouragement and of direction to the people of God. Blessed are you, of every description, who know the joyful sound; you shall walk in the light of God's countenance, and rejoice in his name all the day.

But, more particularly, this subject speaks in encouraging language to those pious persons who are not possessed of human learn-

ing. If, indeed, it were only the learned who could perceive the excellence, and enjoy the comfort of the Gospel, you of the class now referred to might well be disheartened; but, when you consider that many such continue spiritually blind to the last, you may surely suffer them to pursue the wide excursions of natural science, without one sigh of regret, and without one murmur against Him who has appointed your humbler lot. Are not all the nobler and more useful subjects within your reach? Is not the Bible in your hand? To you the Gospel is preached. To you the way of life is pointed out—that highway in which the simple do not err. Is not the throne of grace open to you? and are you not invited to draw near? Nay, are you not actually in possession of that knowledge which the labour of a thousand teachers could never impart, and which death itself cannot destroy? Look up, then, thou taught of God, to Him who guides thee; lift up thy voice aloud and sing. The range of thy ideas is limited, extending, perhaps, but a short way beyond the spot which gave thee birth; but, in much human wisdom there is often much sorrow; while the light that shall bless thee in heavenly mansions, already irradiates thy humble dwelling.

If, on the contrary, you have had the benefit of a learned education, as well as the blessing of heavenly wisdom, let the latter ever be the higher in your estimation, and to this let the application of the other be ever subservient. It is you who have it most in your power to contribute, in many respects, to give a right tone to the sentiments and feelings of the public; let it, therefore, be your high ambition to consecrate all your acquirements to the service of your God and Saviour.

But, however it may be as to this adventitious distinction, I beseech all you who know the Lord, to live, as becomes those who are wise, in the faithful observance of piety, and in the exemplary discharge of every good work. "Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding:" therefore, says the apostle Paul, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil." Learn from the apostle James, chapter iii. 13, what are the genuine fruits of that wisdom which he ex-

norts you to ask of God: "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him show, out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of wisdom.—The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

Nor would it be the part of gratitude, or of benevolence, to keep all this precious wisdom to yourselves. Endeavour to diffuse it in your more immediate circle, on every side, and through every land, till "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." If you wish to imitate God himself, who giveth to all men liberally, you will attend to your Saviour's precept: "Freely ye have received, freely give."

And, to say no more, sensible of your remaining ignorance, continue in the same humble supplication for farther teaching, and abide all your lifetime in the school of Christ; so shall you, undoubtedly, obtain a clearer light—a light which will cheer you in

the darkest night of sorrow, and turn even the shadow of death into the morning. But, oh! how glorious the enlargement which then awaits you! At present, after all your labour, there is much which eludes your grasp; but "what you know not now, you shall know hereafter." "Now you see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now you know in part; but then shall you know even as also you are known." How elevating the thought, that when you have burst your way through the veil of mortality, you shall leave every mist of blindness, and of conjecture, and of doubt, below you; and, under the immediate instruction of your heavenly Teacher, be led on to contemplate, with a keenness of research ever delightful and ever new, the glories of creation, the mysteries of providence, and the surpassing wonders of redeeming love! Let, then, this wisdom continue to be the chief object of your pursuit in time, as it will certainly be your employment and your delight through eternity.

• THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the late REV. JOHN GEDDES, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. ANDREW GILMOUR, Greenock.

THE LAMB OF GOD;

A SERMON,

By the late Rev. JOHN GEDDES,

Of St. Andrew's Church, Glasgow.

“Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”—JOHN i. 29.

THE ministry of John the Baptist holds a kind of middle place between the Old and New Testament dispensations. It has, in this view, been termed the clasp of the Law and the Gospel, or the clasp of the Mosaic and Christian dispensations—uniting the two as the dawn unites the night and the day, and allied to both as the morning star in the firmament ushers in the day—as the bright harbinger of the coming morn is called to lose his light in the splendour of the risen sun. It was, accordingly, the commission of John the Baptist to bear testimony regarding Christ rising as the Sun of Righteousness: “He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

There are three points for consideration in our text. In the first place, the name or title by which the Messiah is designated: “The Lamb of God.” In the second place, the office or work executed by him: “He taketh away the sin of the world;” and, in the third place, the attention due to both.

I. He is called a *Lamb*, not only for his innocence, and his purity, and his meekness, and his patience under suffering, but also to denote that he was a sacrifice; and, moreover, he is called *the Lamb of God*, to denote his dignity and his distinction above every other sacrifice, for accomplishing to the full end the purpose for which he was designed. We can be in no doubt as to the person here described, or as to the reason why he is so described. We behold that Lamb as the Lord Jesus Christ—the only Redeemer of God's elect, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and is in a

sense that none else can ever be, emphatically, and by distinction, and by eminence, and by divine superiority, “The Lamb of God.”

Upon this, then, we may meditate, considering him, in the first place, as the Lamb foreordained; in the second place, as the Lamb prepared; and, in the third place, as the Lamb manifested. He was, in the first place, the Lamb foreordained—elect, of whom the Father testifies, “Behold my servant, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” In that eternity in which he dwelt before the world began, in what sublime strains is his eternal existence described in Proverbs viii. 22—31. “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth; when he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep; when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.” And when he dwelt among the sons of men, the summary of the testimony of his disciples regarding him was their faith that he came

from God. He says himself, "I proceeded forth and came from God." John viii. 42. In his sublime affectionate prayer on the night in which he was betrayed, he said, "Father, glorify thou me;" for "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John xvii. 5. "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." Verse 24th. And in harmony with the testimony of the Father regarding the Son, and with the whole declaration of the Son regarding himself, is the testimony of the Holy Spirit by the inspired Apostles. Peter, speaking of being chosen in Christ, and before the foundation of the world, and for a purpose and grace which were in Christ Jesus before the world began, says, "Forasmuch as ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." 1 Peter i. 18—20.

In the second place, we may meditate on the Lamb as prepared. He was foreordained before the foundation of the world, and before time was counted by means of the sun or the moon, or the revolutions of day and night; but, since time began, and man fell, he has been prepared amid promises, and predictions, and types—all a preparation for the coming and for the manifestation of the Lamb of God. There was, in unrecorded eternity, assigned him an abode among the dwellings of men; but there arose after this age a future age of suitable preparation. The occasion of this age commencing was the fall of man; and so soon as man fell, this preparation began, extending from the entrance of sin down to the coming of Christ, and through a period of four thousand years, and including both the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, as introductory to the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. This preparation arose at first as a bright sparkling stream in Eden; but it was magnified and multiplied afterwards, till it became a mighty and overflowing river, making glad the city of our God. It was declared first in the compass of one short promise, which included the

whole family of man—the seed of the woman, it was declared, should bruise the head of the serpent. It was given to one nation, and to Abraham; for it was promised unto him, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed.—It was limited next to one of the twelve tribes of Israel; for God announced Judah's tribe to be blessed, and out of it the promised Shiloh was said to come. It was limited next to one family, the family of Jesse, and was to be a root out of his stem. It was next declared, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us."

Thus was there a long preparation, by promises, predictions, and types, especially for a Lamb. We read a remarkable passage in the early history of the world, that "unto Adam and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins;" garments died with blood; garments typical of Christ's righteousness, as the garments of our righteousness, and the robes of our salvation; garments which the Lord God did make, for all which man could devise was a covering too narrow to wrap himself up in; garments died in blood, typifying how Paradise would be regained, and how, through the Lamb of God, man should be clothed anew in an unspotted robe of truth. But, next to this, we read that Abel offered of the firstlings of his flock a lamb, for he was a keeper of sheep, and he offered it through faith of the typified, the promised, the predicted Lamb of God. And down to a later period, we read that Noah, after the flood, offered sacrifice to the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and, therefore, necessarily a lamb.

It was in connexion with a purpose earlier still, even the foreordination of the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" and more remarkable and closer still was the type when Abraham, receiving the command to slay his son, his only son, "Behold, there was a ram caught in the thicket"—a ram, we may suppose, of the first year, without blemish and without spot, a substitute for the Lamb who is called God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son; so that we do not wonder if Abraham, by this lively type, his own son saved, did see, through faith, Christ then afar off and was glad. And leaving the patriarchal dispensation, and coming to the Mosaic period, and marking the history of that institution

which has been superceded by the simple and bloodless sacrifice of this day, how were the children of Israel delivered out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage? Was it not by a lamb of the first year without blemish, and by the blood of that lamb sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels? How was it that the anniversary of this great deliverance was kept up? Was it not by the lamb, its blood sprinkled, and its flesh eat? How was the Sabbath-day kept? How was the week day kept? By a lamb in the morning and in the evening. The blood of bulls and of goats is often mentioned, but especially the blood of lambs. These lambs, and this blood, more than any other sacrifice, are, no doubt, designed throughout the whole of these periods to shadow forth what was to be seen at last—"the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

But I have said, also, that we are called to meditate on the Lamb manifested. That great salvation long prepared, and now disclosed to view, hath proved that the love was consistent still, and that the promises were true. Christ foreordained and prepared, was at last manifested. It was the special office of John the Baptist to declare his approaching manifestation; for, when the Priests and the Levites of Jerusalem, wondering at the power of his mission, asked, "Who art thou? he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us: what sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord." John i. 19—22. And he made it straight. He baptized in the name of Christ. Other prophets spoke of distant

periods, and the times of which they spoke had to be searched out; but John said, Behold, he is coming; the Lord is at hand: yea, behold, he is coming. For this Zachariah praised God; for this Elizabeth hailed Mary as the mother of her Lord; for this Mary herself magnified the Lord, and gave praise to his name; for this angels left their seats of bliss in heaven, and filled our air with their praises; for this a new-born star was seen, and wise men sought out the child; for this Simeon was willing to resign his life and die. "Now," exclaimed he, "lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And for this Anna prophesied and gave praises, and spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Judah. He was from eternity foreordained; he was throughout centuries, and for four thousand years, and by types, and by promises, and by predictions, prepared. But he is now at last seen, and heard, and magnified; and it was thus the special office of John the Baptist to point out the man, and to say, Behold him, behold the Lamb who made Luke, John, Andrew, and Peter, leave all and follow him. To know more, we must leave the disciple, and learn of the Master; and if we do leave the Baptist, and follow the Saviour, we will, undoubtedly, learn that all that John said of this man is true. "I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not," as a man: "but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." verses 32—34. Oh! Christians, you see and you hear, in the emblems of this day, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world."

CHRIST THE SPIRITUAL LIGHT;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. ANDREW GILMOUR,

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"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."—EPIH. v. 14.

THE great object of the Gospel is, to "turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God." It takes for granted a truth which is clearly

demonstrated in the history of our race, the depravity of our nature and our alienation from God, our present misery and our fearful anticipations of future ruin. But it pro-

poses a remedy as generous as it is plain, as effectual as it is necessary, and as sincere as it is free. Christ Jesus steps forth and engages to satisfy the demands of justice, to answer all the claims of the law, to eradicate from our natures the indwelling principle of sin, to free us from its consequences, to wash us from our sins in his own precious blood, and to fit us for the heavenly glory. In the fulness of time these covenant engagements were fulfilled to the very letter and the spirit of the law. Justice had no demand upon man which he did not satisfy; sin rendered obnoxious to no curse which he did not bear; transgression exposed to no wrath which he did not endure; and we were liable to no condemnation which was not laid upon him, as the substitute and surety of men. What those sufferings were which he endured when he bore our sins in his own body on the cross, we can never know. We know that the law was just, that its sanctions were absolute, and that its claims were eternal. But, however uncompromising were its demands, and however stern were its enactments, we are assured that the vicarious sufferings of our surety were perfectly satisfactory in the eye of the law—that the Father has accepted of his substitutionary sacrifice—and that God is for ever well-pleased in him for his righteousness' sake. And as a pledge of this, "God has raised him from the dead, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." Divine justice, being fully satisfied, as imperatively demanded his restoration to liberty and to life, as it had before made him the object of its curse and of its heaviest penalties. The very design of his death was to satisfy the demands which justice had upon man; and his resurrection is the most satisfactory evidence of its efficacy. Accordingly, the Apostle says, "He was delivered for our offences, but he was raised for our justification." Had he continued under the power of death, we could have had no assurance whatever that he had made satisfaction for sin. On the contrary, it would have shown that he was unable to accomplish what he had undertaken, that he could not satisfy the demands of justice, atone for our unrighteousness, or obtain our acquittal at the bar of God. But the Father, in raising him from the dead, "through the blood of the everlasting covenant, which was shed for the remission of sin," proclaims our pardon, our acquittal, and our complete justification

in the person of our exalted and glorified Redeemer. "By the deeds of the law we never could be justified;" but "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all that believe." For God has enacted, that "he who with his heart believeth unto righteousness, shall be saved." This is the only plan of justification, as established by law. All other methods are illegal, and are directly opposed to the statutes of heaven, which enjoin entire reliance upon the righteousness of our surety for pardon and acceptance with God. Therefore, we conclude that a man is "justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." He must renounce every thing like self-righteousness; and he must accept of the righteousness of Christ, which alone can justify him in the day of the Lord Jesus. The Gospel proclaims the glad tidings of salvation, through a once-crucified but now highly-exalted Redeemer, and faith assents to the blessed proclamation. The Gospel makes a free offer of a complete and a finished redemption to all who are willing to embrace it, and faith accepts of the inestimable gift. The Gospel proposes the righteousness of Christ as the only ground of our justification before God, and faith esteems every thing but loss, that we may win Christ, 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." But it is only when the sinner is convinced of his ruined state both by nature and practice, and of his utter inability to render that obedience which the law demands; it is only when he sees in heaven's light the truth of the Gospel; it is only when he believes that the perfect righteousness of Christ alone can save him; it is only then that his faith is of a justifying character, and "is accounted to him for righteousness." Then he possesses that faith which "worketh by love, purifying the heart, and laying hold on eternal life." And then it is that his works, the legitimate result of correct principle, shall receive the justifying approbation of his Father and his God. Then all the elements of a true and a saving faith are in active operation. He heartily assents to the "record that God has given us of his Son," he accepts of the offer of salvation, and he fully depends upon the finished righteousness of Christ, as the only ground of pardon, of justification, and of eternal life. He lives a life of faith on the Son of God, and his walk and conversation

are becoming the Gospel of his grace. He accepts of Christ for "righteousness and life," and he rests upon him alone for salvation, as the great propitiatory sacrifice, in whom "all the seed of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory." To accomplish this is the great object of the Gospel. For this purpose the Scriptures were written by holy men of old, who spoke as they were moved by the Spirit of God; for this purpose the Son of God left the bosom of the Father and appeared in our world in the form of a servant; for this purpose he suffered, and bled, and died; and ere he left our world he appointed his successors, and gave them a commission to preach the Gospel of peace to every creature, with the gracious assurance, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world;" for this purpose he continues to invite our attention by his faithful servants who, "in Christ's stead, beseech us to be reconciled to God;" he addresses us in the works of nature; he speaks to us in the dispensations of his providence; and he pointedly calls upon us in his written word, "To seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near." With all the tenderness of a Father he expostulates with us concerning the absolute necessity of a Saviour, the infinite ability of Christ to redeem, the free offers of mercy, the happiness of those who embrace these offers, and the fearful condition of those who reject them. "As I live," saith the Lord, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn and live." Therefore, he says, in the language of our text, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light"

In guiding your thoughts upon this passage, we shall notice,

I. The characters that are here addressed.

II. The invitation that is given; and

III. The promise that is made.

I. Those who are here addressed, are described as being "asleep," and "dead." These expressions though primarily of very different signification, are here employed to indicate the same spiritual condition. Sinners are frequently described as being "alienated from the life of God," and as being "dead in trespasses and in sins." Natural death, too, is often spoken of under the figure of a sleep. Accordingly, when the kings of Israel and of Judah died, they were said to "sleep with their fathers." Daniel, when speaking of the resurrection

of the dead, tells us, that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." And when our Saviour is informing his disciples of the death of Lazarus, he says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death; but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead." From this it is evident, that these terms are equally employed to point out the state of natural death. And hence the facility with which they are used to describe the state of the sinner, as "dead in trespasses and in sins."

Nor are these metaphorical expressions inapplicable to the natural state of man. Sin has polluted as well as changed his whole character. His holiness is converted into pollution—his love into enmity—his obedience into rebellion—and his happiness into misery. It has darkened the understanding, so that we form very incorrect notions of the character and perfections of God, the dispensations of his providence, and the offers of his mercy. We see not the spirituality of the divine law, nor can we understand its claims upon the heart and the affections. In the Saviour we see neither "form nor comeliness; and there is no beauty that we should desire him." We depreciate his spotless righteousness, despise the promised influences of the Holy Spirit, and practically trample upon the blood of the covenant, counting it an unholy thing. We think that we are "rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; while we are poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked." Like Paul, we think ourselves "alive without the law," calling "evil good, and good evil." For the "natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." The understanding is so darkened, that we see little or no criminality in sin, considering it as our misfortune rather than our fault; we despise all that is distinguishing in the Gospel of Christ; we deny the necessity and even the importance of the Saviour's substitutionary sufferings; and we consider the gospel scheme of man's salvation, as an apparatus by far too splendid and expensive for the purposes to which it

is applied. Surely, then, the language of our text is fully justified, when it describes us as spiritually "asleep," and as "dead in trespasses and in sins!"

But the will is also in subjection to sin. Dark as the understanding is, and desperately wicked as are the hearts of men, we have yet so much intelligence as to discriminate betwixt the holder outlines of truth and of error; of virtue and of vice; of infidelity and of true religion. But the will is so entirely led captive by sin, that we choose and delight in what is evil. We see what is good and bestow upon it our approbation; we know what is evil, we condemn, and yet we practice it. Daily experience, too, convinces us that every dereliction from the path of duty is succeeded by proportionably disastrous consequences; and yet, with this conviction praying upon our mind, in opposition to the strongest convictions of our own consciences, the clearest light of reason, and the plainest declarations of the Word of God, we fearlessly barter the grandeur of eternity, with all its holy and important realities for the pleasures of sense and the unsatisfactory enjoyments of this fleeting world. We know our duty to God, and are convinced that in keeping his commands there is even "a present reward," and yet, we "live without God and without hope in the world." We are convinced of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment to come, and yet we indulge in our criminal propensities, and roll sin as a sweet morsel under our tongue. When sickness, when danger, or when the near prospect of death has roused us to more than common reflection, when eternity has darkened upon our spirit, and when our anticipations of the coming judgment have faithfully represented our sin, our folly, and our danger, we may then be found drawing near to God, vowing to the Most High, and earnestly resolving to devote our future lives to the service of God, and to the glory of his holy and venerable name. But, alas! days, and months, and years pass away, and we are still the same. Our troubles are forgotten; our vows to God are undischarged; and our feet are not treading in the path-way to heaven. Our convictions are, no doubt, the same as before; we are still conscious that we are wrong; we dare not even calmly contemplate our danger; we shudder at the prospect of being overtaken by death, while thus "unfurnished for the world to come;" we wish that we were at

peace with God, and we earnestly resolve to be serious in matters of religion; and yet, notwithstanding all this, we live in a state of estrangement from the covenant of promise; and we die, without having any lot with Jacob, or portion with Israel. How true is the declaration of the inspired Apostle, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be! The understanding is not only darkened, but we are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness and hardness of our hearts."

But the state of our affections, as well as the moral principles of our nature, fully warrants the Apostle's description of our character. We have a natural aversion to every thing that is good, and a constitutional desire to do what is evil. If we obey the law of God, it is not because we love it, but because we fear its penalties. Our desire, with regard to this world, is, to gratify "the lusts of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life; walking in the ways of our own heart, and in the sight of our own eyes." And our highest ambition, with respect to eternity, is, to escape the punishment of hell, rather than to be sanctified and made meet for the enjoyments of heaven. We "like not to retain God in our thoughts." Accordingly, the prophet reproves the obstinacy of Israel, in the following striking language:—"Thou art obstinate," says he, "and thy neck is as an iron sinew, and thy brow brass." Hence, the Apostle speaks of the natural man, as "dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world—according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; having their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind." Eph. ii. 1. And he further describes some as "walking in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Eph. iv. 17. We thus rob God by "yielding the members of the body, as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," instead of "reckoning ourselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 13. We ungratefully return the greatest evil that we

are capable of repaying, for the greatest good that we are capable of enjoying, justly exposing ourselves to the terrible charge, "I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me." Isa. i. 2. Nor have we any desire to repent, "to the acknowledging of the truth; that we may recover ourselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Tim. ii. 25. And to this awful degeneracy the whole human family are exposed; so that however amiable our tempers, or polished our manners, or cultivated our minds, we are justly described, as spiritually "asleep," and as "dead in trespasses and in sins."

II. But to such the gracious invitation is given. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

This invitation or command, very naturally divides itself into two branches—the external call of the Gospel, and the internal call of the Holy Spirit. The former of these is made to all indiscriminately, but the latter is confined to the people of God. The former is always resisted, but the latter is ever effectual.

Man, in his natural state, spiritually "asleep," and "dead in trespasses and in sins," can no more make himself spiritually alive, "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," than can the mouldering ashes of the urn inspire with natural life the inhabitant of the grave, or a pale trophy of the king of terrors resuscitate the silent tenant of the tomb. He cannot even prepare himself for the new birth, says an eloquent and judicious divine. He has, indeed, a subjective capacity for grace, above every other creature in the inferior world; and this is a kind of natural preparation, which the inferior creation have not; a capacity with respect to the powers of the soul, though not with regard to the dispositions of the heart. He has an understanding to know, and when enlightened, to know God's law; he has a will to move and run, and when enlarged by grace, to run the ways of God's commands; and he has a capacity to receive the life of grace in his soul, upon the breath and touch of God. But, although the soul is thus capable, as a subject, to receive the grace of God, yet it is quite incapable, as an agent, of preparing itself for it, or of producing it. It is capable

of receiving the truths of God; but the hard and stony heart is quite incapable of receiving the impressions of those truths. Grace is all in a way of reception by the soul, and not of action from it. The highest morality in the world is not necessary to the infusion of the divine nature into the heart. Nor can our convictions of sin—our sorrow for its commission—our tears—our repentance, or our devotional exercises, be considered as the disposing causes of grace. Neither can the will of man, though essentially free, and perfectly at liberty to choose what is good, and to reject what is evil, and to act up to the choice as far as the external conduct is concerned, dispose the heart to receive the grace of God. The power of man's will extends itself to things within its own sphere, according to its natural capacity. And that man acts freely, as an intelligent being, in all those things that are agreeable to his nature, none will deny. Moreover, there is the fullest concurrence betwixt the understanding and the will, the one being subservient to the other in all matters of judgment and of choice. But every agent, whether intellectual or moral, is circumscribed in its actions, by the very nature of its capacities. The brute creation, in the fullest exercise of their will, cannot elevate themselves to the rank of man, or exercise the intellectual and moral properties of his character. Man, in like manner, cannot raise himself above his station, or exercise the functions of the angelic nature. Neither can the cherubim of heaven possess or exercise the perfections of God. The free will of the unregenerate mind, therefore, can be conversant only about carnal things. Nor can it ever put forth higher principles of action, unless they are imparted by the Spirit of God. When we consider man as an intelligent being merely, it is perfectly agreeable with his nature to put forth free actions under the direction of the understanding; but when we consider him as a renewed creature also, then he is acting under the influence of a much higher principle. The former of these supposes no more than the common operations of providence, which originally imparted our reasoning faculties, and which afterwards sustain them. Whereas the latter supposes that we are under the influence of the Spirit of God. But in both cases the will is equally free, subservient to the understanding, and subjected to no restraint.

But here a question very naturally proposes itself for our consideration, concerning the necessity, or even the propriety, of the external call of the Gospel. For, to what purpose is the Gospel proclaimed, if it is impossible for all to obtain its blessings? And what respect are we to have to the promises of God, if they are not a declaration of his purposes with regard to man?

The propriety, as well as the necessity, of preaching the Gospel, however, will be perfectly obvious, if we consider what it is, and the end which it is designed to accomplish.

When we preach the Gospel, we simply declare the revealed will of God to man—the duties which it becomes us to discharge as living under a dispensation of free mercy and unmerited favour, and the terrible consequences of neglecting them. A general declaration is made to all, that Christ has purchased the most invaluable blessings; that he will bestow them upon his chosen people in his own time and manner; that these blessings are inseparably connected with faith, and love, and repentance, and all the other gifts and graces of the Spirit; that the outward and ordinary means of obtaining them, are the ordinances of grace, especially the Word, Sacrament, and Prayer; that it is the duty of every one to wait for the communications of God's favour in the way which he has appointed, and that none have a right to expect these blessings who neglect and despise the appointed means.

Man, too, is objectively, as well as subjectively, blind. Sin has removed every object of moral perception, as well as destroyed every capacity of seeing; but the great end of the external call of the Gospel is, to restore what sin removed far from us, and to exhibit Christ as the new and the living way of recovery; and the object of the internal call of the Spirit is, to communicate the capacity of seeing what is thus restored, and the disposition to return through this living way. Besides, in the external call of the Gospel, God continues to claim that natural and inalienable right to our obedience, which is due to him, as the moral Governor of the universe, and "the Judge of all the earth, who cannot but do right." Therefore, his language is, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light." And it is the duty of his servants to take up the very same theme; and, in obedience to his divine

command, "to prophesy upon the dry bones, in the valley of vision, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord." Ezek. xxxvii. 4.

Nor can it, with justice, be objected that man being spiritually "asleep," as well as "dead in trespasses and in sins," he is unable to awake from his sleep, and arise from the state of the dead; therefore, it is unnecessary to command him to do so, and unjust to punish him for not doing what he never can accomplish; for, when we consider the true nature of his inability to comply with the gospel invitation, the excuse which is here urged will be seen to be an aggravation of his crime. In what respect, then, is man unable to embrace the offers of the Gospel? Is he physically unable to do what it commands? Do the decrees of God bring him under a fatal necessity of rejecting the Gospel and of continuing in sin? And is he not left to the freedom of his will in choosing what is good, and in rejecting what is evil? No such thing. He has no disposition, he is unwilling to comply, and, therefore, he is unable. A want of disposition, a want of will, is the true and the only cause of disobedience to God. This, however, is no excuse, but, on the contrary, is a high aggravation of his wickedness and impiety. What would be thought of the detected, the convicted, and the condemned thief, if he impudently pled in justification of his conduct, the irresistible force of his nefarious and contemptible propensities? If he confessed that he was perfectly capable of refraining from stealing, but that he was not disposed to do so, would his plea be held in arrest of judgment? or, would it not, on the contrary, render him still more contemptible? Will the murderer, whose dark career is about to be cut short by the last fearful operation of his country's outraged laws, command our sympathy, and obtain our compassionate interference in his behalf, by telling us that his thirst for vengeance is insatiable—that the shriek of despair sounds like music in his ear, and that his delight is to riot in a brother's blood? or, will the slanderer, whose principles are falsehood, whose occupation is

calumny, and whose communion is death—will that foulest of living pestilences ensure our approbation, by telling us that he is quite capable, but by no means disposed, to comply with the divine command in this matter? Shall we look with indifference upon the pitiless ravages of this human vampire, merely because he delights to crawl in loathsome pollution over the blasted reputation of youth, and innocence, and sex, and station? No! The pleasure that he feels in poisoning every ear by the foul whisper of detraction; the happiness that he experiences when his plausible tale is likely to hurt the reputation of an absent and unconscious neighbour; the satisfaction that gladdens his bosom as his malignant villainy successfully shoots the envenomed shaft to the heart of his selected victim; these are all so many condemnatory circumstances before a human tribunal, and refuges of lies in the presence of God. The inability of man, therefore, to comply with the invitations of the Gospel, is not a physical, but a moral, inability, and, instead of being an excuse for his disobedience, is a high aggravation of his crime.

If religion depended upon the strength or weakness of men's minds, as hearing or seeing does upon the goodness of the bodily organs, then we should no more be culpable for a want of religion, than for a want of good eyes, or a profound understanding; but it depends upon moral, and not physical, qualities. This is the view that is taken of it throughout the whole of the sacred volume. Hence, the severe reproof of Stephen to the Jews, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." Acts vii. 51. Every one who heard him understood well that his calling them "uncircumcised in heart and ears," was no more a censure upon their natural understanding than upon their bodily organs; but that it was a reproof for another kind of defect, for which they could blame neither God nor nature; it was a want of a disposition to hear, and an unwillingness to understand, for which he reproved them. Isaiah expresses himself in similar language: "Bring forth," says he, "the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears." Is. xliii. 8. And, again, "Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent?" Is. xlii. 18. But these expressions can never be understood as com-

plaining of their want of natural capacity, which is at all times an object of sympathy and compassion, but as charging them with an unwillingness to hear, which forms just ground of the severest reproof. "The wicked," says David, "are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not listen to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." Ps. lxxiii. 3. But this is not a natural deafness of which he complains, but a deafness arising from stopping the ears, and refusing to hear; and this voluntary deafness, this unwillingness to hear, is a great aggravation of their wickedness and impiety. In like manner, as the human family can plead no other excuse for refusing to listen to the invitations of the Gospel, but their unwillingness to do so, and this is the only respect in which it can be said that they are unable to obey its commands, they are justly exposed to the fearful consequences of their stubbornness and rebellion. Their indisposition to hear and to obey is the very ground of their condemnation; when it is pled as an excuse, it only darkens their criminality; and when it is urged in mitigation of punishment, it aggravates their guilt, and enhances their woe.

But whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, the gospel offer is made to them; and, as the only kind of inability to accept of the offer arises from an unwillingness and a want of disposition to do so, it is with perfect propriety that it addresses the spiritually "asleep," and those who are "dead in trespasses and in sins," "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light." But the light that is here promised, is entirely in consequence of the internal call of the Holy Spirit, and in consequence of the almighty power of God accompanying his word of command. And this brings us to remark,

III. The promise that is made: "And Christ shall give thee light."

We have already observed, that sin has darkened the understanding, depraved the affections, and rendered us insensible to every form of moral worth. It is altogether the result of divine power, therefore, to enlighten the understanding, to purify the heart, and to bring us into subjection to the obedience of Christ; and it is eminently the work of the Spirit to communicate those new principles of light and of life, by which we are enabled to say, "One thing I know,

that whereas I was blind, now I see;" and when this new principle of life is imparted—when God "shines into the heart, giving us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," the understanding "delights in the law of the Lord;" the will is disposed, and it chooses to run the way of his commands; for he makes us a willing people in the day of his power, and the affections are all inclined to flow in a proper channel, to desire what is good, and to delight in what is pleasing to God. Thus it is that Christ gives light to the spiritually asleep, and thus it is that the dead sinner is made alive, and enabled to embrace the offers of the Gospel. Previously to this, the Gospel was heard to no purpose; but now he sees it invested with a beauty, a glory, and a moral grandeur, that are truly divine. Previously to this, if he received any satisfaction while waiting upon God in the house of prayer, it was only because he enjoyed a rich intellectual repast; because he had participated in the "feast of reason and the flow of soul;" or, because a form of religion was necessary to lull the conscience to rest, and to calm the fears of an awakened mind. But now the very simplicity of the Gospel is refreshing to his soul; for, "as a new-born babe, he desires the sincere milk of the Word, that he may grow thereby." The hard and stony heart is taken away, and a heart of flesh is imparted—a heart which glows with a new principle of life, receives and retains good impressions, feels after the Lord, beats with holy ardour, and prompts to pious action. He no longer walks in the forbidden paths of sin and of error, under the galling yoke of the prince of the power of the air. He walks in "the light as God is in the light," and "his path shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "I am the light of the world," says the Saviour; "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John viii. 12. In this path he is "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation;" for, "he who has begun the good work will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ." And when time, with regard to him, shall be no more—when his mortal career is run—when his spirit has winged its flight into an unseen world, he will be welcomed to the enjoyment of "the inheritance of the saints in light." Then he will be for ever before the throne of God and of the Lamb, joining the golden harps

of heaven, celebrating the praises of that redeeming love which awoke him from the sleep of death, imparted to him spiritual life, and ushered him to the heavenly glory. "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. xxii. 5.

In closing our discourse, we observe,

1. That none will be able to urge, at the last day, that they were compelled to sin, or prevented from forsaking it, by the providential arrangements of God. It is inconsistent with the holiness of God to be in any way accessory to the commission of sin. Can he cause men to rebel against his own authority, to dishonour his name, and to reject the salvation which Christ has purchased at such an infinite price? Wherever the Scriptures, therefore, speak of God's hardening the heart, we can only infer, that he leaves us to indulge in those delusions which we love, to practise those vices which we are unwilling to forsake, and to harden ourselves in those crimes which we are indisposed to renounce. "Let no man, therefore, say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." Nor,

2. Can you say that you have not sufficient means and opportunities for obtaining the blessings of redemption. You have the Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus. Your relations to God are there clearly stated; your duties are explained in terms of such unrivalled simplicity, as to defy every thing like misapprehension; everlasting life, with the highest rational and immortal enjoyments, is promised as the reward of obedience; and the most terrible threatenings are denounced against those who transgress the law of God. You have access to the ordinances of grace in private, in the family circle, and in the house of prayer. The ministers of the Gospel urge you, from Sabbath to Sabbath, and as they occasionally meet with you in the private walks of social life, to be reconciled to God. The throne of grace is at all times open to your approach, and Christ is ever ready, the exalted Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. Therefore,

3. None will be able to say that they

humbly, earnestly, and perseveringly sought the assistance of the Holy Spirit, without obtaining it. There are many who reject the statements of the Bible, with regard to the utter helplessness of man. They think that the Spirit's influences are not indispensably necessary; that they can refrain from sin, and become religious when they please; that it is time enough to be religious when they become older; and that the pleasures of time and of sense are neither so unsatisfactory, nor so destructive, as they are represented. And is God unrighteous in withholding strength from those who despise it—in restraining the influences of the Spirit towards those who think them unnecessary—in sealing the fountains of his mercy to those who will not ask it, and in leaving them to their own hearts' lusts who are resolved to persevere in a course of sin? He is willing to receive every repentant and returning sinner; to forgive all his sins, however numerous and aggravated; to sanctify him by his Spirit, and to make him meet for the enjoyments of heaven. "Seek ye the Lord, then, while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him turn to the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God who will abundantly pardon."

4. Neither can you plead your inability to obey God, as an excuse for continuing in sin. If you do so, it is a proof that you only want an excuse for neglecting your duty. No doubt, you cannot change your natures, nor sanctify your hearts, nor even prepare yourselves for the reception of divine grace; but God can, and will do so. He has appointed the means of grace, and he has promised to bless them to all who humbly, and sincerely, and perseveringly use them. And if you do not seriously attend

to the Scriptures; if you do not pray for the sanctifying influences of the Spirit; and if you neglect the means of grace, you are as inexcusable as that man who refuses to take food when in health, or medicine when in sickness, merely because he cannot preserve his life, or restore his health. You are as inexcusable as the agriculturist would be, who refuses to tear up his fallow ground, and cast, in seed time, the precious grain into the bowels of the earth, merely because he cannot insure an abundant harvest, unless God cause his sun to shine, and his genial showers to descend. And if you are thus perverting the doctrine of man's inability, we must tell you plainly, that it is because you have no wish to serve God—because you love sin, and hate holiness; and because, with all your professions of believing the Scriptures, you do not really believe them. It is all pretence, or hypocoerisy or delusion.

If you fall into a pit, from which you cannot extricate yourselves, the very consciousness of your helplessness would cause you to cry for aid. This was David's fearful case; but he cried unto the Lord for help; nor did he cry in vain: "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." Ps. xl. 1. Your case is that of David's; let his example be the model of your conduct; cry for help to Him who alone can help you; and as assuredly as he heard, and answered, and delivered him, so will he hear and deliver you. "He will hide you in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle will he hide you: he will set you upon a rock; and he will put a new song into your mouth, even the praises of the living God!" Ps. xxvii. 5.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY;

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS,

By the Rev. GREVILLE EWING,
Of the Independent Chapel, Nile Street, Glasgow.

We have lived to see a day* of freedom to the slaves throughout the British empire. Our fellow-creatures of every complexion are no longer held as personal property in

our country. Their labour must be paid, their emancipation will not be complete till the end of the term of their apprenticeship; but that term has this day begun to pass, and even now the new-born children are this day born in a state of freedom. What

* 1st August, 1834.

a large portion, calculated at eight hundred thousand, are thus favoured to experience at once an improved condition! At last they actually taste of the sweets of liberty, and have the prospect of tasting them more and more fully, and of leaving them, when they die, as an inheritance to their offspring. Now they will have comforts, to which before they were absolute strangers. Above all, they will have the liberty to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to read the Holy Scriptures, to worship God in public and in private, to observe, in christian fellowship, the sacred rest of the Lord's day, to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; in short, to live and die, not as beasts of burden, but as rational creatures—as moral agents, as partakers of the blessings of civilization and of divine grace.

Adverting to the horrors of slavery, the original seizure, the distant transportation, the compulsory, anxious, hopeless labour, the command, and control, and abject prostration of human beings, for the benefit of strangers, I speak, said he, merely of the system—there have been happy instances of goodness and gentleness, of gratitude and fidelity, of mutual attachment and confidence, among both masters and slaves; but the system is essentially and incurably bad, and its tendency incalculably pernicious. How thankful, then, ought we to be that such a system is abolished in the British empire!

But our labour ought not to cease with the cessation of slavery in our own dominions. The extent of slavery in other coun-

tries is an aggregate of evil of far greater magnitude than in this single empire. Our slaves are estimated at eight hundred thousand; but foreign slaves are estimated at more than five millions. We should act an inconsistent part if we did not now endeavour to induce other nations to follow our example.

If we are Christians, the emancipation of slaves will, in our view, be a branch of the missionary enterprise. On this principle we devote a part of this day, never to be forgotten in our history—the day fixed for the emancipation of the West India slaves—to the exercise of thanksgiving and prayer, of thanksgiving to Almighty God, through whose good providence this great act of justice and mercy has been conducted, and of prayer that he may conduct it to a happy issue, and accompany it with his blessing, for extending religious instruction to that long-injured class of our fellow-subjects. We have long endeavoured to support missionaries there, though they have been much persecuted. The London Missionary Society have announced their intention of sending out additional missionaries to the West Indies. As yet their funds are unequal to the proposed extension of their exertions. Instruction is now called for, for eight hundred thousand, who have been, in a great measure, shut out from knowledge, because it was not thought fit to afford it. Let us then liberally contribute according to our ability, in order to send out additional labourers into this harvest.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT MONTGOMERY, Airdrie.
PRAYER by the Rev. WALTER FAIRLIE, Whitehaven.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE MOURNER IN ZION ;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. ROBERT MONTGOMERY,

Airdrie.

“Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted.”—MATT. v. 4.

BOUNDED by the limitations set to man, before we can confer titles or possessions we must first be ourselves proprietors ; for this plain reason, that no one can justly give to another a title to that over which he has himself no claim. There might, indeed, be a fancied conferring of rank or of riches ; but if the giver of these donations were himself poor and indigent, depending on the bounty of others for the blessings of life, it is a self-evident truth that the whole transaction must vanish into thin air, because it is in itself a mere fiction. So in like manner is it the case with the bestowal of blessings ; some with the utmost unconcern bless with the mouth, while in the same breath they could curse from the heart. But as the curse causelessly shall not come, so neither the blessing without the influence of God shall ever take effect.

The patriarchs of old blessed, but in doing so, they spake by the influence of the Holy Spirit, who through them made known the will of God which should afterwards be fulfilled. And thus they were enabled to reveal what should befall the Church and their descendants in the latter day ; but, as men, they could neither enter into the scrutiny of the heart, nor make one hair white or black. It was not so, however, with the speaker in the text ; he knew alike, and with unerring certainty, the counsels of peace and the denunciations of wrath. In the counsels of eternity his divinity was there ; he is privy to the closest recesses of

heaven's unrevealed secrets, and, by virtue of his inherent power, he can change the heart of man, and make it alive and holy. He entered into the unmaturing designs of the most powerful created intelligences, and knew what should be the state of man for all time coming, even for ever. And not only was it his province to decide upon the beatitude of the human family, but, by virtue of inherent power, it was also his prerogative to confer upon every obedient soul the perfection of bliss. This complex view of his character must we keep before us while we explain the passage. Jesus tells both what the mourners in Zion naturally are, and what he will infallibly make them. He, like every practical preacher, points out the blessings of salvation, and gives certain marks by which the diligent inquirer may test his own standing whether or not he be in the faith. And as the blessed Redeemer never opened his mouth without the amplest reason, and never preached inapplicable to the state of his hearers, we may view the text and the context as an answer to some such ascription of praise as we find recorded in the eleventh chapter of Luke's gospel : “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, yea rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.” In the one case as in the other, Christ was preaching unto the people ; the multitudes had come thick together to hear the Word of God descend upon them as the

rain, and the droppings of his mouth as the sweet smelling myrrh. And in the passage before us he declares with divine authority, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

In these words there is a character mentioned—The mourner in Zion; then the blessedness of that character is declared. In the farther prosecution of the subject we shall, therefore, mention the few things over which the godly mourn; and then notice the blessedness of those who mourn in Zion.

1st. Those intended in the text, mourn over the general mischief sin has introduced.

When man sinned he suffered not alone, but the very ground is cursed for his sake. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now. The transgression of man is the true source of sorrow to every pious soul, inasmuch as it hath deformed the fair creation, and entailed, by unalterable law, the principles of dissolution on every grade of sentient being. Originally the vast fabric of the whole creation appeared worthy of the infinite Creator. Beauty and harmony pervaded the whole system, and the Deity himself delighted in all his works. But sin entered the economy of the universe, Jehovah withdrew his benign influences, and destruction and death followed after.

In primeval innocence, there was a surpassing beauty in every inanimate object, to declare the glory of God; and every living thing above, and all that moveth below were at peace. The bloom of satisfaction settled on every breathing thing. Nor was there any fear of harm so long as innocence prevailed—but one hymn of harmony and of order ascended to their Author from all the tribes of the world. Man, however, brake the law, and broken with it was the peace of the whole. Then followed storms of the air, eruptions of the earth, and death throughout the animal creation. Now such scenes of disaster cannot but awaken the sympathies of the heaven-born soul. All things were under man even as he was under God. It was his rank to inherit the world, and his business to beautify his extended dominions. But, alas! how is the gold become dim? How is the most fine gold changed? Every kind of being was created for the glory of God. And a beautiful order prevailed through all the varied gradations, from the lowest lifeless

matter, up to the fairest plant in the vegetable kingdom—even to the tallest cedar in the garden of God; and thence through all the orders possessed of animal life until it arrived at man who was himself lord of the lower world. But the higher the elevation be, the more severe is the fall; and the deeper rooted the interest be, the more disastrous is its eradication. The most dignified of the whole was the first to derange the system. And what makes the case the more heart-rending is the fact, that had man remained firm to his trust, and faithful to his God, there was not another way that sin and the dire effect of sin could ever have entered the lower world. Say then, if the saints have not cause to mourn over the evils which sin has produced? Ye may never have experienced bereavements that have come nigh even unto your soul. You may never have seen the death of relatives when you could have been satisfied that your own life-strings had burst; and, in the mental shock received from their fall, were only sorry that yourselves were left behind. If, indeed, you have never had periods of mental depression, when the breaking billows of disappointment have come into the very vitals of life, you may not be prepared to mourn. But let the haughtiest amongst you, and he that is exalted highest above the level of human misery, take a survey of six thousand years, and say what will be the result. Say if he can bid bold defiance to the feelings of men, or if he is able to lend a deaf ear to the tale of wo. See all the scenes of desolation and death which have passed in rapid succession—the more beautiful and innocent of the warbling tribes become an easy prey to the more disgusting and voracious: and thus of all the animals which move in the plain, as though nature were in arms against herself, and madly determined to devour her own vitals. See the blasting, and the mildew, and the locust, linked in destructive league, until they have despoiled the fair field of its produce, and spread privation far and wide. Behold earthquakes that with their yawning mouths have desolated whole tracts of country. And near of kin to these are bursting volcanoes which have followed and overtaken with living fire the frightened and fleeing inhabitants. And through all the varied breakings of nakedness, and pestilence, and the plague, what a treasure of feeling has been expended here, and beauty decayed! Parents,

the natural guardians of children, have been stretched listless and lifeless, in the very hour when their kindness was most required; and children, the hope of parents, have been left to sicken and to suffer far from the pitying eye and the consoling arm; for these invincible ravagers have caused every surrounding individual to seek safety in flight or in seclusion. And, still more hideous and horrible, take a view of sin in the desolations of war—war which has been raised by the envy of man, and propagated by the prowess of his arm. And after the sword, has been bathed in blood and has ceased to devour, still more dreadful than the sword because exercised at a period when we would expect compassion for the dying and the dead, follows the maddening outcry of infuriated men. And as a fruit of victory, an unprincipled licentiousness, which neither discipline can restrain, nor civilization do away, stalks forth at large amongst the people; and all that is pure, and reverend, and holy, in the virtue of families, is cruelly trampled on, and held in the bitterest derision.*

But it were endless thus to proceed, sin is productive of scenes which no liveliness of imagination is able to portray; and which no tongue shall ever describe. You may not be able to understand all the destruction which sin carries through its wide domains; you may not have seen the appalling spectacle of men cut down by thousands, nor have heard the death-groan of the dying; but were the stoutest hearted among you to see an individual who now stands in the vigour of life, and in the full bloom of health, in a moment, by some deadly aim to be laid prostrate at your feet, your inmost feelings would recoil at the sight; and some of you would be haunted for whole days, with an impression which nothing but time could wear away; and at night, when you sought retreat from your cares, ever-meddling memory would chase sleep from your eyes, and turn that couch on which you have so often reclined into a bed of restlessness, and the night of repose into weariness of the flesh.

Now it is over sin, as the cause of all these calamities, and of many more than can be named, that the mourner in Zion sighs and weeps, and cries aloud unto his God. But you will say, does not the man of the world also weep over these things?

Sometimes he does, but at others he rejoices, just as he fancies them to be productive of what he calls good or evil to himself. And in this lies the difference between the unregenerated and the renewed man. The saint, with a singleness of eye to the glory of God, mourns over sin, as it is the cause of every calamity; but the natural man is not sure if sin is the cause of sorrow. Nay, he never thinks of sin in the matter, his attention is turned chiefly to the pain which causes him to cry out; and, very often when he does so, in the thoughts of his heart and in the language of his mouth he blasphemes the name of the Holy One of Israel. But the mourner described in the text, laments over sin in all its direful effects to man in the misery of the world; and, in the persuasion of his soul, adopts the language of inspiration, "The wages of sin is death." Lust, when it is conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

2d. They sorrow after a godly sort. "Ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might live unto the Lord." Godly sorrow is intimately connected with the law, operating as a "schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." It is the very nature of sorrow to refer to misery either near or more remote, and that misery as coming in contact with the person sorrowing. Now the law sets before the face of the sinner the wrath of the Supreme Ruler revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. But the bearing of the broken law presses upon the spirit and urges it unto death. In every view that it presents to the carnal mind "our God is a consuming fire." This presses upon the transgressor to the wounding of his spirit, and leaves him nothing to sustain his infirmity; and, the last ray of hope being fled, despair supplies weapons for his own destruction. In every possible case the sorrow of the world worketh death, while godly sorrow worketh repentance that needeth not to be repented of. But it would be a vain thing to sorrow over sin, and yet to indulge in its commission. No such state is consistent with godly sorrow; it leads to a real change of mind as to past guilt and to future godliness. And in this consists that repentance to purity which never shall need to be repented of. There is a change wrought in the whole man; he has new views, new desires, and new actions.

The judgment is so changed by the rays

* See Chalmers on the hatefulness of war.

of divine light as to form entirely different conclusions concerning the good and the evil. Men under the power of sin, committing iniquity, never form a correct judgment concerning either the guilt or the bearing of their transgression. Because it holds for ever true, that the natural man receiveth not the things that be of God, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned. Hence, men are called to ponder the ways of God aright. And by reason of their sottishness are declared to be void of understanding. There may, indeed, be degrees in deceivableness, but all sinners are more or less deceived, for they do trust in false refuges. Every man who commits iniquity, while the natural principle of conscience remains, must be convicted in his own mind, that it is the judgment of God that those who do such things are guilty of death. Yet there are many who through misguided views so far despise these convictions as to commit transgression with greediness. In their practice they cause evil to take the place of good, and good to take the place of evil, evidently regulating their conduct by some rule very different from the law of God. They judge either that sin is not so evil as it is declared to be, or that it is better to enjoy its pleasures for a season than to forego it on other considerations.

But "repentance unto life is a saving grace wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God; whereby, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filth and odiousness of his sins, and upon the apprehension of God's mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, he so grieves for and hates his sins, as that he turns from them all to God, purposing and endeavouring constantly to walk with him in all the ways of new obedience." There is a thorough change in the judgment; and the mind, divinely convinced by saving truth, distinctly concludes that sin is utterly base, that it offends God and ruins the immortal soul. Then, casting off all palliations, the believer comes to the fixed determination that all sin is evil, only evil, and that continually. "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." This is the result of the believer's enlightened judgment with regard to the law, his own condition in time and eternity to come.

But the will must, at the same time, be renewed, otherwise there can be no true

sanctity. Wherever the will is not summed up in the divine will, there is a tendency to do iniquity; and so long as the will is given to sinning, nothing but external restraints can keep from indulging that propensity. But there can be no such desire in the sanctified soul. The believer in the exercise of faith is jealous over himself with a godly jealousy. It is with respect to the will that we are said to be dead in sin, and alienated from the life of God. But, when the will is renewed, the inclination to do iniquity is done away. And by this change of will we become dead to sin that we should not live any longer therein. And how much soever of the body of sin and death may cleave to us, yet the will of sinning is taken away; and the affections are so modified that as we sought formerly to please the creature, we now seek supremely the glory of the ever blessed Creator. And all sin as bearing against that glory is to the true convert the object of the bitterest sorrow. "For, behold this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge. In all things ye have proved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

No doubt the grand matter in every saint is to be possessed of living faith, which worketh by love, and which purifieth the heart; but then it is true of the whole human race, "by their fruits ye shall know them." So the pure internal principle must diffuse itself through the whole external conversation as one continued bond of christian circumspection, bringing all our actions within the range of God's law. Without this no repentance can ever be genuine. To possess repentance for sin, and yet to commit it, whenever conveniency occurs, is both to mock God and to deceive our own souls. No such sorrow for sin, how often soever it may be felt, can indicate a real change of our views, of our desires, and of our actions. There is still a lie in it: our words may be good, but then our actions show that we are unsteadfast and perfidious in the covenant of the Lord. There must be fixedness of purpose to be for the Lord, and for no other, and decision of performance, in giving effect to that purpose in all our actions, being fruits meet for repentance; and the only way in which this can be done, is to follow the standing rule

of our divine Lord and Master—to depart from every appearance of evil. Whenever we begin to be pleased with the gilded bait of sin, or to tamper with temptation, we have already slipped from the precipice of moral rectitude; and the actual commission of iniquity is to have reached the descent of our fall in the foul plunge of moral filth, or to be broken on the rock below by virtue and our own weight. The saint must be sincere in the work of his soul; and the only mark of sincerity is in an unblemished walk going on from strength to strength, until he appear before God in Zion. But, wherever there is not the strictest watchfulness and diligence to avoid every act of iniquity, and that, too, in cherishing all the graces of the Spirit, by the punctual performance of every revealed duty, there is reason to doubt the reality of repentance. Where there is not the strictest piety, there will, at least, be some interruptions of our walk with God; and as often as this is interrupted, our steadfastness is broken through, and we give evidence of that baneful principle—sin working death. But, in our godly sorrow for sin, whereto we have already attained, in letting the light of an unblemished christian conversation shine before men, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things; and happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth.

3d. They mourn over sin, as it is committed against God.

“‘Gainst thee, thee only, have I sinn’d,
In thy sight done this ill;
That when thou speak’st thou may’st be just,
And clear in judging still.”

Beneath this view of the matter, all our sorrow for sin must flow from selfish and from sinful motives; and all the misery which sin possibly can superinduce upon the creature is comparatively insignificant, when we take into account the indignity which it meditates against the Creator. He is the Supreme, the universe-pervading, and universal prevailing God; and sin, in his sight, is so very vile a thing, that if we have saving impressions of his sovereign grace made upon our souls, these impressions will bring us to the exercises of the Prophet, when he said, “Oh! that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, for the slain of the daughter of my people.” And we will have heart-penetrating sorrow, like that of the upright patriarch, who, in every

other view that he could take of sin, found some room for self-justification; but, when brought into the presence of the eternal God, was forced to exclaim, “I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

And, in every view that we can take of God, this impression must be produced upon our minds, on account of the sin that we have committed against him. Jehovah is so pure and so holy, that no evil can come nigh his dwelling, neither shall sin stand in his sight; yea, he chargeth his angels with possible folly, and the heavens are comparatively impure in his presence. But, contrasted with the angels that kept their first estate, and the heavens that retain all the rectitude, in which they were originally framed, sin is made up of all uncleanness, and of every thing that loveth and that maketh a lie; and, agreeably to its innate ingredient, is hated and hateful before the Eternal. God is angry with ill men every day. His Spirit was long grieved with the workers of iniquity; and he said that he would not always strive with men: yet, for their iniquities, he would shorten their days, and number them with the dust. These are the beginnings of sorrows, and make way for the strongest possible marks of Jehovah’s displeasure.

And if, in connexion with the vileness of sin, we take into view the high character of Him against whom it is committed—the rectitude of his nature, the power of his might, and the benignity of his grace—it will fill our hearts with the deepest penitential sorrow, that the black and the bitter ingredients of sin should be found operating, so uninterruptedly, in the soul of man, against the King of glory, even the Lord of heaven, whose right it is to command, and to have every sentient being obey him, and who can testify the utter incompatibility of sin with his holiness, by no stronger reprobation than by leaving it to produce, in every frame where it is found, its legitimate effects—destruction and death; and, overpowered by the down-bearings of personal guilt, amid the relentings of a heart broken by the divine Word, we will be forced to exclaim, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory.”

But the sinner, in every pursuit, is himself pursued. If we think of the omnipresence of Jehovah, the tear of sorrow shall

oe shed over sin; for how daring and impudent soever the act may be, it is open to the view of the eternal God. No secret thought can elude his research; no private design can escape his scrutiny. Every deed that is done in darkness he will bring forth into light. The basest intrigues shall be held up to the gaze of countless myriads, and openly dashed back in the face of the boldest perpetrator. David sinned in the deep recesses of retirement—behind that veil which the halo of rank has drawn around the mitred head; his iniquity was fenced with all the embankments which the power of man could fabricate, or the wealth of the earth could raise; it was conducted unknown alike to his friends, and hidden from his foes, yet the Lord was privy to all his ways. Open to his eyes are the deeds of darkness, ever before him are the doings of men; so that whatever is unpleasant in his presence can never be secluded from his review. The utmost distance of place is as near to the Eternal as though it were the centre of the system; and the yet closer than midnight secrecy is as clear in his sight as though written with a sun-beam. Nor can the repetition of the act ever reconcile that which is filthy to that which is pure. Sin is mediating an alienation between us and our God, and, as doing so, must be a grief of mind to all who are concerned about the salvation of their souls. It is causing the Creator to remove far from those works of his hands in which he took the greatest delight. Even while, from the immaculate holiness of his nature, he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, he is declaring, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he would turn unto me and live; and is, in the overflowing fullness of redeeming love, expostulating with the sons of men, concerning every act of unrighteousness, "O do not that abominable thing which my soul hateth!"

Not, however, must we consider God as capable of being acted upon, or proceeded against, as the children of men are. Sin is opposed to his perfect law; it is contrary to his holy will, and altogether in opposition to the rectitude of his moral government; but, though it be so, he is too highly elevated to be injured by its baneful influences. He testifies against it as an exceeding evil thing, and as productive only of evil effects; but, then, if his admonitions are neglected, the ultimate end of all evil and enmity is, that it reverberates upon him who exerts it.

Now, the effects of sin are the cause of all the sorrow which the unconverted can have in the matter; for they love to work out sin in life, though they do not love to receive its wages in death. But the mourner in Zion casts self, as it were, behind his back, and sorrows after a godly sort, because sin is directed against all the gifts of beneficence and the glory of his God. It is the very essence of believing in the Lord Jesus that the saint becomes willing to be reckoned as nothing, and even less than nothing, that God may be all in all.

It is the source of sorrow to the saint, keen and long-continued, that the malignity of sin, in his soul, is exerted against the tenderest kindness and the most disinterested love of his God. Were any earthly individual to confer favours on his fellows—were he to treat them as a father and as a friend, and were they uniformly to regard him with indifference, or to treat him even with meditated contempt, and, on every occasion, to betray his best interests—such conduct would manifest the basest ingratitude, and would rouse to indignation the feelings of the most sympathetic soul. But no father's care can equal the care of the Lord, nor can mother's love compare with his; yet, against all the benignity of Jehovah, as flowing through the pure river of the waters of life, sin in every act is committed, and can be counteracted only by the saving operations of the Holy Spirit, working effectually upon our souls the work of faith with power, and which is reckoned up in the benediction of the text, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

I come now to point out the blessings of those who mourn in Zion.

In the first place, we remark, that they are blessed with the pardon of all their sins.

"O blessed is the man to whom
Is freely pardoned
All the transgression he hath done,
Whose sin is covered."

Blessed is "the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." There is a deterioration and a deadly character about sin, which burdeneth the soul of every individual over whom it reigns; which fact, of existing positive corruption, renders it indispensably necessary before the sinner can be saved, that he must be freed from every thing which defiles.

All who are capable of being reasoned with know, that, in the whole kingdom of

nature and of providence, every operating principle produces its corresponding effect. It is the nature of fire to burn; it is the nature of every fluid to flow down; the vapours ascend; and so of every object that might be mentioned, it is its nature to operate after its kind. Without this, there could be no general law in nature, nor reasoning with certainty among the sons of men; but, as things exist, wherever we find the cause, there we wait for its legitimate effect.

Now, to apply this principle to the case in hand, in the human frame the seeds of death are sown; and, however latent they may lurk for a while, they will at length spring up, and so luxuriate as to produce the fatal shock. Take the fairest personage produced among the offspring of men, and combine, with beauty, the most robust constitution; then elevate that individual as high as you may, or depress him as low as you please; hide him close from the ken of men; let him be removed far from the range in which death ordinarily commits his ravages, and, if you will, give him length of existence which no man can enjoy; yet, in time, mortality will produce its specific effects—death and dissolution. So, in like manner, sin, how much soever its glow may glitter, or its defiling effects may fascinate, will at length produce retraction and remorse, as well as draw down the judicial vengeance of an offended God upon the head of its own guilty perpetrator. Yea, every worker shall finally weary himself in the ways of iniquity; and when snared in the drag of his own devising, shall be forced to exclaim:—

“How vain are all things here below!
How false and yet how fair!
Each pleasure has its poison too,
And every sweet a snare.”

“Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can a man go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?” So whosoever liveth in sin, must lie down in sorrow. Afflictions are natural fruits to the sin-bound soul.

But, when the pardon of God is completed, sin is removed from all the saints, so as never to be reckoned against them; and the justificative righteousness of Jesus is imputed unto their souls, by virtue of which they stand accepted and acceptable in the presence of Jehovah. Every thing that defileth is removed, so as neither to corrode their comforts, nor disturb the peace of the inner

man. Nay, they are so purified unto himself, a peculiar people, that, by virtue of his own forgiving act, the Lord sees neither iniquity in his Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel. Nor even in all the similes given of the finally impenitent pleading for an entrance into heaven, is there one word spoken of their being so holy as those who are admitted there; but they either cry out on account of their pain that the Lord would pity them, or they proffer their former good works as the ground of acceptance in his sight. Thus it would seem that those who are blessed with the pardon of all their sins, are clear in the sight of men, as well as clear before the Lord. “They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

The disciples of the Mediator were, of old, so meek in themselves, and so modest in their behaviour, that even the wicked took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus; and, occasionally, they beheld the face of the saints as though it had been the face of an angel, and were alarmed in their deeds of darkness, although not deterred from their works of death.

Balaam, too, hunted out by the perfidious Balak, and stimulated, even to infatuation, by the deceitful wages of unrighteousness, when he saw the descendants of the covenant father abiding in their tents, found neither enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel; but the dew of heaven should descend, and should water them as the flocks of Lebanon. And he was involuntarily hurried to the conclusion, “Blessed is he that blesseth them, and cursed is he that curseth them.”

Such is the blessedness pointed out in the text, as communicated to those who obtain the pardon of all their sins. Their peace is made with their God—nothing shall hurt them; the venom is charmed from the deadliest hatred, and the most destructive events are rendered harmless, and ranked amongst the “all things which shall work together for good to them that love God; to them who are the called according to his purpose.” They are restored to a state similar to that which man at his creation enjoyed. Fellowship with God is their chief delight and their highest comfort. They estimate their riches by the favours of his countenance, and their poverty by his frowns. They are near unto him in proportion as their sins are pardoned, and consequently their union is complete. The

language of inspiration is, "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it out of the pit of corruption: thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea;" and,

"As far as east is distant from
The west, so far hath he,
From us, removed in his love,
All our iniquity."

In the second place, we remark, that they are blessed with peace of mind.

"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." To have quiet satisfaction in the soul is the greatest good which can be granted unto man; and the holy in every age have obtained it.

"I will both lay me down in peace,
And quiet sleep will take;
Because thou only me to dwell
In safety, Lord, dost make."

This is the conclusive language with which those who have been blessed with peace from the Lord have been enabled to console themselves. They have spiritual peace and confidence in the law of God, to which the evil doer and the profane are utterly estranged. The wicked flee when no man pursueth. They become alarmed at the rustling of the leaf, and shake with fear at the shadows of the mountains. The guilt of their own conscience is the cause of their terror, and the angel of the Lord pursues them from above; but the righteous are firm and bold, with all the stability of conscious innocence—they recline under the protection of the Most High, and he gives his angels charge concerning them. The pure angelic spirits bear them up, and bring them to Zion.

"The angel of the Lord encamps,
And round encompasseth
All those about, that do him fear,
And them delivereth."

Nor is it easy for man to find language sufficiently descriptive of the peace which God hath given to his saints. Nothing shall move them. Store of grace is infused into their lips. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty;" and the more severe the trial, the greater is the security. "His truth shall be a shield and buckler unto thee. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth by noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at

thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked."

Such peace is more precious than the golden wedge of Ophir. It increaseth as the natural strength decays; and, like true wisdom, much rubies cannot buy it, neither can the topaz equal it. When we take a survey of the busy throng, we find that all the energy of man is exerted for some pleasure either contemplated or possessed. All the labour of a man is for his mouth; yet, apart from this peace of mind which the Lord bestows, he can never be satisfied. There are periods in which the nearest and the dearest earthly relative can afford no consolation: the stroke does not admit of mortal remedy. All the delicacies of life have lost their relish, and all the delights of nature have for ever ceased to please. The ties of life totter on the brink of death, and the soul loatheth the honey-comb. The stillest whisper disturbs the ear, and the pitying eye of attendants distracts the thought. The sincerest sympathy adds more sorrow to the heart, and the soul is in the very grasp of death. Eternity unexplored is before, and a world of wickedness is behind. The eye is about to be closed, and never again to open on to-morrow's sun. The twilight of time makes way for the dawn of eternity, and the latch is falling on the last windings of sublunary bliss. Then it is that a true estimate of this peace of mind can be drawn. In such a scene, what would a man give for his soul! what for the character described in the text, and the blessing added!

Now it is, if never before, that Jesus, and the Gospel of Jesus, can be properly appreciated; and now it is that this peace of mind can be fully applied, so as to elevate the soul, above being hurt by feelings from without, or fears from within. It is a peace which passeth all natural understanding. It is implanted in the believer in the day of regeneration, and is cherished through all the various stages of his growth in grace—justification, adoption, and sanctification, until it is perfected in the completion of his redemption. The peace of the saint is preserved in faith and love, till, by the strength of divine grace, he arrives at the fulness of the stature of manhood in Jesus.

From the commencement of the new birth, his whole aim is to have peace with God. Formerly his mind was at enmity: he hated the law, the sentence, and the Judge, and was ready to rise up in rebellious war, mustering his feeble efforts to fight against God, and summoning up his every energy to do despite unto the Lord of glory; but now he is soothed into silence, and yields a willing and an enlightened obedience unto all the precepts of the Lord.

The believer, thus blessed, lives in the Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit is peace—peace persisted in, and long continued, even through all the varied ages of the world, and diversified situations in which mankind have been placed. The chosen of old were so blessed with peace, that even a dog should not move his tongue against them; and the Lord laid a restraint upon their enemies, so that they should neither be able to annoy them, nor come near them with the sword. Nor are the external blessings of peace wholly consigned to the days of other years; but even now, when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.

But this peace, in a particular manner, pertaineth to the conscience. Believers are freed from all the bitter bitings of remorse to which the wicked are subject, and which not unfrequently hurry them headlong to destruction. Even causing them to prove traitor to their own souls, and to rush unasked into the presence of their Judge, who is sitting in judgment for the distribution of justice. This is an alarming, yet natural and necessary, effect of sin, when carried to an extreme; for, when it is finished, it uniformly produceth death: or, if there be many who never, to such an extent, feel sin's fatal effects, yet, in its easiest terms, it hangs a gloom of doubt, and of dark forebodings, over the mind of every worker of iniquity. The atheist and the theist alike receive not the light of heaven, but trust to a darkened understanding—the blind leading the blind, until the end of both is destruction. The righteous, however, in peace possess their souls, and onwards pursue their christian course in faith and love. They follow peace with all men, peace with God, and perseverance in the Holy Ghost, until in due time they have fulfilled all God's will and their own duty, and are found no more fit for being left in the land of sin and of sorrow, but are meet for the upper house

and the heavenly Jerusalem, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and then they are found of God in peace, having neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing.

3d. They are blessed with the fellowship of Jesus.

“Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” “I will come in and sup with him, and he with me,” is the language of the living Redeemer. The saints, and the saints only, in the holy and heavenly exercises of their souls, know what is meant by the fellowship of Jesus. When in the lively exercise of faith, they are elevated by the holiest emotions of divine influence, and are transported, in the aspirations of their minds, from earth to heaven, where Christ in all his fulness mediates for them. There they have foretastes of the joy which Jesus inspires, by the radiating light of his countenance; and in the sweet experience of their souls can exclaim, “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” Then the world, and the things of the world, sink into insignificance; and, in the holy longings of their soul, they “desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.”

In every ease where the state of friends admits of personal union, the gifts which each bestows may be many and great, but all that a friend so situated can ever give, can never equal himself. His personal presence would consummate the pleasure and perpetuate the beneficence. Now the fellowship which Christ holds with his people, both admits of this union, and makes it in its perfection. When dignitaries of old wished to testify their attachment, they gave in promise the best of their kingdom, and to the half of its extent. But no royal benefactor ever exerted his influence farther, or extended his grant beyond this; himself was always in reservation, and his rule upon the throne. When Jesus gives, however, it is after the manner of heaven—in princely prerogative—not to the half, but to the whole of his kingdom. He effects a union with his friends, which the most endearing earthly relation is used to figure out, and to represent to the mind of man. The Church is described as “the bride, the Lamb's wife.” After he has exerted all his influence for the salvation of men, and bestowed every other benignant gift, last, but not least, he gives himself to those who are blessed with his fellowship; and thenceforward he continues with them even for ever, with all the

fellowship of a friend—with all the care of a father, and the sustentation of God.

The saints in every age have been sustained with this fellowship, and, under the radiant influences of divine grace, have been elevated to heaven. When Abel, in the piety of his soul, offered up sacrifice to God, he received the marks of divine approbation. And such was the intercourse between God and man in the case of Enoch, that, in the emphatic language of Scripture, it is declared he “walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” Noah, too, “found grace in the eyes of the Lord,” and was so favoured with the friendship of heaven as to be warned of things not seen, and guided to a safe retreat for the saving of his house. In the ark of bliss, enclosed by his God, he was carried far beyond the cares of the world, and held fellowship with Jesus, while trouble and anguish lay on every soul; men’s hearts failed them for fear when the yawning deep pressed them behind, the war of elements circumscribed them before, and the judgments of God fell from above, but the ark was the object of Jehovah’s care, “and God remembered Noah.”

Under the influence of the same fellowship Abraham went out to seek a land of which the Lord should tell him; and he ever rested in his director with the sweetest delight. Nor was it wanting unto Jacob, when he went out from his father’s house; the angels of God ascended and descended to the place where he lay, and at the top of the heavenly communication stood the Lord omnipotent. Again, when he returned to the land of the west, the hosts of heaven met him; and he was consoled by a man, ere he saw the face of his brother Esau, as though it had been the face of God. But what shall we say more, for time would literally fail me to speak of Jephtha, of Gideon, and of the prophets? But the fellowship of the Lord never faileth to those whom he blesses.

“Ye gates lift up your heads, ye doors—
Doors that do last for aye;
Be lifted up that so the King
Of glory enter inay.”

Christ was known unto his disciples in the familiarity of his language, and in the fulness of himself. “Children, have ye here any meat?” was the consoling question. For immediately every conveniency was provided, and he was known to them in the breaking of bread. And when the fears of his followers were greatly excited, ill was heaped on ill till a crowd of evils seemed to consummate their misery; they had taken away their Master from their head, and each returning day brought prospects deepening in gloom which depressed their minds near to despair: but while the gathering blackness thickened the gloom, quickly the Lord stood in the middle of them and said, “Peace be unto you.” And by this fellowship he lit up a light in every soul which burned brighter and brighter until that it burst in glory. But, before the mist and the darkness fell upon them, they had been partakers of the fellowship of his body and of his blood, instituted by himself, and communicated to his disciples. This communion shall continue to be celebrated while sun and moon endure. It is a sweet repast to the soul, to tell the weary traveller that Jesus is gone before, and that he hath gained the crown for all his followers. It is a foretaste of that fellowship which they shall enjoy when heaven shall be held in fruition—when death shall be no more, and when speaking in vision shall be lost in victory. This is the fellowship with which Jesus blesses his followers; it is a fellowship in the obedience of their lives, and in the experience of their souls. It is a commemorating of all that he has done, and is continuing to do for them, while he bears the names of his chosen on the Urim and the Thummim of his breast, before the throne of God; until that they shall stand on the sea of glass holding the harps of God in their right hand, and shall sing the praises of the Redeemer. Then, indeed, shall the love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the communion of saints, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be fully and freely with them. “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”

PRAYER

AT THE ORDINATION OF THE REV. WALTER NICOL, A.M., OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LONGTOWN, CUMBERLAND,

By the Rev. WALTER FAIRLIE,

Whitehaven.

WITH reverence, gratitude, and praise, we approach thee, almighty God, adoring thee as infinitely great and supremely good. Reflecting upon thine immaculate holiness, and upon our degradation through sin, we are astonished at thy condescension, patience, and mercy towards us, in that thou dost permit us to enter thy sanctuary for the purposes of becoming acquainted with the counsels of divine wisdom, and of holding fellowship with thee, the almighty Lord of heaven and of earth. But thy goodness, O God, appears not only in allowing us to appear before thy precious throne, for thou hast also provided a Mediator, through whose merits sinners may approach thine august presence with acceptance; and thou hast pledged thy word, thine oath, and even thine existence, that thou wilt bestow upon all them who seek thee in faith, in love, and with holy importunity, all blessedness in time and also in eternity. Thanks be unto thee, almighty Father, for thine unspeakable gift, Christ Jesus, and for all the pledges of thine unmerited love through him. We have, indeed, destroyed ourselves; but in thee is our help; our sins have separated between thee and us; ignorance has spread a veil over our understanding, shutting out the vision of thy glorious character from our minds; moral pollution has defaced thine image originally impressed upon our hearts, disordering our affections, and keeping them without the renovating influences of the Holy Spirit, in a state of carnality and of enmity against thee. Sin has, indeed, so perverted the springs of action, and ruined our whole moral constitution, that, unless the all-creating power of Christ Jesus were made to rest upon us, our souls would be destitute of the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost. The unsanctified propensities of our nature make us spurn at thine authority, involving us in much guilt, and making us to drink of the bitter waters of poignant sorrow. But thanks be to thee, most merciful God, that thou hast made provision

for the redemption of this ungodly world; that thou hast promised the Spirit of Grace to renew man's perverse nature; that thou hast sent forth the Spirit of Truth to disperse the darkness of the human mind, and the Spirit of Might to subdue the refractory dispositions of Adam's posterity, "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them" in the Gospel.

And blessed, O Lord, be thy name, that, for effecting this moral renovation in the hearts and lives of men, thou hast appointed the ordinances of religion; that thou hast conferred gifts upon an order of men to minister in the christian church; and that, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, thou hast given some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." To thee, O God, do we give thanks that thou hast planted a church in this place; and that, when thy people of this congregation were deprived of their late pastor, thou hast, in tender compassion to their souls, provided for them another messenger of peace, to dispense among them the blessings of salvation. And we now most earnestly beseech thee, almighty Father, to bless abundantly thy servant whom we, by the laying on of our hands, set apart to the work of the ministry, and to the pastoral charge of this church.

O thou merciful, gracious, and sovereign Jehovah, be pleased richly to endow thy servant, whom thou hast called in thy providence to the work of the holy ministry in this congregation, with all the gifts and graces requisite in a faithful, able, and successful minister of the New Testament. May he be favoured by thee in his private studies when meditating on the Scriptures of Truth, with a quick apprehension of the mind of the divine Spirit therein contained; when his heart indites good matter touching the King, the Lord Jesus Christ, may he have the felicity of being enabled by thy gracious aid to commit it into language sufficiently simple for the understandings of

his people, and, at the same time, powerful enough to arrest their attention to its great importance; and, under thine infallible direction, may he be always fortunate enough to infuse into his compositions much of the warmth of christian piety, and also much of the unction of practical godliness. When in the pulpit, may his utterance and boldness, and uncompromising faithfulness evidently appear to his audience to be the effects of great devotedness to his work, of deep earnestness in his Master's cause, and of frequent intercourse, by devotional exercises, with the Almighty; and may his instructions, suited to the diversified capacities, cases, and conditions of the hearers, find a ready entrance into their hearts. May his teaching from house to house, as well as publicly, and his visits of mercy to the chambers of the sick and the dying, be always blessed by thee the God of Sion. May his warnings lifted up to the stout-hearted, his consolations tendered to the sorrowful, and all his ministerial services be so conducted and be so rendered effectual by thee for conversion, and for his people's improvement in holiness, that he may have many in this place for a joy and crown in the great day of the Lord.

Our prayers, also, almighty God, we present to thee for the prosperity and comfort of the people of this congregation. Enable them to take a just and practical view of the relation which has been now formed between them and the minister of their free and unanimous choice. Grateful to the chief Shepherd for the inestimable

favour of a gifted, qualified and accredited teacher of religion, may they wait regularly, devoutly, and profitably upon his ministry, "esteeming him very highly in love for his work's sake." Taught by him in the Word, may they communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things; may the elders cooperate with him in every pious and benevolent work; and may they and the whole congregation offer up unto God their prayers, frequently and fervently in his behalf, strengthening thereby his hands and encouraging his heart, while he "watcheth for their souls as one that must give an account." And, oh! that his labours for the conversion of sinners, and "for the edifying of the body of Christ, may be truly successful, so that when he and his flock appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, truth may enable him joyously and triumphantly to say, in allusion to a rich harvest of immortal souls, "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me."

God be merciful unto all the nations of the earth, and bless them with the Gospel of Jesus Christ; may men of every kingdom, of every rank in society, and of every condition in life, be blessed in the Redeemer and call him blessed.

"Now 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 us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever." Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN MUIR, D.D., Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. A. ROBERTSON, A.M., Greenock.

COMPARATIVE VIEW OF JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION;

A SERMON PREACHED ON SUNDAY, 20TH JULY, 1834,

By the Rev. JOHN MUIR, D.D.,

Minister of St. James' Church, Glasgow.

"Comparing spiritual things with spiritual."—1 COR. ii. 13.

WE formerly took up these words as the ground of our text, when we proposed first to compare the Old and New Testaments the one with the other, showing wherein they agree, wherein they differ, and wherein the one excels the other. We proposed next to compare the old covenant of works and the new covenant of grace with each other, showing wherein they agree, wherein they differ, and wherein the one excels the other; and we proposed next to compare justification with sanctification in the christian life, showing wherein they agree, wherein they differ, and wherein the one excels the other. Now, in entering on this last comparison, we first showed the necessity of justification from these words: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." We were then led to consider the nature of justification from another passage. We came, last of all, to speak both of the nature and necessity of sanctification from this text: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and we come now to the comparative view of justification and sanctification, and we shall show wherein they agree, next wherein they differ, and, lastly, wherein the one excels the other, comparing still "spiritual things with spiritual."

We come, then, to show wherein these two parts of christian experience, the justification and sanctification of the believer, agree. First, they agree as to their origin, both of them being from God, as their author; next, they agree as to the honour they put on the moral law, both acknowledging it to be the everlasting rule of righteousness; thirdly, they agree as to being

necessary to our well-being in eternity, there being no justification without sanctification, and no meetness for heaven without sanctification; and, lastly, we shall find that they agree in their being connected with one another—the one as parent, the other as offspring.

First of all, then, justification and sanctification agree as to their origin, both being produced in the soul by God alone as their author. This is true as to justification, as will appear from the following remarks. We say justification has its origin from God alone through the Holy Ghost, and that none but he can show the truth to us, so as to make men believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This justification before God by grace, through faith, owes its origin in the soul of man entirely to divine agency; for we are born under a covenant of works, and mere nature can never lead a man to seek justification but by the works of the law; but if it be by grace, then it must be supernatural or imparted. If nature be counteracted, it must be by supernatural grace imparted. The first covenant God made with man was strictly an arrangement of works; and it was called so, because man was called to work for a time to obtain the favour of God. A particular command was given to him, which was—Not to eat the forbidden fruit. Any other divine command might have been given, but this was the one the Eternal condescended upon. Man was now set a working, in order to obtain life; and had he kept that command to the end of life, he would have had life without end as the reward of his work. The arrangement then God made was an arrangement of the cove-

nant of works, and we are born under this covenant, with a view to please God and obtain his approbation. This is the way of works which man naturally endeavours to take, with a view to please God and his own conscience, and so be confirmed in the favour of God. So true is this, that, taking the way of works to please God, is called walking after the flesh, because it is the way that the flesh always dictates as the only way; whereas, taking the other way, the way of grace or faith, is called in Scripture walking after the Spirit, because the Spirit alone can dictate or show men this way: renounce the old way, and take up the new way as the only true way. Man left to himself, takes the way of works as Paul did before his conversion. It was the way he took for a time, till God brought him from that way, and conducted him in the right way. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"—looking to Christ as the way to get the sentence of condemnation taken off. And now what is it to be in Christ? Says Paul, in the 2d verse, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death;" where we understand him to say, that whereas a time was when he had no law but the law of sin and death—that is, the moral law summed up in the ten commandments, nevertheless, he came by divine teaching to be acquainted with another law—that of spiritual life through Christ Jesus. But, then, if that account will not satisfy, he goes on to say more fully in the 3d and 4th verses, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"—where he gives us to understand that, for a time, expecting by doing it in his best way he might please God; but then the time came when he found the law never could do this—namely, condemn sin in the flesh; because, though the law be good, he was flesh, corrupted nature, and no man could bring a clean thing out of an unclean. However, finding the law insufficient for condemning sin in the flesh, he found that God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to condemn sin; and to fit him for that end he was both partaker of our nature and partaker of the nature of God. This language shows, that if left to

himself with the law only, man will endeavour after a covenant of works, and walk not after the Spirit, but after the flesh. It is because man, left to himself, seeks justification by works, that faith is called in the Word of God a strange act, and the soul's union to Christ a strange work. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." This foundation is called a stone, a tried stone, because Christ was tried and approved ere he stood the propitiation for our sins: it is called a precious corner-stone, because Christ connected in his own person the natures both of God and man; and, when believed in, he connects man with God, and God with man, and makes him walk in the right way. The chapter then proceeds to state how God goes to work in connecting the souls of men with this foundation. If they be found not based on a proper foundation, the soul stands self-condemned; and, as condemned, it is vexed, and wishes to understand the law. However, the Lord comes very near to the soul, that he may do his strange work, and bring to pass his strange act—that is, bring the soul to Christ. To the natural man it appears a strange thing that we should be accepted not on our own foundation, not so much by doing as by believing—by resting on the work of another, rather than by working in our own strength. It is called a strange work and act, because faith in Christ and belief in his imputed righteousness are altogether works of grace, and not of mere nature. It is for the same reason that all who embrace Christ's way of justification are exposed to the reproach and reviling of men. "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law." Now Christ's law is the law of faith, the law whereby we walk so as to please God and be happy. "Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation"—leaving us to understand distinctly that, in consequence of this way of acceptance being strange to the men of this world, whenever believers come to be understood as such to men, they incur their reproach and reviling; but then God shall comfort their souls, in the end they shall enjoy eternal life.

In short, the way of justification, revealed

in the Word, is the only possible way, and it is revealed to us only in the Word, never in the writings of men, whether ancient or modern, however learned or skilled. The Word of God may be said to be that which has God for its author; and then in the Word it is taken up by those to whom the Holy Ghost gives the relish. Unless the Holy Ghost gives such a kind of taste, though we read technically that we are justified by grace through faith, we shall never be able to understand the Word and enjoy it. Till the Lord humble the soul effectually by his providence and Spirit, and thus bring to pass his strange work and his strange act, the man remains ignorant and careless. Then we find that justification has God for its author; and so we read in this very context that we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God; that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"—plainly showing that if men retain the spirit belonging to this world, they shall never understand the things of God, and be justified; whereas, when God gives us the Spirit, we understand the things of God, and are wholly saved by grace through faith; that faith is not of ourselves; no, "it is the gift of God." In the 16th chapter of the Acts, we read that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, and she attended to the things that were spoken by Paul. No doubt Paul preached the grace of God wherever he went. Though Paul preached well, yet it required the Lord to open not her understanding, but her heart, and make her attend to what was said—to take away the old, and impart a new taste. When she had that relish from the hand of God, then she was able to understand the things spoken by Paul; and, to this day, whenever any are brought to take an interest in the things freely given to them, which is the same as justification, it is in consequence of the Lord opening the heart: it is in consequence of this that a taste is given for the beauties of holiness, which is the gospel way of justification—annihilating the creature, and exalting grace. Hence it follows, from God being the author, and the only author of justification, that if a man be but taught in this matter, he may conclude he is out of darkness; if he finds that he is able to attend with interest to the things spoken of in the Gospel, he may infer that God has begun to work in him. Accordingly, we read in 1 John v. 1, "Whosoever believeth

that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; which proceeds on the supposition, and it is true, that no man, left to himself, takes the least interest in Jesus being the Son of God. It is a question that interests him no more than it did Judas Iscariot. Being a man of form, and not of heart, in religion, and left entirely to himself, he takes no interest in Jesus being the Son of God; but if you see a person feel interest in this doctrine, you know, assuredly, that he is not under nature, but under the teaching of supernatural grace, and is born of God. We ought to take comfort from this. The interest a person feels in justification by grace through faith, is proof that he is really taught of the Lord—that a good work is begun in him, especially when it is connected with love to all the saints; for it is said, "Let us love one another; for every one that loveth is born of God."

Another inference is, that as many as are thus justified may warrantably hope for glory in the end; because it is said, "whom he justified, them he also glorified." When we feel no condemnation in our consciences because of Christ, or have an answer of a good conscience, we may rest with confidence, because we have proof that God has begun a good work in us, for God is a God of consistency.

Another inference is, that, since the whole is the work of God, and not of man, we ought to join in prayer to God for the Spirit along with the preaching of the Word. No doubt faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God: but God contrives to bring a person in contact with the faith of the Gospel; and, accordingly, Lydia being one of this kind, was made by the providence of God to leave her own town in Asia—why? because, where she was, she would never have heard of God. Timothy and Paul were allowed to go to Philippi, and there at Philippi she heard Paul, and the Lord opened her heart, that she attended to the things spoken by him. In like manner the Roman centurion was to be justified, and, therefore, he must be brought into contact with preaching. Accordingly God prepared the way. They came to the place in Cesarea where Cornelius lived, and while Peter announced in the hearing of Cornelius that Christ was Lord of all, the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and upon all who sat along with him. And so then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God; but then, since God alone gives grace, we ought to give our prayers. It is good to pray much; and the

more people pray before hearing the Word on Sabbaths, the more benefit will they derive from the preaching of it.

We have now shown how justification is effected by divine agency, and we now speak of sanctification as agreeing with justification in its origin, both being from God; for is not sanctification keeping the commands of God, and are not these summed up in one word, even *Love*, and is not Love said to be "the fulfilling of the law?" Now the end of the commandment is *Charity*, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned; and is it not true, that all this put together is called the Gospel? Yes. Then fallen man does not possess one spark of love to God unless 't be imparted to him; and, therefore, sanctification is the gift of God. Paul says for himself, and he speaks also for his friend Titus, a minister of those days, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 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." Titus iii. 3—5. Hateful because in God's sight we have no love to God, frustrating the end of our being. Paul says, before he was converted he had no love to God—he merely understood the ten commandments literally, but he had no love to God. It is true, then, and we know it by experience to be true, that men by nature are in the state in which Paul was—hateful, without love to God, and haters of one another. If the desire, therefore, of sanctification comes into a man's soul it must be of grace. I allow, however, that a man before receiving genuine sanctification, may do many things the world commends, and still be without sanctification; and thus Cornelius, the Roman centurion, before he obtained that repentance which was unto life, which he obtained by hearing Paul preach, did many things. Yet the man had no love to God, and therefore was in danger of hell-fire. He knew that the Lord helped his conscience to report this to his mind; and, therefore, he set a day apart for fasting and prayer. Then God suggested to him the idea of sending for a minister. That minister came; and when he preached, the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and also fell upon many others. But then he did many things before that sanctification. Peter defended

himself—when they came to hear the whole matter, they cried out with one consent, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life;" but you never hear of this till he heard the Gospel, because then, and not till then, did he look to God by the Holy Spirit shed abroad in his heart. He did so many things that he was accounted blameless; but what he counted gain then he counted loss afterwards, desiring to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith. He did many things, but sanctification comes from love to God, and this again rises up to the mind that sees God to be lovely—that has a taste for his loveliness. Now that part of God's beauty and loveliness is just the loveliness of his beauty as it appears in Christ, who is to us a just God and the Saviour, the just and the justifier of them that believe in the Son, so that we come to love him because of his first love to us. The two are connected as first and second in order of time, as cause and effect, so that till we get this taste we are never conscious of repentance unto life, never conscious of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.

These remarks, then, show that as justification has God alone for its author, so also sanctification has God alone for its author; and hence, when this comes out clearly, we must see ourselves great debtors to God's grace, for we shall find that when dead in sin the Lord puts spiritual life into us—not only gives us to see the things of God's Gospel, but by this means to have life shed abroad in our hearts; in short, we are nothing, and God is all—eternal debtors to his grace and mercy.

Again, it follows from the view we have been giving, that if any man want love, or charity, or sanctification, he must seek it in the true way, through faith and hope. The Word is, "faith, hope and charity, these three," and no man has ever a taste for these by taking hold of the last, but by first taking hold of christian faith and christian hope: christian faith, that is, believing in Christ; christian hope, that is, expecting much good from Christ—and then by means of these we arrive at something like charity; and, therefore, we exert all our energies to have what this word charity implies, and to have more of it if we seek it aright. Thus we see that justification and sanctification agree in their origin, both having God alone for their Author.

Secondly. These parts of christian ex-

perience agree as to the honour they put on the moral law, both of them acknowledging that law as the everlasting rule of righteousness. You are aware that by the moral law, we mean the ten commandments summed up in "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, strength, heart and mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." Justification, or the man who obtains justification does this, for justification is being found in Christ, consenting to the righteousness of God's law. No man can be convinced of such righteousness, without being first convinced of his own sin. They that are whole have no need of a physician. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The man who obtains justification in the scripture way, puts honour upon the moral law, by acknowledging it in his own mind to be the everlasting rule of righteousness. He is led by God's providence to pay ample honour to the moral law, accounting that all those who are spoken of as having obtained justification, are spoken of as being more or less convinced of sin. Paul says, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God"—showing that God made use of the moral law to produce in his mind a conviction that he was dead to all hope of obtaining justification by and through the law; he died to all hope of obtaining life through the law and became dead to the law. There can be no doubt when these statements are given, that he was convinced of sin before he was convinced of Christ's righteousness, that he was made to feel self-condemned before he opened his eyes so as to understand Christ Jesus.

But were Lydia, and Cornelius, and the Ethiopian led to pay homage to the moral law? They were. What could induce Lydia to sail from Thyatira at the time Paul preached where she could hear him, to join a company and pray every morning, but some conviction in her conscience which said to her, You must do something to please God? We are sure of the fact here—there was something pressing heavy upon her—there was some wound in her soul which nothing could heal but the Holy Ghost. So also with Cornelius. There was nothing in him but a conviction of his being something, not such as the law required—of his being devoid of love to God, though he did many things approved of by him. It is plain there was some conviction of sin, and he was led to pay homage to the law before he obtained justification through faith in Christ. What led the Ethiopian eunuch to

leave his own country and undertake a long and expensive journey into Judca and Jerusalem but some conviction that God was not yet pleased, or that he must do something to make himself happy? when it pleased God to interfere, Philip was taken up to the carriage, and as he rode he preached Jesus to him, and sent him on his way rejoicing. You see all are led to pay homage to the moral law; and the reason why they rejoice in Christ is because they know that Christ fulfilled the law, and opened up a door of access to us. Hence the want of knowledge of the moral law leads to grievous practical errors on the matter of justification. When you hear of a person in our day who despises justification, and confounds justification with sanctification, and hates the idea of imputed righteousness, you will find this error to be traced to the varying views he has of the moral law. He knows not its requirements; he knows not his own lack of doing the things in the law. Right preaching consists always in the explanation of the moral law, exhibiting it in the full requirements of it, that so a sinner perceiving what it requires may stand before God self-condemned, and be glad to embrace the magnifying of the law of Christ, who is the end of the law by righteousness to all that believe.

Hence people cast down in matters of religion should not despond. They are cast down, but they should not allow the adversary to say, when so cast down, your cause is hopeless, and you may despair. The truth is, God's people are cast down because they find that by keeping the law they cannot be justified. They hope in God's mercy, and know, for the first time, that Christ is the end of the law by righteousness to all that believe; and though by the deeds of the law no person can be justified in God's sight, nevertheless the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel is unto and upon all that believe.

But we go on to speak of sanctification, as in like manner paying homage to the moral law as the everlasting rule of righteousness. A common objection men make against the gospel way of justification is, that it leads men to live as they like. Now what shall we say of this doctrine? Shall we say, Go and sin because grace abounds? The answer is, God forbid, how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? The truth is, all who come rightly to apprehend the things of God in the Gospel obtain a distaste for sin, and how can they live any longer in it? It is impossible.

Hence, when Paul speaks of justification without the law, he says not that we are under the law of Moses, but that we are under the law of Christ. And, again, when the question is put, What is the use of the law at all then? he says it was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator. It is of use to those who believe to keep up in their consciences a knowledge of sin aye and until Christ's promised seed be raised up in them; and it is the righteousness of God to them who believe. The justified are still the sanctified. In the end Christ came not by water only, but by water and blood; he came in a compound way. Accordingly, you find that all the justified, all the truly sanctified under the Gospel, have no quarrel with the law, but with their own hearts as still in some measure unsanctified. Natural men think the law too strict, and they like that preaching of the law that levels it to their weak and frail nature. They have quarrelled, then, with the law as love to God with all their hearts, and love to their fellow-men as themselves, and have no quarrel with their own hearts, or with such men as would only give a moderate view of the law, and may be able to walk in some measure in God's commandments; whereas sanctified people have a quarrel with their hearts, and not with the law at all. "The law," says Paul, "is holy, and the command is just;" and, "oh! wretched man, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." He has no quarrel with it but with his own heart, crying, because in his present weak state he cannot love God more and serve him better. All those people who are justified and sanctified pay homage to the moral law, and rejoice in it when they see Christ as he is. Justification and sanctification both agree in paying homage to

the moral law. Hence we conclude, that the Gospel is not Antinomianism—not the enemy of works, but the friend of every good work. By this we mean keeping God's commands by the love of God shed abroad in the heart. But love to God never can rise up in the mind without seeing God to be lovely—love never appears except in the face of Jesus Christ; and, therefore, the Gospel in place of being Antinomian or favourable to licentiousness, is the only way of exciting genuine love to the unseen God in the cold hearts of fallen men, and prompting men to new obedience. We read that the law is good if a man use it lawfully. Others make an unlawful use of the law which is understood by calling to mind what Paul says to Timothy of some preachers in his day. He says, 1 Tim. i. 6, "The end of the commandment is charity." This looking to God grows out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling. There are who understand that the law is good if a man use it lawfully, understanding this that it is not made for righteous men, but for the lawless and disobedient. It seems there were teachers then, as now, who, under the name of being great advocates for the moral law and virtuous deeds, taught the law as they call it, but not lawfully; they gave a mixture of law and Gospel. It must either be wholly by works or wholly by grace, if any are saved. Again, another use of the law is understanding that the law, as a covenant, is taken up and answered by Christ as surety, but is made to hold under bondage the lawless and the disobedient man who, by his gross disobedience, shows he has never come to Christ, and shows us that by the very nature of the law no man can please God.

ON THE NUMBER OF THE SAVED;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE WEST-PARISH CHURCH, GREENOCK,

By the Rev. A. ROBERTSON, A.M.

"Then said one unto him, Lord are there few that be saved."—LUKE xiii. 23.

IN systems of philosophy mankind generally are accused of being selfish. This accusation is just respecting this world merely, for connected with eternity, not unfrequently we are anxious about the state of others, and neglect our own. Religion is a personal matter, and the more we are concerned for our own safety will we be anxious to promote the spiritual welfare of others; and if so, our minds will not be engaged so much

about the generalities of religion as the particular hearing which it has on mankind. The person who asked the question in our text, seems to have been more under the influence of an idle curiosity than of serious impressions concerning the state of his soul. The Saviour in his hearing, it would seem, had spoken of the increase of his kingdom, and this individual wished to know its exact number. Like too many he was more de-

sirous to know the number of the redeemed family, than if his own name were written in the Book of Life. Our Saviour's answer is dictated by infinite wisdom, and while it checks useless curiosity about unimportant matters it furnishes us with salutary advice, and shows us how we may try ourselves if we are among the number who are to be saved. It is not enough that we seek heaven, but we must strive to enter into it. The wish may be general for happiness, but are the means used which God has prescribed? Heaven is not to be got by seeking in our own way, but by striving in the use of means which God has appointed. The text, therefore, divides itself into two parts: 1st. Those alone who strive, enter in at the strait gate. 2dly. Few thus strive, and, therefore, few are saved.

There was a time in the history of man when striving was unnecessary. He was happy in the possession of what he enjoyed, and was able to retain, without strenuous exertions, the possession of his enjoyment. In Paradise all was bliss, and love to the Creator pervaded the breast of man. From the influence of this principle he felt his obligations to his Creator, and delighted in his service. A change was effected by Satan. This was a voluntary surrender on the part of man, for in the exercise of his native power and faculties he could have resisted Satan, retained his innocence unsullied, and Paradise in eternal bloom. Like to the Saviour he could have told Satan to get hence, and triumphed in his victory: like to the Saviour he could not have said "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;" but he could have frowned upon the tempter and said, thou shalt not assail unsullied innocence: like to the Saviour he could not have quoted Scripture; but he could have referred to the law which was written on his heart by the finger of God. In Paradise Satan was earnest for man's destruction, and, striving successfully, man submitted to his suggestions and became a slave. Man could have retained his innocence without effort; but fallen, even striving could not regain what he had lost. He was voluntary in his disobedience, and connected with his fall, punishment necessarily was incurred. Over the past his mind would linger with regret, the passing moment would give no peace, and futurity would be darkened by direful forebodings. By the mercy of God a change was produced in this state of things. A promise of deliverance was given, and the means necessary to be used prescribed. What our first parents saw in prospect we enjoy in substance; and what they were

told to perform we have written in the Word of God. The dispensation of grace to which we refer, in one sense, is unconnected with striving. "By grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves it is the gift of God." Grace is its origin, by grace it is continued and consummated. The act of God's giving his Son was an act of grace. He "so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son." The undertaking of the work of our redemption on the part of our Saviour was of grace. "Lo, I come; to do thy will, O my God I take delight." In the application of the benefits of Christ's purchase, the "Spirit quickens whom he wills." Redemption, therefore, is entirely of grace in its origin, continuance and completion. In every part of it, however, *striving* seems to be an essential ingredient. The Godhead are represented as active for man's deliverance. The Father does not spare his own Son, but delivers him up for us all. In order that we may accept the "all-things" in connexion with the great gift, he not only speaks to the sons of men, but calls upon them and stretches out his hands in token of earnest entreaty. He melts with kindness or overawes by threatenings, and only lets alone his rebellious children when no man regardeth.

The striving of the Second Person of the glorious Trinity for man's benefit, is most astonishing. For our sakes he became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. By example, precept, works and entreaty he strove with man; and seeing the determined rebellion of those among whom he laboured and the result of their wickedness, he wept over their devoted city, that since his striving had not been effectual his burdened heart might be relieved. When nailed to the cross, his striving for his enemies was heard in his last prayer—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." In accomplishing our redemption he strove with Satan, and dreadful was the contest which he had to maintain in the hour and power of darkness. Striving with Satan, he travailed in the greatness of his strength; and from the mental agony which he endured, we know that his efforts were great before he could say "It is finished."

The last gift which the Saviour promised to his disciples was the Comforter. In the application of Christ's benefits the Spirit has to change the heart; and he has to strive with man that he may enter in at the strait gate. In his efforts how much is he opposed. He is vexed, grieved and resisted; and divine benevolence does not say, "My Spirit shall not always strive with

men" till their wickedness waxes great. Angels, likewise, are engaged in striving in the behalf of man: they minister to those who are the heirs of salvation—they study with intense interest the work of redemption, watch its effects, and rejoice in its success—all heaven is engaged in this work, that man may strive to enter in at the strait gate.

Opposed to their exertions are Satan and his agents: he is active, restless, and determined, and his agents are numerous. The Bible is a history of these proceedings—a record of the most astonishing events. The earth is represented as a field of action, and on it, in determined hostility, are the inhabitants of heaven and hell striving on account of man. These wonders are as idle tales to a vast majority of our race, because they have no moral sympathy with the events recorded. They wish, like the man in our text, to know the issue of this striving, but concern themselves little about the effect which it will have on their own future condition. Satan blinds their eyes, and the splendid moral exhibition which we have in the Bible is treated as a romance or foolishness. Yes; the Bible, as to the wonders unfolded, is a moral romance; and yet, every astonishing event therein stated is a reality in which the careless sons of men have the greatest interest. The Bible is just a record of the mighty agents employed for and against man, and the results of this agency; and, when so much is doing on account of man, is he to be an unconcerned spectator, and merely gather the spoils after the victory is gained? Is he to slumber while heaven and hell are striving for the mastery, and is he not to bear his part in the contest? Yes, my friends, he has placed before him a strait gate, and it is not accessible without striving. Redemption is of grace, but the effect of grace is to excite to diligence. Faith implanted is not a dormant principle, it is active in its operation, and has the mighty end in view—the soul's salvation. It is like to a grain of seed, but it waxes to a tree; it is like leaven which leavens the whole lump. Every part of redemption is connected with striving, and the Christian under its influence must work out his salvation with fear and trembling. Within his own household there are enemies, for his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and he must watch and be sober. He is in an enemy's country, and he must be girt about with spiritual armour—must stand fast in the faith, and fight for victory under the banner of the cross. Does he require fresh supplies of strength in his arduous and continued

labours? he must not only ask, but he must seek, knock, and even wrestle. Is he in a journey to his Father's house? he is but a traveller, a pilgrim, a wayfaring man, his face must be directed towards Zion the city of habitation, and his treasure, his heart and his citizenship must be in heaven. Is he on a race? to reach the goal he must lay aside every incumbering weight, and with his eye steadily fixed on the prize, he must not faint by the way, nor cease to strive till he has secured the end of his labour. From fears without, and fightings within, the Christian is kept ever active, and through much tribulation he must enter the kingdom of God. The heart of a Christian is a field of action in which two powerful armies are engaged—grace and corruption. Wishing to do good, evil is present, and the contest continues unabated till the end of life. New strength is acquired by resistance, and day by day opposing powers wax feebler and feebler; and the Christian retiring from a well-sustained conflict exclaims, "Oh, death! where is thy sting? oh, grave! where is thy victory?" "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift."

If we are, then, to strive before we can enter the strait gate, those who oppose this doctrine are under a mistake, and are led aside either by the carnality of their hearts or by the suggestions of Satan. Such suppose we are to be careful for nothing, and even not to be anxious about the state of our souls. Careful for nothing merely implies that we are not to distrust the promises of God; and when we are required to take no thought for the morrow, this only forbids the anxiety which distracts the mind and proves our want of confidence in our heavenly Father. Striving implies that the state of our souls is to occupy the chief place in our hearts, and how this can be done without concern we do not understand. We are told to examine ourselves, to try ourselves, and to prove ourselves, and these mental acts must subject us to a certain degree of anxiety. In performing these, we must endure mental striving. It is an easy matter, by an act of the mind, to believe that salvation is secured. This state obtained, why strive? The pearl of great price is in possession, and only patience is required in this system. It is certainly agreeable to reach the goal without the fatigues of a race—to wear the palm of victory without the struggle in the field of action, and to be put in possession of Canaan without passing through the wilderness. Those to whom we refer, strive most earnestly in the cause of party, instead of

striving with their hearts. Oh! had they been earnest to rouse the dormant energies of this generation, been striving to subdue carnal pride, and entering the strait gate by fightings without and fears within, then we would have hailed their exertions, and endeavoured to establish their pretensions. Striving not with their corruptions but yielding to modifications of carnality, they have in their successive wanderings proved that *humility* is no mean virtue of the Christian, and that we must strive before we enter the strait gate.

In the nature of things it must be so, for this world is merely preparatory for a state of untried existence. Imperfection is stamped on terrestrial objects; and the striving to which we are subjected, is the means to make us perfect men in Christ Jesus. Whatever be our situation in life, this is a work which we must perform. If in retirement, we require continued watchfulness lest we be lulled into a sinful apathy; if in public, we must strive against conformity to a world lying in wickedness, and we must come out from it so as to prove our principles of action, lest we be partakers of other men's sins. We are ready to attach too much importance to a life of retirement as favourable to advancement in the divine life. The heart there is left more to its own workings, and it depends much on circumstances whether it proves advantageous. There is a root of bitterness within which will flourish even in a wilderness; and it is the *state* of the heart which makes the Christian, and not the *station* in life. In society the active graces are strengthened—in private, the contemplative; and he is a good Christian who strives against his besetting sins, whether he mingles in the busy crowd or is cloistered in retirement. Piety is proved by principles, and the sharper the trial the greater the victory and the more splendid the reward; and, connected with retirement, some minds may have to strive much to enter in at the strait gate, and in active life the same result may follow. All works together for good to those who are the called according to God's purpose, and, the principles strengthened by striving, we gradually become meet for the inheritance of the saints in bliss. During this process the Christian uses faithfully every means of grace, is actuated by love to God as a ruling principle, and the salvation of his soul is the great end of his striving. The Christian is sober, righteous and godly. Eternity, and not time, engrosses his attention. As to this world he is not siothful in business, and as to eternity he is fervent in

spirit. Striving against the motions of his own sinful heart, against the temptations of the world and the suggestions of Satan, can his be a state of repose? And, oh! when he does yield in any degree to temptation, how poignant his regrets and how deep his humiliation! In the closet he strives with himself; and, weighed in the balance of the sanctuary and found wanting, how earnestly he strives with his God! He asks, seeks, knocks and wrestles, even with strong crying and tears, lest he may have turned aside from that narrow way which ends in bliss. His heart is relieved by such exercises; resolutions are formed, and he receives new additions of grace to strive successfully. Experience makes him more watchful, his conscience becomes gradually more sensitive, and the longer he strives the easier it becomes from a heart assimilating to God. The conflict soon terminates. One struggle more and the prize is gained. The outer man decays, and, across the dark swellings of Jordan, he is conducted by the Angel of the Covenant. The strait gate is passed, the striving is over, the new Jerusalem is in view, the harp is seized, and the song of triumph is begun—"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." "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, 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."

We now remark, in the second place, that few thus strive, and therefore few are saved.

Many wish salvation, but few strive to enter in at the strait gate. The word many in our text may either refer to a great number, or to mankind generally. Few are to be found who do not *seek* in one way or other, or at some time of their life, to enter in at the strait gate; but they do not strive, and thus are excluded. Conscience accuses, fears alarm, and they seek salvation; but their hearts are either too much carnalized, or they do not value sufficiently the salvation of the soul. Hence they merely seek, and do not strive. They would have no objection to enter in at the strait gate, by seeking when they found it convenient; but to strive, and that for a continued time, is out of the question. They would willingly enter into heaven; but to take it by violence requires too much exertion for their dispositions. The bias of their hearts is altogether against

striving; and they conclude, that at present they will gratify themselves, and at a convenient season they will seek and obtain their wish. They leave the striving to the saints, and, bearing the name of Christians, they find their own pleasure and purpose, afterwards to *seek* an entrance in by the strait gate. To gratify their passions they strive; to flatter their vanity they strive; and, in every thing connected with the world, they strive. Oh! the striving of the daughters of pride to gratify vanity at the shrine of fashion; the striving of the worldly to collect the dust of the earth; the striving of the ambitious to be enrolled in fame! Oh! the striving for trifles which we every day witness, and with what anxious looks and distracted breasts do the sons of men pursue the fleeting forms of a vain world! And where all this time is the striving for heaven? Is it a trifle on which not one passing thought should be expended? Is it nothing to be eternally miserable or eternally happy? Are weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth not worth the striving to avoid, and are crowns of glory, palms of victory, and white robes, not worth the striving to obtain? Must heaven and hell strive for man's redemption, and may he slumber at his post, and obtain the mighty boon for mere seeking? Do trifles here require striving, and are the realities of eternity only worth the act of seeking? Will man be allowed to spend his life in striving against God; and, when he can strive no longer, by seeking will he enter the strait gate? Man wishes to find the strait gate by seeking, but God says, it shall not be entered without striving; and thus while many merely seek to go in, they are excluded.

This painful truth is distinctly taught in the Scriptures. The wickedness of man became great, and Noah, alone perfect in his generation, was found striving to enter in at the strait gate. In the cities of the plain, the mass of the population were striving for Satan, and not ten were found striving for God. In one period of the history of the Jews, the eye of a prophet saw nothing but striving for idolatry, and God the decerner of the heart, could find only seven thousand who were striving in his cause. The Saviour appeared among his own, and they knew him not; for the great majority were striving for themselves, and for the prince of darkness. "The heathen world," says an Apostle, "knew not God;" and from the wickedness he imputes to them in the 1st chapter of Romans we find they were striving for the mastery in crime.

Satan is a prince; he governs a kingdom, and rules in the hearts of the disobedient. God's people are few—a little flock; the gate they enter by is strait, the road narrow, and not accessible without striving. The other party are a multitude, the road on which they travel broad; and merely seeking heaven, and striving for hell, they receive the end of their labour—the destruction of their souls.

Were the Bible a darkly-finished fiction to excite tragic woe, then the labouring heart would be relieved, and the tear wiped from the eye, as we mingled in the crowd and surveyed the realities of life. Turning, however, from the Bible, and entering the world, like to a prophet of old, we see still greater abominations. Many follow wickedness with greediness, and regard neither God nor man. They violate laws, human and divine, and, mortals, are fiends; and breathing on earth, are fit for the unhallowed atmosphere of the regions of despair. Nothing that is filthy can enter heaven; and they pollute even the earth, and striving for hell, do not even seek heaven. These are the outcasts of society, over which the worldling sympathizes. There are degrees of crime, and degrees of punishment, and we leave such, unless they are plucked as brands from the burning, for their own place, where the worm ever gnaws, and the fire never shall be quenched.

Many are irreligious who are not sunk into such depths of moral degradation. They are, as to religion, practical Atheists. The Bible is to them a book without meaning; the sanctuary a prison-house; the Sabbath a sad weariness; death a necessary evil; and eternity a dream. This is a creed either attempted to be believed or acted on in life. The error of such is with regard to eternity. As to this world, they may be careful in their day and generation; and, as citizens, they are, in some cases, from talents, industry, and wealth, influential members of society. They may be sober and righteous, though ungodly. They may be temperate in all things from selfish motives, and they may give to all their due from similar principles of action; but ungodly, the love of God has no influence over their hearts. As far as they are good citizens of the world they may here have their reward, but they have no treasure in heaven, and are not even seeking a resting-place in that sacred abode. God is not in all their thoughts; and, striving to keep him out of view, as they sow will they not reap? They are sowing to the flesh, and must they not reap corruption? they are scattering their ener-

gies to the wind, and shall they not reap the whirlwind? they are asking, but not for God; they are seeking, but not for heaven; they are knocking, but not at the gate of Paradise; they are wrestling, but not with the Angel of the Covenant; and since they mock God, will he not mock them when their fear cometh?

Leaving the irreligious, who seek not the strait gate, among the professedly religious, certainly we shall find striving. Christianity implies a profession, and within the walls of the sanctuary we should find those who strive to enter in at the strait gate. Among the many who bear the name which implies striving, how great is the proportion who are merely *seeking* entrance by the strait gate! They have a name to live, but they are dead. They have a profession, but are destitute of christian principle. They have come out from the marked irreligious, and seek for heaven in their own way, and leave God's way to the chosen few. Call them *saints*, and they would blush; deny them the name of Christians, and they would reckon it an insult. All their striving is expended on mere attendance in the sanctuary; and, ranked among a church-going population, they esteem themselves good Christians. If faithful preaching is not offensive to them, all the rebukes from the pulpit are generalized, or, at all events, not personally applied. Unable to bear sound doctrine, like Ahab they hate the faithful Micaiah, simply because he is a true prophet. Like to the rebellious sons in the days of Isaiah, they attach themselves to prophets who speak not right, but prophesy of smooth things: they are in a moral slumber, and cannot endure to be awaked. Like to the irreligious who are sober and righteous, they may be so from similar principles: their religion is exchanged with their dress, and the idol of their heart is the world, and by them the Great God is acknowledged merely in word. They dread hell so much as to seek for heaven; but striving they cannot endure. In the sanctuary they may have an appearance like to others, but in the world are their sympathies, and from the world must be their reward. Conscience is quieted by the act of attendance at church, and a God all mercy is embraced to dissipate their fears, and thus the God of the Bible by them is dethroned. They find it ranked among the deencies of life to go to the house of God, at least occasionally; and, acting like to the multitude in pleasing themselves, they seek heaven in their own way. They are, in every respect, conformed to the world in

its maxims and its fashions. They know nothing of the christian life, its struggles, its dangers, and its toils. They are at peace with their own hearts, with the evil one and the world, and they are ignorant of spiritual armour and the fight of faith. The disquietude of the Christian, his bitter regrets, his anxious wishes, his resolutions, his devotions, his heavenly aspirations, his faith, and love, and hope, are mysteries which a nominal Christian does not comprehend. A glance of pity he may cast at the votary of heaven, and he wonders why he strives so much for what *he* expects to obtain by merely seeking. Or, if he wishes he were as the striving Christian, it is his end, and not his work, which he envies. His strictness is to him singularity; his devotion, cant; his language, professional; and, if something strikes him in the godly simplicity of the Christian as peculiar, his wondering is not wisdom, for he understands not the cause. He strives for the world, and gratifies the prevailing bias of his heart, and religion sits very light on him, is no yoke, no burden, simply because he is not religious. He walks on the broad way, and strives for himself and Satan; and under the deception of seeking the strait gate in some appointed ordinances, finds at last that his end is destruction. Profession is not principle; religion is not a name, but a reality; and those who will not strive, cannot enter in at the strait gate which conducts to bliss, as its sure termination.

These individuals are clouds without rain, and spots in our feasts; for they disgrace the name by which they are called. We must, therefore, leave them seeking, but not finding, and turn to a class who strive apparently much, and, notwithstanding, enter not in at the strait gate. Those to whom we refer are loud in their profession of religion, and the little light they have is exposed to the best advantage. They love the corner of the streets, the market place; and, as to their striving, the Spirit asks "Who hath required these things at your hands?" They are not fond of retired religion. The right hand must know what the left hand doeth. They hate ejaculatory prayer, the closet, and all duties which bring them in connexion with God without the intervention of man. They act a borrowed part, and the principle of their action is not love to God and man, but the gratification of *self*. They love to be seen of men, and strive much to gain their end. They are men of times and seasons, and use religion as a cloak to cover more closely the state of their hearts. They do not bend to reli-

gion, but they make religion subservient to their own interests. Like to the shallow brook, they are loud and noisy; and, like to the barren fig-tree, they have a profusion of foliage, but no fruit: they work by the side of the Christian, and by the side of the worldling; they sigh in public with the man of God, and, supple and yielding, they are the men of every company. In retirement and among confidants, their natural propensities are displayed; and when accused of inconsistency, with an easy smile they blunder an apology for their assumed character. They are men of great allowances, and seem to think that Christianity is striving with saints, and yielding to the men of the world. They are twofold in appearance, but, in reality, *one*; for all they do is to be seen of men. If they have one particle of religion in their breasts, it originates from feeling. Though honey-tongued, they actually remain in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. They are not our Sadducees, but our Pharisees; and the severity with which this sect was treated by our Saviour is very remarkable. There were many good men among this sect, but a great proportion of them were decided hypocrites: they strove much for trifles, for the anise and the cummin, but they neglected the weightier matters of the law. Religion with them was mere work striving to no profit: they were outwardly as whitened walls and painted sepulchres, but within were full of rottenness and all uncleanness—hypocrites, they were the dead weights of religion, and the active agents of Satan; they might compass sea and land to make proselytes, but, their children bearing their image, they made them twofold more the children of hell than before. The Saviour was tender, but he was faithful; and, O ye *gilded* professors, we leave for your consideration his awful denunciation: “Woe unto you hypocrites, for ye shall receive the greater damnation.”

After such a representation, you may ask, Who then shall be saved? With men it is impossible; but with God all things are possible. A remnant shall be saved. God shall bring his sons and daughters from afar, even from the ends of the earth. In heaven there is a multitude which no man can number. When we think that nearly the

half of mankind die in infancy, and reflect on the glory of the latter days, when converts shall come into the Church as doves fly to the windows, we see how the Saviour shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Even among ourselves we hope there are many who are of the election of grace, who have their faces Zionward, and who are quietly moving onward to the new Jerusalem. They are not a noisy crowd; but God knows them, and will keep them as the apple of his eye, till they reach their final destination, and be crowned with honour, glory, and immortality. To you before us we have been faithful; be not unfaithful to yourselves. We decide nothing; we merely plead for God. We occupy a watchtower, and proclaim to you, “What of the night?” lest we be chargeable with the blood of your souls. We appeal to God in our own behalf, and make an appeal to yourselves if we have not declared the counsel of God. Fearless of man, we dread a day of future reckoning. Stand aside ye nominal Christians; ye hypocrites join the ranks of the irreligious and the abandoned; and, oh! omniscient Jehovah where are thine own? What we now imagine, soon will be a reality: these walls which have re-echoed many a faithful sermon will crumble into dust; the ground around us will heave; nature will be convulsed; every thing will change but God; and *the day* will reveal the number of the saved. Oh! what will avail this part of knowledge if we are not among the few who, by striving, have entered the strait gate and are saved. Such ignorance would be bliss; for if we are not saved, how cheerfully would we embrace annihilation, and be buried in the ruins of a crumbling world. We leave you to God, and remind you, as Jeremiah did of old the Israelites respecting Babylon, that “this world is a place of idolatry and of captivity;” but if you serve God, he will deliver you from its temptations and slavery, and will give to you the heavenly Canaan, satisfy you with angels’ food, and guarantee the continuance of these enjoyments. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in and will not be able.” “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN HENDERSON, Carmunnock.

LECTURE by the Rev. JOHN BRUCE, Edinburgh.

SOCIAL WICKEDNESS CHARGEABLE ON INDIVIDUALS, OR THE
DANGER OF BEING PARTAKERS OF OTHER MEN'S SINS;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. JOHN HENDERSON,

Carmunnock.

"Neither be partaker of other men's sins."—1 TIMOTHY v. 22.

MAN is naturally formed for society, and is, consequently, called upon to the discharge not only of personal, but also of relative and social, duties; and whatever, therefore, may be the amount of individual sinfulness, with which any one is directly chargeable, he may, from the nature of his social walk, be virtually chargeable in addition with much of the sinfulness that is manifested by those who are around him, either in the circle of his domestic intercourse, or his outward companionship.

This, my friends, is a very solemn consideration, deserving at all times of our devout and practical regard. Independently of the deceitful spirit in which it was uttered, it shows at once the folly and the guilt of the language of Cain, when he insultingly lifted up his voice to Jehovah, saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" and it should obviously lead us to much social circumspection, and teach us, in the words of the Apostle to the Philippian converts, (not, indeed, in the contemptible character of "a busy body in other men's matters," but in our own sphere, with christian affection, and in the exercise of personal humility and prudence,) "to look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

The possibility of being, in some measure, chargeable with the sinfulness of others—that is, of being art and part with them in their offences, and sharers, therefore, of their guilt, is recognised, to a certain extent, by human law, but is far more comprehen-

sively true at the bar of conscience and the judgment-seat of Christ.

This possibility is directly held forth to us in the words of the text, in which Paul exhorts Timothy, "Neither be partaker of other men's sins." It is obvious, from the first clause of the verse, as well as the foregoing context, that the exhortation was originally given to Timothy, in his official character as a minister of the Gospel, and was designed to guard him against any thing like remissness in the solemn and important work of ordaining and setting apart others to take part with him in the ministry which he had received of the Lord. He was for this purpose "to lay hands suddenly on no man;" or, in other words, to take care that those who aspire to the office of the ministry were duly gifted for the discharge of its sacred duties; and whatever might be the conduct of others in this momentous matter—whatever the carelessness which they might manifest, he was "not to be a partaker of their sins," but to "keep himself pure."

It is not, however, with this connexion that I wish at present to have to do. I purposely avoid it, however interesting and extensive the field of remark to which it might lead, in reference to the order and authority which Christ has established in his church, in regard to the existence and functions of a standing ministry, and the consequent obligations of those who are already invested with the sacred character of Christ's ambassadors; and I go on to the

illustration of the broad principle to which I have already adverted, that every man is, to a certain extent, "his brother's keeper;" and that, as men and professing Christians, we may one and all of us, in our domestic and social capacities, be chargeable with the guilt of offences which we have not personally committed, because "partakers with them" in their evil deeds, and sharers, therefore, in the criminality with which these evil deeds are fraught.

Now, in taking this extended, but, in all respects, warrantable view of the passage, what we intend, in dependence on divine aid, is simply to point out some of the varied ways in which, in the language of the Apostle, we may "be partakers of other men's sins," and then to apply the subject in the way of admonition and improvement; and if, in the course of the illustrations to which we are thus led, your understandings should be in any measure convinced, O may your hearts also be affected, and your consciences rendered more tender!

We are, in the first place, to point out some of the varied ways in which, in the language of the Apostle, we may "be partakers of other men's sins;" and here we begin with observing, that this condemnation may belong to us, when we do not exercise, for the cause of righteousness, that authority and influence over others with which, at any time in the course of divine providence, we are invested.

I need not here pause to illustrate the truth which, I would trust, no one now hearing me feels disposed to deny, that the lot of every individual in the human race, however much brought about by the operation of secondary causes, is primarily to be regarded as ordered by God; and that whatever be the advantages, therefore, of which we are possessed for "doing good," these are to be viewed as an important trust committed to our charge, for the abuse or improvement of which we are accountable to the "Judge of all the earth."

If, then, we are possessed of influence and authority over others, in any one form or degree, and are not careful to employ these for the cause of righteousness; if, so far from this, we are not only habitually careless about them, but actually prostitute them to the purposes of sin; then, according to the amount of good which we are thus the means of preventing, or the amount of evil which we are thus the instruments of producing, though those over whom our influence and authority extend, must individually be accountable for their own

wickedness, and neither our carelessness nor impiety can shield them from the doom of transgressors; yet, in so far as we have been the instruments of their ruin, "shall their blood be required at our hands?" We have not employed those means for ameliorating and improving their spiritual condition which divine providence placed in our power. Nay, we have converted that, which was given for good, into an engine of evil!

It is of no consequence for us to say that no human instrumentality could of itself have been available for their deliverance from iniquity; and that, for aught we could have done, they must still have perished in their sins. The food which we eat cannot of itself nourish the body, unless directly blest for this purpose by the Author and Preserver of our lives; but we do not for that reason neglect this ordinary means of human sustenance. Besides, every advantage we possess, is a talent committed to us, which we are bound to occupy, and regarding which we have no right to speculate in such a manner at all, but only to seek to improve it to the purposes for which it has been given, and then "to commit our way unto the Lord, to place our trust in him, that he may bring to pass the purposes of our heart;" and he shall, in faithfulness to his own promise, "bring forth our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noon-day."

Now, in the constitution of human society, there are many situations of influence and authority—situations in which individuals have a certain influential and authoritative control over others, and which, to a greater or less extent, may either be improved to the furtherance of godliness, or abused to the triumphs of sin.

In talking, indeed, of influence and power, in connexion with the spread of morality and religion, we are too apt to limit our thoughts exclusively to the civil rulers of the land—to the public ambassadors for Christ—to those who are raised to an eminence above their fellow-men, by the adventitious circumstances of wealth and station; or, to those who may have obtained a still more commanding influence over the public mind, by the splendour of their talents, and the amount of their intellectual acquirements.

Now, in all of these, there is unquestionably involved an extent of obligation in reference to this subject, that cannot remain unheeded, without the contraction of a most fearful criminality. "The powers that be, are ordained of God," and they are

designed, from the king upon the throne to the meanest of those who bear rule under him, to be "the ministers of God for good." If, then, instead of endeavouring in their official capacity to maintain the righteousness of the land, they should remove any one of its bulwarks, and by their indifference to the interests of religion open upon us the flood-gates of infidelity and ungodliness, their conduct involves in it a most awful responsibility before the throne of Him "by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice," and who has said from his holy hill of Zion, "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his anger is kindled but a little." The public ambassadors for Christ, again, are set upon the watch-towers of Zion. They are "stewards of the mysteries of God;" and wo is unto them if they seek not to be faithful to their divine Master, and do not manifest themselves willing "to spend and be spent" for the salvation of souls. Rank and wealth, again, are not bestowed merely for personal gratification, but for the public good. Hence the exhortation, "Charge them that are rich, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim. vi. 17-19. Once more; the splendour of natural talent and intellectual acquirement, as it is all bestowed by "the Father of lights," so it is only legitimately employed when consecrated to his glory and the advancement of the best interests of our common humanity.

But, besides the sources of authority and influence to which we have now adverted, and the consequent obligations of those who are placed in any of the above circumstances, there are many situations connected with the ordinary habits of domestic life and human industry, to which a certain portion of authority and influence is also attached, and which, though of an humbler and less ostentatious kind, are, perhaps, fitted to tell no less powerfully on the vital godliness of the land.

We shall confine our observations to two of these; and the first which we mention is that of parents. Parents have in their children a charge committed to them, over which nature and religion unite in calling

upon them to take the oversight. Their authority, too, when duly and mildly exercised, is at once the most commanding and tender—their influence the most endearing. If, then, parents take not up the resolution of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" if they are not careful to maintain in their own persons a holy and circumspect walk, reverencing the divine authority, sanctifying the Sabbath, and waiting upon all the ordinances of Jehovah; and if they seek not "to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," studying to acquaint them with those "holy Scriptures which are able to make them wise unto salvation, by faith which is in Christ Jesus," surrounding with them the family altar, and pouring forth the family offering of prayer and praise, and endeavouring, in short, according to the ability and opportunities which God hath given them, alike by precept and example—by the maintenance of personal, and family, and public devotion, and by the maintenance also of mild and affectionate, but firm discipline, to instruct them in the knowledge, and bring them up in the love and practice, of "the truth as it is in Jesus;" if, instead of all this, they live regardless about religion themselves, and are at no pains to inculcate religious obligation in the family circle, then, should their children around them grow up *in the love and practice of sin*, ruining their character for time and their interests for eternity; though these pledges of their affection must themselves perish in their iniquity, yet they, as their natural guardians, are unquestionably responsible for not employing the means which might have been used for restraining them from evil, and to that extent are chargeable (and how solemn the thought!) with being partakers with them in their sinful and ruinous career.

As parents, then, would escape the condemnation of the text, let me exhort them "to rule well their own house," and to "train up their children in the way they should go;" taking encouragement from the promise, that, "when they are old, they will not depart from it." True, indeed, all is of grace. Even the best exertions of parents must fail, when unaccompanied with the blessing of God; and it may happen that the objects of their parental tenderness whom, with many prayers and many affectionate counsels, they have dedicated to the Lord, may still "be carried away with the error of the wicked," and "bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." But, in these affecting circumstances, (the most affecting, perhaps, in which the aged

servants of God can be placed,) parents have still the consciousness that they have endeavoured, at least, to perform their duty, however imperfectly, and discharged the office of kindness, however feebly; and though they dare not speak boastingly of any of their doings, but must acknowledge that in every thing their work is imperfect, yet they can still cast the burden of their sorrows upon Him who is able to sustain it, and who has promised in his faithfulness, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." And, in this view of the subject, oh! let me impress it upon those before me, who may have wandered from a christian parent's prayers and entreaties, that unless they repent and turn from this their great wickedness, and seek for mercy through "the blood of sprinkling," these affectionate prayers and entreaties shall every one of them stand recorded against them in the book of God's keeping, and minister to the bitterness of their final condemnation.

Another situation of authority and influence of the humbler description of which we now speak, and to which we would also advert, is that of masters in relation to their servants. What parents are to their children, christian masters and mistresses, in so far as religious example and discipline are concerned, ought to be to their servants. Hence the commendation of faithful Abraham: "I know him," said Jehovah, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."

Masters are not to suppose that they fulfil their obligations to their servants when they, merely in reference to their stipulated wages, "give to them that which is just and equal." Not to do this is obvious and gross dishonesty; but, as the heads of their respective household, they are also to consider that the spiritual interests of their servants are, in an important measure, intrusted to their charge, and they are to watch over their moral and religious conduct—to be careful not to detain them unnecessarily from the house and ordinances of God, or from those domestic devotions to which they engage with the family; and to study not only to afford them every opportunity in their power for religious improvement, but to be upon their guard against throwing any temptation in their way, either to dishonesty or any other criminal course, and to employ, as far as possible, their own example, and influence, and authority, for their "correction and instruction in righteousness." And here,

my friends, can we not suppose the case, or, rather, is it not one too often realized, of a servant going from one family where the name and authority of God were revered—where the Book of God was read—where prayer was wont to be made—and where, in fine, precept and example concurred in pointing out to the household the way of righteousness and salvation, and going into another, where there is little or no regard paid to the things of God and eternity—where, perhaps, the name of God is blasphemed, his day dishonoured, and his authority habitually and systematically despised? And, oh! how withering must this influence be! How much must it tend to counteract every former religious impression that may have been made upon the mind! Let masters, in these things, remember, that they too have "a Master in heaven;" and that, according to the influence and authority of which they are possessed, they are accountable to him if they do not improve them to those purposes of good for which they have been vouchsafed.

Nor in talking in this way would it be proper to omit giving a word of counsel to servants themselves, when brought, under the merciful arrangements of divine providence, to serve in a christian family. In such circumstances, murmur not at the religious restraints that may be imposed upon you. They are at once designed and fitted for the advancement of your highest and most enduring interests—even for making you the servants of Him who "is no respecter of persons;" and concerning whom it is said, and with a direct reference to your situation in life, "That whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

We have seen then, my friends, how we may fall under the condemnation specified in the text, and "be partakers of other men's sins," if we do not exercise, for the cause of righteousness, the authority and influence over others with which, in the course of divine providence, we are at any time invested. But, in the daily intercourse of the world, we come into contact with many over whom we have no such authority or influence, either by virtue of natural relationship or the ordinary gradations of human society, and on whom, nevertheless, our conduct, whether good or bad, is calculated to have a most important effect.

Let us now, then, turn our thoughts for a little to the conduct of mankind, simply as members of general society, having no influence over others but that which is derived from mere acquaintance and outward

companionship, and inquire how far, even in this extended sense, we may still be liable to the charge before us?

And here it is abundantly obvious, and needs no illustration, that, as members of general society, we are "partakers of other men's sins," when we act the cruel and diabolical part of designedly urging others forward to sinful courses. This, though a conduct the basest and most hardened that can well be conceived, is one that has too often been exemplified in the history of human wickedness. There have been persons in every age who have not only delighted in wickedness themselves, but who have, as it were, acted upon a system, and employed every effort for leading others also astray from the paths of ordinary sobriety, purity and rectitude, to say nothing at present of the sacredness of a religious walk. The Bible, accordingly, not only supposes the existence of such persons, but most pointedly and emphatically guards us against their influence. "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not." "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away; for they sleep not unless they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall."

I would trust that there are no such characters now before me. "Evil men, and seducers, waxing worse and worse, deceiving others, and being themselves (still more miserably) deceived." But should there be any individuals of this description, I would not only remind them that they are liable to the charge in the text in its most direct and appalling form, but would call upon them also, if peradventure they have any of the ordinary feelings of humanity remaining, seriously to consider the evil of their ways, in thus doing what they can, not only to aggravate their own condemnation, but also to entail everlasting misery upon the souls of others! I need not say whose image such persons bear. They are engaged in the very work of the grand adversary of God and man. They are like "a roaring lion walking about, seeking whom he may devour." And awful, oh! eternally and inconceivably awful must be their doom, when "the wicked are to go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal!"

I willingly, however, hasten away from so disgusting a picture of human nature, and remark, in the second place, that as members of general society, we may be "partakers of other men's sins," when, though

we do not designedly urge others forward to sinful courses, we yet willingly, in the language of Scripture, "put a stumbling-block in our brother's way," so as to retard his progress in *vital godliness*.

There are many who, whilst they would shrink from the idea of leading others forward to the commission of *positive sin*, have yet such a deep-rooted hatred at every thing that wears the aspect of *seriousness*, that they scruple not to adopt various expedients for destroying in those around them, every thing like the appearance of *vital religion*. Such persons, for example, often profess, and perhaps really frequently have a general respect for the outward decencies of human life. They, therefore, would not advise their companion to break through any of the restraints of ordinary morality; but did he manifest any concern for the interests of the soul, and attend to the duties of devotion, they would not hesitate to employ every artifice to make him undervalue the one, and desist from the other. They would, perhaps, for this purpose quote, or rather *misquote*, the oft-perverted text, "Be not righteous overmuch;" and, making his holy deportment the subject of jest and ridicule, endeavour to laugh him out of every thing that is sacred in itself, and momentous in regard to his everlasting destinies. Now, such a line of conduct, my friends, is substantially, though not always *designedly*, the same in its tendency as the one already pointed out. If, in the one case, we directly prompt to iniquity, in the other, we do what we can to shake those principles from which only all true morality can proceed. True it is, that if a work of grace has already been commenced in the souls of those against whom our unhallowed efforts are thus directed, these efforts shall not ultimately prevail. "He who has begun the good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "No one can pluck any of Jehovah's people out of the Saviour or the Father's hand;" but they shall all "be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." Apart, however, from the consideration that this cannot lessen our guilt, we may in reference even to such, be the instruments of turning them aside, for a season at least, from the steadfastness of their christian walk, to the dishonour of their divine Master—to the discomfort of their own souls—and to the triumphs of wickedness in those who may have been waiting for, and who now rejoice in their fall. And may not again the circumstances be otherwise? May not those against whose seemingly religious profession our ungodly derision is directed, be of the number of

those who are only "not far from the kingdom of God," and "almost persuaded to be Christians?" And, then, if through our ridicule their convictions should be stifled, we may not only be the means of blasting every thing that appeared at least *favourable* in their condition, but of turning them away for ever from the path of life, to harden themselves more and more in their iniquity, and, by the influence of their evil deeds, to become the ensnarers of others; and thus, throughout eternity, when "in hell they are lifting up their eyes, being in torment," may many be enabled to point to us, as the instruments of bringing upon them the misery to which they are then consigned, in that place of "outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

Under this particular, too, we may mention, that we have specially instanced *ridicule*, though there are many other methods of throwing a stumbling-block in the way of the serious, because it is the one most frequently and also most successfully employed, and particularly with regard to young persons who appear to give symptoms of early piety.

And let me guard the young against so merciless an expedient for their spiritual ruin. If, my young friends, you have, indeed, been called by divine grace "into the kingdom of God's dear Son," and are "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;" the angels in the presence of God have rejoiced over you; Jehovah the Father is delighting in you to do you good; Jesus is rejoicing in you as the fruit of his purchase; and you have the approbation and prayers, and best and most affectionate wishes of all the truly good and wise in the world. The very persons, too, who in their malignity deride you, are forced in their sober reason to admit the wisdom of your choice, and in the midst of that very malignity, they envy your condition.

Be exhorted, then, whatever be their taunts, to remain unmoved in the path of righteousness and salvation upon which you may have entered; and, animated by the infinitely higher testimony that is in your favour, and by your own conviction of the truth, that if you are in the faith, you have indeed "chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from you," let it be increasingly engraven upon the table of your heart, that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and that a good understanding have all they that do his commandments." Listen to the voice of the Saviour himself, when he saith by the mouth of his prophet,

"Hearken unto me ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation."

I now proceed to observe, in the third place, that, as members of general society, we may be liable to the charge in the text, and be "partakers of other men's sins," when, instead of lifting up our testimony against the evil deeds and sayings of others, we are content to witness them in silence, and thus to appear as if we regarded them with complacency.

I speak not here merely of the open ungodliness of actually joining in the noisy and unhallowed mirth that often characterizes the circles of the wicked, at the expense of all that is sacred in religious obligation and becoming on the score of moral decency, but even of anything approaching to a temporizing spirit in such circumstances, and specially of a tame and silent submission, when ungodliness ought to be repudiated and condemned, and the cause of righteousness vindicated and upheld.

This, to say the least of it, is to give our indirect countenance to sin, and just in proportion to the general correctness of our own conduct is the weight of that countenance. Nor does it require much observation of the world, or any great insight into the philosophy of human character, in order to perceive that to act in this way must have a tendency more and more to harden the consciences, and confirm the evil habits of those to whom this countenance is given. Hence we are exhorted to have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them;" and "a word spoken in due season," says Solomon, "how good is it!"

There is such a thing, indeed, as being quick in discerning "the mote that is in our brother's eye," whilst we "consider not the beam that is in our own eye," and indulging with respect to the conduct of our neighbour, in a spirit of censoriousness—the joint offspring of pride and uncharitableness which can only irritate and disgust; and it is possible, also, to give "that which is holy to dogs, and cast our pearls before swine," so as to lead them only "to trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend us." In other words, it is possible to administer counsel and reproof to such a class of persons, or in a manner and under circumstances so unseasonable, as only to subject ourselves

to injury and insult, and expose the things which we hold sacred, to greater mockery and profanation. Against all this we are undoubtedly to be upon our guard, as at once inconsistent with the christian temper, and positively detrimental to the interests of pure and undefiled religion; and in administering counsel and reproof to the erring and disobedient we are to do so with humility, in the spirit of meekness, and in the exercise of a zeal, directed and controlled, by much christian prudence and caution. But still, like righteous Lot, we are to be "vexed, with the filthy conversation of the wicked," and to show that we are so; and when the authority of God is openly trampled upon—when his name is blasphemed—or his ordinances slightly spoken of, in the midst of "foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient, there is often a criminal silence arising either from indifference—a false modesty—or that "fear of man which bringeth a snare," and which, by giving the weight of our character to what is thus done or said, goes to strengthen the bands of wickedness, and makes us sharers of the evil to the extent in which it might have been counteracted by our bold, and prudent, and christian interference. We must, therefore, my friends, if we would avoid the condemnation spoken of in the text, not only "come out and be separate from," but *testify against* "an evil and adulterous generation;" and whilst seeking to maintain a conscience "void of offence toward man," we must study not to neglect the higher duty to which this must ever be subordinate "of having a conscience void of offence toward God." In this respect the charge originally given to Ezekiel the prophet, though chiefly to be considered as applicable to those who are officially "watchmen unto the house of Israel" should be seriously pondered, and practically acted upon by the most private individual. "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. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul."

But we hasten to remark, in the fourth place, that as members of general society, we may be liable to the charge here alluded to by the Apostle, and be "partakers of other men's sins," if at any time we purposely do aught that is calculated to excite the known evil propensities of our neighbour.

In the moral constitution of man in his fallen state, there is not only the universal

prevalence of iniquity, but, also, for the most part, either naturally or as acquired by habit, the ascendancy of some particular besetting sin; and individuals are frequently to be met with, who think they display their *wit*, when they make a far greater display of their *impiety*, by endeavouring to draw out and expose what they call the *weak side* of their neighbour. Now, this, my friends, though sometimes engaged in without actual malice to our neighbour and simply for the purposes of idle merriment, and though too often palliated by the world as a kind of harmless expedient for creating social mirth, is, in so far as it has the desired effect, to become "partakers of other men's sins," in a manner as direct as in any of the instances to which we have already adverted. It is not merely to place temptation in the way of our neighbour, but to set before him that very temptation, which of all others is the most likely to overset him. And if it be not to act the part of a designed corrupter, it is, nevertheless, to fulfil the diabolical purposes of such a one, in a manner the most obvious and the most successful. Apart, too, from any wish to raise this unhallowed mirth at the expense of the moral principles of our neighbour, there are many other ways in which (if we may be allowed the expression,) we may add fuel to his peculiar corruption. Are we in the company of the drunkard? We may do so by speaking lightly of the degrading habit to which he is addicted, or pressing him in misguided kindness to partake of the flowing cup. And a similar illustration might obviously be given in regard to every separate course of human iniquity in which we may know our neighbour to be peculiarly enslaved.

And we only farther observe, that even though we were individually free from all the social evil already pointed out, we may yet, as general members of society, become "partakers of other men's sins," if we are not habitually careful in our own example to exhibit before all men, a holy, and circumspect, and religious walk.

The influence of example, as the instrument of producing either good or evil, though more silent and gradual is often eventually far more powerful than that of direct counsel and intreaty. And though there may be peculiar circumstances in the situation of one man, fitted to render his conduct in society far more influential than that of another, yet it is impossible to estimate the extent to which the example even of the most private individual may contribute either to the cause of righteousness or to the amount of abounding iniquity.

Let us suppose the case that any evil deed of which we are guilty, tells directly, in the first instance, upon the character only of one solitary companion. We even here put a principle of evil into operation which it is utterly beyond our power either to calculate or control. The victim of our evil example is prepared to entail upon others the same ruin; and though we are unable to trace the bareful influence of the deed through all its ramifications, yet the all-seeing eye of God may discover its consequences at the distance of ages after it has been committed, and its effects may continue to be perpetuated and felt by multitudes, when we ourselves are forgotten in the land of living men, and when our memory survives only in that book of remembrance where all our guilt has been recorded, in connexion with all the consequences with which it has been fraught. As then, my friends, we would keep free from the sins of others, let us study to be more and more free from sin ourselves; and seeing that "evil communications corrupt good manners"—that "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," let us strive that the influence of pure and undefiled religion may increasingly regulate our own temper and conduct; and that ours in the sight of all men may be "a conversation becoming the Gospel."

We have thus, then, considered some of the varied ways in which we may be liable to the condemnation specified in the text. Our illustrations might have been more numerous, and prosecuted to a much greater length; for the condemnation may be said in a general way to belong to us, when we say or do any thing, the tendency of which is either to counteract what is good, or encourage what is evil. The remarks, however, already offered, are surely sufficient to hold forth the language of the Apostle as a solemn warning to us all, and as fitted in no ordinary way for our "reproof, and correction, and instruction in righteousness."

In application of what has been said, let us see the necessity of cultivating more and more tenderness of conscience in regard to the spiritual state of those around us; and if we would fulfil the law of christian charity, let us not only seek as we have opportunity the furtherance of their temporal good, and exercise toward them all long-suffering and forbearance, but remembering too, that they have immortal spirits that are either to be saved or irretrievably lost, let us be upon our guard against saying or doing any thing that may be the means of confirming their evil principles, and accelerating their progress in the path of the destroyer; and let

us study rather if they are erring from the truth, to become the instruments of converting them to the faith and the hope of the Gospel, knowing that "he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins."

Remembering too, our past walk and conversation, and how much in one form or another we may each of us have been guilty of the course against which the Apostle guards us, let us seek to cherish deeper and deeper convictions of our own unworthiness; and, whilst studying to walk more circumspectly in the time to come, let the subject be improved by us as a fresh argument for placing all our dependence upon Him, "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth." Brethren, it is a solemn truth which, in the land where we dwell, we are taught from our childhood to cherish in our memory—that "every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come;" and when we take into our view not only the long catalogue of our direct personal offences, but also the amount of social evil that may be recorded against us, what reason have we not to prostrate ourselves in humility before a holy and offended God, and, "fleeing for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us in the Gospel," to rejoice, as the ground of all our confidence, only in the finished work of Him whom "God hath set forth to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood." Truly, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 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."

Finally, let us not only seek to avoid the condemnation in the text by separating ourselves from sin, but by a life of active devotedness to Jesus, and christian usefulness amongst our brethren of mankind, let us study to be of the number of those who turn many unto righteousness; and however obscure may be our situation in the world, let us be assured, that by the light of a holy life, the wisdom of christian counsels, and the fervency of christian prayers, we may prove a blessing to the generation that now is, and to generations that are yet unborn. "And now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever." Amen.

THE CURE OF THE LEPER, THE CENTURION'S SERVANT, AND
PETER'S WIFE'S MOTHER;

A LECTURE FROM MATTHEW viii. 1—17

By the Rev. JOHN BRUCE,

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THE passage of Scripture we have now read, is well fitted to teach us that Jesus was ever foremost in every good work of beneficence and kindness. He went about continually doing good in this his labour of love, losing no time, and sparing no labour. He was one who had no rest and knew no pleasure but in doing his Father's business, working the work of him that sent him while it was day, remembering that the night cometh when no man can work, and always rejoicing in the reward that was set before him. There is scarcely any thing more frequently brought before us in the history of the life of Christ than his indefatigable industry. Although having a body like ours, subject to pain, and weariness, and faintness from excess of labour, he never laboured as we do that he might rest, but passed from one engagement to another, and seems rather to have sought his relief from a change of pursuit, or from such a change of pious occupation as is alluded to in the passage we have just read. We here see him compassionately attending to the sick just after finishing his discourse on the mountain, and when just coming down from the mountain, for the audience had not yet dispersed, and great multitudes followed him. The mention of the cure of the leper immediately on our Lord's coming down from the mountain with the multitude still about him, and his allowing himself no leisure or quiet, serves to remind us of many other striking examples of the same characteristic feature in the mind of our Lord. It serves to fix also, beyond a doubt, the time of the occurrence of that wonderful miracle, however difficult it may be to fix the precise date of the others that are narrated. A comparison of the narratives of the Evangelists, Mark and Luke, with that which is here before us, has led to one of those unsatisfactory discussions about the order of succession in these miracles, for which I think the Evangelists would have been more careful to give ground of settlement had they considered that discussion of any importance. They are careful to note precisely the date of any miracle, when they are certain that some important lesson is to be gained by it, or when it throws some considerable light on the course

of the narratives; but the same desire to illustrate main points led them very often to omit the date, and to bring forward many circumstances out of the natural order; and though I am not confident that the Evangelist did depart from the natural chronological order in the passage I have read, I think it not unlikely that he may have done so, and have been induced to do so by his desire to place before us in one view several of those acts of divine power with which the life of our Saviour was crowded, and which taken together give the more important fulfilment to the prophecy of Isaiah, with reference to which he closes this passage: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Following out this general object, and confining myself, therefore, at present, to certain general remarks on the relative importance of these miracles, and so taking a connected and summary view of the whole passage, you observe that it consists of a somewhat particular detail of three miraculous cures of the same nature performed by our Lord, to which is added, a general announcement about many others of the same nature. Of the last of the three instances, that of Peter's wife's mother, there seems to me so very little peculiar in it that I cannot conceive why it was selected for such very special commemoration, unless for the notoriety which would attach to one so nearly allied to so distinguished a man. Perhaps, also, the circumstance of her rising and ministering, or assisting, in domestic arrangements in behalf of our Lord and other visitors, afforded a proof of the completeness of the cure, and of the reality of the miraculous interposition he had wrought. In the second instance, that of the centurion's servant, which, from the nature of the case, was attended with many more interesting circumstances than the others, the Evangelist is also at pains to note the completeness of the cure and its miraculous nature; for at the close of his account in the 13th verse it is said, that Jesus who had not so much as seen or come near that dying man said to the centurion, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the

self-same hour"—marking the coincidence in point of time between the declaration of Christ as to the fact and its actual occurrence. These instances being in fact chiefly valuable as miracles authenticating our Lord's mission, it was a point of supreme importance to mark how instantly and entirely the disease departed at the bidding of our Lord. Nay, so important did it appear to our Lord himself, that in the first instance referred to, that of the leper, he guarded against any such attempt at misrepresentation as he had reason to apprehend on the part of his enemies, and sought to obtain from them a certification of the reality of the cure ere they could take any alarm. Whatever other reasons our Lord may have had, and it were easy to imagine many, for saying to the cleansed leper, "See thou tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them," there is no doubt that his enjoining silence on the man respecting his benefactor till his recovery should be officially certified in the proper quarter, proceeded from a desire to have his recovery duly attested by the priests as the competent judges of that matter, and who might have refused the attestation altogether, had not means been taken to put them off their guard. He wished to anticipate them in their designs, and to have evidence of the completeness of the remedy, every way unexceptionable, for the priests were required to be very active in separating leprous persons from the rest of the community, and preventing their return till the offer of the gift of thanksgiving which Moses commanded, so that the fact of their restoration to sound health might be exactly ascertained. This leprous person, then, having presented the gift and passed the examination, and having been pronounced clean by the constituted authorities, his recovery was established by law beyond a doubt, so that no greater testimony could be given to the people and the priests themselves of the truth and reality of the miraculous power of Christ; and it was undoubtedly from his desire to obtain that legal and fair testimonial of the reality of the cure ere ever they could take alarm, and thus fix indisputably the main fact regarding the reality of his miracles, that our Lord enjoined silence on the leper, till first of all he had gone and shown himself to the priest and offered the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them. From this account of the matter, it seems plain that the truth as to the genuine preternatural character of

this miracle is established by most competent and unexceptionable evidence; but it is no less plain, that had our Lord intended to prove no more than the truth and reality of his divine commission on earth, he needed not have gone on multiplying his miracles of that description, or confined himself so almost exclusively as he has done to the cure of sickness, or the prevention of death. He might have shown his miraculous power over the elements of nature, as we see in this chapter he did, when on the rising of a furious tempest on the sea, he rebuked the winds, and there was a great calm. He might have wrought innumerable wonders of a similar kind in the midst of the earth or on the face of the sky. He might have done as Joshua did, when he stopped the sun in his course, or as Moses did in the land of Egypt, when he turned the light into darkness and the water into blood, and brought plagues successively into the land by stretching forth his hand in the name of God. No reason can be given for his not afflicting the land in that manner, especially when we consider the iniquities that prevailed in that nation; no reason can well be given for our Lord deviating so remarkably from the example of Moses, if he meant merely like Moses to prove his divine commission, and to convince men of their guilt and danger in refusing to hear him. But it affords good and satisfactory explanation of our Lord choosing a new walk for himself, and departing so remarkably from the course of former prophets, if you conceive that his miracles were designed, not merely to show that he was a person who had framed the arrangements of nature—not merely to prove the reality of his mission to earth, and to show that every man's destiny was held at his disposal; but that his object was as much in these miracles to explain the benign intention for which he came to earth, and thus not merely to convince us of our guilt and danger in refusing to hear him, but to persuade us and make us willing, nay, exceedingly anxious to sit at his feet, to hear him distinctly, and hear him always as the person who is designing nothing but our good, and thus most reasonably prepare us to listen to him as a friend, as well as to bow down to his resistless power. Whoever attends to the ordinances of the law respecting the plague of leprosy, and is at pains to mark how that disease, being said to be incurable, laid the person under miserable disabilities, separating him from his family and the congregation of Israel, and representing him as nucleau, or unfit to be acknowledged or spoken to,

cannot fail to see that a man with leprosy was as properly a type of our pollution from sin as were those men who would have been stung to death by the serpents, had not God interposed miraculously for their deliverance. Christ's healing the leper, and saying, "I will, be thou clean," was intended to signify his commission to cleanse the soul from that moral pollution which in its nature, and by the law of God, excludes a man everlastingly from all communion with God, and the privileges of his unfallen creation; and every miracle he ever wrought in the whole of his history, went to prove more or less clearly that he came to us as sinners, and sought to effect a change in our spiritual condition, which none but he himself was competent to achieve. His cleansing the leper was, perhaps, among the most complete symbolical intimations he ever gave of his having come for that end—to "clean and sanctify to himself a peculiar people—to present to his Father a holy church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." But neither must we forget, on the other hand, that while all miracles have more or less of this figurative or emblematic import, (what is called spiritualizing, is exceedingly profitable,) while, I say, they have all that figurative import wrapt up in the bosom of them, representing his concern to deliver us from sin, without which we could not be delivered from pain and misery, they are also intended most literally to signify and certify that Christ has a concern for our bodily pains and infirmities. We are apt to forget that while he is the Saviour of the soul, he is also the Saviour of the body; that he saves the body, as it were, by making it follow in the train of the soul. But he actually hath an express care about the body, having it distinctly the object of his watchful vigilance as much as the soul itself. He has compassion for the body, as the body is a part of our nature, which, though the less honourable of the two parts which compose our nature, is still a constituent part of it, polluted as it is by sin, and afflicted by disease and death; and this is accounted by Christ a sufficient reason for his extending his almighty power over its resurrection. The Saviour has not neglected that body, on the existence as well as future state of which, the soul is so dependent for the healthful exercise of all its faculties. When our Lord here, as in the case of the centurion's servant, simply upon a prayer to help being sent to him, cured the person, though at a distance from him; or when, as in the case of Peter's wife's mother, he

restored instant health to one diseased with a raging fever, he taught us to look to him as much for the assuaging of bodily pains and sickness, as for the cure of any mental or spiritual disease whatever; he taught that medical as well as moral treatment is under his inspection, and subject to the very same watchfulness; that medical as well as moral treatment depends on him for its efficacy; so that the one is not a whit more properly than the other the object of his concern. As the Saviour of the Church, he has taught you that the physician, though he prescribes for nothing more than the pains of mortality, and is guided by no surer counsel than that which God has annexed to human skill and experience, is, nevertheless, as properly the instrument in the hands of Christ, whether intelligently so or not, as is the spiritual physician who, in the exercise of his more awful calling, dispenses to the sick and the dying the infallible words of wisdom; and our Lord taught us, in fact, by these miracles, that, so far from restricting his attention to the condition of the soul, and letting the body follow as it were, the body is not less an object of interest to him than the soul. He is ready to pray distinctly for both, as well as to save both, and the only difference in the treatment of the one from that of the other is this, that whenever it so happens that the present peace, and rest, and final quietness of the soul happen to be in danger by the body's well-being, that body, as the inferior part, shall step aside and surrender its place of ease and safety, on the principle that every thing that is inferior must give way to that which is superior—a principle of truth which reigns through creation, and on this principle, also, that whoever is humbled God shall in due time exalt, and that whoever is willing to descend to the lowest place, God shall exalt at last to celestial and endless glory. Now, I cannot but think that this obvious consideration, were it kept more prominently in sight, instead of spiritualizing always, and never doing any thing else, might help in various ways in the work of practical godliness—it would give a more substantial, a firmer, a more satisfying, because a more realizing, conviction of the influence of Christ's superintending care. It appears to me that many of you, by considering him exclusively as the Saviour of the soul, have your ideas of religion sublimated and refined away, till there is nothing in them for upholding you amid earthly and incessant temptations. By imagining about Christ that he is appointed head above all things to a race of beings without bodies,

you think it always presumption to regard these bodies as objects of Christ's intercession. Now, we are, nevertheless, declared to be the temples of the living God, while the body, as well as the soul, is designed for immortal honours, after having escaped from this prison-house. Such habituating themselves to think of Christ as if he were acting for souls alone, do, in fact, greatly injure religion; and their attempts to spiritualize religion are much like the attempts to see some things which are invisible from their subtlety, or to touch something gaseous, or to grasp something illusory as spiritual existence.

Besides, finding how greatly this truth will help them to observe temperance as a branch of godliness, and to endure sickness with divine tranquillity, and to follow the example of our Lord in compassionating the bodies and distresses of their afflicted brethren, they would also find that it serves not a little to aid them in upholding that substantial conviction of the reality of the truth which man so greatly needs, in order to his walking by faith, amid the crowd of objects that are all visible, and where the want of distinct conceptions of the objects of faith must be so great a hinderance, because so sad a discouragement. Were it necessary, I might corroborate this last remark, by observing how, in the last verse of this passage, the Evangelist quotes one of the passages in Isaiah, which relates to the whole of Christ's sufferings, as well as to the salvation accomplished by him—thus proving that, instead of considering our Lord as the Saviour of the soul to the neglect of the body, he conceived the bodies of the saints to be as constantly, and vigilantly, and compassionately under the care of the Saviour now, as ever they shall be after they are fashioned and changed into

the likeness of his own glorious body. This most vital difference is to be marked, however, between the body in its sickness, and an immortal soul in its sins; that whereas Christ very often removes sickness from those who are without faith, he never removes sins from those who are without it. The prayer of a believer may be the means of raising a confirmed and hardened infidel from his sick bed; but every one knows that that alone can never be the means of delivering his soul from death, if it fail to convert him. Supposing you, who are believers, to pray for the recovery of a dying infidel, who refuses to pray for himself, and that the effect of that intercessory prayer shall be to heal his body, yet it shall leave his soul as free to death as ever, if it leave him an infidel; for the cure of a man's soul consists in its awakening him to a spirit of prayer. All this is confirmed; for it is said, at the 16th verse, that "Christ healed indiscriminately all that were sick;" *i. e.*, all that were brought, as the verse explains it, and commended to his attention by others, whether they had any faith or confidence in him for themselves or not; and yet never do we read of Christ granting absolution upon the intercession of others, except it was for those who had faith themselves. And, in the instance of the centurion, on every account so remarkable that we shall return to it at a future period, you cannot fail to perceive what vast commendation our Lord bestows on his faith, and how he takes occasion from it to foretell the rejection of the Jewish nation, and the forfeiture of all their privileges, and the final perdition of innumerable souls in the judgment of the great day; and all this, because without faith in Him, as head of all things, they could not but be driven forth from that kingdom over which he presides

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. J. M'NAUGHTAN, A.M., Paisley.
SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT GORDON, D.D., Edinburgh.

THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE GLASGOW YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
THE INTERESTS OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

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

Paisley.

"Head over all things to his church."—EPHES. i. 22.

THE term "Church" has often been made the rallying word of a party, and has been limited or extended in its application according to the wishes and the purposes of those by whom it has been employed. Sometimes it has been so generalized by the spirit of liberalism as to include all who make any pretensions to the christian name, however unfounded their profession and inconsistent their claim; and he who would set in opposition their announced principles and their enacted practices, their avowed sentiments and their undisguised actings, would be proclaimed a judge in other men's matters—a bigoted meddler in the concerns of his neighbour. Though error, like a canker worm, had eaten the core out of their religious belief; though immorality hung like a millstone round the neck of their professed principles; still the world's charity would smile upon all that was anomalous and inconsistent, and wall them up within the pale of the Church of Christ. Sometimes the term "Church" has fallen into sterner keeping, and has been narrowed in its application, until it excluded multitudes who were of the household of faith. Men of contracted views, whose spirits were soured by bigotry and mystified by prejudice, have attempted to monopolize the understanding of God's revealed truth; and, having fearlessly concluded the rectitude of all their personal opinions, have made coincidence with them, in all things, the very badge of discipleship, and thus have unchurched and unchristianized many who held one faith, one Lord, one baptism. The error of the former class would almost nullify the distinction between the righteous and the unbelieving, and would go far to

identify the Church with the world; while the error of the latter would tie up the influences of the Spirit and the promises of the Gospel to a special party, who, at the best, were but a tithe and a fraction of the heirs of grace. Perhaps the error of both has partially originated in the attempt to attach one uniform and specific meaning to a term which is variously used in Sacred Writ. Men, assuming that it can have only one application in the inspired Canon, have first ventured to determine that one, and then have twisted and accommodated all passages wherein it occurs, to suit that idea, thus making their opinion the master-key to revelation, instead of making revelation the guide and the rectifier of their every notion. Now, it must be manifest to every attentive Scripture reader, that the term "Church" is used with different degrees of latitude, according as it is applied to the "body visible or invisible." It generally means a spiritual society, organized under one spiritual Head, gathered out of a world that lieth in wickedness, and called to the knowledge, the love, and the obedience of the truth. It occasionally refers to a body of professors who assemble together in one place for devotional purposes, as when the Apostle says, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, and the church that is in their house;" and, as in the epistles addressed to the churches at Sardis, and Ephesus, and Thyatira, without reference to the sincerity or the formality of those thus gathered together. Sometimes it designates the elect of God—all that have been, or shall be, justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; as when reference is made to "the church of the first-born which

are written in heaven;" and sometimes it marks out the whole body of professors below, who *appear* to receive the truth in the love of it; who claim the privileges, and share the protection of God's redeemed ones: who are witnesses for Jehovah in the midst of rebelliousness; and who, by maintaining the rights of his laws, and proclaiming the extent of his mercies, do at once promote the glory of the Eternal, and perform essential service to the perishing around them. It is in this sense the epithet is used in our text: He is "Head over all things to his Church;" and we would understand by the term "Church," any class, and every class, of professing Christians whose received doctrines do really unfold that manifold wisdom of God which shines in the cross of Christ—the manifestation of which wisdom, to principalities and powers in heaven, and to erring and ignorant ones on earth, is a cause why Jehovah hath ever preserved a seed to serve him in the earth, and hath fostered and kept alive in the world the knowledge and the love of his will amid successive changes of divine dispensation, and during the overturning seasons of earthly revolutions. This is just the idea which the Apostle affixes to "the Church," in the 3d chapter of this Epistle, at the 9th verse, where he states that his apostleship was ordained, in order that "all men might see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known *by the church*"—that is, by means of the church—"the manifold wisdom of God;" a passage wherein the Apostle instructs us, that the smiting of a spiritual rock by the hand of the Father, and the rearing upon that smitten foundation a glorious temple, every pillar of which is inscribed with "glory to God, peace on earth, and good-will to men," is intended, amongst other reasons, to increase the knowledge even of celestial powers, and to prepare their minds for joining in the rapturous melody of the ransomed, when they cry aloud, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessings;" for he is "King of kings, and Lord of lords:" "Head over all things to his church."

In this clause, there is expressed the relationship of Jesus to the world, he is "Head over all things;" as there is expressed the connexion between his supremacy and his people's safety, he is "Head

over all things to his church." We remark therefore,

I. That the text affirms the supreme *political* power and authority of Immanuel.

It is quite evident that the Apostle is speaking of the mediatorial exaltation of the Redeemer, and makes no reference to that unbegun dignity and glory which, as the eternal Word, the Son hath ever possessed; he is describing the proofs of the Father's acquiescence in the atonement of Jesus; in that he hath given him a name, which is above every name; "hath put all things under his feet, and hath given him to be head over all things to the church." The instant that Messiah, in the counsels of eternity, offered himself as a ransom and a peace-maker; the instant he set his shoulder to shore up a world whose props of righteousness were crumbling into ruins, and offered himself as the object upon whom all the vials of accumulated wrath should be emptied, he was proclaimed King and Governor amongst the nations; the government was laid upon his shoulder, and he acquired a new right and a new title to the obedience, and the subjection, and the homage of all, *separate and distinct* from the right of his inherent Godhead, even the title and the right resulting from his having procured the suspension of threatened destruction by the intervention of his sacrifice, and the interference of his grace. In virtue hereof, Jesus hath been proclaimed Lord of all; earth has been resolved into one mighty empire, of which Immanuel is the anointed Emperor, and all the kings and potentates of time hold their crowns by tenure from him, and all the princes of the earth sway their sceptres by appointment from him, and all the magistrates and dispensers of law exercise their functions by delegation from him; for all the arrangements of the kingdoms of providence, and all the dispensations of the treasures of grace, have been put in his power, for the promotion of the divine honour, and the safety and preservation of redeemed Zion. So that when the universal sovereignty and headship are affirmed of the Lord, we are not to imagine that our conceptions of it are complete, when we think that he controls the elements of nature, and helms the earth in its orbit, and guides the stars in their courses; nor when we imagine that he sits amidst the serenities of his Father's love, and looks with a prying glance upon all the transactions of this lower sphere, in order that he may judge a righteous judgment when all shall stand before his dread tribunal; nor when we conceive that he is

waiting the promised hour when, his adversaries having been removed out of the way, all the kingdoms of the world shall nominally become the kingdoms of the Lord; when, having broken opposition in pieces, and trodden upon the high places of the earth, he shall ride forth conquering and to conquer; but we are to understand that *now* there is an intimate connexion between all terrestrial government and Christ's mediatorial power, even that connexion which ought ever to subsist between "the Prince of the kings of the earth," and those who owe him their love, their loyalty, and their all. Just as in Israel, there was established a Theocracy, the Almighty claiming to be recognised as the Head of their civil and ecclesiastical polity; and just as all judges and rulers were expected to recognise their power as delegated to them from above; and just as the divine right and title were not subverted nor destroyed, when rulers and people sank into sin and idolatry; so now in the earth there is established a larger civil and ecclesiastical government, of which Jesus is the Head, and of which the Theocracy was a symbol, and all rulers and all subjects are required to acknowledge their lawful Lord who sits upon the holy hill of Zion—the stability of whose government, and the legitimacy of whose claims upon all, are no more affected by the godlessness of the nations, and the impiety of their rulers, than were the claims of the Shepherd of Israel set aside by the wanderings of his flock, or the usurpations of her hirelings.

It is almost unnecessary to quote scripture testimony in confirmation of a truth so expressly laid down in our text: he is "Head over all things"—a truth which may be amplified and illustrated by each at his leisure, from the thought of the offices and functions that are uniformly assigned to the head, as the source of intelligence, and energy, and power—the seat of understanding and will—the fountain of direction and authority. To confirm this truth, however, you may refer to that impressive passage in the 2d psalm, wherein God the Father is described as reasoning with the proud and high-minded monarchs of earth, and is counselling them to make their peace with the Son, and to submit themselves to him as their Supreme: "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little;" or, you may refer to that passage in the 89th psalm, and 27th verse, wherein, describing the office and exaltation of David's Lord, the Spirit

declareth, "Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth;" or, you may refer to the prophetic declaration of Daniel, in the 7th chapter, wherein, after symbolizing those idolatrous powers who should war against the truth and raven against the Church, he adds, "I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him"—language which tallies and corresponds with that of our Lord and his Apostles: "All things are delivered to me of my Father"—"Father, glorify thy Son, as thou hast given him power over all flesh"—"Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet; for in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him." He left nothing—no king, no ruler; no government, no magistrate, no creature in heaven or on earth, that is not put under him: that is, we say again, God hath established a mighty sovereignty, including the circle of the whole creation, and Jesus Immanuel, Mediator, is the head of it; and though many a monarch, and many a despot, and many a democrat, have cast off their allegiance, and have set themselves against the Lord and his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us, HE hath never relinquished his claim or his character; but, by word and ordinance, by providence and power, hath invariably and ceaselessly declared it; he hath entered his protest against the usurpations of the adversary, and hath proclaimed that, when once his patience and forbearance are exhausted, he will arise in his wrath, eternally abolish the iniquities of the unholy, shiver their sceptres and uproot their thrones, and reveal himself as 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. Let us, therefore, when met by the objection of the general character of terrestrial governments as inconsistent with the holy and merciful spirit of the Gospel of the Kingdom, ever be prepared to make a distinction between the actings of a province in a state of anarchy and insubordination, and the countenancing of these enormities by their lawful prince; and to discriminate between a subject's denying the authority of his prince, and the prince's relieving him from his allegiance. All the governments of time, and all the churches on earth,

might retrograde so far in corruption, as to deny to Jesus his kingly crown; they might attempt to fetter and manacle his omnipotence, limiting his right of interference to spiritual things, and disclaiming his right to regulate their national policy and civil administration; but all this puny opposition would neither shatter his mediatorial might, nor sully the lustre of his regal diadem. It would only serve to awake the plague and the penalty that are stored up against his despisers, and hurry forward that awful hour when he shall strike through kings in his wrath, assert his undoubted sovereignty, fulfilling the words of the prophet Ezekiel: "He shall remove the diadem, and take off the crown; exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. He shall overturn, overturn, overturn, and it shall be no more until he come, whose right it is, and he will give it him."

II. Our text affirms, that the power of Christ as King of nations is subordinated to his purposes as King of saints. He is Head over all things to the Church, or for the Church—for her peace, her prosperity and perpetuity; so that he is now described as putting his honour on his people, even as the head puts honour on the body. Jesus is the Head of his new creation; he hath loved and bought it with a most precious ransom; he hath gifted it with spiritual existence; and, when complete, it shall be to him a glorious body, without spot or blemish, or any such thing. This body he has been building up from the fall to the present hour, nourishing its growing parts with the milk of his own love; and never will he cease thus to feed and cherish his spiritual flesh, but from every country and from every tribe will its members be gathered in; and when the body and the head are gloriously and indissolubly united, they shall reign and rejoice together amid the felicities of a sinless eternity.

But more particularly we remark,

1. He is Head over all things, in order that he may bring together the materials, and build them up into a church unto himself.

He is the head corner-stone, living, tried, and precious, upon which there must be reared a blemishless indestructible fabric, composed of living stones, selected from the quarry of humanity, polished and prepared by the Spirit of all grace, and cemented together by the binding of undying love. In other words, Jesus must bring his people to himself, from the north and from the south—wheresoever scattered, and howsoever occupied; they must be brought into contact

with the truth, established in the faith, grounded in love; and all the mutations in time, and all the evolutions in science, and all the reverses in fortune, are so ordered and managed as to minister to the ingathering or to the preservation of the saints, the elect of the Lord. When brought unto Him, when conformed to his image, when animated by his sympathies, they are, indeed, as sheep in the midst of wolves, exposed to the machinations and the animosities of a world they daily condemn, hated by all men for their Master's sake, beleagured by enemies mightier in intelligence, superior in power, most unwearied in activity, ever anxious to deceive and to destroy, so that unless these combined influences were restrained, and thwarted, and counteracted, the righteous would speedily perish from the earth; truth would be shorn of its glorious majesty; error would creep forth from a thousand lurking points, and, unmasking its hideous deformities, would be enthroned amid the darkness of unchecked and progressive immorality. But Jesus is the Head, and his people are safe. No conceivable obstruction can choke up the path-way he hath opened to his chosen, and no concentration of power can smite from his embrace those who repose on the bosom of his love. "He is the Shiloh unto whom the gathering of the people shall be." "Kings shall shut their mouths at him; but he shall say, Behold me! behold me! unto a nation that was not called by my name." "He is the Head;" and all the counsels of the sage, and all the devices of the crafty, and all the persecutions of the malignant, strengthened by the strivings of the ambitious and the divisions of the restless, shall but subserve his purpose, of bringing this son and that daughter to himself, without seriously marring the interests of any one who has laid hold upon his purchased salvation.

Although, indeed, when providences strange and trying, are enacting around us, and we, forming a part of the mighty drama, are thus incapacitated from taking an accurate and an impartial glance at the tendencies and consequences of all events, so as ever to perceive the hand amid the storm that guides the tempest, and that reins the whirlwind; yet, in looking back with the eye of dispassionate observation on past events in the history of the Church, it requires no great acuteness of spiritual discernment to perceive that all the plans of providence are subordinate to the purposes of grace; that the moral earthquakes whereby earth has been repeatedly shattered are

so many contrivances to facilitate the outflow of the streams of redemption; and that all the disappointed efforts that have been made to crush the temple of the Lord, have served to disclose the fact, that her bulwark is the arm of Omnipotence, and her guardianship the eye, the wakeful eye of Omniscience; that her Redeemer is in the midst of her, himself the pillar of cloud and the column of fire—protecting, shielding, defending—so that no weapon formed against her shall ever prosper; for the Lord who watcheth Zion hath said, “She shall not be moved; God shall help her and that right early.”

2dly. Christ is Head over all things for the beautifying of his Church; that is, he exerciseth his power over all things, so as to promote and advance the beauty of his Church. The beauty of a church is her purity in doctrine, and her holiness in practice, her strict unbending conformity to the law and the order of her exalted Head; and the administration of her wise and her gracious Ruler is all ordered and arranged, so that at length she may be presented in the heavens a glorious church without spot and blemish, or any such thing. In order to this she is tried with the storm, and strengthened with the sunshine; the fire and the flood are brought to bear upon her goodly fabric, so as to purge out all that is polluted and profane, and hasten on the perfection of her coming state. Hence it oftentimes happens, that when the dust of this world has been allowed to settle within her chambers, so as to obscure her fairness and hide her ornaments, the Great Master of assemblies commissions the Potentates of time to sweep off the incrustations of age, whilst yet he allows them not to unsettle the position of one living stone, or deface the order of one settled column; that is, whensoever for the Church's purity, it is necessary, *He* brings upon her sifting times that she may be purged of her dross, and as King of kings, employs the instrumentality of blinded and deceived men, in order to effect his purposes of grace in reference to his redeemed ones. How beautifully is this truth brought out in the histories of the Old Testament, clearly revealing that the hidden machinery even of heathen government is managed by Immanuel for the sake of his Church. Let a man transport himself in thought to the counsels of Moab or of Midian in the days of Israel's judges; let him listen to the orations of some aged and prudential adviser, testifying that Jacob's sons had now slackened their vigorous habits, that their garrisons were feeble and their warriors effeminate, and that thus

there was offered an advantage which Midian should not neglect, to cramp the power of a dreaded invader, and cripple the energies of an hostile neighbour; and let him mark the enthusiasm with which the counsel is received, and the success with which it is followed out, and what does he witness, but the natural result of remissness in one party poised against prudence, and decision in the other? But let him sit in these counsels with the pages of the Old Testament spread out before him; let him note the predictions which were directed against Israel's forgetfulness of Jehovah; let him connect her idolatry with the schemes of her restless neighbours, and her captivity and subjugation with her return to the right path, and her renunciation of the evil, and what is the picture when the surface is thus rent off, but the delineation of Jesus marking with jealousy the wilful wanderings of his flock, and scourging into submission, by the lash of heathen intrepidity, those whom his mercy and his grace had failed to wall up from forgetfulness? Or, suppose you conceive yourself placed in the tent of Cyrus, when he lay with his army before the walls of Babylon, and that you take part in all the deliberations relative to the possibility of destroying the impregnable defences of that magnificent and that joyous city, and that at length the bold idea is mooted of turning aside the tide of the mighty river that rolled through the midst of its palaces, and entering by the dried highway which its channel would afford; that you listened to the lengthened acclamations with which the proposal was received; that you watched the accomplishment of the crafty enterprize, till the treasures of Bel were made the prey of the Persian, and the Mede who had conquered was hailed as the monarch of the world. Suppose all this, and what have we but the operation of mortal craftiness, the successful aspirings of creature ambition, the power of Cyrus matched against the might of Assyria, and successfully exalting itself over the ruins of an humbled and a fallen rival? But let the picture be examined with the key of revelation, and long ere the actors are brought into being, we have the histories of them all—their plans, their devices, their resources, their successes are all described with graphic accuracy and historic minuteness. They are interwoven with the record of God's dealings with his church; and Nebuchadnezzar is exalted in power that Israel might be smitten for her sin and chastened for her rebellion. And when the captive tribes wept over their trespasses, and bemoaned the desolation of

Zion, Cyrus is called forth to break up the bondage of the Hebrew, to restore them again to the land of their fathers, and to beautify the temple of the Lord, and to settle in peace those whose souls were humbled by affliction, and whose graces were purified by the flames of calamity. And had we the same key to the secrets of Providence in ancient and modern times, we should find that the welfare and the beauty of the Church is the centre round which they are made to play; and that all the virulence wherewith the truth is ever assailed, and that all the contrivances whether of governments or of societies for retarding its progress—that all the enactments of an earthly legislature that have a bearing directly or indirectly on the honour and the sanctity of the Church, are just so many acts of Christ's mediatorial sway, the fulfilment of his own righteous declaration, "that he would sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver, and would purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they might offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

Lastly, Jesus is Head over all things in order that he may perfect his body, the Church. Of all those who are given unto him of them he can lose none. Time, with its thousand vicissitudes must roll along, whilst there remaineth one, whose name is written above, alive or unacquainted with the grace that is in Christ. Its plans and its purposes shall have existence *until* the completion of Christ's body the Church; its discoveries in science, and improvements in arts; its advances in civilization; its augmentations in commercial zeal; its treaties and its friendships; its mercenary operations and its concerted revolutions are all the secondary causes in His hand for finishing His plans, and for making one with Himself all his covenant children. Yes, believing brethren, the heavings of empires and the convulsions of states, the schemes and the sins of men, all are hurrying on the period, the happy period that yet shall dawn on this moral waste, the blessed day foreseen by Isaiah the prophet: "It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And it shall come to pass that all flesh shall come to worship before me, saith the Lord." "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun."

And when all these ends are accomplished; when all the elect are gathered unto Christ; when all his sheep are brought into his fold; when the building of the temple is completed, and the top stone is laid amid the shoutings of grace; *then* time shall be no longer; its providences shall be brought to their termination; earth that had been reared and employed as a great scaffolding for promoting the erection of this spiritual structure shall be taken to pieces; and civil magistracy, and principalities, and powers of earth, shall be pronounced useless things. The thrones and sceptres of this world shall be valuable no longer; their purpose is served, their end accomplished, when the Bride, the Lamb's wife, "all glorious within, in raiment of needle-work and clothing of wrought gold" is presented perfect in the heavens; yea, Christ himself as King and Governor of the nations shall lay down his Headship and his sway; and all power, and all honour, and all glory shall be merged in the majesty and the will of the eternal Jehovah, even in the combined honour of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the one, the only living God.

Learn from this subject the absurdities of those who speak of the State keeping the Church in existence: this is reversing the order of divine appointment. The State is not the pillar on which the Church rests; but the Church is the foundation on which the world's prosperity and existence depend. The saints of God are the very salt of the earth who preserve it from immediate putrefaction; they are the bulwarks of a nation—the very guardians of time itself. Their extirpation, were such a catastrophe possible, would be the signal for the overthrow and the ruin of all that remained. It is you, believers in Christ, for whom the world is still continued; and it is the promises that are linked with your peace that stand between the sinner and perdition. How silly and how senseless, then, are the sentiments of all who maintain that kings and magistrates should leave religion to itself—that they should officially take no pains to multiply the number of the pious, and irrigate their land with the streams of righteousness! It is the doctrine that they should neglect the very means of self-preservation, shut up the sluices of national blessing, and expose themselves to the curse that impends over the kingdom—that will not acknowledge the sway of Jesus as Head of all.

Learn, also, the safety and security of the Church of Christ. She hath a King, an Head who is over all; one who can bind the strong one with chains, and the prince

of darkness with fetters of iron; one who can subdue sin, swallow up death, and bring forth judgment unto victory; whose word, and glory, and truth, are all pledged to the salvation, the honour, the eternal blessedness of his children.

Ye little ones whose faith is feeble, and whose confidence is easily unsettled, think of Him who helms the universe as watching over you all, and bury your fears and your dark anticipations in the ocean of his omnipotence. For his glory he hath allowed the present working of conflicting opinions; for our sins he might justly make the devices of the wicked successful; and the Church, now reposing in peace, might have her sanctuaries laid desolate, and her sons again driven to the mountain-side to serve the God of their fathers. But it would only be a temporary exile, appointed that the heirs of the kingdom, nerved and braced by the atmosphere of the mountain, might again be restored to their tents in the vallies, and dwell in peace and live in gladness. Fear ye not, as if it were possible for the rage of the tempest to rend you like tender twigs from Christ the vine, and leave you to perish in the bosom of time. Nothing shall

separate you from the love of Jesus, or diminish or destroy the interest he feels in his people's redemption.

In fine, let all bethink themselves of the necessity of being personally united to Christ—made members of his body: without this the text speaks no comfort to your hearts. Ye must be born again, renewed, regenerated, conformed to his image; your belonging to this or that church is nugatory; profession is a fallacy; charity is an empty sound, unless based and begun in personal union, by faith, to the Redeemer. Search ye your hearts, try your spirits, weigh your motives, scrupulously examine your principles; and if you come to the conclusion that ye are the Lord's, rest in his mercy, devote yourselves to his cause; but if ye are constrained to judge that ye are Christless ones, cry aloud, and spare not, that the Spirit would take of the things that are Christ's, and show them to your souls. Let your prayer be, O Lord, we are undone, undertake thou for us. Let grace—sin-subduing, sin-destroying grace, be the burden of your petitions, that the Lord may lift upon you the light of his countenance, and give you peace. Amen, and Amen.

THE PRESENT DECLENSION OF RELIGION;

A SERMON PREACHED IN SOUTH LEITH CHURCH, FROM THE 12TH PSALM, IN BEHALF OF THE EDINBURGH MAGDALENE ASYLUM,

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If we are to refer this psalm to any particular period in the history of David, we shall find no event, I think, more likely to have given occasion to it than the death of the prophet Samuel. Even during the lifetime of that eminent individual, especially from the period at which he was raised to the throne of Israel, many abuses, both of a civil and religious nature, had crept in. Though Saul stood in great awe of Samuel, though he showed much anxiety to conciliate his favour, yet, in spite of the plainest revelation of the divine will, and the severest remonstrances of the prophet, he continued to pursue his own infatuated course, till Samuel was commanded to deliver again, and in the most absolute manner, the message he had before been commanded to convey to the rebellious king: "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, who is better than thou." Still, however, during Samuel's life, there

was something like a check upon the growing degeneracy of Israel. It was known to the whole kingdom, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, that Samuel, almost from his childhood, was established to be a prophet of the Lord, and that the Lord never allowed any of his words to fall to the ground. It appeared, moreover, that if not the original founder, he was at least, during his life, at the head of the school of the prophets—an institution of which we find repeated notice in the Old Testament history, and which, from the account there given, could not fail to exercise a salutary influence on society at large. In the course of time, this institution seems to have been greatly multiplied, and to have been established in the society of the Levites, who, it will be remembered, were dispersed among the twelve tribes, for the more easy distribution of religious knowledge among the people. It appears that these religious institutions themselves were schools or seminaries in which young men

were instructed, under the superintendence of some such venerable person as Samuel, in the knowledge of the law, the statutes, and the ordinances of God; and, though they were not all prophets, in the strict and literal acceptation of the word, as denoting persons endowed with the gift of foretelling future events, yet many of them were so inspired, and all of them received the title of the *sons* of the prophets. To the superintendence of one or more of these seminaries Samuel appears to have devoted a large portion of his time, especially during the latter years of his life; and we cannot doubt that the labours of those who were trained under the direction of such a man must have contributed not a little towards arresting the progress of irreligion and immorality through the land. But if, even in Samuel's lifetime, notwithstanding the fear and awe with which Saul regarded him, and the efforts he made to diffuse the knowledge of divine truth through the earth by means of the prophets; if, notwithstanding all this, both king and people continued to backslide, what was to be expected, when the prophets died, but that irreligion and immorality would advance still more rapidly? Saul would feel as if relieved, it may be supposed, from a most painful and galling restraint, when no longer under the possibility of being admonished or reproved by any man in the kingdom, perhaps, who had knowledge and courage to tell him the truth. The school, or schools, of the prophets, if not suppressed by royal authority, would hardly fail to be discountenanced and discouraged; and the influential men of the time, intent only on their worldly interest, would be ready to aid and abet the king in all his favourite measures, especially if these measures were such as tended to relax the rigour of religious ordinances, and to give a license to unholy gratifications. All this might naturally be looked for as the consequence of Samuel's death, and that it actually proceeded to be so, may be gathered from the history of the time, brief as that history is. The ark of God, we are told, was not sought after in the time of Saul—the ark of the living God, the charter by which the people of Israel held the possession of Canaan; and, consequently, the ordinances of God continued to be treated with growing neglect. The persecution of David, which had commenced long before Samuel's death, was pursued with daily-increasing bitterness and malignity on the part of Saul, knowing, as he did, that the man he sought to destroy was assuredly to be king of Israel; and knowing that he had

been anointed by the express order of God to that high and honourable office. In that unjust and profane persecution—I say profane, because it was an attempt to defeat the purposes of Jehovah—the contempt of religion, of necessity, was followed by the most outrageous violation of all those laws which secure the safety of man's person and property, and which are essential to the very existence of civil society; and to such a pitch of infatuation did Saul come, that when his desperate applications to God for direction—I call them desperate, because they were not the applications of faith—were rejected, he betook himself, in direct opposition to his own statutes, to a dealer with familiar spirits, to obtain counsel from the very man whom, in his lifetime, he treated with dislike, and whose direction he never followed. When David, then, with his known apprehension of the sins of the time, and especially when under the influence of the Spirit of God which came upon him from the time he was anointed, was told of the death of Samuel, what can be conceived more gloomy than the prospect that opened to him for the Church of God: or what language more appropriate could he utter than that of the psalm: "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

But, while there is thus to be found in David's own history a state of things corresponding very remarkably with that description in the text—a time when the godly man ceased, and the faithful failed from among the children of men; when every man spoke vanity with his neighbour with flattering lips and a double heart; and though it might be to this state of things that the Psalmist did in the first instance refer, yet, we cannot doubt that, under the guidance of the spirit of prophecy, he has here given us a faithful representation of other times of similar declension in the Church, and of abounding iniquity in the world. We can hardly read the psalm, I think, without being reminded of the character of that time in which our Lord appeared both as it has been described, or rather foretold in ancient prophecy, and as set forth by the inspired writers of the New Testament. The very predictions of what Messiah was to endure at the hands of the Jews, did themselves plainly intimate that he was to appear at a period of great degeneracy and almost universal corruption; and how fully these declarations were verified, needs no other proof than the declaration of our Lord himself respecting those very men that were commonly esteemed the most wise and the

most learned in Israel: "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." Nor would it be very difficult to point out other periods both earlier and later in the history of the Church to which the description before us will be found applicable—periods to which the people of God have good reason to be examples, as David was when he composed the psalm before us.

But the instruction, reproof, and encouragement, which the psalm is fitted to convey, are not to be confined, I think, to such remarkable seasons of spiritual declension and of growing immorality as I have now referred to. Times do frequently occur, though they may not be marked by any palpable dereliction of godliness, or any sudden outbreaking of iniquity and perverseness, when every good man has reason to adopt the lamentation, and to offer up the prayer of the Psalmist, and, at the same time, to inquire how far he himself may have been chargeable with neglect of duty, or otherwise countenancing irreligion, and in what way he may be instrumental, by influence or example, in arresting the progress of irreligion and immorality; and such, I conceive, to be the character of our own time. I shall not enter upon any minute comparison of the present state of religion and morality among us, with what it was in any definite period of our history. This is more than I could venture to undertake, and it is unnecessary even that I should. For the practical application of the subject before us, it is enough to remark, what I think no reflecting man will venture to dispute, that there are many things in the present aspect of society which intimate that in various characters true godliness is on the decline, and in various respects immorality, of which there is at all times enough, is upon the increase.

It is but too evident, I fear, that, with vast multitudes in the different ranks of society, there is a growing profanation of some, and a growing neglect of all the ordinances of God; and did this remark need any proof, I might refer to the single undeniable fact—a fact that is in every body's mouth, and acknowledged by all—that Sabbath profanation has been increasing not only among those who, from their infancy, have grown up in ignorance, surrounded by temptation, and familiar with crime, but among many also who occupy places of influence in society, and who not only avow their own disregard of the sacredness of

that day, but are forward to defend the conduct of their inferiors, by whom their example is too readily followed. This fact intimates the decay, or rather, perhaps, I might say the absence, of vital godliness on the part of those who set at nought the divine authority in regard to keeping the Lord's day, and turn their backs on all the religious ordinances to which that day should be devoted. When such practices are sanctioned by the high, and greedily followed by the humble; and while sentiments so contrary to truth are industriously and largely circulated through the press—that channel through which multitudes are every day furnished with much entertainment, and not a little knowledge—when this is the case, Christians are in danger of becoming so familiar with what is essentially ungodly, as in time to cease to feel the abhorrence they ought to feel for it. Long habit will make them think these to be works of necessity; and they will do what they should not themselves practise, and which, most assuredly, the Bible would not sanction. By degrees their own reverence for the sacredness of the Sabbath is diminished, and with it their taste for every other pious and spiritual exercise; and at length they may come, unconsciously, to affect others with their own indifference for divine things far beyond what they have ever once conceived of. And while reverence for the authority of God is weakened, especially as to the sanctification of the Sabbath, it will, assuredly, be followed by a growing disregard of those duties which mankind owe to one another; or, in the emphatic language of the text, "When the godly man ceaseth, the faithful will also fail from among the children of men;" for never was there a more miserable delusion than that which governments and heads of families have sometimes practised on themselves, when they have set the example to their subjects and dependents of setting at nought the authority of God, and yet flattered themselves all the while that their own authority would continue to be respected. It is impossible in the nature of things but that the decay of godliness will, in all cases, be accompanied with growing immorality; and wherever disregard to the authority of God, either as to his ordinances or as to any one of his express commands, generally prevails, there it will be found as generally that men speak vanity every one with his neighbour; that, with flattering lips and a double heart, do they speak. And so it is even among ourselves. The prevalence of falsehood in the various forms in which men are charg-

able with that detestable vice has kept pace with the growing neglect or profanation of divine ordinances; for, is it not true that it forms no small part of every man's constant care and watchfulness to avoid becoming the dupe of fraud and imposture; and that in the business of life, provided a direct falsehood is not told, dishonesty, at least that which the Word of God would pronounce to be so, is practised in ten thousand ways, not only without shame and remorse on the part of those who do so, but as lawful examples of dexterity and skill? It were not a very difficult thing to show from acknowledged fashion that such a system is fearfully prevalent; and not only so, but that multitudes, who would not directly sanction or approve it, are so familiar with it, and have come to regard it so much as a matter of course in the business of this world, that it has almost ceased to awaken abhorrence, or to give rise to any thing more, perhaps, than a passing remark. And if such be the state of things; if the authority of God be openly disregarded by no small portion of the world at large; and if, in the prosecution of worldly gain, violations of truth, if well disguised, are not thought displeasing, have we not reason to say, in the language of the Psalmist, "The godly man ceaseth; the faithful fail from among the children of men. They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips, and a double heart, do they speak?"

And what, then, is the duty of the Church—what is the duty of the people of God in such circumstances? The text furnishes a reply to this question. They are to imitate the example of the Psalmist, and cry unto God as he did: "Lord help, for the godly man ceaseth." There are no circumstances in which a Christian man will be more feelingly alive to his own helplessness, or more deeply sensible of his absolute dependence upon God, than when he looks around him on the abounding iniquity of the world, and asks, How can I be instrumental in arresting its progress or preventing its increase? At such a moment he will feel sorely overwhelmed at the amount of iniquity, recognising the truth that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and resting on the promise that the cause of truth will ultimately prevail, and that however unpromising appearances may be, God will rise again, will visit again his heritage. But if Christians can find a refuge in prayer, in the exercises of faith, and the promises of God, they must be deeply concerned on account of the prevalence of ungodliness, and sincerely anxious for the revival of true religion. If

not, they will be little inclined at all to pray on the subject; or, if they do think on it, presenting the formal petition that God will build up Zion, it will not be the prayer of faith—such as can be acceptable unto God or productive of any encouragement to themselves. The first question such Christians ought to put to themselves is, whether they are sincerely and deeply affected by the melancholy prevalence of irreligion and immorality around them, whether they have any sympathy with the saints of the olden time, when they said, "Horror took hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law. I beheld the transgressors and was grieved, because they kept not thy word." Something like this must be the feeling of Christians if Christianity is not in them in great deadness and backsliding; and, if it be like this, it will assuredly prompt them to such an exercise of self-examination as can hardly fail to lead to most important practical results. It will suggest to them this interesting inquiry, whether they have not contributed, within their own sphere, to the growth of the very evil they deplore; whether they do not continue to do so still, by exhibiting in their life and character what they have not been careful enough to discover and correct; and whether they might not do more than they ever do or attempt to do in the way of discouraging or putting down the province of immorality? I have no doubt that christian men will stand to their own consciences of having directly participated in any practice flagrantly profane or immoral. I am far from maintaining this, but with reference to many of the prevailing sins of the day, as those to which I have already referred, they may find, on a rigorous examination of the heart and life, that they have themselves been partakers of it, and have been necessary to making others so, to an extent they little imagined. Imbibing the spirit of the world around them, they may have lost much of their veneration for the Sabbath of the Lord, and have done too many things inconsistent with its sacredness, and which they are conscious, if in a more healthy state, would assuredly condemn them. And under the influence of the very same spirit they may, in the ordinary intercourse of life, and in deference to the wisdom of the world, be at times chargeable with what Paul would call violations of truth; and if they occupy the responsible place of masters and heads of families, their example must have a most injurious influence on dependents. Even though regular in their attendance on the public ordinances of religion,

and punctual also in the performance of every promise they have given, yet if there be any thing in their domestic arrangements to convey the idea that they do not regard the Lord's day as altogether sacred, and to be entirely set apart to religious duty, or if they make it appear that in compliance with general custom they sometimes say and do what their children and dependents see not perfectly accordant with truth and justice, then they may have awakened in them impressions that will never leave them, and, at the same time, have weakened the most important and salutary of all impressions; and if so, contributed to a deviation from the ways of godliness and integrity on the part of those persons, the termination of which it is impossible to calculate. And these melancholy facts are more especially to be dreaded if they are indifferent as to the manner in which their domestics have spent the Lord's day—an inconsistency into which I fear multitudes are drawn by some admissible plea of necessity. Among those, indeed, who never spent one thought about the interests of those who are to minister to them in their daily wants, it may be a convenient system to give them the full freedom of the Sabbath as a sort of reward for diligent labour and attention throughout the week, without asking them one question as to how they have spent it. But, I fear, too many who are not altogether responsible, have too readily gone in with a practice which I know has led to most terrible and melancholy consequences, converting the Lord's day into a day of frivolity and idleness, and exposing those who so spend it to manifold temptations which they would otherwise have escaped. If Christians, then, are as deeply concerned as they ought to be about the prevalence of immorality and irreligion, they will make it a subject of serious inquiry whether they may not, by a mere thoughtless compliance with custom, have been contributing to the abounding of iniquity; and if so, the result of the inquiry cannot fail to be a salutary one, and it will lead them to plead with greater earnestness the supplication of the Psalmist, as involving in it a confession of their own neglect of duty, "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

But if such an inquiry leads Christians in sincerity and truth to offer up this prayer, it will prompt them also to follow up their prayers with active and persevering exertions with the view of counteracting the evils they deplore, and which they have reason to fear they have been the means of

increasing. They must be well aware that to rest contented with merely praying for the accomplishment of an event which is only to be obtained through the instrumentality of their own exertions as well as those of others, were a glaring inconsistency—a plea whereby to excuse themselves from painful exercise and self-denying duties. It were hopeless by any thing they profess to effect any salutary change on society at large, or to produce any sensible diminution in the vast amount of moral evil around them. Some, it is to be feared, do plead their inability to effect such an extensive change, as an excuse for not attempting what they might, with the divine blessing, be enabled to accomplish—just as a man's benevolence is wasted in conceiving some splendid scheme of philanthropy to the utter neglect of benefiting particular individuals who every day press on their notice. But the Gospel requires no such idle expenditure of strength or substance. It requires that Christians do all they can to arrest the progress of immorality, and promote the cause of truth and righteousness; but it also requires that they shall be contented to do the little which their little sphere affords them an opportunity of doing. And did Christians operate on this principle; did they carefully mark the prevailing sins of the day, and the prevailing influences of these on those to whom they are most exposed; and did they labour by their example and advice to discourage such sins, and faithfully give warning of such temptations, with what confidence might all not utter the Psalmist's prayer, and reckon on the fulfilment of the Psalmist's prediction!

Notwithstanding the gloomy prospects of David, who saw the godly man cease, and the faithful fail from among the children of men, leaving the wicked apparently triumphant, every one speaking vanity with his neighbour, yet he expressed his firm belief that the Lord would lay a restraint on the ungodly, that he would cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaketh proud things, and would rise for the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy, and set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. And so it turned out in the Psalmist's own day. Though true religion was in a very low condition in these days, David's exhortation from the throne after so long a period of humiliation and suffering, was the commencement of a revival which ushered in one of the brightest periods of the Jewish history. The words of the Lord though long neglected and perverted, were found true at length—to be as

silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven times. God delivered his people from that crooked and perverse generation; and when David and others, esteemed by the world the vilest of men, were alone exalted, the wicked without on every side were in other lands—they were scattered abroad, and made to wander in depression and dismay. And so it was in a still darker period of the world, when the despised followers of a crucified Master were armed with a power before which the proudest and mightiest trembled, and were by the instrumentality of man accounted the offscourings of all things, countless multitudes were converted and turned from Satan to God. Whatever, then, be the extent to which iniquity abounds, Christians have no reason to despond. If they are faithful each in his own place and according to his opportunity; if they are careful to maintain a consistent state, or walk and conversation, so that their example will always carry with it a holy and purifying influence; if they are faithful to the best interests of those over whom they can exercise their authority or persuasion; and if, with all this they are deeply concerned for the advancement of pure religion, sincerely affected by the prevalence of ungodliness around them, and earnest and importunate in supplicating the divine blessing on what they and others may attempt, they may rest assured, that they are putting into operation an influence which will prove at last irresistible; and they will find that however the opposition may continue, He that is for them will be greater than he that is against them.

Let us apply these principles to the more immediate occasion of our present meeting. The very name of the institution in support of which I have undertaken to solicit your contributions, cannot fail to suggest to every serious mind a subject of very unfavourable recollection, inasmuch as the institution is itself a most melancholy proof of the abounding iniquity around us. Its professed object is to afford a refuge, in most instances I fear the only one, to a class of unhappy outcasts from all that is virtuous, and to make an effort, humanly speaking the last one, to rescue them from a situation of the most loathsome debasement, and to put them in the way of attaining to peace in this world, and to happiness in the world to come. But melancholy is the spectacle of immortal creatures consigned to misery here, and but for the remarkable interposition of God's providence and grace, to

misery hereafter. Yet how small after all is the portion which their degraded state presents of the enormous guilt that must have been incurred before they were brought to their present condition! How little do we see, merely in their personal misery, of that falsehood, that speaking with flattering lips and double tongue which must have been employed, and which the Psalmist lamented as the prevailing sin in his own time! It cannot be doubted that the ruin of these unhappy persons, whom it is the object of our institution to reclaim, was brought about by deliberate acts of fraud and villany, by protestations which were felt at the moment to be insincere, and by promises which it was never intended to fulfil—by every act in fact whereby religious impressions could be effaced, and a sense of moral obligation weakened; and all this by men who continued to pass in the world as upright and honourable men—men who, if charged in the ordinary intercourse of life with being capable of the falsehood they employed for ruining a fellow-creature in time and for eternity, would be ready to repel with indignation, yea, ready to avenge the foul stain in the blood of the accuser. Guilt like this is not only tolerated but in many cases approved, affording one example out of many whereby religion is set aside by miserable conventional forms, and how man's abhorrence of vice is diminished by the very circumstance that goes to aggravate its guilt; but, on the other hand, it will be found, I fear, that that melancholy debasement of moral character to which I am referring may, in many instances, in part at least, be traced to other practices more generally practised, just because less guilty, and because gone into by many from a thoughtless compliance with established custom—I allude to the obligation already referred to on parents and heads of families to exercise a becoming watchfulness over the conduct of those around them, especially on the Lord's day. It is in consequence of devoting that day to idleness that multitudes have been ensnared by another sin, that of intemperance—that loathsome and almost incurable vice, the source of every other pestilential crime that injures humanity, and which is at present working destruction; and being ensnared by that sin their ruin is not far off. It is, however, an awful reflection that their ruin has been occasioned partly by ourselves. If, then, recovery be possible, shall we not tender a helping hand?

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES WATSON, Dumfries-shire.
LECTURE by the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D., Edinburgh.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS;

A SERMON PREACHED IN BEHALF OF THE SABBATH SCHOOLS IN THE PARISH OF ST. MUNGO, ON SABBATH EVENING, 3^d AUGUST, 1834,

By the Rev. JAMES WATSON,
Minister of the Relief Congregation, Waterbeck, Dumfries-shire

"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings."—MAL. iv. 2.

THE wisdom of Jehovah is one of his most prominent attributes. Numerous are the illustrations of it which might be borrowed from the works of creation. It is seen in the heavens above us, in the atmosphere around us, in the ocean before us, and in the earth beneath us. "The heavens declare his glory." "He maketh the winds his angels." "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." He cries, "Peace, be still," and the waves of the sea obey. How well do these facts correspond with the declaration of the Psalmist, "He hath established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his understanding!"

In nothing does the wisdom of God appear more obvious than in the *variety* of objects which he has created, and the *adaptation* of these objects to their several purposes. Natural historians tell us they can describe no fewer than fifty thousand different kinds of animals; and each of these, let it be remarked, has its own element to move in, its own instincts to follow out, its own habits to cultivate, its own tastes to gratify, and its own ends to accomplish, in the grand system of the universe. "The stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming."

When we turn to the Book of God, how many and how diversified are the proofs of divine wisdom there! The whole scheme

of redemption is nothing but one continued chain of evidences of it. It is for this reason Christ is so often denominated "the wisdom of God." "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are called, Christ the power of God and *the wisdom of God.*" We behold his wisdom in devising the plan of mercy, and in the means which he employs to carry it on and carry it out; but, in the final completion of this plan, the ransomed of the Lord will not only see this wisdom displayed, but they will also admire it, and will rejoice and glory in its manifestation.

The promises of the Gospel afford us a rich proof of the sovereign wisdom of the Lord. This will appear obvious, whether we look to the persons to whom they were given, to the times at which they were given, to the manner in which they were given, or to the purposes for which they were given. Observe, particularly, their adaptation to the different circumstances and situations of men. Some are afflicted, but they can read, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee;" some are tempted, but they can read, "Resist the devil and he will flee from thee;" some are sorrowing, but they can read, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;" some are persecuted, but they can read, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;"

some are frail and feeble, but they can read, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" some are faint and weary, but they can read, "They who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up as on eagles' wings;" and some are in spiritual darkness, but they can read the words of our text, "To them who fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." While, therefore, the text proves the love and affection of God to his saints, its adaptation to their circumstances in seasons of tribulation, or doubt, or despondency proves his wisdom.

In illustrating this passage we shall consider,

I. *The promise which is made;* and,

II. *The persons to whom the promise is made.*

May the Spirit of God aid and bless us.

I. *The promise which is made.* It is—"The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings." In this promise two things merit our attention: first, *the metaphor* under which this coming of Christ is spoken of, "the Sun of Righteousness shall arise;" and, second, the manner in which Christ is to come, "with healing in his wings."

The *metaphor* under which this coming of Christ to his saints is spoken of, is "*the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.*" The language of the sacred writers is very often figurative. Many, indeed most of their figures are borrowed from the objects of nature; and it must be admitted by every one who has given attention to the subject, that the symbols which they do adopt are in themselves not only appropriate but extremely beautiful. When they speak of innocence, a lamb is the symbol; when they speak of wisdom, it is a serpent; when they speak of cunning, it is a fox; when they speak of affection, it is a dove; when they speak of strength, it is the lion; and when they speak of perseverance and increasing zeal, it is the flight of the eagle. The objects which they select from the inanimate world, prove, in no less a degree, if we may be permitted the expression, the taste of the sacred penmen. The emblem of beauty is the rose; the emblem of purity is the lily; the emblem of knowledge is light; the emblem of ignorance is darkness; the emblem of stability is the rock; of greatness, the mountain; of power, the sceptre; of protection, the shield; of abundance, the tree

bearing its fruits every month of the year. In describing the character of Jesus Christ, these different epithets, or epithets similar to these, are employed by the sacred writers. From the first to the last of them—from him who wielded the rod of legislation among the Jews, to him who was exiled to Patmos, do we discover something like a spirit of emulation displayed, to exhibit Jesus in as attractive colours as possible to the human eye; to portray him as "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." What does Moses say of him? Is it not that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent? What does Balaam, infidel though he was, say of him? Is it not that "a star shall come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Seth?" What does Zechariah say of him? Is it not that "in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness?" What does John the Evangelist say of him? Is it not that he is "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world?" What does the Apostle to the Gentiles say of him? Is it not, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ?" What does Jesus say of himself? Is it not, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman;" "I am the door, by me the sheep enter in;" "I am that manna which cometh down from heaven;" "I am the root and the offspring of Jesse, the bright and the morning star?" Thus, in these several passages, under the figures of a seed—a star—a sceptre—a fountain—a lamb—a foundation—a vine—a door—and of manna, do the sacred writers describe the Saviour; and each of these similes, it would not be very difficult to prove, has reference to some one of his more prominent and distinguished attributes.

Malachi, in the text before us, gives Jesus the beautiful appellation of "the Sun of Righteousness," and assimilates his coming to that of the sun rising upon the earth. And is he not well entitled to this appellation? Was it not he that dispelled the darkness of heathenism, and ushered in the light of the glorious Gospel? Was it not he that "illuminated the night of the grave," and "brought life and immortality to light?" Is it not he who "enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world?" And is it

not on this account that the Psalmist says, "His name shall endure for ever, it shall be lasting as the sun; men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed." Because, then, the Saviour casts a light and a glory on our darkened world; because he warms the heart and cheers the bewildered soul of man; because his circuit shall be round and round our globe; because at his coming the whole world was aroused from its lethargy, and the very mountains brake forth into singing, and the forests clapped their hands together; therefore is it that Jesus is denominated "the Sun of Righteousness."

The *manner* in which Jesus is to come to his saints—in other words, the manner in which the Sun of Righteousness is to arise upon his people—is, "with healing in his wings." Not a few biblical critics have found it difficult to say what object is figuratively referred to by the prophet, when he speaks of the sun rising "with wings." Some have proposed a different translation of the passage. They would read it "with healing in his rays." Some have supposed that the expression is borrowed from an Egyptian hieroglyphic of the sun represented with wings—a hieroglyphic placed upon almost every one of the distinguished temples among the ancients. Others imagine it is no more than a figurative expression borrowed from the protecting cover and fostering care which the wings of birds afford to their young. We confess the expression does not appear to us so incomprehensible as many would make it. We would say it is nothing but a bold poetical figure used by the prophet for the beams or rays of the sun; and such bold pointed figures are by no means uncommon with eastern writers. Similar expressions are elsewhere to be met with even in Scripture. Speaking of Jehovah the Psalmist says, "He bowed the heavens also and came down, and darkness was under his feet, and he rode upon a cherub and did fly, yea, he did fly on *the wings of the wind.*" In the 139th psalm the same writer, in language no less beautiful, says, "If I take *the wings of the morning* and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." In these passages the expressions "the wings of the morning," and "the wings of the wind," are just as bold, and poetical, and figurative, as the expression in our text. "the wings of the sun," and yet

no one misunderstands them. The simple meaning of the text, therefore, appears to us to be, that Jesus Christ shall yet extend comfort and consolation to his saints in a more copious manner than he has hitherto done; and that in the coming day of calamity he shall shelter them from the vengeance of God, as a hen shelters and protects her infant brood with her wing.

If such be the manner in which the Sun of Righteousness is to arise, it will not be difficult to point out the healing and restorative effects which his rising is to produce. Most salutary and most enlivening will these effects be upon all those who are the subjects of his saving grace. To use the appropriate language of inspiration, he will make "the blind to see, the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear, the lame to leap as the roe, and the very dead to shake off the fetters of the grave—to spring to life—to come forth to light and glory." Let us earnestly pray that in such a manner and with such effects this Sun of Righteousness may arise to our souls in the day of his sovereign and almighty power, and then shall they be imbued with the influences and graces of the Holy Spirit, numerous as the dew-drops of the morning.

We proceed to consider,

II. *The persons to whom this promise is made.*

It is made "to them who fear the name of the Lord." "To fear the Lord," and "to fear the name of the Lord," are expressions used in Scripture for religion in general. It would not be difficult to show that there is much beauty as well as much propriety in this use of the phrase—a beauty and a propriety which it does not require much lengthened research or investigation to discover. Without a certain mixture of fear, taking the term in its most literal signification, no worship can be acceptable to Jehovah. Without a certain mixture of fear, no worship can produce any deep or lasting impressions on the worshipper himself—no sanctifying effects on his heart and conscience. It is obvious, therefore, to use the words of the Psalmist, that "God is to be feared in the assembly of the saints," and that he is "to be had in reverence by all that are about him." But although "to fear the name of the Lord" is a phrase used by the sacred penmen for religion in general, its signification may be limited to some particular classes of saints in the text before us. In this limited sense we wish to con-

sider the passage; and to point out a few of these classes we now proceed.

1. *To them who are spiritual mourners* the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings. There is no situation in which a Christian can be placed in which he, to a greater degree, requires our sympathy, than where he is—to use a common but sometimes a very much misunderstood theological phrase—mourning an absent God. What a picture of dreariness does our world exhibit, when the sun withholdeth the light of his beams; when darkness and solitude reign triumphant throughout creation; when the heavens are covered with sackcloth, and the earth puts on mourning! The bird of prey is abroad in search of its victim, the scream of the screech-owl terrifies the solitary traveller. But how different from this is the scene when “the Sun as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race?” “The flowers appear upon the earth, the tune of the singing of birds comes, the voice of the turtle is heard in our land, the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vine with the tender grapes give a goodly smell.” So is it with the soul of the Christian and his God. When Jehovah withdraws the light of his reconciled countenance from the saint, his soul, if we could but see it as we see the natural world, would exhibit an appearance of the deepest melancholy; we would discover it shrouded in a darkness palpable as was that of Egypt. Examine the history of the saints of God as it is recorded in Scripture, and is there not abundant evidence of the truth of this observation? Was it not this made Job say, “Oh! that I were, as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when, by his light, I walked through darkness?” Was it not this made David say, “Return, O Lord, deliver my soul; oh! save me for thy mercies’ sake?” Was it not this made Paul say, “Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Was it not this made Jesus Christ, the Son of God himself, say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Taking the history of the saints as recorded in Scripture; taking the experience of Christians as communicated to us by themselves, we have plenary evidence that to them it is a time of sadness and mourning, when God withdraws the light of his countenance.

But to all such as are sincerely spiritual mourners, “the Sun of Righteousness will yet arise with healing in his beams.” Their sorrow will yet be changed into joy, their mourning into dancing, their days of darkness into days of sunshine. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless, come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” In our present state, and according to our present mental constitution, it is certainly a wise arrangement of Providence that even religious enjoyment should have its occasional interruptions. If there were no shadings in a picture, we could not relish its more brilliant colourings; if there were no clouds in the sky, we could not appreciate the beauty of the blue vaulted canopy; if there were no winter, we could not value aright the loveliness and delights of summer; if there were no death, we could not correctly estimate the worth of life and immortality; and if there were no seasons of spiritual mourning, much of the zest which in general accompanies them would be taken from “those times of refreshing which come from the presence of the Lord.” Thus from what he sometimes wants, the Christian is taught to prize what he generally enjoys. It is for this very reason that we hear him speak so enthusiastically of the blessings of the presence of a reconciled God; and for this very reason it is that we find him put so very little a price on the things of time, and so great a price on the things of eternity. Deprive him of honour, deprive him of riches, deprive him of friends, deprive him of health, deprive him of liberty, nay, make him a martyr at the stake, if you will; but give him his Bible, give him his Saviour, and with these give him the smile of his God, and even then will you hear him say, “Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the folds, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

2. *To them persecuted for the sake of religion*, “the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings.” Some have supposed that the chapter, of which our text forms a part, refers solely to the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, and to the salvation afforded at that time to the

saints of Jesus. There is no doubt whatever that the destruction of the city of Jerusalem affords an illustration, and a striking illustration, of the fulfilment of the promise contained in the text. To the members of the infant Church of the Saviour that, assuredly, was a most afflictive and eventful period. The account which Christ himself gives of it, by way of prediction, has much in it to touch the most hardened and unsympathizing heart. They were to hear of wars and rumours of wars; nation was to rise against nation; kingdom was to triumph over kingdom; famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, were to rage in divers places. They who were upon the house-top were not to come down to take any thing out of the house; they who were in the field were not to return back to take their clothes; they who were in Judea were to flee to the mountains. The sun was to be darkened; the moon was not to give her light; the stars were to fall from heaven; the powers of the heavens were to be shaken; a voice from the four winds was to be heard saying, "Wo to Jerusalem! wo to the city, the people and the temple!" And, "in the fulness of the time," all these events did occur. Jerusalem was ransacked; its temple was burned; its inhabitants were put to the sword; one million of them perished in war; ninety-seven thousand were taken prisoners; its walls were laid level with the earth; Titus, the Roman general, wept like a child when he beheld its ruins; and Ichabod! Ichabod! "the glory is departed!" was heard proclaimed in heaven above and on earth below. But, for the sake of the elect, these days were shortened. Christians fled to the north, and to the south, and to the east, and to the west, carrying along with them the glad tidings of salvation. A remnant was saved, and it was to them that the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings.

But we would not limit the promise in the text only to that period of the Church's history; it extends to the persecuted for "righteousness' sake" in every nation and in every age. Has it not been abundantly fulfilled in the annals of our own country? Look to those of our ancestors who fought the battles of civil and religious liberty, and say, was it not realized in their case? When they were "hunted like the partridge upon the mountain;" when their solemn meetings could be held only on the hill-side, or in the lonely glen; when their temple was

nothing but the mossy sward below, and the wide canopy of heaven above; when their song of praise was heard carried on the wing of the blast, with the cry of the lapwing and the whirr of the moorcock; when the night of tribulation was waxing thicker and darker to those who had sworn by all that was dear to them that they would stand faithful to the solemn league and covenant; when they were chased by the infuriate soldier, and tracked by the merciless bloodhound, and "mountain and flood" echoed to the shout, "Raze them! raze them! raze them from the foundation!"—then it was that the dayspring from on high visited them, and that "the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings." God himself was a wall of fire round the Church; the gates of hell could not prevail against her; and hence it is that she came forth from that arduous conflict, shining "bright as the morning, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."

At present our nation is greatly favoured. Every one sits under his own vine and fig-tree. High up does Britain stand on the mount of gospel privileges. In this respect she overlooks all the other kingdoms of Europe. But let us not triumph. The day may not be distant when of all these privileges we may be deprived. Our temples may be deserted; the grass may wave proudly on the walls of our Zion; the candlestick of the Lord may be removed from its place; the voice of the evening psalm may be exchanged for the piping, the singing, and the dancing of the infidel and the stranger; and, like the captive Hebrews of old, we may be compelled to hang our harps on the willow to moan to the passing breeze. But let these days of sorrow come; let these clouds of darkness cover our sky; let these scenes of desolation rise up one after another before our eyes in all their dreariness; even then, with our Bible in our hand, we would point to the text before us, and say to weeping friends and mourning followers of Jesus, "Upon you shall the Sun of Righteousness yet arise with healing in his wings."

3. *To them who sit in heathen darkness* shall "the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." It is melancholy to look around us and see how many of our brethren of mankind are ignorant of the true God, and are untaught the way of salvation. "Darkness has covered the nations,

and gross darkness the people." No Sabbath smiles upon them to remind them of the creation of the world, or the resurrection of Jesus; no congregation meets to celebrate the praises and show forth the honours of that great Spirit who formed the universe; no prayer for mercy ever rises up from these dark lands to the footstool of the God of heaven; no preacher proclaims salvation to perishing souls, or warns them to flee from the wrath to come. Silence reigns for ever unbroken there—a silence deeper and sadder than that which prevails over the land of the grave: it is the silence of moral and spiritual death. Nature tells us of a God, and to the instructed mind exhibits proofs of many of his perfections. In the moon we discover his purity; in the sun his glory; in the abundance of autumn his benevolence; in the lightning's flash his power; and, in the muttering thunder, his wrath and indignation. But, to them who sit in heathen darkness, these are lessons relative to the Godhead, which are read in vain. In the emphatic language of the Psalmist, it may be said of them, "Eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they do not hear."

To these children of darkness a better day is dawning. The morning is already beginning to break upon their mountains. The voice, not of one, but of many heralds of salvation, is heard in their wildernesses, saying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make his path straight." Indications are everywhere given that the time is approaching when "the Spirit of the Lord shall be poured out upon them; when the desert shall become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be accounted for a forest;" when "the Sun of Righteousness shall rise upon them with healing in his wings."

4. *To the elect on the day of judgment* shall "the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." When Jesus comes at the last day in the clouds of heaven, it will be a time of sadness and mourning to those who have not known God or obeyed the Gospel. The character of those who have to appear *then*, the situation and circumstances in which they will appear, it is quite impossible for us minutely to describe. They are but vaguely delineated in Scripture. Merely the outlines are given. Perhaps Cain is there, mourning over the shed blood of an only brother; perhaps Jezebel is there, full of repentance for the shed blood of many of the servants of the

Lord; perhaps Herod is there, thinking of the shed blood of the little innocents of Bethlehem; perhaps Judas Iscariot is there, weeping over the shed blood of the Lord of glory. But it matters not who they are, what their character is, or whence they have come: their sentence is written, their destiny is fixed, and their doom is about to be pronounced; "for Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king it is prepared: he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is much fire and wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it."

Far otherwise will it be with the righteous on that day. "To them who fear the name of the Lord, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings." To them shall he come with joy and songs of triumph; and as these ransomed ones behold their Lord descend in glory, together shall they mount up to meet him in the air; and again and again will heaven's echo to the enraptured shouts, "Worthy art thou to take the book and open the seals thereof:" "Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellions also, that God the Lord might dwell in the midst of them."

It is thus we have gone over what we intended as an illustration of the text. It remains for us now to make a short improvement or application of the subject.

Some may be led to put the question, What connexion has this subject, which we have endeavoured to discuss, with the object of our present meeting? What connexion has this subject with Sabbath schools? We acknowledge it has none directly; but we believe it has much indirectly. Sabbath schools may, in many respects, be compared to "the Sun of Righteousness." There are two points of view in which this comparison holds good, the illustration of which will be sufficient as an applicatory conclusion to our discourse. Sabbath schools enlighten and they sanctify the human mind.

Sabbath schools enlighten. The Sun of Righteousness disseminates moral light; illuminates a world that is sitting in spiritual darkness, and reposing in the shadow of spiritual death. Precisely similar to this are the nature and object of Sabbath schools. They are instituted to instruct tender minds in the knowledge of the Saviour; to lead them to an early acquaintance with the Word of inspiration; to "bring them up in

the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" to induce them to walk in wisdom's ways, "whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are peace." They operate upon all, but they operate chiefly upon those in the humbler walks of life. Like the Saviour himself, they preach the Gospel to the poor. They cast a light and a glory around their path, which the noblest scientific institution cannot do; they point them to heaven; they speak of immortality; they uphold before them the cross of Calvary; they deliver from going down to the pit. If it be true that "righteousness exalteth a nation," the statesman, the peer, the priest, and the philosopher, should rally around this standard of salvation, and should bid its supporters God speed, as well as the Christian and the philanthropist. Throughout the three kingdoms, upwards of one million are attending them; but if their value were correctly appreciated, never would such men cease in their exertions till they had millions more. Society has sometimes been compared to a conical pillar—the people forming the base, the monarch the apex. But if the base be insecure, if it give way, all that is above it must tumble to ruins. Patriotism, philanthropy, and political expediency, as well as Christianity, call upon us to support these institutions.

Sabbath schools sanctify. In this they are also assimilated to the Sun of Righteousness. "The Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in his wings;" these little humble seminaries bring healing and salvation to many a young immortal spirit. They warm as well as enlighten. We do not, of course, mean to say that these alone are quite sufficient to regenerate the soul; the Spirit of God must accomplish this mighty work; but they evidently afford *the means* of sanctification. This is not the case with some, if not with many, modern seminaries of education. Of late years, one is induced to think that there is a disposition to throw out religious education altogether, and to make them merely intellectual and literary institutions. There is, assuredly, an inclination to reject the Scriptures and the Catechisms, and all those books which formed the staple part of the education of our forefathers; and the tone in which they are sometimes spoken of, leaves the impression that they are of too antiquated a system for modern men and modern scholars. We do not say that the Scriptures are generally neglected in

such institutions, or that they are altogether rejected in any; but what we do say is, that in our estimation the general tone of feeling seems to be against them. Our education is more of a literary and scientific, than of a spiritual and religious nature. The intellectual faculties may be strengthened and invigorated; the mental powers may be developed and improved; and there is no doubt whatever that when this is accomplished much is done; but still much remains unaccomplished, and much must be considered as left undone. The heart, that great and formidable bulwark of human nature, is left unimpressed. The spirit of the Gospel is not infused. The light which it can disseminate may be seen; but the heat which it imparts is unfeeling. The soul is illuminated; but it is not hallowed, or sanctified, or spiritualized. In many respects such an education may appear useful and attractive; but it is like the house which was built upon sand, mentioned in Scripture, and which remained unmoved while the sun shone upon it and all was calm around it, but which soon gave way when the floods came, and the winds blew, and the rains descended; or, like that beautiful palace of ice which was planned and cut out by one of the most active and spirited empresses that ever ruled over the destinies of Europe, but which, as soon as the united heat of the earth and sun reached it, melted away into a thousand streams. But if this be the character of many of our seminaries; if this be a deficiency with which they are all more or less chargeable, and, perhaps, from their very nature it must be so, Sabbath schools fill up this deficiency. Their object is religious instruction alone. They are "determined to know nothing else but Jesus Christ and him crucified."

It is quite impossible for us to estimate correctly the value of these schools. We know that they have been a blessing to many of our fathers, of ourselves, and of our children; and we hope that they will continue to be a blessing to our children's children to the third and fourth generation, nay, to every generation while our world lasts. But never shall we be able to calculate the full amount of the good they have done, till Jesus come to judgment; till all of us appear before his tribunal; till every teacher stand before the Judge of souls with his little flock saying, "Lord, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." It is then that we shall find these

institutions have cheered many a widow's heart—have instructed many an orphan east on the mercy of a pitiless world, and have saved many an immortal soul from perdition. For all these reasons we call upon you, brethren, to countenance and support these seminaries; for if you permit them to wane or die away among you, you will permit one of the glories of our land to perish—one of the brightest suns that shines upon our nation to be eclipsed. For the sake of the poor and needy; for the sake of the fatherless, and the motherless, and the stranger; for the sake of the careless and indifferent; for the sake of the wicked and immoral; for the sake of the Church of Christ and the glory of the Redeemer; for the sake of your children and for your own sake, we beseech you give these schools your countenance, your personal exertions,

your prayers, and your contributions; then shall ye find to your sweet experience that “the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will be withheld from them who walk uprightly.”

In conclusion, we would remind you all that you are possessed of immortal souls—that you are hastening to eternity—that the race will soon be run, and the battle soon fought, and the course of existence soon finished. While, therefore, you are anxious for the salvation of others, neglect not your own. Let this be accounted “the one thing needful.” Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you have found Jesus to be a refuge from the tempest, and a succour from the storm. “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the latter end of that man is peace.”

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM;

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN THE ORIGINAL SECEDERS' CHAPEL, RICHMOND STREET, EDINBURGH, 7th SEPTEMBER, 1834,

By the Rev. THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D.,

Author of the *Life of John Knox*, *Life of Andrew Melville*, &c.

“*And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*”—LUKE XXI. 20—24.

In a former lecture, we considered the events which preceded the overthrow of Jerusalem and of the temple, as predicted by our Saviour in answer to the question of his disciples; and these embrace the persecutions which the Apostles and primitive Christians were to endure by the agency and at the instigation of their countrymen, the Jews, who, in this way, filled up the cup of their iniquity, until wrath came upon them to the uttermost. Our Lord intermingles with the prediction of these sufferings, circumstances that were of a consolatory kind. The primitive Christians, including the Apostles, were to lay their account with being falsely accused and dragged before human tribunals; but this would turn out to

them for a testimony. In the prospect of this persecution, they might feel appalled by the majesty and solemnity of courts of justice, and think that they would be unable to make a cool, composed and creditable defence; but they are told, upon such occasions, not to premeditate what they shall answer, for, says our Lord, “I will give you a mouth and wisdom,” matter and manner, “which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.” They were to stand in jeopardy every hour; they were to be surrounded by those who were ready every hour to betray them; but, then, their confidence was this, that they were under an Almighty safe-guard, so that if their lives should be made a sacrifice for the truth,

they would still be great gainers. "There shall not an hair of your head perish." Well, therefore, might he say to them in conclusion, "In your patience possess ye your souls."

We now come to the consideration of the destruction of Jerusalem itself, and to the direct answer to the question of the disciples, "When shall these things be? What sign will there be when these things come to pass?" Our evangelist gives only an abbreviated account of the prophecy detailed at large by Matthew; but, by adopting other forms of speech, he has sometimes thrown light on the obscure expressions of the corresponding narratives. In the Gospel according to Matthew, we read at the 15th verse of the 24th chapter which corresponds to the 20th verse of the 21st chapter of Luke, "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." The expression here used, *the abomination of desolation* occurs thrice in the book of Daniel; but it is highly probable that the quotation is taken from the 9th chapter and 27th verse, where, after declaring that the Messiah was to be cut off, the prophet foretells the destruction of Jerusalem. In the words given by Matthew the translation of the Septuagint is followed, and the Hebrew idiom "the abomination of desolation" is preserved, which you are to understand as meaning *the desolating or wasting abomination*, or, as others choose to translate the words, *the abominable waste*.

Without taking up your time in detailing a number of views of that expression, I shall just mention, that by far the most probable view is, that we are to understand, by the desolating abomination, the Roman army which was to desolate the land of Judea under Vespasian, and afterwards by his son Titus, issuing in the destruction of the capital and the desolation of the temple. To a Jew a foreign army overrunning his country, and desolating its capital, and threatening to destroy the temple of Jehovah, was an object of the utmost horror as well as dread. War in all its forms is horrid and detestable; but that which issued in the overthrow of Jerusalem, and in the destruction of the Jewish nation, was accompanied by circumstances of peculiar horror, owing chiefly to the obstinate and infatuated resistance made by the besieged. You are

to add to this, that the Roman army carried with them images of their gods, or of the Roman emperors, which the soldiers worshipped. Now the ensigns, the flying eagles, and the images of their gods, though a proud sight to a Roman, were an abomination to a Jew. "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." That such is the proper meaning of the words appears from the passage before us, where the Evangelist translates the figurative language, used by Matthew, into the language of plain description. Accordingly, he says, in the first verse of what we have chosen for lecture, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." Before this time the clouds had often gathered, but they were dispersed, and the former serenity of the sky had returned. Formerly there were wars and rumours of war, but now the battle is turned to the gate. The expression, "when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies," refers to the period when Titus, after having reduced other fortified cities of Judea, drew his legions to Jerusalem with the view of besieging it. Titus, we are told, at a later period, drew a rampart or mound around the whole city fortified with castles or towers, so that nobody could go out of it. But our Lord refers to the beginning of the siege, before the city was completely enclosed. If the city had been completely enclosed, it had been too late to have attempted escape. As soon as they see the approach of the enemy, "then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." This intimates to us the *nearness* of the calamity or of the desolation. Hitherto, although this had been threatened and had been anticipated by many, the time was not yet come. There, however, it is intimated to us that the time is come; the army is collected; it obtains its ground; it has received its commission; it is about to begin the work of God in the way of executing judgment on a hypocritical and rebellious nation.

This intimates to us, also, the *extent* of the desolation. It was not to be confined to the capital around which the hosts of the Roman legions had been drawn, but was to extend over the whole country; and, there-

fore, our Lord says, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains;" let them hide themselves in caverns and in the clefts of the rocks. Agreeably to another prophecy, "He shall pass through Judea; he shall overflow and go over; he shall reach even to the neck," in allusion to a flood; "and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel."

This intimates to us again the great *expedition* necessary in making the escape. Accordingly it follows, "Depart out, and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto," even upon most pressing business. And this is more strikingly pointed out to us in the awful account we have in our Lord's discourse in the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. In allusion to their houses which were flat on the top, so that a person could go from them to the walls of the city without coming down, our Lord says, "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house;" and, again, in allusion to the practice of eastern labourers to leave their upper garment when they go out to work, he says, "Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes."

It may not be difficult for the young, the vigorous, and those minumbered, to avail themselves of this warning and make their escape, but what is to become of those of a different description that cannot flee, or if they would attempt to flee, would leave behind them all that is dear to their hearts, their aged parents, or their helpless infants? "Wo to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days." In the prospect of such distressful circumstances, the apostle Paul, though he held marriage lawful and honourable in all, gives his prudential advice, that those that were unmarried should remain as they were, for, says he, "I would have you without carefulness."

The winter is a most unpropitious time for travelling, and the Jews entertained a scruple about long journeys on the Sabbath-day; and, therefore, they were in danger, if evil happened on that particular day, of delaying till calamity overtook them; and hence our Lord says, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath-day."

Now, all these modes of warning were intended to point out to us the severity, as

well as the suddenness, of the desolation that was to sweep the land of Judea, and empty it of its inhabitants, and to throw them to the uttermost parts of the earth. Accordingly, it is said, "For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." "These are the days of vengeance;" God afflicts his people, in order to correct them, as a father corrects his children. You find him speaking in very similar language, indeed, in the prophecy of Zechariah: "And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction," the things here referred to. "These are the days of vengeance," not of correction, not of chastisement, but of destruction, at least for a long period of time. "That all things that are written may be fulfilled." They were days that were fixed; they related to a desolation which, to use the language of the Prophet alluded to by our Lord, was a desolation determined. Our blessed Saviour, when he announced the judgment about to alight on Jerusalem, declared nothing but what had been declared by the prophets before. All that he did was to fix the time and manner when this judgment should be executed on that ungodly people. Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly." At intervals the later prophets sounded the trumpet of alarm, and threatened a guilty people with the judgments of the Almighty; but the Lord Jesus Christ fixed the time and the manner when these things were to be accomplished. "These be the days of vengeance," as if he had said, You ought to be acquainted with these things already; you have read of them before in the Book of God; they are written down in His Book, and it is, therefore, necessary that they be fulfilled—that they be all carried into effect.

Let us not lose the practical instruction conveyed by the Word of God, while it is under our review. Days of vengeance are not limited to the time spoken of by the Saviour in this passage, nor confined to the posterity of Abraham. "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth," says the prophet Nahum; "he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sin." He is a God of great mercy and forbearance, and slow of anger; but he will not

always bear with the ungodly, the unbelieving, and the impenitent. He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world, and in which he will render tribulation and evil; but there are days he has fixed for executing judgment and for taking vengeance. A remarkable day of this kind was that of Jerusalem's overthrow, and the scattering of God's ancient people; and, accordingly, it is described by our Lord in such terms as to point it out to be of the most severe kind: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." And the mode of expression in our text is not the less dreadful that it is historical. You see in what manner it is described when our Lord says, "These be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled;" and afterwards "there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people." The immediate ground of God's controversy with his people was their putting to death his own Son, rejecting his Gospel, and persecuting unrelentingly his preachers; but although these sins merited all the punishments inflicted by God at that time, and more than these, for they merited punishments in the eternal world also, yet, when we consider the judgment which fell on the Jews at this time, we are warranted to say that God, by what he did at that time, vindicated the honour of his law and his name from a course of profanation that he had suffered on earth for many generations—from the beginning of the world. By inflicting, I say, such severe judgment on that people, and on that age, so much greater than those formerly or since inflicted, he made his appearance at that time as a God of vengeance, vindicating his violated honour, and maintaining the righteousness of his injured law. This seems implied, not only from the reasons annexed, in our Shorter Catechism, to the second commandment, where God is called a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him; but, also, from that remarkable declaration, a little before our passage of Scripture, "Ye are the children of them that killed the prophets. Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers, that upon you may

come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias. Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation."

Such are the particulars deducible from a brief account of this passage. We read in the 24th verse, "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." When it is said that Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, we may consider this generally as intimating that the Gentiles should possess power, and exercise dominion over Jerusalem and the country of which it was the capital. "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," said Jesus to his disciples. In allusion to the temple, we are told in the 11th chapter of the Revelations, that, during Christ's reign, the outer court should be left out of the measurement; "for it is given unto the Gentiles, and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months"—the "thousand two hundred and threescore days" afterwards referred to. Now, this refers to the profanation that was, in the ordinances of God, to take place under the papal apostasy. However, we may understand, also, that God refers to the ignominy with which the scattered Jews should be treated. And has not this prophecy, in all its parts, received a most remarkable accomplishment? and do not we see the accomplishment of it at this day, nearly eighteen hundred years since it was first begun to be executed? And what does the prophecy suggest to us? Just this—"Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

Severe as the judgment is, however, and long as it is continued, mercy is bound up with the threatening. Jerusalem was to be trodden down by the Gentiles; but a period was to be put to the ignominy and sufferings of his ancient people, who, though enemies for the Gospel's sake, are still beloved for their fathers' sake: "Jerusalem

shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." And what are we to understand by this? Some are of opinion that our Lord would say that Jerusalem was to suffer severe treatment from the hands of the Gentiles, until the time came when these Gentiles should be ripe for vengeance also. In the Prophets we often find God telling his people that he would employ this fury of the nations as a rod of correction, and that he would punish them for their hypoerisy and wickedness, but that afterwards he would punish these nations for their wickedness also. It is understood by some that the fall of the Roman empire is pointed at; but as the fall of that empire did not relieve the Jewish people, we can scarcely think it is referred to here. Others think, and with greater probability, that there is a reference to that period in the history of the world in which, by a large effusion of the influence of the Holy Spirit, the great body of the Gentile world shall be collected into the visible Church of the living God, and that this general conversion of the heathen world is to be accomplished in recalling God's ancient people. If you understand the words in this sense, then they are of the same import with what we find the Apostle using in the

25th verse of the 11th chapter of the Romans: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits,) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in;" that is, until the Gentiles or the nations have been generally brought into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, by being converted to the faith. "Israel shall not be saved, but *then* it shall return to the Lord." Then all Israel shall be saved, according to what is written. "Then shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." This is a pleasing view of the words in the conclusion, or rather interruption, of the prophecy, lest our minds should be distracted, and our faith in the promises of God shaken by the things God goes on to execute. Let us then adore the justice and wisdom of God towards his ancient people whom he so highly favoured; and, oh! mark the truth of the prophecy even in the present day in which we live. And while you do this, forget not that people—pray for them, and remember, that if the casting away of them was the reconciliation of the world, the receiving of them back again will be like from the dead.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN BROWN, D.D., Edinburgh.
LECTURE by the Rev. GREVILLE EWING, Glasgow.

THE PRESENT CONTRASTED WITH THE FUTURE STATE OF
BELIEVERS;

A SERMON PREACHED ON 10TH AUGUST, 1831, IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH,
WELLINGTON STREET, GLASGOW, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DISPENSATION
OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,

By the Rev. JOHN BROWN, D.D.,
Professor of Exegetical Theology in the United Associate Synod.

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) 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: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”—1 PETER i. 6—9.

THE best means towards the satisfactory exposition of a long and complicated sentence, such as that which I have just now read, are correct construction and careful analysis. The sentence consists of a direct assertion, containing in its bosom a long parenthetical statement. The direct assertion is in these words: “Wherein,” that is, in the last time, “ye greatly rejoice; ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” The parenthetical statement is contained in these words: “Though now for a season (if need be) 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: whom, having not seen, ye love;” not having seen him, indeed, but having believed in him. A careful reader of this passage can scarcely help noticing, that, though the direct assertion is made in the present tense, it has a reference to future events. This will appear whether you attend to the beginning or end of the statement. If you attend

to the beginning of the statement, you will find that the rejoicing that is here spoken of takes place *in the last time*. “Ye are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed *in the last time*; wherein” (the word *wherein* can refer to nothing but the last time) “ye greatly rejoice.” And what that last time is, we are at no loss to discover: it is the time of the revelation of the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is the period when grace is to be brought unto the people of God at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and if we look to the end of the direct assertion, we will be led, I apprehend, to the same conclusion: “Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” Could it be more clearly stated in words, that the period when they are to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, is the period when they shall receive the end of their faith, and the salvation of their souls?

It is, by no means, a very uncommon thing in the New Testament to meet with assertions made in the present tense that have a reference to future events. I shall give you an example or two. In the 7th

chapter of the Gospel by John, we find our Lord, at the 33d verse, making use of the following language:—"Yet a little while am I," that is, shall I be, "with you, and then I go," that is plainly, shall I go, "unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am," that is, where I shall be, "thither ye cannot come." In the 15th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, at the 35th verse, we have the following words:—"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" that is plainly, with what body shall they come? I shall only quote another example of the same usage from the Book of Revelations, where we find the following language, used in reference to the two mystic witnesses that are to prophesy while the holy city is trodden under foot by the Gentiles:—"These," says John the divine, "are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the whole earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth," that is, fire will proceed out of their mouth, "and devoureth," that is plainly, will devour, "their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed." It is thus by no means an unexampled circumstance for a statement to be made in the present tense that has a reference to a future event. The meaning of the passage would have been plainer to a mere English reader, if it had been rendered in the future tense: "Wherein," that is, in this last time, "ye *shall* greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom, though unseen, ye love;" not having seen him, indeed, but having believed in him, "ye *shall* rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." We are not to depart from the plain grammatical meaning of a passage of Scripture, merely because we apprehend that it involves in it something difficult; but it is a recommendation to a particular mode of exposition, if it can be satisfactorily upheld, that it actually states what we know to be the state of the fact.

I believe this passage has often excited alarm in the minds of the pious. I believe that the experience of the great body of Christians leads them to say we have a peace in believing, which all the enjoyments of the world never could have given, and

which all the afflictions of the world cannot take from us. I believe that the experience of the mass of Christians will lead them to say that there have been peculiar periods—but they have been like angels' visits, few and far between—when in this full assurance of faith they have, indeed, triumphed in the hope and glory of God. But I apprehend there are very few who can honestly say that these words, as they are commonly understood, are a fair description of their habitual experience. Very few, if they were about to give a history of the state of their feelings, would adopt this language, and say, amid the afflictions of our present state, we habitually greatly rejoice—we "rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable, and full of glory." These words, in all their extent of meaning, seem, even on the first glance at them, to be far more applicable to the state of the Christian in the future world than to his state in the present world. It is in this point of view I mean to consider them in the remaining part of this discourse.

The passage before us seems to me to present us with a most interesting and instructive contrasted view of the state of the true Christian in the present time and in the last time, on earth and in heaven; and the leading points of contrast seem to be the following:—Here, and now Jesus Christ, the great object of the Christian's love, is bodily absent from him; he is but imperfectly understood by him, and all intercourse between Him and his people is maintained through means of believing: there, and then Jesus Christ, the great object of his people's love, will be bodily present with them; he will be intimately known by them, and their intercourse with him will be direct and immediate. Here, and now Christians are exposed to numerous and varied afflictions, for the purpose of trying them: there, and then they will enjoy the glorious results of believing. Here, and now complete salvation is the subject of faith and hope to the Christian. there, and then complete salvation will be the subject of enjoyment to the Christian. And, in fine, here, and now, owing to the causes specified, Christians are sometimes in heaviness, since it is needful: there, and then they shall "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Let us turn our attention to these four points of contrast. In the first place, Here, and now Jesus Christ, the great object of the Christian's love, is bodily absent from him; he is but imperfectly known by him, and all the Christian's knowledge of and intercourse with the object of supreme love

is by means of believing. Jesus Christ is the great object of his people's love. Whenever a man is brought, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to believe the truth as it is in Jesus, every estimable and amiable excellence seems to him to centre in his person and character, and the blessings of his salvation seem to be infinite in number and infinite in value. Contemplating, under the influence of faith, his glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, he says, in his heart, "He is the chief among ten thousand, and is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend." And, reflecting on what he has done and what he has suffered, what he has given and what he has promised, he says, in his heart, "I love him who so loved me: I love him who laid down his own life to accomplish my salvation: I love him who loved me, and washed me from my sins in his blood, and made me a king and a priest to God the Father, and gave me a hope of reigning with him for ever and ever." Jesus Christ is not the only object of his people's love, but he is the *supreme* object of their love. He is regarded by them with an affection that is quite peculiar; and, in comparison of him, they hate sister and brother, father and mother. It is of the very essence of love to desire intimate, frequent, uninterrupted intercourse with its object. This law of our nature operates on the mind of the Christian in reference to the object of his supreme attachment.

It is plain that, in the present state, this desire can be gratified only within comparatively narrow limits. There was once a time when the only-begotten Son of God was on our earth—a man among men—and when it was possible, in the ordinary meaning of the word, to have had an intimate acquaintance with the God-man, Christ Jesus; for the Word which was in the beginning with God, and was God, became flesh, and dwelt among men: "Inasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." I believe no Christian, who is not deficient in the imaginative or reflective part of our nature, has read the touching accounts of the going in and out of the Redeemer among his chosen friends on earth without, in some measure, enjoying their happiness; without indulging in the wish that it had pleased God that he should have been brought into being nineteen centuries ago, and that his lot had been cast in that land, blessed above all lands by the residence of the incarnate

Divinity. We wish to have had an opportunity of rejoicing in the contemplation of him in the humble shrine chosen for the residence of divinity, and to have seen the wonderful bursting through of its radiance in miracles of power and mercy; we wish to have had an opportunity of rejoicing in that countenance, beaming with divine intelligence and benignity, and to have listened to that voice which used to pour forth strains of divine wisdom, and truth, and tenderness. Oh! happy family of Bethany! have we said, all the members of which were the personal friends of Jesus Christ, and under whose roof he spent so many of his retired hours. Oh! that we too had been with the three favoured disciples, and had witnessed his glory, or that we had been called with them to watch and pray in Gethsemane! Oh! that we also had been with his two disciples when he so opened the things in the Scriptures, and the prophecies respecting himself, as to make their hearts burn within them! Oh! that we had been in the midst of the assembly, and had felt his warm breath, when he said, "Receive the Holy Ghost." Oh! that we had been with him when he exhibited what were at once the tokens of his love, and the evidences of the reality of his resurrection! These wanderings of the heart, for I know not that they deserve a better name, form none of the *essential* exercises of a vital Christianity. But I believe no Christian, who is not deficient either in imagination or affection, is a stranger to them; and I apprehend they will not be severely judged of by Him who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust. It is plain, however, that, in the present state, this longing of the heart cannot be gratified. On that memorable day when he led his disciples as far as Bethany, and lifted up his hands and blessed them, he was, while in the act of blessing them, parted from them and taken up to heaven—the heavens received him, and there he must remain till the final restitution of all things.

This is an arrangement with which we have every reason to be well satisfied in reference both to him and ourselves: in reference to him; for what of honour is there on this earth that can, for a moment, be compared with that name, which is above every name. If we loved him, we would rejoice, because he has gone to the Father; for the Father is greater than he. We ought to be well pleased with it in reference to ourselves: for it was expedient for *us* that he should go away: had he not gone away, the Comforter would not have come; and, because he had

gone away, he has sent the Comforter, who will remain with us for ever. Still, though we know and believe all this, we are persuaded we would be happier if we could but see the face and hear the voice of our Redeemer; for we are persuaded that "his voice is sweet, and his countenance is comely."

But not only, in the present state, is Jesus Christ, the great object of his people's love, bodily absent from them, they are also but very imperfectly acquainted with him. They are acquainted with him to a certain extent, and they would not part with that knowledge, limited and, in many instances, incorrect as it is, for all the treasures of earthly science a thousand times over. They know it is life eternal to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, and they count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord; and if they know him, they are studying his Word and providential dispensations—both of them manifestations of his character. In the present state, however, however diligent they may be under the great teacher, the Spirit, it is quite plain that they must continue to see but in part, and to know but in part. All their intercourse with him is through the medium of belief. We have not seen him; we have believed the truth concerning him; we know nothing of him but what this book tells us of him. It is only in the revelation of God that we know him, and have intercourse with him. If we are Christians, we have the Spirit given us; but that Spirit gives us no *direct* information in regard to him: that Spirit does not enable us to hold *direct* communion with him, but he enables us to understand and believe what is told us in this volume. Communion may be considered as consisting of two things—a community of thought, and feeling, and enjoyment, and a community of intercourse and fellowship. Now, in regard to that community of thought, feeling, and enjoyment, which forms the first part of communion with Jesus, how is it carried on? In this book we have his will and mind; when we understand it, his mind and will become ours, and so we become partners of his enjoyment. And with regard to the community of intercourse and fellowship, how is it maintained? On the part of the Saviour, by communication of blessings; on our part in the exercise of appropriate holy affection. How does the Spirit carry on this intercourse? By enabling us to understand and believe the truth; for grace, mercy, and peace, are multiplied to us from Jesus Christ our Lord,

through the *knowledge* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And, in a similar way, how are the affections of love, and admiration, and esteem, and confidence, drawn out towards the Saviour, but just by our being led to believe the truth in regard to those qualities in the Saviour that naturally draw out these affections of the heart towards him?

In the present state, then, Jesus Christ, the great object of the Christian's love, is bodily absent from him; his knowledge of him is but imperfect, and his knowledge and intercourse with him are maintained entirely through means of believing. But it shall be otherwise by and by, when there shall be a revelation of Jesus Christ. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven," said two angels, in the appearance of men clad in white apparel, to the Apostles, after our Lord had disappeared: "this same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven." And John the divine, when hurrying forward under the influence of an inspiring spirit into the last time, the time of the revelation of Jesus Christ, exclaims, "Behold, he is coming with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him." Yes, though the heavens must retain him, they are to retain him only during a fixed period. God "hath appointed a day, in the which he shall judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." Yet a little while and these heavens shall burst asunder, and make way for the descending Judge, the glorified God-man, as the Judge of the quick and the dead. In the exercise of his power he shall call into renovated being all the dead; and, having passed and executed just sentence upon them, he, at the head of the redeemed, shall lead them into the mansions prepared for them in the house of his Father and their Father: in the midst of these glorified men shall he spend his eternity, the visible Head of his then visible body the Church, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. It is surely a fact that does not require illustration, that this bodily presence of the Redeemer to the redeemed will greatly add to their enjoyment; but I apprehend there is something more important meant in the revelation of Jesus Christ than even this. I apprehend that it has a primary reference to a farther unfolding of his personal and mediatorial excellence. I conceive that a far more extended revelation will be made.

and they will be furnished with capacities for understanding every part of this extended revelation. The only other idea to which I wish to turn your attention is, that thus their knowledge will be obtained, and their intercourse maintained. No longer are they under any but direct influence. They will see no more through a glass, darkly as by means of a mirror; they will see him face to face: they will know no longer in part; they will know him as they are known. We cannot distinctly describe, for we cannot conceive, the manner in which their knowledge is to be obtained, and their intercourse maintained; but it will be as different from and as superior to the mode in which they carry on their intercourse here, as the being an eye and an ear-witness of an event is superior to merely hearing a report of it. Such, then, is the state of the people of Christ in the present and future times.

I remark, in the second place, that Here, and now the people of Christ are exposed to numerous afflictions and trials; there, and then they will be delivered from all these, and nothing will remain but the glorious result of these. "Now for a season ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Temptation, in the classical use of the word, means enticement to sin; but he has read the New Testament with very little care, indeed, who has not seen it often mean affliction generally—affliction in the aspect of trials, and that is plainly the meaning in the passage before us. When we think abstractly of the character of God, and of the relation in which his believing people stand to him, we would be ready to come to the conclusion, that they would bid farewell at once and for ever to evil in all its forms and degrees, and would be made happy at once up to the fullest measure of all their varied capacities and enjoyments. It has appeared right to Him, who alone has the power, to order the matter otherwise. It is quite plain that Christians are just as much exposed to the ordinary afflictions of life as other men are. They are men born of women, of few days, and full of trouble; they come forth like flowers, and are cut down; they flee as shadows and continue not; they are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. And if there be any difference we would really be led, from attending to what takes place around us, and from noticing the declarations of his Word, to judge that his people generally and specially, and even those of his people who, from the height of excellence to which they have reached, are objects of peculiar complacency, are visited with more than the ordinary

share of human sorrows. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." And this is not all: they not only have their fair share of ordinary calamities, but are exposed to a variety of sufferings, and very severe sufferings, arising out of the peculiarity of their characters—the example of the world lying in wickedness, and of the wicked one under whom the world lies. Amid mockings and imprisonments, torture and death, in their most frightful forms, has been their portion; and yet not one of them has had reason to doubt of the faithfulness of the true Witness. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." He that would love God in this world must suffer, in some form or other, persecution. And where is the Christian who does not know that there is at all times a powerful, malignant influence issuing forth from all sides of a present evil world, exercising a blighting power both over his improvement and his enjoyment? Not merely have Christians, in the present state, to suffer from the world, but from that evil being who is called the prince, the god of the world. I am fully persuaded, that the subject of a malignant evil influence does not occupy that place in the popular evangelical theology of the day that it ought. No Christian is an entire stranger to his devices. His envenomed sting inflicts not a fatal but often a very painful wound, and his buffetings are found to be all but intolerable. All these afflictions flow from the world or the prince of the world; all these are to try the Christian; all are intended to test and improve his character; all are intended for the purpose of trying and of strengthening the Christian's faith, hope, and other graces—dispositions which have been produced through the Holy Spirit by the instrumentality of the truth.

Such is an account of the present state of things; it will be otherwise in the future state. In the last time of the revelation of Jesus Christ there will be no more temptation; then the trial of their faith will be found to be much more precious than is gold that perisheth though it be tried with fire. The comparison here is not so much between gold and faith, as between the *trial* of gold and of faith. It is the trial of faith that is more productive of good results than the trial of gold. The trial of gold purifies it; removing from it all heterogeneous mixture, it leaves it purer and more excellent than it found it. But try gold as you will—refine it as you will—try it by endless purification, you will never make it any thing but a material perishable thing; but

faith purified and strengthened by affliction, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, acquires the character of immortality; and as faith is as it were the soul of the new man, the principle of the new creature, the reference is, I apprehend, to that character of perfect conformity to the mind and will of God which is formed by the Holy Spirit partly, and to a considerable extent through the influence of tribulation along with the word. It is found to praise, and to glory, and to honour. These three words are synonymous. The question has simply been asked, To whose praise, honour, and glory is this spiritual character to be ascribed; and it matters very little whether it is to the praise, honour, and glory of the saint or of the Saviour, for we find that glory and honour will be to every one that worketh good in the day that Jesus Christ judges all people according to his Gospel; and we know that at that day Jesus will be glorified by his saints, and admired in all them that believe. It has been said, these two things do well agree, the honour of the saint and the honour of the Saviour; and if they are saints they shall share his throne and his crown, and shall say, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

The third point contrasted is, that Here, and now complete salvation is the subject of the faith and the hope of christian people; there, and then it will be the subject of their enjoyment. The salvation of their souls is the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls is the end of their belief. That man is labouring under a mistake who thinks that the salvation of Christ is entirely a future salvation. That man who never expects to know any thing of the happiness of heaven till he gets to heaven, is in no very likely way to get there. That man who believes the truth as it is in Jesus, obtains an interest in the work of the Redeemer here; all his sins are truly forgiven, and he is accepted in the beloved, and he obtains a peace which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away. But, at the same time, it is equally plain that in the present state the salvation that is in Christ, is but very imperfectly enjoyed by his people. We see them exposed to the ordinary calamities of life, exposed to the temptations of a wicked world, and the temptations of a wicked devil; and that they have to struggle with the remains of a depraved nature. When we go to the church-yard, were we opening the graves of those whose deaths were precious, there

will we find, as well as in the graves of the wicked, sad memorials that, in their case as well as in that of their unregenerate brethren, the tremendous sentence has been executed: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Our complete salvation is not in possession but in hope. This salvation contains in it complete deliverance from all evils, physical and moral, in all their various forms; and contains in it, too, all that is necessary in order to make a perfect human spirit, inhabiting a glorified human body, every way fitted for its residence, every thing that is sufficient to make a human being completely happy for ever and ever. We are looking for a Saviour from heaven, who is to change these vile bodies and fashion them like to his own glorious body. The soul is by far the most important part of the component nature of man; and hence its salvation is always spoken of by way of pre-eminence. And, besides, it is with the soul and the body, as with the majestic vessel and little boat we often find connected with it. If the vessel founder in the deep, its attendant must perish also; and if it find its way into the peaceful haven, its little attendant is also placed in circumstances of security. In this passage this salvation is represented as the end of their belief: not that there are to be no more faith and hope in heaven; were there no more faith and hope in heaven, I think there would not be much happiness in heaven. They are to continue to believe in the absolute security of their happiness, and to hope in the full assurance that God will do as he has said, and will execute to them that promise which it will require all eternity fully to fulfil. "I am thy God." But, at the same time, it is quite obvious that the subject of the faith and hope of the people of God in heaven is different from what it is now. They will no longer believe that they are to be saved, and no longer hope so. They know this; they have the experience of it, and it is no longer matter of faith and hope.

It only remains now that I turn your attention to the fourth point of contrast between the present and future state of the people of God: Here, and now the people of God are sometimes in heaviness through manifold temptations; there, and then they will rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. There are some men who have insisted that even in the present state they have nothing to do but to rejoice; they interpret the Apostle's language quite differently from what we have interpreted it; they speak of an everlasting joy quite

inconsistent with the feeling of heaviness, with being troubled in the present state. It is not possible, and if possible, it would not be a desirable arrangement; it would not answer the purpose which the present arrangement is intended to serve. I have no doubt that the people of Christ are often very much to blame for being in heaviness; yet, at the same time, it is quite obvious that it is just a part of the arrangement of heaven, that they shall be occasionally in heaviness, and exposed to those troubles which befall the human race. Is it at all unnatural, that loving the Saviour as they do, and being often much in the dark as to the declarations of his Word, and the dispensations of his providence, their souls should sink within them, and that they should say, "Oh! that I might know where to find him, that I might come even to his seat!" Is it strange that when struggling with the remains of a body of sin and death they should say, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who will deliver me?" Thus, heaviness when not indulged in an improper degree, is not in itself sinful; and the Apostle mentions two circumstances about it calculated to prevent it from becoming oppressive. "It is but for a season." I believe, all Christians know something about it. These scenes are longer to some than others, and there are persons who, from a peculiar constitution of body and mind, find the whole of their lives to be little more than a long train of bodily disease. These, however, are exceptions. Ordinarily speaking, these scenes of depression are not very long, and even in the worst cases, they are only for a season. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy will assuredly come in the morning. There is another circumstance; it has its end. That should reconcile us. "All is ordered, and all is well." In the last time, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when the conformity of mind and will to the Saviour is completed, there will be no more need for the trial or the heaviness that accompanies it; there will be through all eternity nothing but unmingled joy; they shall rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. It is to no purpose that we attempt to illustrate this. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive it. The only thing we can do is to quote a few passages of Scripture. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion

with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

"Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord God shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." "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." "God himself shall be with them, and be their God; 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 Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

Such is the contrasted view this passage gives us of the present and future state of the people of Christ; and now what is the practical conclusion? Is it not that of the Apostle, that we reckon the sufferings of the present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed? "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, and every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought into you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." May the blessing of God rest on this illustration of his Word. Amen.

CHARACTER OF THE JEWS, AND THE MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN ;

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN THE INDEPENDENT MEETING HOUSE, NILE STREET,
GLASGOW, FROM ACTS vii. 51—60,

By the Rev. GREVILLE EWING.

(SLIGHTLY ABRIDGED.)

In the latter part of Stephen's historical detail, he showed the testimony which Moses had borne to Jesus as the prophet whom the Lord should raise up like unto his brethren. He showed also the rejection of Moses by their ancestors, and the rebellion of the people against God in the matter of the golden calf, worshipping him, even Jehovah, under an idolatrous symbol, on account of which he gave them up to worship false gods—to serve the host of heaven during their wanderings of forty years in the wilderness. Even after their settlement in the promised land, they maintained their Egyptian idolatries, adding to them those of the neighbouring nation of Canaan, on the other side of that country; for which repeated idolatries and rebellions God threatened them with captivity beyond Damascus and Babylon. All these things were fulfilled in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, which were foretold as early as the time of Moses. To correct their superstitious veneration for their temple, Stephen rehearsed its history, from which it appeared that Abraham and their fathers worshipped God, when they built an altar wherever they fixed their own tent, and long before tabernacle or tent was built; 2dly, it appeared that the tabernacle was not, originally, built in the time of Moses; that it was built after a model furnished by God himself; and, therefore, was equally venerable as the temple afterwards, and that this moveable tent continued all the days of Joshua and the succeeding ages, till the reign of David, without any want or desire of a temple; 3dly, he showed that David was precluded from finishing the temple, which was reserved for his son, Solomon, who was a man of peace; 4thly, he corrected their ideas of God, as if the Most High, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, could be confined within the precincts of an earthly temple, or could accept any thing but a pure and spiritual worship, such as was inculcated by the law of Moses and the prophets of old. From these premises he draws, in the conclusion of his discourse, the severe and pointed address which commences where we this morning began to read. "Ye stiff-necked and uncir-

cumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did so do ye."

He addresses his hearers in language which the Holy Spirit had long ago applied to their fathers. The terms are figurative, but they were well known to his audience, and connected with associations calculated to fill their minds with salutary alarm: "Ye stiff-necked." This is a metaphor borrowed from the management of a horse by his rider, or of a bullock when put under the yoke. You will find the first of these allusions sanctioned by an expression in the 32d psalm, 8th and 9th verses: "I will instruct thee, and teach the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." And in the 75th psalm, 4th and 5th verses, and you will there see the allusion made to a bullock put under the yoke, but still unaccustomed to it: "I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly; and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck." This term was first employed by the Holy Spirit, when the people had sinned in making the golden calf, to which Stephen had referred in the 41st verse of this same chapter, and when it was proposed by the Lord immediately to consume them. You find this instance of the use of the expression in the 32d chapter of Exodus, at the 9th and 10th verses: "And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people." To give us an idea of the guilt and danger of such a character, it is said, "Now, therefore, let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation." In calling them stiff-necked, Stephen was directed to lead them to consider themselves as being in deeper guilt than the congregation of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, when detected in the matter of the golden calf. Again, observe the speech of Hiezekiah, in 2d Chronicles, 30th chapter and 8th verse: "Now, be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield

yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever; and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you." Thus Stephen addressed the people, as Hezekiah had done, after the Lord's anger had been remarkably kindled; and, indeed, it was in his reign that a very awful threat was given of the captivity of Babylon. Farther, this phrase was employed in describing the fatal obstinacy of Zedekiah, as described in 2d Chronicles, 36th chapter, verses 11—13: "Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign; and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem," &c. Here, then, Stephen was using language which they well knew had been often applied to the last king who had reigned before the Babylonish captivity, and had brought his people and himself to ruin because of his obstinacy. This language was now used in respect of the awful wrath that was coming on the unbelieving Jews.

Stephen calls them not only "stiff-necked," but "uncircumcised in heart and ears." Here is another metaphor borrowed from the sacred ordinance of circumcision, which was, like baptism afterwards, a symbol of regeneration. Hence those receiving it were called on to manifest the humble conduct of the new creature, in opposition to the obstinacy of the old man. See the language of Moses in the 10th chapter of Deuteronomy, 16th verse: "Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." You observe the connexion, as in the passage before us, between being "stiff-necked" and "uncircumcised." Again, in the injunction in the 10th chapter, where both metaphors before us are put in their proper contrast, you find that what is thus inculcated is also practised in the same Book, Deuteronomy 30th chapter and 6th verse: "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." The circumcision of the heart, then, is understood, in the language before us, to be the essence of vital Christianity. Accordingly, it is so explained by Paul in the 2d chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, verses 26—29: "Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?" &c. On the other hand, as the want of the literal circumcision was a reproach among the Jews, so they who refused to hear, and if they heard, refused to obey the Word of God, were called by

way of reproach the "uncircumcised both in heart and in ear." You find examples of this application of the Word in the following passages:—Leviticus 26th chapter, verses 40—42: "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me," &c. Read in the same purpose in the 4th chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah, at the 3d and 4th verses; and still farther in the 9th chapter, 25th and 26th verses. The expression, "uncircumcised in ears," used here, means those who have ears and hear not—not from want of ears, it is moral inability which is, instead of being an object of pity like natural inability, the aggravation of the guilt of unbelief. This will clearly appear from another passage in which we find it, in the prophecies of Jeremiah, 6th chapter, at the 10th verse: "Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it." Stephen then is told to address them as the untoward generation, boasting of their circumcision, but not walking in the faith of their father Abraham. Having a spirit the reverse of this, he says, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always," *i. e.*, from the earliest times to the very day in which he was speaking to them, "resist the Holy Ghost." The very expression would remind them of what was said as early as the days of Noah: "My spirit shall not always strive with man." "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." It was an imitation always surpassing the pattern, as would appear from what follows. They were filling up the measure of the iniquity of their fathers.

In the 52d and 53d verses, we find the conclusion of the speech of Stephen, at least as far as it went; for it was evidently broken off and interrupted without a conclusion: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" &c. They professed, indeed, to venerate the prophets; but Stephen was warranted by scripture history to say, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" The present race built tombs for the prophets, as Christ remarks in the 23d chapter of Matthew, 29th and 30th verses, and garnished their sepulchres and said, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we had not been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." So far was this profession from being well founded, that the audience then

present were the children of them that killed the prophets, and their wickedness had appeared in betraying and murdering the Just One himself. This was the well-known title of Him who had approved himself to be the promised Messiah, the Lord's Christ, the Lord our righteousness—being so named by the prophets. By this title also the Apostles preached him; and he preached himself to the people, before the very audience now addressed, as mentioned in the 3d chapter of the Acts, verses 13—15. Again, he was announced by the same title when Ananias went, according to the commission he received, to salute a former persecutor by the name of Brother Saul: I refer to the 22d chapter of this same Book, from the 13th to the 15th verse. There is one other passage in which the same title is applied to Jesus as the Christ; it is the remarkable one in the Epistle by James, addressed to the twelve tribes. In that particular passage I now quote, addressed to the unbelieving Jews to tell them of their guilt and danger, he says, at the 5th chapter, 6th verse, "Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you." In the 23d chapter of Matthew, from the 31st verse to the end, you see a passage nearly similar.

Stephen then speaks of his audience as one race with their fathers; and then proceeds to notice their inconsistency as to the law in which they gloried, as well as with regard to the Gospel which they did not embrace. "You who have received the law." Their fathers did receive it, and so did they, for what was given to their fathers, was transmitted to them; but, in rejecting it, they showed that they were a stiff-necked race. "Ye have received the law with the utmost pomp and majesty, and yet have not kept it." He, when he gave the law, was attended with innumerable ranks of angels. This I conceive to be the meaning of the "disposition of angels." They received the law by angels, drawn up as the hosts of God under the command of the Lord of angels. This tallies with the description given in the 33d chapter of Deuteronomy at the 2d verse: "And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them." Now, you may compare this account of Jehovah, attended by the hosts of created angels, with what is said also in the 68th psalm, evidently referring to the same subject. In that psalm we have New Testament authority for applying the pas-

sage to the ascension of Christ. The glory of God on mount Sinai, when giving the law, is declared to have been somewhat similar to the glory of God when Christ ascended from Bethany; when a cloud received him out of the sight of his disciples; and when the two angels, who remained behind, told them that the glory they had seen should not be displayed again till the second coming of their Lord and Saviour: I refer to the 1st chapter of the Acts, at the 10th and 11th verses. He was no longer issuing his law; he was leading captivity captive; he was giving gifts unto men—manifesting himself the God of salvation, but intimating also that he would wound the head of the rebellious. You find language similar to that last referred to, used as to the second coming of Christ as early as Enoch, recorded in the Epistle by Jude; also, when, in the isle of Patmos, John was enabled to say, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." The Jews had ever boasted of having received the law in the glorious manner spoken of here through the innumerable ranks of angels, and from the hand of Jehovah the God of angels, as well as from man; but, says Stephen, ye "have not kept it." Hence, our Saviour's testimony in the 5th chapter of John from the 45th verse—and you will see the force of his language very distinctly, if you trace the connexion between it and our present illustration. In like manner, we may well conclude, that Stephen was about to have, no doubt, pressed them with this inference, that not he but they themselves were the persons who were charged with destroying the holy temple, blaspheming the holy place, and provoking the Almighty to take away their place and their nation.

But here his enemies were permitted to interrupt him. "When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth." The multitude, on hearing these things, felt as they did towards Peter and the other Apostles, as recorded in the 5th chapter verse 33d, "When they heard that they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them." The multitude were too furious to deliberate, but they significantly showed that they had already come to their determination. "They gnashed on him with their teeth." It was thus the multitude had acted to Jesus when they cried, "Away with him! away with him! Crucify him!"

crucify him!" Now, it is enough for the disciple to be as his Lord. They were treating Stephen as they treated Him in whom Stephen trusted, and whose righteousness he preached.

Verses 55 and 56, "He, being full of the Holy Ghost," &c. When Stephen was brought before the council, God had given a sign of his approbation of him as formerly he did to Moses when his face shone after the second conference on Mount Sinai. So now, when the multitude were gnashing on him with their teeth, Stephen looked up steadfastly to heaven. What he saw was the Father, and the Son of the Father, enveloped in shining light, the glorious emblem of his presence called here the glory of God—the emblem also of his power. This emblem was made to Christ at his baptism and transfiguration. In both cases the heavens opened, and in both cases the glory of God not only appeared, but the Holy Spirit rested on them. As an act of intercession, how must this vision have added to the splendour of that face already shining as if it had been the face of an angel! It was not seen by the multitude. Stephen, instead of noticing their clamour or being dismayed by their loud cries, announced to them with a heart full of the Holy Ghost, and as a last attempt to convince them of the truth, with all the animation of one speaking as moved by the Holy Ghost, inviting them to see what he saw: "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." As far as heaven was above the earth, so was his situation above that of those who were assembled against him.

In the 57th verse, however, we see that their fury continued. "Then they cried with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord. And east him out of the city, and stoned him." Without waiting for the delivery of the council, or for any formal sentence of death, as in Christ's case, these frantic zealots exclaimed, He hath spoken blasphemy, and, stopping their ears, resolved not to hear a word more in his defence! They rushed unanimously upon him in a tumultuous manner; and, that they might do all things ultimately according to the law, they cast him out of the city, for it was their custom that no man should be put to death in the city.

They stoned him. This was treating him as an officier to idolatry. It may be worth your while to see the unworthy manner in which they treated him, by reading the account of the charge given concerning the

crime of enticing to idolatry, as laid down in the Book of Deuteronomy, at the 13th chapter verses 6—11. Could they really apply this sin to Stephen who boldly preached the truth? Yet this was the crime for which it would seem they were determined to do judgment upon him.

Who were the witnesses of whom we here read? We are told they were false witnesses suborned by the council to stir up the multitude; and yet they addressed themselves with activity to the murderous task which they had previously perjured themselves to accomplish. In such a tumult their garments would soon have been trampled under foot and carried away, but their friends were ready to watch them. And here is introduced, for the first time, a young man whose name was Saul. Saul consented to Stephen's death; but he was at last to obtain mercy in answer to his dying prayer, his last petition. We wonder how Stephen, so promising and useful a teacher, should have been so soon taken away. But that did not prove a loss to the Church; for, if Stephen was taken away, Paul was in due time to promulgate the Gospel. *He* was at last to obtain mercy, and to enter into the labours of Stephen, and to preach the faith he once destroyed.

This parenthesis having come to the word stoned, the same word which was used already in the 58th verse, is repeated in the beginning of the 59th. "And they stoned Stephen." It is added in our bibles, "Calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my Spirit." You observe the word "God," is printed in the italic character. It is a supplement; and, in this case, it is an improper supplement. The context plainly requires that it should be read, "Calling upon the Lord Jesus;" or invoking, and saying, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Dr. Hailes says, this is so plain that it cannot be denied. Not only is it a prayer addressed to Jesus Christ, but we are told the words of which it consisted. And if ever a prayer be more important than another, it is surely when a dying Christian is in the act of commending his spirit to Jehovah, the Lord of life and glory. They are the words of prophecy: "Into thy hands I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Jehovah." It was a profession corresponding with that of Thomas, when he answered and said, "My Lord, and my God." It is added, that he "kneeling down and cried with a loud voice, Lord lay not this sin to their charge; and when he had said this he fell asleep." It is com-

monly said, that when the punishment of stoning was inflicted, they threw down the object of their vengeance, and then buried him with stones. He had contrived, however, to get up so far as to reach his knees. He kneeled down, not as submitting to their violence, but as commending his spirit to the God of his salvation. He kneeled down amid all their violence; and cried with a loud voice. And what was his cry? It was not to arrest their hands. It was a cry to the Lord: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And when he had said this, when he had committed his own spirit to Jesus to be received into his glory, and prayed for his enemies, for the pardon of the sin which they were in the act of committing, "he fell asleep." The expression *he fell asleep*, is descriptive of a peaceful and honourable death. So we read that David was laid with his fathers, and fell asleep. And, again, Paul, when speaking of the five hundred disciples who had seen Christ after his resurrection, says, of whom some have fallen asleep, but the greater part remain unto this day. Paul, in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, would not have us ignorant concerning them that have fallen asleep; for if we believe that Jesus died, even so them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him. One would have thought that there could be no sleep where there was so much violence, but all was peace with him; and the Lord enabled his servant to pour out his life into the hands of Him unto whom he had committed his spirit. Our Saviour prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and Stephen's prayer was not unlike that of his divine Master.

From this passage we learn, first, the power and faithfulness with which the Word of God should be applied to the consciences of them that hear it. When blasphemy prevails, then is the time for the preacher to wax bold. They who believe not that Jesus is the Christ, but oppose him, are charged with not keeping the law any more than the Gospel—trampling under foot the Son of God—counting the blood of the covenant wherein they are sanctified an unholy thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace. Who are these? "He that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Are there any present not willing to come to Christ. Then ye are stiff-necked, ye are uncircumcised in heart and ears. The

Word of God has been often set before you. It is in your hands, and preached in your hearing; and if you receive it not, you are chargeable with these crimes.

2dly. In this account we have an invitation to depart from the evil heart of unbelief. The reproofs of Stephen were faithful. When they heard them their hearts were, so to speak, cut asunder. They must have been convicted in their own consciences. How awful the result! "They gnashed on him with their teeth." That was a deadly threat, you will say, to Stephen. It was a more deadly symptom, it would seem, in their own case. It was to them the forerunner of the weeping and gnashing of teeth that was awaiting them in another world. Now threats were followed by clamour, by outrage, by murder. Instead of the legal forms of execution all were active and conniving: the false witnesses were ready; and one was standing by and serving them who verily thought with himself, at that moment, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; but little did Saul know that he should himself be twice stoned in the service of that Lord whose cause he now opposed.

3dly. We learn the glorious manifestation made to the dying martyr. "As our day is so shall our strength be." He was in the midst of a tumult on earth, but he looked up steadfastly to heaven. What were the threats or assaults of man to him who was favoured to see the glory of God, and Jesus standing on his right hand! He was aware the world was receding from him, but he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." Let us have respect to the recompense of reward, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Lastly. We learn the happy and exemplary manner in which he departed: calling on the Lord Jesus, and saying, "Receive my spirit." Like Paul, afterwards, Stephen knew in whom he believed. It only remained that he should, like his Lord, who said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," say to that true intercessor, "Lord lay not this sin to their charge." Having said this, he had nothing more to detain him nor disturb him. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." Whatever be the outward circumstances of Christians when they depart, they immediately pass into glory.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

LECTURE by the Rev. JOHN FORBES, Glasgow.
LECTURE by the late Rev. DAVID MARR, A.M., Edinburgh.

SUBJECTION TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES ;

A LECTURE DELIVERED FROM ROMANS xiii. 1-7.

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

In the latter part of the preceding chapter the Apostle repeatedly inculcates the duty of the forgiveness of enemies, and of forbearance under injuries ; and he does so, not only on account of the intrinsic excellence of these virtues at all times and in all places, but also in consequence of the peculiar circumstances in which the disciples at Rome were placed, and which rendered the exercise of meekness and patience constantly necessary. Living in a heathen city, where the great majority of the inhabitants were hostile to the Gospel and hateful of every appearance of favour for it, the character, the manners, the services, and the obedience of the disciples, were all calculated to excite the animosity and to provoke the persecuting zeal of an ignorant and ungodly people. Hence the urgency and fervour with which the Apostle called upon them to be meek, and forgiving, and harmless in their dispositions. This was the character which became their profession as the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus ; and it was highly necessary for them to be diligent in exercising this spirit, surrounded as they were by fierce and relentless enemies, and liable every day and every hour to the most vexatious and cruel maltreatment.

The duties inculcated in the passage that comes under our consideration at this time, appear also, whilst they are possessed of a most general authority and importance, to have been particularly suitable to the special circumstances in which the disciples at

Rome were situated. The government of Rome, at that time, was likely to be very obnoxious to the feelings and principles of men, whose spirit was as alien from many of the acts which it performed, and many of the designs which it pursued, as was that of the early Christians. That government was conducted by men who were avowedly heathens, who worshipped false gods, and who persecuted all who did not follow their example ; and many of its measures were, necessarily, from this cause, very injurious to the interests of truth and of religion. There was great danger lest the Christians at Rome should fall into the sin of despising a government which was so corrupt in its principles, and so cruel in its proceedings, as was that under which they lived ; and that they might conceive themselves not merely at liberty but required by a sense of duty to disobey men who held their authority upon very questionable grounds, and who often exercised it in the worst possible manner. The exhortations contained in the verses before us, were particularly suited to the case of persons in these circumstances. The true principles of christian obedience to governments are laid down and explained ; and an antidote is provided against that spirit of opposition and rebellion which is so ready to rise in circumstances where we think that our rights are invaded, our principles insulted, or our liberty, religious and civil, endangered by governments.

But whilst the instructions of the Apostle were so admirably adapted to the case of the Roman brethren, they are, at the same time, highly valuable to all men, in whatever circumstances, with respect to *civil* governments, they may happen to be placed; for government is a standing institution which has hitherto existed, and must continue to exist, in one form or another, in every place, and among all nations. And, although it is no part of the design of revelation to treat systematically of governments any more than of any other object or branch of science, it is, nevertheless, a most essential and necessary part of christian morality to elucidate and confirm the duties which we owe to such a valuable ordinance; for there is a wide and an important distinction which must ever be made between government in its principle, and government in its application. The former comprehends what is essential and what is immutable; the latter relates to what is accidental and variable. We everywhere find governments existing, but we do not find them all of the same form nor administered in the same manner. The principle of governments flourishes in every soil, and among every tribe, from the smallest community to the most wide and extensive empires; but the application of this principle is subject to an endless diversity of modifications under which it manifests itself. It is here as it is with language. The gift is natural and is universally exercised. The mode of exercising it, or the different varieties of speech, are innumerable. The power or the faculty of language is an endowment bestowed upon man by God. The application of language, in its particular uses, is directed solely by custom or convenience. The power or faculty itself is most useful and necessary in all cases, the particular forms are useful in different situations. So it is with government. Its great principles obtain everywhere; its local modifications are infinitely diversified. One people have one kind of government, and another a different—as they have different languages, but all have some.

Now the wisdom of Scripture, it has been often observed, is as admirable in what it does not teach, as in what it does teach upon this subject. It does not teach what particular governments men are to have, but it teaches what will make men good and

happy under any kind whatever. It does not say whether a monarchy, or a democracy, or an oligarchy, is the best form of government, or that any is better than another; but it tells, that government is in its essence a divine ordinance, and that under whatever form it exists in any land, it is to be conscientiously obeyed by the various individuals who live under its laws, and who enjoy its protection. Had the Scriptures done more than this; had they prescribed one form of government as the best, and required all men to set it up, it is obvious that the effects of such an injunction would have been most calamitous and pernicious. The Word of God, by one such injunction, would have ceased to be a message of peace, and have become the occasion of endless wars and discord, and a mere political firebrand. It would, by taking a part in the disputes of this world, have lowered its authority, and impeded its own diffusion. It would have been justly dreaded as a *subversive* system in all those countries whose form of government did not quadrate with its prescribed regulations. But, as it is, no offence of this kind is given by the Gospel; and, accordingly, we find that it is equally cherished in lands where governments, diametrically opposite in their principles and mode of administration, are instituted; for monarchies, republics, and mixed constitutions, all find the Gospel to harmonize with them; and, by sanctioning the great duty of obedience to lawful authority, to be of material service in securing the peace and social well-being of the general community.

Keeping these principles in view, we proceed to consider the various instructions here delivered: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: for the powers that be are ordained of God." That is, Let every man, whatever his office in the church, or his spiritual gifts, be subject to the supreme authority of the State; for there is no authority but from God, and the existing authorities under which you presently live are ordained by God. It has been well observed, "that the extraordinary privileges and dignity conferred by the Gospel on believers, must have affected the minds of the first Christians, just emerging from the shades of ignorance and awakened to new hopes, with singular force. Feeling an elevation to which they were strangers before,

and looking down upon the world around them as the vassals of sin and Satan, they might be easily tempted to imagine the restraint of laws could not extend to persons so highly privileged, and that it was ignominious in the freemen of Jesus Christ to submit to the yoke of idolatrous rulers. Natural to their situation as these sentiments might be, none could be conceived of more detrimental to the credit and propagation of a rising religion, or more likely to draw down upon *its* professors the whole weight of the Roman empire, with which they were in no condition to contend. In this situation it was proper for the Apostle to remind Christians that their religion did not interfere with the rights of princes, or diminish their obligation to attend to those salutary regulations which are established for the protection of innocence and the punishment of the guilty."

That government is the ordinance of God is proved from the constitution of man, from the universal existence of some kind of government or another in every place, and from the great principles of justice and equity which are founded upon the law of God, and which it is the professed purposes of every government to maintain and enforce. An express sanction was never interposed in behalf of any government except that of the Jews. Its form and mode of administration were communicated from heaven, and God was in a peculiar sense the Head or King of the Israelitish people. Accordingly, it has been usual to distinguish that government from all other kinds—from a monarchy, when the chief power is in the hands of one man; from an oligarchy, where it is in the hands of a few; and from a democracy, where it is in the hands of many. The chief power of the Jewish State was in the hands neither of one nor of many, but of God himself. No laws could be added, and none taken away, from the code which he had appointed; and, accordingly, it has been usual to express this by calling the government of the Israelites a Theocracy—that is, a government where the chief power exists in God alone.

But, although the only instance where an explicit power has been ordained by God, was in the case of the Jewish commonwealth; yet, in every kind and form of government where the principles of justice and equity are duly maintained, we have a virtual and implied communication of

divine authority investing that government with its own peculiar sacredness. It is the same here as with marriage, which is at once a civil contract, where the forms and stipulations may vary according to different circumstances, and which is also a divine ordinance, inasmuch as it is ratified by solemn vows, and is expressly acknowledged and confirmed by the divine law; and if God has taken so much care of that private union which is the source of society, that he has invested it with a divine protection, it is but reasonable to conclude, that he also regards the federal institutions which unite men in governments and nations as equally sacred, if not more; for if the existence of mankind be desirable at all, it is only through the medium of governments which defend them from wrongs and from injuries that it is so. Sheltered by government, the helplessness of infants and the decrepitude of old age are as safe from oppression as are the vigour of manhood and the strength of mature years. Every thing, in short, that is good for man is found by him only in social life, where he lives under the civil protection, and where he can avail himself of the good services, of all his fellow-citizens. And, accordingly, whatever form of government has been chosen or is established in any country, it has the divine sanction; and its peace is not to be disturbed, nor its laws to be resisted, without much sin, any more than without great evil.

The 2d verse, which contains an inference deducible from the truths now considered, shows that opposition to governments is a most criminal and dangerous course of proceeding: "Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation;" or, as it may be rendered, damage or punishment. It has been objected to this, and similar precepts of Scripture, that they inculcate a spirit of passive obedience, and seem to teach that men must submit to governments with patient endurance, however tyrannical their principles, or however corrupt and hurtful their administration. This, however, is far from being a fair and candid conclusion. The question here is not with the abuses of government, but with government itself; and the doctrine laid down is, that whosoever resisteth lawful authority, or, in a spirit of reckless insubordination, attempts to overthrow civil institutions, is, by so doing, contravening

the will and appointment of God, and exposing himself to manifest hurt, both for time and for eternity. There is nothing in the divine authority of governments to hinder them from requiring and from receiving improvements, as well as other human institutions. Some governments are more favourable to the prosperity of society and to the advancement of human nature than others; and there are none who would not prefer to live under the free institutions of Britain, rather than feel the iron despotism of some other kingdoms. But there is a wide difference between improving and overturning any system of government—between removing its evils and eradicating and destroying it altogether. The Word of God and the wisdom of the highest statesmen agree upon this principle, and condemn reckless subversion. “To avoid,” says one of the greatest men of modern times, “the evils of inconstancy and versatility, ten thousand times worse than those of obstinacy and the blindest prejudice, we have consecrated the State that no man should approach to look into its defects or corruptions but with due caution; that he should never dream of beginning its reformation by its subversion; that he should approach to the faults of the State, as to the wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling solicitude; for,” he adds, “the State is to be looked on with reverence, because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature: it is a partnership in all science, a partnership in all art, a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born. We owe it to our posterity to transmit, to them at least unimpaired, those civil privileges which the wisdom and virtue of former ages have communicated to us.” Such are the sentiments and views of one who wrote according to the dictates of sound reason and the most philosophical views of human society; and you see what a coincidence there is between his deductions and the declarations of the Word of God.

Vain and superficial minds think lightly of the foundations of government and the permanence of social institutions; and they are willing to hazard the most dangerous

experiments upon existing laws to remove the slightest evils, or even to gratify their own love of amusement. With the selfish spirit of the tyrant who set his capital on flames to enjoy the luxury of the commotion and anxiety displayed on the occasion, they would prefer the wild anarchy of revolution and civil war to the calm and to them uninteresting repose of a season of prosperity and peace; when men sit under their vine and their fig-tree without any to make them afraid. A proud and vindictive hatred of order and rank inflames others with an aversion to all regular government, where there are diversities of conditions existing among the various members of the State. They hate a system of things where they do not hold the place to which in their vanity they feel themselves entitled; and, rather than that there should be any higher in rank, or greater in affluence than themselves, they would have the whole social edifice pulled to pieces, and levelled to the ground, with unsparing ruin. There are others who ascribe all possible evils to government; and if they are not successful in their business, or happy in their undertakings, they lay the blame, not upon their own negligence and supineness, but upon the laws and regulations of the country—under which, however, others prosper, who are situated in all respects in the same circumstances with themselves. The principles of such men are not only erroneous but sinful; and if they were to gain what they want, it would produce only ruin to themselves and misery to others. When they speak lightly of governments and teach others to do the same, they are reviling an ordinance, the most necessary of all human things to be kept in sacred respect. In weakening or overturning the existing order of things, they are letting in a flood of evils which may never be averted, or not until they have exhausted themselves, by producing all the mischievous consequences with which they are fraught. A reckless resistance and opposition to governments will certainly injure the commonwealth; or, if it should remain impregnable, will recoil with ruin upon the heads of those who make the attempt; and that surely is a conflict to be avoided, where either public misery, or private punishment, or both, must be the inevitable consequence. No men can do greater evil than those who plunge into rebellious courses, and conspire

to set the law of society at defiance, and overturn its institutions. If they succeed, they destroy their country; if they fail, it destroys them. Hence, the wisdom and prudence of the well-known maxim of the Book of Proverbs, chapter xxiv. 21, 22. "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change: for their calamity shall rise suddenly; and who knoweth the ruin of them both?"

In the 3d and 4th verses, the Apostle confirms the exhortations previously delivered, by adverting to the nature of governments in general. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou, then, not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister and servant of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." By these observations we are taught that the general and ordinary concern of governments is to encourage and protect the good, and to restrain and prevent the evil; and that governments, therefore, should be upheld on the ground of their beneficial tendency, and usual equity and justice. And that this representation is true, may be readily demonstrated by an appeal to experience. Even the greatest tyrant, unless when his personal pride, or malice, or avarice is concerned, will be found to observe the rules of equity in judging between his subjects. Even as the worst parents often wish to have their children religiously educated, and trained to good habits, for their own peace and respectability, so an enlightened government, even though regulated by the most unprincipled men, has been found to encourage what tends to promote the general interests of morals and of religion.

In ordinary cases, then, the man who walks according to the will of God, which enjoins mercy, justice and humility, as its leading requirements, will have nothing to fear, but every thing to expect even from governments far from being perfect. There is, in fact, a defence spread around such persons in the respect which public opinion pays to goodness and harmlessness, which even the most despotic and arbitrary rulers would be afraid to invade. For wantonly to attack and injure the meritorious and

inoffensive, would excite general indignation and fear, and the distrust of every member of the community out of which the victims of tyranny were taken. Accordingly, all rulers, from a principle of safety, feel themselves bound to abstain from such unpopular and dangerous measures; they always profess, at least, to act according to the principles of equity, and to carry with them in their proceedings the approbation of the consciences of the greater portion, if not of all their subjects. And, upon this ground, even the worst governments deserve to be respected, because they are at least infinitely preferable to none whatever. A state of tyranny, great as its evils often have been, is not to be compared to the more dismal state of a scene of anarchy and wild misrule, where every man is left to be the prey or the oppressor of every other, without the least restraint. There may be a shelter to which the good can retire for refuge, where there is even the shadow of regular government; but there is no possibility of safety in a state of things, where the fullest scope is given to the evil passions of the human heart. In fact, mankind could not long exist in such wild confusion and misrule as would thus be introduced. Rapine, and murder, and oppression, would soon thin their numbers, and at last extinguish the race. The fields, if cultivated at all, would be plundered before they were ripe for harvest; cities would be pillaged, and havoc instead of industry would be the usual mode of acquisition put in practice. Quarrels would, in almost every instance, terminate fatally to one or other of the two contending parties; and man would everywhere find that his most dreadful foe was man.

When these things are considered, it should be a ground of thankfulness that God has everywhere appointed the ordinance of government; and under whatever form it exists, has rendered it the means of checking evil, and of securing peace to those who enjoy its protection. It is true, that men seldom think of the benefits which they derive from living under a regular government, because they have been accustomed to them from their infancy, and have no experience of the contrary evils. But let them just think what the consequences would be if avarice, and revenge, and sensuality were not checked and restrained by the strong arm of law; and if the whole multitude of unprincipled and flagitious

persons, who live in any country were allowed to act in any manner they pleased. It is a miracle of wisdom and goodness, when these things are considered, that there should be any security or any peace in human society. The power which restrains the sea from covering the earth, and which dispels the rigour of winter by bringing back the sun, is not more beneficial than that which has formed men into confederacies for mutual protection and defence. Nor let it be said, that this is the simple effect of the feeling of self-interest, and that the existence of governments is independent of divine care; for, just suppose that all men were to pursue their interest without any other consideration, and would not the poor and needy who are everywhere the more numerous and stronger party in society, immediately be changed into spoilers and plunderers, instead of continuing to live upon the reward of honest industry, and earn their bread with the sweat of their brow.

Having shown that government is the ordinance of God, and that it is highly useful and important, the Apostle in the 5th, 6th, and 7th verses, points out the duties which are owing to them who are in authority. These are three: a conscientious submission; a willing payment of public taxes, imposts and burdens; and a respectful homage—"fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour."

With respect to the first, the submission of Christians, it is to be rendered not from wrath, not by compulsion, but for conscience' sake. In all lawful commands magistrates are to be cheerfully obeyed. They, indeed, carry the sword, and can enforce obedience, or punish the refusal of it. But Christians are not to obey from such unworthy motives. They are to act from the dictates of reason and religion; they are to avoid evil and do good, willingly and cheerfully. No one of them is to suffer as an evil doer, or as a murderer, or as a busy body in other men's matters. In such cases where conscience is hurt, and things are required which are contrary to the divine will, it is the duty of Christians to hold fast by their integrity. Yet even *here* they are to act with moderation and meekness, and not to make *conscience* a pretext for courting singularity, aspiring to fame, and bringing government into contempt or aversion by resistance. As there is not a more honourable class of

men than those venerable martyrs and sublime patriots who have sacrificed their lives in support of the cause of God and of liberty, so there is not a more despicable tribe than those who ape such greatness, courting punishment for its fame, and seeking persecution because it brings them into notoriety.

With respect to the payment of custom and tribute, the second duty which we owe to government, it needs no observation. The sums so raised in so far as they are necessary for defraying the expenses of the government, are a debt due by every individual to the public for the benefits which he receives, in the protection and defence of his person and his property. Every attempt to escape from a due payment of public burdens, is a mean and dishonourable fraud. This is sometimes not so deeply felt as it should be. Persons, who would disdain to defraud a private individual in the ordinary business of life, think it no evil to injure the public revenue by evading taxes and eluding the payment of custom. Every such act, however, is strictly condemned by the Word of God, and ought not, therefore, to be practised or even attempted by those who reverence its authority, and acknowledge its precepts.

And the last duty which we owe to governments, and to those who exercise them, is honour and fear. Official men depend upon the reputation in which they are held for much of that efficiency with which they are able to perform their duty. When they are esteemed their measures obtain confidence, their motives are approved, and their conduct is commended. It is, besides, a debt of gratitude to give respect and honour to those who employ their time and their talents for the benefit of the public. Also, as rulers are, in some degree, the representatives of the community, we show by our deference to them, that reverence which we entertain for the public of which they are the federal head. On all these grounds, every well-disposed and right-minded person will feel it a duty to give honour to magistrates, rulers, and all superiors in station; he will feel no congeniality with those who often seize upon public men to make them the objects of ridicule and hatred, for no other reason than that they are exalted. On the contrary, he will do every thing that lies in his power to uphold the honour due to rulers, because

he feels that in so doing he fulfils the law of God, and promotes the best interests of society at large. Upon this ground it is that we are required to remember all in authority in our intercessions with God. The Apostle enjoins upon us that prayers be made for all men, for kings, and for all in authority, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

Having pointed out the duty owing to rulers and magistrates, let us conclude, by

shortly reminding you of that reverence and submission which you owe to Him by whom kings reign and princes decree justice. If any thing can be more inconsistent and disgraceful than another, it is to be loud pretenders to loyalty and submission to earthly rulers, and to be rebels and despisers of the government of heaven and of the authority of God. Whilst, then, you venerate the king, let this duty be connected with that other and more sacred one, of fearing God.

THE WIDOW OF NAIN'S SON RAISED;

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, LOTHIAN ROAD
EDINBURGH,

By the late Rev. DAVID MARR, A.M

"And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now, when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about."—LUKE vii. 11—17.

OUR Lord had not long commenced his public ministry until all were convinced of his omnipotent power to heal the body, however stiff-necked and slow of heart they were to receive him as the Messiah promised to the fathers; therefore, every kind of disease incident to the human frame, seems to have been brought under his eye, in order to elicit the compassion of his heart, and to display the triumphs of his healing power. To the leprous and the unclean, who were loathed for the impurity of their disease, he said, "I will, be thou clean," and immediately they were restored to vigour and health; to those who were racked with pains, and tormented with unclean spirits, he gave immediate relief of body and soundness of mind; to the withered hand, he said, "Stretch it forth, and it was restored whole as the other;" the melancholy feebleness of palsy was exchanged for alacrity and strength: nothing was too good to expect from his kindness, and

nothing was too great for his omnipotence to perform.

But there is one disease more incurable and obstinate than all that goes before it. Whilst there is life, there is hope; but who amongst all the professors of the healing art is able to cure death, and bring back the body alive from the grave? We here see that Jesus Christ was able. His other miracles leave all earthly physicians at an infinite distance; for the troubles which they can only relieve by a long course of medicine, he cures in a moment with a touch, a word, or a volition, whether at hand or afar off. He speaks with absolute certainty—"I will heal"—whilst they are in great doubt of their success; and he undertakes cases which they must abandon as desperate. But in the miracle that comes before us this evening, he stands alone without a pretender to rivalry. At the borders of the grave, where all others must leave us, Jesus takes us up and shows that he is able to save unto

the uttermost. This was the first miracle which Christ wrought upon the dead. It was nearly a thousand years since the Church of God had seen one raised to life; therefore, its verity as well as its own intrinsic glory, demands our particular attention.

“And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.” That was the day after he had wrought the miracle upon the Centurion’s servant. He immediately left Capernaum; he did not linger there to hear his own praises, or to receive the homage which the military officer might wish to bestow upon him. He had a work to perform whilst it was day; therefore, he bent his course towards the city of Nain, in order to meet with this object which he saw afar off. Nain was situated about twelve miles from Capernaum, near to Endor, where Saul consulted with the witch. It is celebrated only for this notable miracle which was wrought near its gates. True glory has no localities: our Lord was not honoured from place or circumstances; but these were honoured from him. Bethlehem and Nazareth, Jerusalem and Judea, and even the whole globe itself, all receive from him a lustre which they could never bestow upon him; and, in eternity, it will be the glory of this planet, amongst all the works of God, that here the Second Person of the Trinity became incarnate, lived and died, and rose again, even as Nain is chiefly celebrated for the widow’s son who was dead, and became alive again.

Our Lord was accompanied upon this journey, not only by his chosen Apostles, but also by a multitude of others who were either avowed disciples or curious observers, and who had been attracted either by the wisdom of his discourses, or by the omnipotence of his benevolent works. The love of the marvellous operates powerfully upon the human mind, and, no doubt, induced men to flock after Christ wherever he went. With great condescension and with infinite wisdom our Lord bore with their infirmities, and overruled them for his own glory and our eternal benefit; for we are enabled to say, concerning this most astonishing miracle, as well as all the wonderful works of Christ, these things were not done in a corner. It is characteristic of true miracles that they are wrought in

the face of day, before a sufficient number of credible witnesses, not selected from the friends of him who performs the miracle, but taken indiscriminately from all, and eyes from those who are watching to detect any imposture. When fanatics and false prophets have arisen in the Church, and many of late years have appeared both at home and abroad, they have always failed to prove their miracles before neutral witnesses. When the Jewish prophets, as they were called, pretended to raise the dead, the government wisely allowed them to try it, and set a guard of soldiers to preserve them from the intrusion of the mob; but the complete failure of the attempt exploded for ever the awful delusion. We have now to behold a different event, arising from the objects that meet the serious eye—a funeral procession—a weeping widow, and a young man’s corpse.

“Now, when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out.” This sad procession was the first sight which caught the compassionate eye of the Redeemer as he drew near the town. Every thing which he saw was serious to his mind. In the bustle of a city we look upon men merely as they stand related to this world; we see merchants and tradesmen, travellers and idlers, sons of earth and citizens of the world; but in such a scene Christ’s perspicacious eye beheld pilgrims through time, candidates for eternity, sinners against God, penitents at his footstool, or rebels against his throne, plunging into everlasting misery or ascending to immortal felicity. Here, however, he beheld a sight at which we all look grave; for, when man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets, we are struck with awe. When we meet a funeral procession, we stop or turn aside, move slowly or hush our conversation, from a respect to the sorrows of the living or the obsequies of the dead. The train of mourners, the coffin and the pall, the hearse and all the circumstances of death, may only excite the stare of vulgar minds; but minds of a higher order are thrown into solemn musings, and prompted to grave inquiry—Whose funeral is that? A soul has gone into eternity; is it that of a saint or a sinner? Who are these attendants? Are they devout men carrying a Stephen to his burial, and making great lamentation over him; or are they the accomplices of the guilty attending

him to the grave, to which they have contributed to hurry him? Was the soul driven from the body, yon invisible but irresistible hand executing the sentence, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee?"—or, has the spirit departed peacefully at the joyful sound, "Come up hither: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" And when the day of doom shall again revisit the souls and bodies of the whole human race, shall that body reluctantly come forth at the trumpet's blast, desirous to shrink back into the grave, or even to hide itself beneath rocks and mountains, rather than face the descending Judge?—or, will that waking frame listen to the trump of God, as to celestial melody, and lift up its head with joy because its redemption draweth nigh?

But, although such reflections fill the contemplative mind of him who meets a funeral, it is still our duty to attend them; it is natural, it is amiable and useful to gather around our bereaved friends, when they are compelled to say, with Abraham, "Bury my dead out of my sight." The trembling widow or bereaved parents may need some friendly assistance at such a time; and religion, so far from prohibiting to join the mourning trains, commands us to "weep with those that weep."

A great company of those whom the Syriac language calls the sons of the city, attended their deceased townsman to his long home. This crowd contributed to prove the truth of what followed; for they were not companions of our Lord, prepared for a miracle—but attendants on the dead, who expected any thing rather than to see the young man rise again. They were carrying him out of the city; for the Jews, who considered the dead as polluting, buried them at a distance from crowded cities or towns.

Our Lord beheld with this funeral train a weeping widow. The very name "widow" is sanctified to our tenderest and most respectful sympathy, by the kind attentions which God has shown to that state: he has declared himself the Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widow; and has commanded his Church to be kind to such who are widows indeed, and desolate. The tenderness of the female sex, and its liability to shrink from the world's cold blast, are often increased in a state of widowhood. She who has been accustomed to lean

upon the arm of another, and to find refuge under the husband's protecting wings, when her husband sinks into the arms of death, is left to pursue her pilgrimage alone. "Call me not Naomi, (pleasant,)" said an ancient widow, "but call me Marah, (bitter, for the Lord has dealt bitterly with me." It the widow has any earthly comfort more pleasant than another, it is that of beholding her children who perpetuate their father's image and name; and, although they may be young and unprovided for, yet they furnish a balm to the bleeding heart of the mother, by presenting objects of solicitude, preventing the mind from preying on itself, and objects of endearment and hope with whom the weak may vent her affections and share her griefs. The widow of Nain enjoyed only one such alleviation. Whether she ever had any more, and death had robbed her of one after another till he extinguished her last hope, we cannot tell; now, however, she is "childless"—a calamity which the Hebrew women considered as almost a curse. Her neighbours seem to have sympathized deeply with her as a daughter of Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted because they were not.

Christ beheld, at this funeral, the corpse of an only son. They were carrying out the body on a bier; it was not shut up in a coffin, as is customary in this country, but laid upon a board with a mattress, either completely open to view, or so slightly covered that the general form could be seen. This is still the mode of interment amongst some nations, as the circumstances attending this miracle show it to have been among the Jews. Upon that bier was stretched all that remained to this poor widow, from the fond names of wife and mother; and, as she cast her eyes upon the corpse and beheld the frightfulness of death, she would burst afresh into agonies and tears; for what mourning is equal to that for an only son!

No doubt she was reluctant to part with him, and she might clasp him, if possible, to reanimate the cold clay with her own vital fires; but it was all in vain: she was not the resurrection and the life. Still she was slow to resign him to the tomb; for dark are thy regions, O death! and dark are thy dwellings, O grave! but when the vital spark of heavenly flame has fled, the mortal remains soon become unpleasant and loathsome to survivors. Therefore, there is no remedy; she must submit

to send out of her house him who had been its joy and the staff of her widowhood. As she passed through the streets of the city all would seem lonely and dismal, as if, with her only son, all had died; and now, arriving at the gates, she would tremble to think that they were so near the grave. When the Saviour and his company approached and met the solemn procession, behold the effect produced upon him: "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise."

When the Lord saw the weeping mother, he had compassion on her. How often is this said of Christ, and what importance should we attach to this saying! Human compassion is often barren of pity, and is no proof of substantial kindness; for those who weep most tragically at fictitious wo, often live coldly to themselves, and indifferent to the real miseries around them. Yet true greatness is combined with tenderness; and the Lord of glory, the Prince of life, not only wept at the grave of his friend, but showed the reality of his compassion, by restoring him to life. Again it is true that religion penetrates beyond this vale of tears; for it looks not to the things which are seen and temporal, but to the things which are not seen, and which are eternal. This, however, gives no sanction to stoical apathy or hardness of heart; for who could tell the future consequences of present events?—who could tell the ultimate advantages of the sorrows of this life so well as our Lord? Yet his heart was moved with compassion when he saw this mourning widow. He respected the bonds of relationship; for, next to the love of God, the highest joys which religion sanctions are those which arise from the tender sympathies of husband and wife, of father and mother, of son and daughter. Nor was it recorded for her sake alone that the Lord had compassion on her, but for ours also, that we might know we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but that, in all our afflictions he is interested, his compassion drawing forth consolation. "He said unto her, Weep not."

From any other but Christ this would have been little better than mockery and insult. But He knew how to speak; and the words which he uttered with authority

and grace would relieve, by anticipation, the sorrows he intended to dispel. By first speaking to her thus, he called the multitude to observe the miracle he was about to work, and awakened the mind of the mourning widow, that she might see to whose compassion she owed the restoration of her son. His voice, like oil upon the ruffled deep, calms the agitations of the widow, stays the fountain of her tears, rouses her soul from the sorrows of grief, and enables her to fix her eyes upon Him who bids her not to weep, although attending the funeral of her only son. Behold the significant action of his hand! He touched the bier, not the corpse, that he might not shock the prejudices of the Jews. This touch, however, by the ceremonial law, would have made any one unclean; but He who could take away the cause was incapable of being defiled by death. Jesus passed through the midst of sin and death upon the earth, as the sunbeams dart through a polluted atmosphere with undiminished purity and lustre. Whilst the grim king of terrors was marching in all his awful pomp, enjoying his most cruel triumphs, and trampling upon all that was lovely and dear to man, behold death's conqueror, the Prince of life, met the vain triumph; He laid his hand upon the foe, and said unto him, Stand still: "and they that bare him stood still."

They would, no doubt, look with astonishment at the authoritative action of Him who pretended to arrest the march of death. Their inquiring looks would say, What meanest thou, bold stranger? Wouldst thou not have the dead interred? But Jesus had said to the spoiler of men, Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther, and here shall thy proud sway be stayed; and the same hand that touched the bier shall one day be stretched from heaven to arrest for ever the march of death, when he shall say, Cease thy desolations, king of terrors: "O death! I will be thy plagues! O grave! I will be thy destruction!" Listen to the sovereign mandate of Christ's will: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Strange orders given to the dead, to call a corpse young man, and command him to rise, when the dead can neither hear nor move! but the Scriptures tell us of a God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were; who, in the beginning, said, "Let there be light, and there was light; who spake, and it was done;

who commanded, and it stood fast;" and it was the same Being, though now in the form of a servant, who said to the dead, "Hear," and to the stiff clay, "Arise." Death heard the voice, and, trembling, owned his conqueror: fleeing from his prey, he resigned the field to God the Lord, to whom the issues from death belong.

"And he that was dead sat up and began to speak." Deep in the inmost recesses of his being the youth felt the awakening power of the Saviour's voice, and all within adored and obeyed. The cold clay became warm again; the pulse that had ceased began to beat; and the blood that was frozen, now melted and began to flow; the wheel that had stopped at the fountain began to revolve again; and the ghastly countenance of death was changed into all the vigour of life and youth: light beamed in his eyes, sounds vibrated in his ears, sensations thrilled through his frame; and, conscious of life again, he rose up, looked around him, and began to speak. Would he not exclaim, O my mother!—but it is in vain to conjecture. The Scriptures are silent upon this subject.

To the mourning widow Jesus delivered her son. Admiration for his deliverer, and affection for his mother, would glow in his bosom. The last time he saw his dear mother was by the side of his deathbed, where, with a tenderness known only to a mother, she wiped away the cold sweat from his convulsed countenance as he sunk into her arms, vanquished by the last enemy. He now, for the first time, beholds the Redeemer, whose word had spoken him to life again, and whose eye still beamed with that compassion which relieved the widow's griefs, by snatching the prey from the cold iron grasp of death. Looking around him, the youth would see himself on the road to the grave, surrounded by a train of mourners and a gazing multitude; but whilst these thoughts and scenes agitate his mind, Jesus took him by the hand, and delivered him to his mother. Of the rest it would be profane to speak. It belongs only to the imagination of a widow who has lost an only son. "And there came a fear upon all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up amongst us; and, That God hath visited his people." How natural was this; for who could see a corpse move without starting in alarm? who could hear a voice from the lips of the dead

without trembling at the sound? Such is the mysterious awe that hangs over death, that no voluntary motion is to be expected from its stiffened limbs, no voice from its closed lips; but here a whole multitude beheld, with awful wonder, a man rising from the dead, speaking to those around him, and, although shrouded in his grave clothes, yet alive and blooming in the vigour of youth. The funeral procession returns to the house whence it came forth; one is added to their number, and the mourning of the widow is turned into joy.

It is not wonderful that the multitude around glorified God. This was the very design of the miracle, that men should say, with Nicodemus to our Lord, "We know that thou art a teacher (or prophet) come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." But as God had not sent a prophet for many years with the power of working miracles; as none since the days of Elijah had raised the dead, the people exclaim, "Glory to God, that he has visited us with more than the ancient wonders of his power and grace!" Nor is it wonderful that the fame of such a miracle should spread throughout all Judea and all the region round about; for every one that saw it would speak of it with astonishment, and would scarcely be able to speak of any thing else; and they who heard of it would receive the report and exclaim, Is it possible that one in the appearance of a man should have power over death? Who can this mighty prophet be? He must be more than mortal!

But let us learn from this subject what sin has done. It has brought death into our world with all its woe. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble: he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not." Death has filled the world with lamentation, mourning and woe, making her that was a wife and a mother first bewail her widowhood, and then mourn for her only son. Oh! lover of sin, these are the fruits of thy favourite. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death has passed upon all; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Yet these are but the beginnings of sorrows—the brandishing of the sword of justice over thy guilty head, oh! lover of sin, that thou mayest not perish in sin, and compel eternal vengeance to sheath the

sword in thy heart; for then in the world of retribution it will shed the blood of thy soul, and make it curse its immortality, which will not suffer it to die. But if your heart sickens with this prospect, and if you cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?" we answer, Behold what Jesus Christ can do to save from the bitter fruits of sin! He can wipe away tears, however bitter and hopeless; he can take the prey from the hand of the mighty, and deliver the wretched captive. Christ did not raise up this young man and deliver him from going down to the grave, merely to show pity to the widowed mother. He has compassion on many widows and bereaved parents, whose relatives he brought not back from the dead. This was done to seal the truth of his mission, and prove that he came from the God of our life, and that life or death hung on the reception or rejection of his Gospel. Nor is this all. He designed this miracle to convince us that life and immortality are brought to light by his Gospel; that the hour is coming when all the

dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God saying to them, "Arise;" and all that are in their graves shall live.

But, again, we see from this miracle that Jesus can quicken the dead in sin. The two resurrections—the one of the body, and the other of the soul—Christ declares belong to him; for, "as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will; for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father;" and as Jesus himself explains the miracle upon the man born blind, as illustrative of the illumination of the mind which the Holy Spirit affords, we have seen but the smaller half of the glory of this miracle on a dead body. If we have not opened our eyes to the truth taught by the Apostle, let us *now* know that God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sin, quickened us together with Christ "for by grace ye are saved."

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM KIDSTON, D.D., Glasgow.
ADDRESS by the late Rev. JOHN GEDDES, Glasgow.

THE SINFULNESS AND THE DANGER OF REJECTING
THE GOSPEL ;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. WILLIAM KIDSTON, D.D.,
Senior Minister of the United Secession Church, Campbell Street, Glasgow.

“ 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 ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him ; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will ? ”—HEB. ii. 2—4.

THESE verses inculcate a lesson of infinite importance and universally interesting—a lesson which ought to arrest the attention and affect the heart of every one to whom God has made known the riches of his grace in the Gospel of his Son. They proclaim the wickedness and the danger of those who do not receive and improve the Gospel of the blessed God for the salvation of their souls. In the first verse of this chapter the Spirit of God requires all who call themselves the disciples of Christ, to treasure up in their minds those truths in which they have been instructed ; and this salutary admonition is enforced by considerations the most powerful and persuasive. These are, first, the divine glory of Him who is at once the author and the grand subject of the Gospel—that glory which the preceding chapter displays and illustrates ; and, secondly, the wickedness and the fatal consequences of inattention to the glad tidings which it announces. “ Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” Why shall we be solicitous to hide in our hearts the things which we have heard ? What crime shall

we commit, what loss shall we sustain, what danger shall we incur, if at any time we shall let them slip ? To these questions a plain and a most satisfactory answer is returned in the verses which have been selected as the subject of discourse. “ 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 ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, both by signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will ? ”

To impress the minds of those whom I address with the wickedness and the danger of putting away from themselves the words of eternal life, of not embracing and improving the Gospel for the salvation of their souls, is the object which I shall keep in view in the sequel of this discourse.

A few sentences concerning the great salvation, and the neglecting of the great salvation, will be profitable as an introduction to this subject.

The great salvation of which the Apostle

testifies, is not the salvation which the Gospel reveals, but the Gospel itself, even the good news of the kingdom, which by his Son, God in these last days hath spoken unto us, (chap. i. 2.) which the Hebrews heard from the Apostles and other ministers of Christ—"the word which began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by them who heard him, God also bearing oint witness, both by signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." This Gospel is the word of salvation, and the word of faith by which this salvation is embraced. They who preach the Gospel show unto their brethren the way of eternal life. The salvation which is in Christ Jesus may, with the most obvious propriety, be denominated *great*, if we compare it with the deliverance which was wrought for the house of Israel, when the Lord brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, which the Church, after the lapse of several hundreds of years celebrated in the following strains:—"For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth"—or if we bring under view the blessings which it comprehends. The former was a temporal deliverance, the latter is a spiritual salvation, including deliverance from sin and wrath—from everlasting destruction; and not only deliverance from all evil, but also the enjoyment of eternal life. How precious must be that Gospel which reveals this salvation, and, by the faith of which, they who are dead in trespasses and sins, and are by nature the children of wrath even as others, are made partakers of so great salvation.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—to save the chief of sinners." Is it not reasonable to conclude, that the glad tidings of the kingdom which bring near so great salvation, will be readily embraced by all in whose hearing they are proclaimed? Alas! by the perverseness of mankind expectations apparently the most reasonable have been miserably disappointed. Of those to whom the Word of God has come, there are many by whom the Gospel of the grace of God, even the great salvation, is neglected.

What is it to neglect so great salvation? The word here used, occurs in several passages of the New Testament. To two of these a reference shall be made. Con-

cerning the infidelity and the rejection of his ancient people, the God of their fathers speaks in the following terms:—"They continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not." Heb. viii. 9. "All things are ready, come unto the marriage," is the intimation which the servants of the King, according to his commandment, gave to those who were bidden to the marriage of his Son. Did they regard this kind, this generous invitation as duty and interest required? Did they accept of it? No. "They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise." Matt. xxii. 5. In both these passages the same word is employed, and they ascertain its meaning in the text. They who neglect so great salvation, make light of the Gospel. They do not regard it as the way of eternal life; they do not give to it that cordial reception to which it is entitled; they do not improve it for the great purpose which it is intended and happily fitted to accomplish; they put away from them the Word of God which is able to save the soul, and judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life.

This is a most serious charge. Are there any in the present time against whom it can justly be preferred? To this question you must have returned, and I must return the affirmative answer. In every past age there have been many, in the present time there are many, who are chargeable with *neglecting*, with *not regarding*, with *making light of* so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, which in these last days God hath spoken unto us by his Son.

The great salvation is neglected by all who enjoy the means of religious knowledge, and yet remain ignorant of the faith once delivered to the saints; by all who do not with the heart believe unto righteousness, how much knowledge soever they may have attained—and in this class must be included not avowed infidels only, but also those who pervert the Gospel, and every one whose faith stands in the wisdom of men, not in the power of God; by all who seek after righteousness, not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law; by all on whose heart the truth has not made the proper impression, who have not received the love of the truth, that they might be saved; by all who continue in the love and the practice of sin, who pro-

ness to know God, but in works deny him ; and by all who do not seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness—who do not give to the salvation of their souls and concerns of eternity, the preference to every other object of pursuit.

These observations must be sufficient to show that the lesson which the text teaches, demands and deserves the most serious attention. I shall, therefore, proceed to bring forward some considerations which, by the blessing of God, may serve to impress our minds with the wickedness and the danger of neglecting so great salvation. To make light of the Gospel of the grace of God is at once an evil and a bitter thing. It is an heinous iniquity which the Judge of all the earth cannot fail to punish with merited severity.

I. To neglect so great salvation is a very heinous sin. It is not only dangerous in the extreme, but it also includes a world of iniquity.

The law which God spake from Mount Sinai, was given by the ministry of angels. It was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator—of Moses who was a type of the one Mediator between God and men. To receive and to obey this law must have been the indispensable duty of those to whom it was delivered. Every transgression of this law and every act of disobedience must have been rebellion against the God of heaven, their lawgiver and their King. For “whoso committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law.” But how criminal soever the transgression and disobedience of the law of Moses must have been, to neglect so great salvation must be a much more heinous iniquity.

The following considerations which the text obviously suggests, may serve to illustrate and establish this important truth.

1. The dignity of Him by whom the great salvation has been made known to us, illustrates the wickedness of neglecting it.

The Word, even the law, was spoken by angels; but the things which we have heard, even the Gospel of our salvation began to be spoken unto us by the Lord from heaven. “God who, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the

brightness of glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath obtained by inheritance a more excellent name than they.” Of all the messengers by whom God has made known his will to the children of men, his own Son is by much the most excellent. The word spoken by angels was steadfast, and during the time appointed possessed all the authority of supreme law; but the authority of the one Lawgiver must shine with greater refulgence in the great salvation which was spoken by the Lord of heaven and earth. The time of reformation having arrived, the law has passed away, “but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.” The favour of God to his peculiar people was signally displayed when he gave them his statutes, and showed unto them his judgments (which if a man do he shall even live in them); but his kindness to that people is not worthy to be compared with the more abundant grace which he manifested, when he sent his only begotten Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to make known to men the way of eternal life. To transgress or to disobey the law of Moses must have been highly criminal. But as the Son of God is a more glorious messenger than angels; as the majesty and authority of God are more impressively displayed when he speaks by his only begotten Son than when he spake by the ministry of angels; as God manifest in the flesh, preaching righteousness in the great congregation, proclaims more gloriously the condescension and the love of God, than angels publishing his law amidst fire and smoke—so to neglect so great salvation must be more wicked than the transgression of the Word spoken by angels. The Saviour testifies, that the rejection of the Gospel which he preached to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, is a sin of such malignity, that all the other iniquities with which the Jews were chargeable, are nothing when compared with it. “If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin.” Every one who neglects so great salvation is guilty of “trampling under foot the Son of God, and of counting the blood of the covenant,

where with he was sauctified, an unholy thing." He sins against all the authority of God speaking by his own Son, and against all that lovingkindness which the mission of his Son into our world has manifested, into which the angels desire to look, and which they shall for ever contemplate with increasing admiration and delight. Than this transgression and disobedience, what can be more wicked?

2. The wickedness which is included in rejecting the Gospel of the blessed God our Saviour, is illustrated by the clear and full revelation which it makes of the way of eternal life.

"The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The law, even the covenant which God commanded in Horeb, "was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." "The law was added because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made;" and it served to unfold the promise of salvation in which the Gospel was preached before to Abraham. But the light which it reflected on the mystery of redemption was feeble, when compared with the full revelation which is made by the Son of God. The law is to the Gospel what a dark profile, or the bare outline of a portrait is to the human face. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and the prophets, and all the holy men of old time, saw and embraced the great truths which are now fully unfolded. Still they saw through a glass darkly. Even the holy men of God who spake of this salvation as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, were far from understanding fully the meaning of their own writings. "The prophets, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, inquired and searched diligently, searching what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when he testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. And unto them it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."

The land of Judea, when compared with the rest of the world, was gloriously illuminated. During many ages, it was the only bright spot in a dark world. The clearest

light of the former dispensation, compared with this last and better age, is but the dawning of the morning to the perfect day. "Jesus came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the seacoast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephtholim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephtholim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." The substance being come, the shadows have passed away. The obscurity of the former dispensation is removed by the appearing and the ministry of Jesus Christ. The mystery of salvation by the obedience and the death of the Son of God, which was hid from ages and generations, is clearly revealed, and hath appeared unto all men. The way into the holiest of all is now made manifest, and every true worshipper is admitted to privileges superior to those which, under the law, the High Priest himself, and he only, enjoyed. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The purpose and the grace of God "is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel."

If every transgression and disobedience of the law of Moses, by which the grace of God was obscurely revealed, was highly criminal, to make light of so great salvation, now that it is manifested so fully and so clearly, must be wicked in the extreme. The Gospel proclaims tidings so good and so interesting, that, on the acknowledged principles of human nature, it seems at first view reasonable to conclude, that to a very faint discovery of them, all whom they concern must give the most earnest heed. How inexcusable, then, must be they who turn away from him who now speaketh from heaven, proclaiming in the clearest manner, "Peace on earth, and good-will to men!" The man who has the Bible in his hands, and who can read the Sacred Volume, must be wilfully and criminally ignorant if he does not know the great truths of the Gospel of our salvation. "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." These words are a quotation from the Confession of our Faith, as I trust you all know. They who have not the law, the written law, are a law unto themselves, so that they are without excuse in the idolatry and wickedness with which they are chargeable. The seed of Jacob to whom, by the special favour of heaven, the oracles of God were committed, were much more inexcusable when they continued not in his covenant. If we who live under the last and the best dispensation of the grace of God shall neglect so great salvation, we must be without any shadow of apology. The more that we know or have an opportunity to know of the great salvation, the neglect of it must be the more wicked in the estimation of him whose judgment we are sure is according to truth against them who commit such things. "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

3. The wickedness of neglecting so great salvation, is illustrated by the infallible proofs of its divine origin by which it is recommended to our acceptance.

"The word spoken by angels was steadfast." That the law which was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator, is the law of God, was proved by evidence the most satisfactory. The whole congregation of Israel heard the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, and they received the covenant which he commanded in Horeb as the law of their King. The giving of the law was attended with many signs and wonders by which its divine authority is fully established. Unless the Gospel of the grace of God comes to us attested by the most satisfying evidence, it must be our duty to cleave to Moses and not to follow Christ.

That the Gospel is indeed the Word of the living God, is established by the most abundant evidence. It began to be spoken by the Lord, who confirmed his mission and the doctrine which he delivered by a multitude of gracious miracles. To him Moses, in the law and all the prophets, bare witness; and in his life, and ministry, and death, all things which were written concerning the Messiah were fully accomplished.

"The Jews require a sign," is the language in which the apostle Paul speaks of the evidence of the Gospel which they demanded. "What sign showest thou," are their own words, "that we may see and believe thee?" In reply to this demand, he, on several occasions, directed them to his resurrection from the dead on the third day, as the grand, the decisive proof of his Godhead and mission. On the third day after his death he arose from the dead, according to the Scriptures and the word which he had spoken, and proved to the confusion of his enemies, and the everlasting consolation of all who believe on his name, that he is the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners, and that all the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth are the true sayings of God.

The knowledge of salvation by Jesus Christ, was communicated to the Hebrews in a form which, instead of weakening, rendered more abundant the evidence of its divine origin. The great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, that is, by the Apostles whom he had chosen, who were his companions during the term of his public ministry, to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and who were chosen of God to be the witnesses of his resurrection, and the accredited publishers of the great salvation. In preaching the Gospel to all nations, and in committing it to writing, they enjoyed the unerring guidance of the Holy Ghost, and by them the doctrine of Christ was delivered to the churches with infallible certainty.

Do you require evidence to convince you that the Gospel which the Apostles preached, and which they delivered to the churches, is, indeed, the great salvation which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord? What you require, the text supplies in rich abundance. "So, then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God; and they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word by signs following." That the God who cannot lie will not attest what is false, is a self-evident truth. He cannot be deceived, and he will not, he cannot deceive. If, therefore, the God of heaven bears testimony to the doctrine

which the Apostles published, it must be the great salvation which, at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord. The Spirit of Christ, who was in the Apostle of the Gentiles, testifies, that the Word, which began to be spoken by the Lord, "was confirmed by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness, or bearing joint witness, both by signs and wonders, and by divers miracles and gifts, or distributions of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." To attempt critically to ascertain the meaning of these terms, is not necessary for our present purpose. The gifts or distributions of the Holy Ghost, may have a special reference to prophecy and the speaking with tongues; or, perhaps, all the means by which the Apostles were enabled to prove that the doctrine which they preached is the Word of God—including signs, wonders, and miracles—may be comprehended in these gifts. "For it is the same God who worketh all in all; and all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." On this subject the Spirit speaketh fully and particularly in the 12th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, to which I refer you. Let it suffice at present to state, that the signs, and wonders, and miracles, by which God bare joint witness to the doctrine which they preached, were not wrought in their own name, nor by their own power, but in the name, and by the power, of that Jesus who was crucified, and whom they affirmed to be alive; and that the mighty works done by their instrumentality, and which nothing inferior to almighty power can accomplish, are the seal of heaven appended to their commission, and to the Gospel which, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, they made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. The Acts of the Apostles record many beautiful illustrations of the passage of Scripture under consideration.

The New Testament dispensation, of which the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, or rather the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost may be regarded as the commencement, is the age of the Spirit. When Jesus was glorified, and the Spirit was given, according to his promise, to furnish the Apostles and their fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, with the miraculous gifts which were necessary to the propagation and the establishment of our most holy faith, the evidences

by which the Gospel is recommended to our acceptance may be considered as completed. No evidence in kind more convincing, and no evidence of the same kind more striking and more impressive, can be expected. They who make light of the great salvation which began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing joint witness by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and distributions of the Holy Ghost, are guilty of doing despite to the Spirit of grace. They sin not against the Son of Man only, but also against the Holy Ghost, by whose gifts God has borne witness to the Gospel which the Apostles preached. If we neglect so great salvation, we resist the Holy Ghost, in the clearest and the strongest evidence of its truth.

How great, then, is the wickedness of those who turn away from Him, who now speaketh from heaven: "Shall I not visit for those things, saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on them who have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof?" Yes, verily; 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?" We cannot escape the more tremendous punishment which this greater iniquity deserves, and which the righteous Judge shall inflict.

Having brought before you some illustrations of the wickedness of neglecting so great salvation, let us attend,

II. To the just recompense of reward which awaits those who reject the counsel of God against themselves.

The reasoning of the Apostle, in the text, plainly suggests the following considerations by which this division of the subject is illustrated:—

1. The righteousness of God renders it necessary that, on them who make light of that mercy which the Gospel reveals, judgment shall be executed.

The Word spoken by angels was steadfast, and could not be violated with impunity. Is the Judge of all the earth chargeable with unrighteous severity, in ordaining that the transgressors of his law shall suffer the penalty of transgression? No. Every transgression and disobedience received a *just recompense of reward*. For some offences atonement was made by those

offerings which the Lord required, and of which he accepted; but for other transgressions, particularly for presumptuous sins, no sacrifice was appointed. The punishments which were inflicted by the immediate agency of God, or by human agency, in obedience to the law of Moses, were necessary to vindicate his law, and to maintain his authority as the King of Israel. If justice requires that condign punishment shall be inflicted on the transgressors of this law, surely he will not, he cannot, clear those who are guilty of a more heinous transgression. If, in righteous displeasure, he punishes the less heinous, he cannot allow the greater sin to pass unrecompensed. To neglect the great salvation is a sin of uncommon enormity—a sin which cannot fail to receive its due reward; while the righteous Lord, who will do no iniquity, is the Ruler and the Judge of the universe. “These things, saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins.” “He that believeth is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.” That judgment is his strange work, he has proclaimed in language the most impressive. He hath sworn by himself, saying, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” “The Lord is slow to anger.” He is also “great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.” “Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid! For, then, how shall God judge the world?” “It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Perish who will, God must be just; and, therefore, those who neglect so great a salvation, must receive the just recompense of reward. If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him for our offences, that he might be just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus, it must be impossible that he can do injustice—that they who reject his mercy may escape with impunity. “Now consider this, ye that forget God;” these are his own words: “lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”

2. The condemnation of those who neglect so great salvation must be dreadful beyond conception.

For the expiation of many transgressions of the law of Moses, provision was made by the law itself. By offering the prescribed sacrifice, the offender confessed that he was obnoxious to death, and in a figure he suffered the pains of law when the victim was slain. In those cases which did not admit of atonement by sacrifice, the offender suffered death, according to the law of God, that the land might not bear his iniquity. The punishment which sin deserves is not exhausted by the death of the body. As offenders against the peace and prosperity of the Jewish nation, the despisers of the law of Moses were punished by the magistrate in this world. As offenders against the God of heaven, they who did not obtain mercy are punished by the one Lawgiver in the world to come.

That the punishment of offenders shall correspond with their demerit, is one of the plainest dictates of justice. They to whom the Gospel has come, and by whom it has been rejected, must, therefore, be obnoxious to the most dreadful vengeance. “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?” How shall we escape the damnation of hell? How shall we escape the most dreadful condemnation? The wrath to come must, in this case, correspond in degree with the iniquity which is included in neglecting so great salvation. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish; for on you must come the fierceness of the wrath of God Almighty! On this awful subject there must be a complete agreement of sentiment and of feeling among all who have been enlightened to know the evil of sin and the righteousness of God; who, knowing the terror of the Lord, have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope that is set before us. To ourselves the Spirit of God appeals in reference to the greater condemnation of those who reject the salvation which the Gospel reveals. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who hath said, “Vengeance belongeth

unto me. I will recompense, saith the Lord." And, again, "The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The Gospel of the grace of God cannot leave any man, to whom it comes, in the condition in which it finds him. If it be not received and improved to the salvation of the soul, it must render his wickedness more aggravated, and his condemnation more dreadful. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Jesus upbraided the cities in which most of his mighty works had been done, because they repented not. "Wo unto thee, Chorazin! wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you."

3. The condemnation of those who neglect so great salvation is most certain. "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?" much more shall we not escape the wrath which is to come, if we reject the only Saviour, and the salvation of which he is the author. That we shall receive the greater condemnation, is unavoidable.

For those who despise the Gospel of the grace of God no remedy is provided. The punishment incurred by the transgression of the law of Moses might, in many cases, be averted by the sacrifices which the law prescribed. But for those who neglect so great salvation, no offering can be admitted; for, "if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." The despisers of the Gospel sin against the only remedy, and, therefore they must perish without remedy: This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost. It is not less true, that there is

no salvation in any other; for "there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Last of all, God sent his Son to proclaim peace on earth, good-will to men, saying, They will reverence my Son. In vain do we look for another Saviour. Never shall he again give himself a sacrifice to take away the sin of the world. He shall appear the second time without sin, without an offering for sin, unto the salvation of them that look for him, and to the eternal perdition of all who have neglected so great salvation.

That they cannot escape the damnation of hell must be obvious, when we consider that their condemnation is the only method by which God can be glorified, in rendering to them the due reward of their deeds. Although the transgressors of the law of Moses might escape, and in many cases did escape, in this world the recompense of their ends, which was meet, it does not follow that they were suffered to be altogether unpunished. "The Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." There remaineth an eternity in which the righteousness of God shall be vindicated and glorified, in the execution of wrath on the workers of iniquity. If they who neglect so great salvation shall escape the wrath which is to come, we may be sure of this, that their sin shall not find them out; and the most heinous of all transgressions must, therefore, pass without any adequate testimony of the divine displeasure.

That they who neglect so great salvation can escape the wrath which is to come, must be impossible; because God, the Judge of all, hath solemnly declared, that "everlasting perdition shall be the portion of their cup." It is a righteous thing with God to recompense to them tribulation, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." In the day of final retribution they shall be placed on the left hand of the Judge, and on them the King shall pronounce that sentence, every word of which is full of terror: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and

his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.' These sayings are faithful and true. The strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent. God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Is it possible, then, that they who neglect so great salvation can escape the perdition of ungodly men? The hope of escaping must be utterly vain, unless it shall be fully proved that the great God is not able to inflict on them the vengeance written in his Word. "He is wise in heart and mighty in strength who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered!" "The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." "He is that one Lawgiver who is able both to save and to destroy." Before the almighty God all creation is as nothing. To elude his all-seeing eye, or to resist his arm, is impossible. How wretched is the condition of the man who has despised the message of peace which the Gospel proclaims! He may flatter himself with the presumptuous and delusive hope of escaping from the indignation of God. "What is the hope of the hypocrite though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? God shall east upon him and not spare; fain would he flee out of his hand. The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape; and their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost!" Oh! that, before it be too late, they who are yet without Christ may be aroused from their lethargy, and awakened to look unto Him who beseeches them to be reconciled unto God. This is the effectual, the only method by which you can escape from the wrath to come, and obtain the salvation which is in Christ with eternal glory. "Wherefore," he saith, "awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Is it not folly to speak to the dead? Can these dry bones live? It hath pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe; and He who gave commandment, saying, "Prophecy upon these dry bones, and say unto them, Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord," is able to render his Word effectual so upon the ears of the dead, and to give life to the dead in trespasses and sins. "Verily, verily, I say unto

you, the hour is coming, and now is," these are the words of Him who hath life in himself, and giveth it to whomsoever he will: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

The review of this subject suggests a most interesting inquiry. Against self-deception, in reference to our state and character, it is necessary that we shall watch with earnest solicitude. Let each of us ask himself, Have I embraced the Gospel of the grace of God?—or have I made light of the good tidings which it proclaims? Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not, your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates? They who are in Christ Jesus shall not draw back unto perdition. That they shall cultivate an holy jealousy over themselves; that they shall keep their hearts with all diligence; that they shall examine themselves and earnestly make supplication to God that he will examine and prove them; that they shall maintain on their minds a serious impression of the danger of final apostasy, (a subject on which the Spirit of God speaks in the plainest terms, and at considerable length, in this Epistle, chapter vi. 4—6, and x. 26—31,) are some of the means by which, under the influence of divine grace, they are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.

What abundant gratitude is due unto God on the part of those whom he has called out of the world that lieth in wickedness, who have been made obedient to the faith. To sovereign grace you owe a debt, the amount of which shall never be fully known. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" This is, this must be, the language of your hearts. Let it be your desire and your habitual endeavour to manifest by your conduct the sincerity of the gratitude which you profess. "Therefore, be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Love as brethren; walk in wisdom towards them that are without;" and let it be your care to employ all the influence which you possess to awaken to the consideration of the things which belong to their peace, those who are dead in trespasses and sins, that they may be rescued from the guilt of neglecting so great salvation, and may know in their happy experi-

ence, that 'the word which began to be spoken by the Lord, is the power of God unto salvation.'

Finally, let me exhort all who have received the love of the truth, that they might be saved, to walk in the spirit and the steps of the holy man of old time, who poured out his soul unto God, saying, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, that you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let the Word of God be your constant companion. Let faith be mixed with the Word read and heard, that it may profit your souls. Let it always be present to your minds that you are in danger

to forget, and not to improve this Word, for building you up in your most holy faith, and that to you the Spirit of God speaks in the text and in the verse by which it is preceded: "Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. 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; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

SUBSTANCE OF AN ADDRESS*

TO AN ASSOCIATION OF JUVENILE FELLOWSHIP MEETINGS IN PAISLEY,

By the late Rev. JOHN GEDDES.

THE three chief exercises in Christian Fellowship are, *Praise, Prayer, and Reading the Holy Scriptures*; to each of which exercises I shall now briefly turn your attention.

I. *Of Praise.*—Let the psalm or paraphrase be selected as much as possible in accordance with the particular subject of conference, or special occasion or circumstances of the meeting. Let the subject of praise become afterwards the subject of prayer—a help and a guide to devotion—a simple and ready opportunity to acquire both ease and variety in the form of address to God. The language of the Apostle, in regard to this exercise, is appropriate: "What is it then? I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." He speaks, too, of "singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." And again, of "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Nor are the feelings and language of the Psalmist less appropriate, when, in an elevation of the spirit, he says, "Sing praises to God; sing praises: sing praises unto our King; sing praises. For God is King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding." Whether, therefore, the psalm be principally of praise, or of thanksgiving, or of petition, or of precept, or of judgment upon the enemies of

the Lord, or of complaint, endeavour in your praises, as in all other parts of your fellowship, to aim at the glory of God—your mutual edification—and the fervent exercise of grace in your hearts.

II. *Of Prayer.*—This includes two things—the *gift* and the *grace* of prayer. The gift may be without the grace; but the grace is never without some measure of the gift: and the grace well exercised, will undoubtedly increase the gift. Fellowship meetings are designed and calculated to improve both; but the *grace* of prayer is first to be sought. Join the disciples in saying, "Lord, teach us to pray;" and strive to distinguish between the gift and the grace. Do not despise any whose gift may be small, but whose grace is great. Contemn not the smallness of grace, but thank God for its reality; and pray to him to make it eminent, as well as real. Remember always what prayer is—the *offering up of the desires of the heart*. Endeavour to understand clearly the meaning of praying in the name of Christ, and by the Spirit. Seek that faith which apprehends Christ, prays in his name, and prevails, as the Spirit of grace. Never suppose that you have the grace of prayer, unless you pray regularly in secret; unless you habitually and with sincerity obey the precept of the

* Delivered in 1827, as one of a series of Annual Addresses by the Ministers of Paisley alternately.

Lord Jesus Christ in regard to this duty:—"When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret: and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be ye not, therefore, like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him."

Seeking first the grace of prayer, exercise this grace; and, having the right beginning in grace, go on to possess and improve the gift. It will profit you, and comfort you, in personal secret meditation and prayer. It will be a mean of usefulness and comfort to others. It will be valuable in the family—in the Sabbath school—and in the church. The association of which you are members, is designed as a nursery for both the grace and the gift of prayer. *Distinguish the parts of prayer—adoration—confession—petition—and thanksgiving.* Prefer scriptural expression, under each and all of these parts. Make yourselves familiar with some examples under each. "Henry's Method of Prayer" is excellent, in the rich variety of specimens which it contains. *Observe method in prayer:* not always the same method, but method so as to avoid confusion and vain repetition—the use of words without meaning or real fervour of spirit. *Never pray without asking help in prayer:* asking it either secretly or openly, and seeking to say Amen, both in faith and in desire.

III. *Of Reading the Scriptures.*—This ought to be done as a daily duty, and with daily prayer. In reference to your meeting, you ought to remember and consider beforehand the particular subject. This belongs in part to all, but especially to him who takes the lead in this exercise. Let me recommend particularly, *consideration of the context and marginal references* upon the verse to be explained and applied. None can know, without trial, how much light this will often throw upon a verse, and verify the saying, that "Scripture best interprets Scripture."

IV. *As general direction.*—Keep in mind

the importance of having *the spiritual sense exercised*, to discover both good and evil; and, in points both of judgment and of practice, to distinguish well between truth and error—sin and duty: that the reproof of the Apostle may not be applicable to you:—"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."

Be ready always to admire the grace which ye see in others. Condescend in all affection to those, whose warmth of piety will often be found to excel even quickness of natural talent, in discovering what is most precious in gospel truth. Believe that the Spirit can teach the meek, guide the humble, and conduct the obedient into much truth, which will be hidden from the self-conceited, and those who are puffed up by the knowledge which edifieth not. Cherish a spirit of sincerity, inoffensiveness, christian affability and affection, one towards another. Let it be the main object of your conference, both *to do good, and to receive good*—to sharpen one another in the discernment of truth—and to stimulate one another in the conscientious discharge of duty. *Be humble.* Do not presume beyond your gifts and calling. Do not think more highly of yourselves than ye ought to think. Be willing to learn of all. Be not too confident in matters of mere opinion, where good men have agreed to differ. But be of one mind in the first principles of the oracles of God; and be ready to speak of them with knowledge, with kindness, with firmness, with seriousness, with spiritual devotion, and with godly fear. *Avoid controversy.* Attend to what is doctrinal with a practical spirit; and connect godliness with doctrine. Do not separate what God hath joined in privilege and duty, in faith and works, in principle and profession, in form and in power of godliness. Look and see Christ everywhere throughout the Sacred Volume; and pray that what is testified regarding him, from beginning to end, may dwell in you richly. *Be not hasty to speak.* In honour prefer one another. Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of perfectness and peace. Love God, and love one another, with a pure heart, fervently. Observing these, and such things, of which you have oft been admonished, and which ye yourselves must know as dutiful and become-

ing, your meetings will be for the better and not for the worse. *Out of meeting*, however, as well as *in it*, you must seek to know and to do "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, and pure, lovely, and of good report." In personal and in relative obligations you must beware especially of either occasional or habitual neglect of any one known duty. You must avoid all which you know or suspect to be sinful. You must abstain from the appearance of evil. You must resist sin of every kind and of every degree. You must, if possible, avoid, and always resist temptation. Think no sin and no duty small. "A small duty omitted leads to a great sin; and little sins are great in their tendency." Make not the rich, but the good, your companions. Walk with the wise. Shun evil communications. Give none occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. In all your intercourse with the world study to be sincere and without offence. Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers. Be not rash in making vows. Deliberate seriously. Perform your promises. Though you swear to your hurt do not change or be unfaithful. Carry with you into your family and among your friends, into your business and into the world the remembrance alway of your profession of religion in the fellowship meeting. Believe not in after life the sincerity of your present naming of the name of Christ. Depart alway from all iniquity. From youth to age love God—love your neighbour.

Maintain purity. Serve your generation according to God's will. Follow on to know the Lord, and cleave to him with full purpose of heart. Let not your mind or conscience be defiled. Esteem all God's precepts concerning all things to be right. Go on to perfection.

And now, in conclusion, I encourage you to continue in prayer—to pray for the Church and its ministers, for the sick and the afflicted, for the weak and the feeble, for the distressed and the tempted, for the backslider, and for the unruly and disobedient—for sinners and for saints. For Zion's sake, and for your friends and brethren's sake, do not hold your peace. Till the sun of life goes down, maintain for one another the honourable office of Aaron and of Hur, when they stood by Moses. Pray like Jacob. Wrestle, and by wrestling prevail. Pray down and live down whatsoever is opposed to God, to his will, to his glory, to your good, and to the welfare of immortal souls; and day by day and week by week, month by month and year by year, keep fellowship with God and with his suppliants. Let nought but death part you and prayer. Live here the life of prayer, and ye shall live hereafter the life of praise. And now, may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen and amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ADAM GUN, A.M., Glasgow
SERMON by the Rev. Dr. PATTERSON, Edinburgh.

ADOPTION ACCOMPANIED BY FAITH AND REGENERATION;

A SERMON PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE 11th SEPTEMBER, 1834,

By the Rev. ADAM GUN, A.M.,
Minister of Hope Street Church, Glasgow.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."—JOHN i. 12, 13.

WHEN Solomon king of Israel was occupied in the dedication of the temple of old, he was favoured with a display of the divine presence, by the permanent abode of the Shechinah above the cherubim, which were over the mercy-seat, under which the ark of the covenant containing the testimony of God was deposited. When Solomon beheld this display of Jehovah's glory, he was filled with rapture and admiration, exclaiming, "And will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth?" Now God has condescended to give a display of his presence with the children of men, far more glorious than that which was unfolded to the king of Israel, in the incarnation of his Son, as set forth in the 14th verse of this chapter. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." This wonderful event might be expected to attract universal attention, and to secure the gratitude of all. But so far from such anticipations being realized, we read, verses 10, 11, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Nor was this treatment of Immanuel peculiar to the Jews. Multitudes of professing christians are guilty of rejecting the Saviour, and of despising his great salvation. It is, therefore, important that our attention should be directed, not merely to the free and full salvation which has been wrought out for us, but also to the act of the soul in closing with the Saviour—an

act, on the existence or non-existence of which is suspended our title to present spiritual privileges, and our hopes of future bliss; and which the text distinctly unfolds. "But to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Let us consider,

I. The blessed privilege spoken of, in being made sons of God, and the love of God manifested in such an act.

Whatever diversity of circumstances may characterize mankind, they constitute two distinct families, at variance with one another, in character, and relationship, and destiny; the one, being corrupt, of their father the devil, and heirs of hell; the other, renewed in the spirit of their mind, introduced into the family of God, and made joint-heirs together with Christ of the heavenly inheritance. In virtue of the great apostasy, all mankind are under the curse, and led captive by Satan at his will; and the family of God, so far as our race is concerned, is made up of persons ransomed from the power of the wicked one, and restored to the favour and image of God. The process by which these outcasts are reinstated in the privileges which they had forfeited is by adoption. "Adoption," as defined in our Shorter Catechism, "is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God." We would

adduce as an example of what is meant by adoption, the case of Moses as recorded in the Word of God. We are informed that he was hid by his mother for three months, and when concealment was no longer possible, an ark of bulrushes pitched with slime was prepared, in which the child was placed; and the ark was laid in the flags by the river's brink, in accordance with the cruel decree of Pharaoh, who required the destruction of all the male children of the Hebrews. When Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe, she espied the ark, and having opened it she discovered the child weeping, and had compassion upon it, and ordered it to be nursed for her. Moses was afterwards reared as her adopted son, and became heir-apparent to the crown of Egypt.

In like manner does God act in adopting sinners unto his family, and in doing so, manifests the utmost condescension and love. That such is the case will be demonstrated if we consider,

1. That God is independent of his creatures.

God had no need of any such accession to his family, inasmuch as he is infinitely blessed in himself; our goodness cannot reach unto him, and his glory will be seenred in the everlasting destruction from his glorious presence of all who continue in rebellion against him. God had no need of any such accession to his family, because his soul's delight centred on his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, who was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity. God had no need of any such accession to his family, because his throne is surrounded by myriads of angelic spirits, who are the objects of his complacent regard, whether in the character of the "sons of God shouting for joy" when contemplating God's handywork in creation, or as "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation:" and should it be alleged, that an accession to his family from our race was necessary, in consequence of the breach which had been made by the apostasy of the angels who kept not their first estate, we must admit that no such necessity exists, when we consider that, by the word of his power, He might multiply to any definite extent, a variety of orders of higher intelligences than any of which we have information, who should throng the court of heaven, and, "while veiling their faces with their wings, and casting their crowns at his feet," swell the anthem of praise, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

2. The divine condescension and love in the adoption of sinners into his family will be manifest, if we advert to the character which as sinners we sustain.

In the case of Moses already referred to, several circumstances conspired under divine providence to his rescue. We are assured that he was a goodly child, and, therefore, calculated to attract the regard of any being capable of affection; the weeping babe was in a critical situation, and his very helplessness could not fail to secure the sympathy of a tender-hearted maiden; and, moreover, the pride of the princess would be enlisted for his deliverance, conscious as she was that no other individual in the kingdom could have ventured, even in a solitary instance, to evade the bloody mandate of the sovereign. But in regard to those who are the objects of Jehovah's electing and adopting grace, their character is most repulsive. It is affirmed of the race in general, "all flesh have corrupted their ways;" they possess "hearts deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" "the sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond;" sinners are described as having "brows of brass"—indicating the presumption with which they defy the Almighty; as having "necks of iron"—intimating the obstinacy wherewith they resist Jehovah's grace in moulding them to his will; as having "hearts harder than the nether mill-stone"—impenetrable alike by the terrors of the Lord and the mercies of our God. If David, when he had proposed to him an alliance of marriage with Michal the daughter of Saul king of Israel, (although such a distinction was merited in virtue of the nobleness of his spirit, and the prowess of his arms in defying and defeating the enemies of Israel,) gave utterance to his feelings in these interesting terms, 1 Sam. xviii. 23: "Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?"—ought not we to be filled with humility and with wonder, at the condescension and love of Jehovah, in proposing such an intimate relationship with creatures who are altogether "as an unclean thing?"

3. Nor will our astonishment be diminished, when we advert to the provision necessary for accomplishing his purpose of mercy. A barrier to the exercise of mercy, impassable by human ingenuity, existed in the justice and holiness of the Lawgiver. Sentence of condemnation consigning to eternal perdition the violators of his law had

already passed, and must have been speedily executed, had no suitable remedy been provided. In this emergency, "God, who is rich in mercy," devised a plan of recovery infinitely worthy of his glorious perfections to propose, and in all respects suited to our circumstances as guilty and helpless sinners. When no equivalent could be found though the whole of creation should be ransacked, "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all;" "thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." A channel of communication between heaven and earth was thus opened up. He who was mighty to save endured the fierce anger of the Almighty, which, as "the wrath to come," would not have expended itself to all eternity. "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many souls unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

How wonderful! that "the poor man should be raised from the dunghill and set among princes" (Ps. cxiii. 7); that a worm of the dust should be dignified with the title of a son of God; that a rebel should be admitted to the friendship of his Sovereign, and clothed with honour; that a slave of Satan should become a heaven-born freeman, and ultimately an inhabitant of glory. What nobleness of spirit should be possessed, to correspond with this high privilege! How exalted must be the standard by which the views and actings of such an individual should be regulated! What glorious objects are presented to him for concentrating his affections in the love of the Father and the love of the brethren! And what joyful anticipations is he invited to cherish of an eternal weight of glory in the New Jerusalem! "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God!"

And now, my friends, unless we delight in grovelling in the dust, our ambition after such a privilege must be excited, and we will anxiously inquire how it is to be attained. This leads us to consider,

II. The accompaniments of adoption.

Adoption, as an act of God's free grace, requires no qualification on the part of the sinner. "God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." God gives us *power* to become his sons. *He* translates us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son. But in order to the formation of such a relationship, there

are conveyed certain accompaniments of this act, viz., a title, or tenure, by which the inheritance is held, and a qualification for enjoying the privilege conferred: faith constituting the former of these, and regeneration, as the entrance to sanctification, constituting the other.

1. Faith accompanies adoption.

Saving faith is of the operation of God's Spirit. It is an act of the mind—securing the homage of the heart, the consent of the will and the obedience of the life. It is a vital principle; for, "with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness." The Word of God presents a variety of topics, which are objects of faith—truths which are credited on the authority of Him who cannot lie. The object of contemplation may refer to the existence, the character, or the supremacy of the only living and true God. It may refer to the history of man in his fourfold estate, as originally created in the image, and enjoying the favour of his Creator, as in a state of apostasy under the curse of almighty God, as restored, by divine grace, to the privileges which he had forfeited, or as introduced into those realms of bliss where he shall be for ever with the Lord; or it may refer to our blessed Redeemer in the glory which he had with the Father before the world was; in the wonderful constitution of his person as God-man; in his obedience, passion, and death, to propitiate God's justice on our behalf; in his resurrection, ascension, and mediatorial sovereignty at the right hand of God, which will continue until, as Judge, he gives to all his creatures their due award; in one word, "all Scripture given by inspiration of God," extending from the simplest affirmation, which is intelligible by the weakest capacity, to the most complex mystery, which will require eternity to unfold, comprises a variety of objects of faith, possessing a relative importance and influence.

But, whilst the truth in general, and the individual statements contained therein, are to be implicitly credited, yet the great leading object of faith is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. It is in the character of sinners that we have received a revelation of divine truth. The subject which most concerns us is the mode of our rescue from our perilous and degraded condition; and, therefore, every thing relative to the character and work of the Redeemer must be regarded as of primary importance. The era of his incarnation in "the fulness of time," forms the central point of all history past and future. To Christ there is awarded

a pre-eminence over other objects of regard. Accordingly, in our text, the persons spoken of as having received power to become the sons of God, are "those that believe on his name." "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Many appellations are employed in Scripture to denote the character of the Saviour. He is called Messiah, the Angel of the covenant, Jehovah's fellow, the Shepherd of Israel, the Lamb of God, Immanuel, Jesus, the Christ, the Lord our righteousness, the true light, the Prince of Life, the Alpha and Omega, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, with many others. These names are descriptive of his person, character, and work. Believing in the name of the Son of God, does not mean merely, as we fear too many deceive themselves by supposing, an acquiescence in the propriety of these designations; it implies a great deal more, even a fiducial reliance on Christ for accomplishing in us, and for us, what these varied appellations purport. For example, we do not believe in him as the Angel of the covenant, unless, recognising him as the angel or administrator of that "everlasting covenant, which is well ordered in all things and sure," we view it as the foundation of the provision made for our recovery, and look to him for the communication of all the blessings we need, and which are ensured to all within the bonds of the covenant. We do not believe in him as the Messiah or Christ, unless we regard him as the all-instructing Prophet, the all-atoning Priest, and the all-conquering King of his people; and, unless we place ourselves under his control that he may execute, in regard to us, these offices for which he has been anointed. We do not believe in him as the Prince of Life—unless, conscious of being dead in trespasses and sins, we seek unto Him that he may put forth his mighty power, that we may be quickened together with Christ, and raised to newness of life, and enabled to "present unto him our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service."

And this interpretation of the import of believing in the name of the Son of God, is confirmed by reference to the synonymous expression used in the first clause of the text, "As many as received him." Receiving and believing are employed as equivalent terms. We can have no difficulty in comprehending what is meant by receiving any thing. Christ is in Scripture set forth as "God's unspeakable gift." All other needful blessings are gifted to us with Christ.

Romans viii. 32. We are to accept of this gift as freely given us in the Gospel, and to expect all the blessings secured in him. If an inheritance should be bestowed on an individual, it could be of no service to him, unless he had access to it for his weekly, or monthly, or yearly supplies. And so is it in regard to the believer, who requires, not merely to receive Christ by believing on his name, but to acquiesce in the salvation offered, and to appropriate the blessings purchased. If he lacks wisdom, he is to ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; if he is conscious of guilt and nakedness, he is to seek an interest in that spotless righteousness which has been wrought out by Immanuel; if sensible of pollution and corruption, he is to look to God that he may be "saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" if groaning under the influence of a body of sin and death, with which he is entangled, he is to expect deliverance in being introduced into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Thus will Christ be "made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," and become our "all and in all."

Now, it is by thus believing in his name that we become the sons of God. This act of receiving Christ is the consent of the soul to the covenant of grace, whereby union to the Saviour is effected—a union set forth in Scripture under various appropriate emblems; such as, the junction of a building with the foundation-stone, the engraving of a branch into a tree, the incorporation of a limb with the body, the union of a wife with her husband. Thus do persons become "accepted in the beloved;" they are adopted into God's family, and constituted "heirs of God, and joint-heirs together with Christ. He takes their debts on himself, and bestows his unsearchable riches upon them; they are washed in his blood, and clothed with his righteousness; they are accounted as dear children, and welcomed into God's family with every token of affection and reconciliation; like the prodigal of old, who was "dead and is alive again; who was lost, and is found." "For as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

While the importance of *faith* is thus demonstrated as the *affiliating grace*, it does not stand alone; it obtains the precedence, but is uniformly followed by a host of other christian graces; for we are required to "give all diligence, to add to our faith, virtue; and

to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity." 2 Peter i. 5—7. There must be the capacity as well as the title to enjoy the privilege of the sons of God.

2. Regeneration accompanies adoption.

This is stated in the 13th verse, where believers are characterized as "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The description is negative and positive.

"Not of blood," *i. e.*, not by lineal generation. We are informed that the "life is in the blood;" (Lev. xvii. 11,) "for the blood maketh atonement for the soul," on the principle of life for life, as required by the divine law; and, as the conveyance of natural life is by the blood, we take this to be the import of the statement: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." A polluted nature is the inheritance transmitted to us from our parents; and to whatever extent a pious or a wicked parentage may influence our final destiny, as means under the administration of God for promoting his purposes, it is obvious that the statement before us is true: "which were born not of blood."

"Nor of the will of the flesh," *i. e.*, it is not the natural man's choice. The flesh or corrupt nature has a bias to what is evil; it resists, at every point, the agency engaged in effecting a transformation of nature. The origin and progress of this important moral change is independent of it. So true and full of meaning is our Saviour's address to his disciples: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

"Nor of the will of man," *i. e.*, however wishful any number of men may be, for the conversion of any of their fellows, it will be vain. The will of man does not secure the communication of the privilege. It is true, that if the people of God agree on any thing in accordance with the will of God, and earnestly seek after it, God will accomplish the desire of their hearts; but, it cannot be said that they are "born of the will of man," but by an almighty power which can alone cause the soul to "pass from death unto life,"

"But of God." How important! that "what is impossible with man, is possible with God. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. We are born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Those who are stout-hearted, and far from right-

ousness, have their stubborn hearts subdued, and are made nigh by the blood of the cross. The obstinate rebel is made willing, in the day of God's power, to renounce his allegiance to Satan, and to submit to the yoke of Christ. He is renewed in the spirit of his mind, which is enstamped with the lineaments of the divine image. A heavenly seed, which tends to produce all holy affections, is implanted in the heart, and thus, as adoption is the result of union to Christ, and union to Christ is effected by faith in his name, so faith is the fruit of regenerating grace; and thus is realized, in the history of every child of God, the interesting statement of the prophet Isaiah xlv. 2—5: "Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee, Fear not, O Jacob, my servant: and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

Thus you perceive that faith and regeneration are accompaniments of adoption, and uniformly go together. A necessary connexion is established between them, whereby the interests of holiness are fully maintained. The allegation, that the doctrine of free grace tends to licentiousness, is disproved. In receiving Christ, the precepts, as well as the doctrines, of the Gospel are acquiesced in. The faith of the Gospel "purifieth the heart." "The fruit is unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." The affection which is awakened in the soul by sonship, constrains the believer to live no longer to himself, but to Him who died for him and rose again. The injunction under which they are called to this glorious privilege is, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glo-

rious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 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. 11—14. Thus will the Christian bear the image of his Maker, and join the Apostle (1 Peter i. 3, 4) in singing, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." "For as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Amen.

NATIONAL SINS AND THEIR PUNISHMENT;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL, NORTH COLLEGE STREET, EDINBURGH, ON THE DAY APPOINTED BY HIS MAJESTY TO BE HELD AS NATIONAL FAST,

By the Rev. Dr. PATTERSON.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."—ISAIAH lix. 1, 2.

ALTHOUGH I consider that this passage had a primary application to the Jews in the days of good king Hezekiah, yet I am persuaded, my hearers, that it has a principal reference to the professing Church of Christ, and to that church in our own time. In proof of this, I need only call your attention to the position which this prophecy holds in a series of predictions which is contained in this book. In the 49th chapter and onwards to the end of the 8th verse of the 56th, you find a series of the most glorious predictions concerning the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God—the redemption which is by Christ Jesus, the preaching of the Gospel, the calling of the Gentiles, the triumphs and establishment of Christ's mediatorial kingdom in the world. But these triumphs were not to be completed at this time. They were to be arrested; the glory of the Church was to be tarnished by the superstitious inventions of men, by the reign and idolatries of anti-christ; and the Church herself was to be wasted by the persecution of the man of sin, and her purity to be marred by her unhallowed connexion with the kingdoms of this world, which would open the floodgates for rapacious wickedness and hypocrisy to enter. Now, it is to this state of things that the passage particularly refers. The triumphs of the ungodly were in their turn to come to an end; the Lord would come out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth

in the manner stated in the 16th, 17th, and 18th verses of the chapter from which our text is taken, and the happy result would be that which is stated in the three last verses of the chapter and onwards to the end of the book, where the glorious millennial state is portrayed in most sublime language. I need scarcely state to you that the period to which our text points is the second of the three to which I have now referred, viz., the time when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. But, blessed be God, that long, and dark, and cloudy day of the Church's affliction seems to be fast drawing to a close, and we already begin to hail the rise of a better, of a brighter, day to the Church of Christ than ever she has yet enjoyed; when the Church shall arise and shine, the glory of the Lord having arisen upon her.

But, again, I am disposed to ask if these things be so, whence is it that at present there is upon the earth such distress of nations and perplexity—men's hearts failing them for fear? whence is it that the scourge is passing through the breadth and length of the land?* and whence is it that the Church is at present at such a low ebb? If you would see these questions answered, you have only to turn to the words of the text. There you will see it plainly declared that the fault is not with God, but with us pro-

* Cholera prevailed at this time.

fessing people. He is both able and willing to heal, and save, and bless them; for, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." But the reason of the evils to which we have referred is to be found in ourselves. "But your iniquities," says he, "have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Now, my friends, if these things be so, surely it becomes us on this solemn occasion seriously to inquire what those sins are in his professing people, which, if there be any truth in my text, are the real cause of all the evils under which, as a nation and as churches, we are at present suffering, and of all the tremendous judgments with which we seem at present to be threatened. And, oh! while we proceed, let us look to the Spirit of all truth, that he may carry home conviction to every man; that he may show each of us what share he has in these things, and lead us all individually to confess and forsake the sins with which we are justly chargeable, that so we may find mercy of the Lord.

I observe, therefore, in the first place, that our national sins are one cause which has separated between us and our God, and has caused him to hide his face from us. By national sins, I mean the sins which characterize us as a people. It was to that pollution which prevailed among all classes of the people that the ancient prophets, in their most fervid paintings, and in their severest denunciations of the displeasure of the God of heaven, principally alluded.

In the 12th verse of the 56th chapter, you will find one of the sins to which I now refer thus described:—"Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." Now, it is well known that drunkenness is one of the vices to which the people of this country are particularly addicted; and it is especially the case among the middle and lower classes of society, where it prevails to a most alarming extent. It is the frightful parent of almost all our crimes, and it is the grand source of all that poverty and wretchedness which exist in the midst of us. Against this crime, God in his providence is manifesting his displeasure at this moment in a very signal manner, inasmuch as the drunkard, generally speaking, is the first to fall a victim to that dire malady with which he is visiting our land. By this dispensation he is saying, "Wo to the drunkard of Ephraim!

the drunkard of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot;" and the angel of destruction is treading them under foot in a most unparalleled manner at present.

The description is continued on from the 3d verse of the 57th chapter: "But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore. Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood, enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the clefts of the rocks? Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion; they, they are thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering; thou hast offered a meat-offering. Should I receive comfort in these?" The crimes which are here peculiarly alluded to are those of uncleanness and idolatry. And need I say to you, my hearers, that the first of these prevails among us in a dreadful degree? To be convinced of this, we have only to walk our streets, in the evenings, and observe what multitudes are lying in wait in every corner to ensnare. We have only to glance at our public prints to be convinced that it prevails to an awful extent among all classes of society in the land, from the highest to the lowest.

And, as to idolatry, we are very, very far, as a nation, from being guiltless. I need only remind you, that nearly one-third of our whole population belongs to the idolatrous Church of Rome, which teaches her votaries to pay divine adoration to the Virgin Mary and numerous canonized saints.

But I go on to observe, that, in the verses following the text, the Prophet sums up this black catalogue of national crimes: "For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity; they hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands." Can we as a people plead guiltless of these crimes? Have we not, as a nation, for a long series of years, been engaged in unnecessary and, consequently, unjust wars, in which large portions of innocent blood have

been shed? Do not prevarication and lying abound among us; and what injustice, what violence, has long been committed in our colonies, and especially towards the slave population of our West Indian possessions? And, oh! my brethren, let us think for a moment of the contempt of religion, the profanation of the Sabbath, and every thing sacred, and of the infidelity with which we are charged as a people.

I confine the few observations I wish to make on this particular to the prophecy before us. But surely enough has been said to show that God has just cause to contend with us; that our iniquities have, indeed, separated between us as a nation and our God, and that our multiplied sin has caused him to hide his face from us, so that he will not hear us; and these things, if not repented of speedily, must eventually call down on us the dire vengeance of heaven. "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation?" And, by another of his prophets, he tells us what the vengeance is we have to expect: "Son of man, when the land sinneth against me, by transgressing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness." And, again, "The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy; yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God."

Oh! my dear hearers, let me intreat you to lay these things seriously to heart. Let me earnestly beseech you this evening to consider what part you yourselves have in these national calamities; and let me beseech you, with Daniel, to seek the Lord God by prayer, and supplication, and fasting in sackcloth and ashes, and to confess your own sins and the sins of your people, and with him say, "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God."

But what I have principally in view is to direct your attention to the sins with which you are chargeable as a professing christian people; for, be assured, these are the most aggravated, and these are sins in which, individually, we have the deepest share; and the Prophet, in the passage before us, will furnish us with a long and black catalogue of these also. I, therefore, observe, in the second place, that the general prevalence of the form of godliness, without the power thereof, is another of the sins which have separated between us and our God. Be not surprised, my hearers, that I should mention this among the sins, and especially among the sins of God's professing people. The having the form of godliness is not in itself sinful, but the contrary; but the having the form without the power, oh! this is sin. It is nothing else than hypocrisy—foul hypocrisy. And of all evils, hypocrisy is the most abominable in the sight of the God of truth. Hypocrisy, to which our attention is directed this evening, was practised in the days of good king Hezekiah, when idolatry and irreligion were suppressed by law. This good man not only served the Lord himself with his whole house, but honoured those who did so, and exalted them to situations of trust and dignity in his kingdom. Religion, of course, became fashionable at court; and, in a very short time, became fashionable throughout the whole land. But with the greater part it was mere form. It was the fear of man more than the fear of God which dictated it; and, accordingly, you see in the beginning of the 58th chapter, that the Prophet is commanded to cry aloud and spare not; to lift up his voice like a trumpet; to show God's professing people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. And mark their character: "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul and thou takest no knowledge?" More could not be said of the great bulk of professors in our own land, and I verily fear not so much; yet, concerning this very people, God says, in my text, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." They were diligent in prayer. No doubt they made long prayers; they took delight in approaching to

God; they often fasted in sackcloth and ashes, afflicting their souls before him. But God took no notice of them. They regarded iniquity in their hearts, and, therefore, he would not hear.

And, my friends, is not this description but too applicable to professors in our own country? Of the millions among whom we live, who seek after the ordinances of God, and who could not be happy were they not admitted to the enjoyment of the ordinances, how comparatively few are they who are the genuine disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ! This evil is to be traced to the constitution of the churches among us. In our national churches, for example, all and sundry are admitted to what are called the sealing ordinances of the Church; it matters not what their characters be, if they do not happen to be lying under what is called public scandal. This, no doubt, is partly owing to the carelessness of church officers; but it is also to be ascribed to the ministers themselves, not refusing any of their parishioners the privileges of the Church. The living in a certain district of country is the only thing requisite to church membership; and I am sorry to be obliged to add, that the same evil exists, although not exactly to the same extent, or occasioned by the same causes, in many of our dissenting churches. Among the causes to which this is owing, is the spirit of a particular interest; and, in some places, the only requisite for church membership is their paying seat-rent. The more members, the more contributors; and there are but few, I fear, who would refuse a man of any respectable standing in society, who had any semblance of moral character, simply on the ground of his giving no evidence of being born of God. Thus the temple of God is defiled; the ordinances of his house are abased for the worst of purposes; men are hardened in their sins, and encouraged in their self-deceivings, and the men of the world have false representations given them of the holy religion of Jesus. Such persons will bring the curse of God upon their country. I consider this promiscuous communion as being the bane of religion among us, and as being the cause, the true cause, why so little good is effected by the preaching of the Gospel. By the system to which I have referred, all are taught to believe that they are good Christians. Their ministers may preach the Gospel faithfully; they may address the consciences of the unconverted; they may warn the careless; they may call on sinners to repent and believe the Gospel; but all

their addresses, all their warnings, all their invitations, fall pointless on the ears of their hearers. There are few individuals present who think these matters are applicable to them; they may apply to others; but, as to them, they are good enough Christians already. Now, my friends, this evil lies like a dead weight upon God's own people. It prevents their united prayers from being heard, and grieves the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God being grieved, this evil is attended with the awful consequence of separating between us and our God.

But I observe, in the third place, that worldly-mindedness in the professors of religion, is another of the evils to which the prophet here refers. And this is the case, not only as it regards the mere formalist, but, I fear much, that it has become the besetting sin of God's own people themselves. It has crept in among us by small degrees, and at present it is eating out the very vitals of religion in our churches, in our families, and in our own souls. The prophet in the passage with which my text is connected, brings home this charge against the professing people of God—against both priest and people. In the 10th verse of the 56th chapter, you find him addressing the teachers of religion in this very striking language: "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." Alas! my friends, the application is not difficult to multitudes of the clergy in the three united kingdoms. How many are there among them who have said, Put us into the priest's office, we pray you, that we may eat a piece of bread, who from ignorance cannot, or from slothfulness will not preach unto the people the pure unadulterated Gospel of Christ? They are asleep and only dreaming of worldly emoluments and pleasures, when they should be preaching and praying; but they are awake and keep a sharp out-look when the question is of filthy lucre. They know well enough how to fleece the sheep, but not how to feed the flock. "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land: the prophets

prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" And such priests such people. The people will always be ready to imitate the rapaciousness of their teachers and of their rulers; and, accordingly, God addresses them in the 17th verse of the 57th chapter, saying, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." The covetousness here condemned, is connected with iniquity and oppression. For this God had smitten his ancient people: he had hid his face from them. But, instead of repenting of their wickedness and saying, What have we done? they went on frowardly in the way of their own hearts. And is it not even so among us? Do we not see christian men not only not labouring as they ought, to do things honest in the sight of all men, but toiling, and grasping, and speculating? The world fills their heads and their hearts, and leaves no room for religion. And even while engaged in the solemnities of religion their heart is still going after its covetousness. They are still planning and still getting; and, if successful in business, instead of giving to him who needeth, or doing good, and being ready to distribute and willing to communicate, they lay up for themselves treasure against some future day. What they spend they spend upon themselves and their pleasures, but they have nothing to spare for Christ and his cause; their treasure is upon earth, and their hearts are there also. Oh! let me intreat you, my hearers, to lay to heart how far these observations are applicable to you individually, and let me earnestly intreat you to beware, when God is at this moment smiting us as a nation for our sins, in the want of commerce, and in the want of employment for the poor of our people; to beware, I say, of going on any longer frowardly in this way of your own hearts.

But I observe, in the fourth place, that conformity to the world is another evil which is condemned by God in the passage to which our attention is now directed. And listen to God bringing this charge against his professing people in the 9th verse of the 57th chapter. "And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell." Now that any of the professors of religion should have been guilty of the sin that is here particularly referred to, was exceedingly criminal in the

sight of God. Their imitating the men of the world in this thing was, in fact, debasing themselves even unto hell. Nor was it only on ordinary occasions that they did so, but we find them charged with this conformity to the world even in their most solemn assemblies, for we find God saying in the 3d verse of the 58th chapter, "Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours." And, oh! how many have been finding their pleasure on this day? If there be one commandment more binding upon the professed disciples of our Lord than another, it is, "Be ye not conformed to this world;" and yet the great bulk of professors seem to live in the negative of this, as if the Apostle had said, Be ye conformed to it. And, accordingly, we find that this is the very ruin of religion in our country. The men of the world in this country are so exceedingly polite and good natured, that they very willingly meet Christians half-way, and find no fault with religion provided it does not interfere with their pursuits and pleasures. And professing Christians seem to think they should meet the men of the world the other half of the way, to go with them into their pleasures, and go with them as far as they can to preserve some degree of consistency. Thus there is a complete amalgamation between the Church and the world; and this has not only a most pernicious influence on the Christian in deadening the power of godliness in his soul, but, oh! it proves most ruinous to the men of the world. It leads them to think that they are not so wrong after all, and that although they live as they list, all shall be well with them at last. And need I say to you what its pernicious effects are on the rising generation, and even on the children of Christians themselves? The same spirit which leads the parents to conform to the world, leads them early to initiate their children into pleasure—into the spirit and practice of the world. And, accordingly, the great bulk of professors are more anxious to see their children making what they call a respectable figure in the world, than to see them walking in the truth, and adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. This kind of training being so congenial to the corrupt minds of youth, is it wonderful that you should see the rising generation growing up lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God? And I appeal to you if religion can prosper among us while these things are so? It is impossible. These things must infallibly separate between us and our

God, and cause him to hide his face from us.

I observe, in the fifth place, that unbelief is another evil here pointed out. God, by his prophet, in the end of the preceding chapter, had promised, that if his people repented and brought forth fruits meet for repentance, and would pray for their deliverance, he would restore them to their former prosperity both temporal and spiritual; he would make them as a well-watered garden, and like "a spring of water whose waters fail not." But they did not believe. They either thought that God could not or would not hear their prayers for deliverance; and, accordingly, the prophet is commanded in the text to tell them, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." He evidently here reminds them of what God had wrought for them as a people and church in former times—in the days of old; and assures them that God was as able and willing to do as great things for them now as he had done for their fathers then. But unbelief was the besetting sin of the Jewish people, and has been from the first period of their history unto the present day. Oh! how often did they provoke God in the wilderness, and speak against the most High, saying, "He who smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? can he furnish a table in the wilderness?" Thus they grieved God; thus they tempted the Most High; and he was grieved with them forty years, so that he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. And unbelief has for these eighteen hundred years past caused God to reject them and to cast them out to this day. And is not unbelief the besetting sin of Christians now in our country? If they believe the great things God did for his people in former ages, they think God cannot or will not do the same great things for them now. They will not in so many words call in question the truth of God's promises, but unbelief prevents them from laying hold of these promises. Oh! how few are there among us who really consistently believe that God, if he choose, could at once deliver us from all the evils under which as a nation we are labouring at this moment; that he could, for example, in a moment command the destroying angel to put the sword into its sheath; command the plague to be staid; heal the people, and banish the pestilence from all our borders? And, then, as it

respects a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—a revival of religion in the midst of us while the Word of the Lord shall run and be glorified; as it respects this greatest of all blessings—this which is the only cure for all the evils under which as a people we are labouring, how slow of heart are we to believe all that the prophets and Apostles have told! If we have not forgotten what God did for his Church in former ages, how he poured out his spirit so abundantly upon them that they were literally filled with the Holy Ghost, and the whole multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul, and great grace was upon them all; and of those who believed not, thousands were converted and added to the Lord in one day; I say, if we remember these things only as a tale that has been told us, but do not consider them in the light of a specimen of what God can do, and will do again for his believing Church and people; then we do not confidently expect such a manifestation of his power to save his people, in our times and in our churches. I appeal to you, my brethren, if this is not correct; and I ask you if you are longing for it; if you are praying for it; if you are confidently expecting such a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord as that I have been now referring to. I fear you are not; and yet none of you dare say that the Lord's hand is shortened, that he cannot save now in the same manner and to the same extent that he saved then. The residue of the spirit is still with him, and the spirit of the Lord is not straitened more now than it was then. My friends, were this place of worship five times larger than it really is, and were it filled from one end to the other with the enemies of the Gospel, there is power enough in the arm of Jehovah to make all the rebels submit to the obedience of faith by one sermon and in one hour. Were his blessing vouchsafed there is preaching enough and Bible enough in this city to convert every sinner in it to the obedience of Christ in a single day. And when the Lord shall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all nations, then shall all ends of the earth see his salvation, for the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. Oh! let this consideration, then, stir us up more earnestly to desire and pray for such a manifestation of divine power among us. His ear is not heavy that he cannot hear. If our prayers are not efficacious for the revival of religion, know that the reason is that our iniquities have separated between us and our God.

But the great searcher of hearts knows that the great body of professing Christians in this country so far from desiring such a revival of religion among them as that I have been referring to, dread it. They know well that it would interfere with all their pursuits and with all their plans. They know that a day of Pentecost among us would turn things upside down. This, my brethren, ought not so to be.

But I would mention, in the last place, and barely mention, that another of the sins that separate between us and our Lord is want of zeal in his cause. If there be one commandment more binding on the disciples of the Lord Jesus than another, surely it must be the last, the very last, commandment he delivered to his own disciples while here on earth; and that was, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." But, alas! alas! how is it neglected, how is it disobeyed by the professed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ! and, in disobeying this commandment, they show their want of love to God and their want of love to their fellow-men; they are transgressors of the whole law, and are multiplying those sins which cause God to hide his face from his people that he will not hear them.

My dear friends, let us for a moment think how negligent we ourselves have been in this respect. We are surrounded by thousands of immortal souls on every hand who are perishing for lack of knowledge, but what are we doing to instruct and to save them? And, then, in other parts of the world, there are hundreds of thousands who have never heard of Jesus; and how few have we sent forth among them to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ? It is some consolation that the people of this country are more actively engaged in this way than a few years ago they were. But alas! what is the mighty amount of all they are yet doing in comparison of what they might do; and, considering their privileges and means, what they ought to do? Oh! my dear friends, let us seriously attend to the complaint implied in these words of the Prophet, in the 16th verse of this chapter, when he says, "And he saw that there was

no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor." He saw that there was none who would plead with God for man—and he tells us that in spite of our unbelief, our unwillingness, our want of zeal for his glory and the good of our fellow-men, he would do his own work of mercy; but in the way of judgment, if they repented not; and, therefore, it is added, "Therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak." And we know that this pestilence which has visited our land is that instrument of vengeance to perform his work, his strange work, which is described in the next verse: "According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies: to the islands he will repay recompense." And if so, then what follows in the next two verses following in its train? "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of sun: when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord." And then we shall be saved.

Thus, my friends, I have mentioned a few, and but a few, of those sins which we conceive have separated between us as a nation, and as a professing people and our God, and caused him to hide his face from us that he will not hear. Oh! let us be humbled before him; let us, my dear christian friends, confess our sins; let us put them away by repentance; let us honour him and he will honour us; and let us be firmly persuaded, in our own minds, that he is both able and willing to do infinitely more and abundantly above all we can ask or think according to the power of his Spirit that worketh in us, and then we shall see that "his hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear." May the Lord bless his Word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. DAVID SIMPSON, A.M., Aberdeen.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN DUNCAN, Glasgow.

CHILDREN URGED TO BECOME THE LAMBS OF CHRIST'S FLOCK ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN GILCOMSTON CHURCH, ABERDEEN, ON TUESDAY, 8th JULY, 1834,
TO THE CHILDREN ATTENDING THE SCHOOLS OF THE GILCOMSTON GRATIS
SABBATH EVENING SCHOOL SOCIETY, AND PUBLISHED IN THE "PULPIT,"
AT THE REQUEST OF THAT SOCIETY,

By the Rev. DAVID SIMPSON, A.M.,
Minister of Trinity Church, Aberdeen.

" He saith unto him, Feed my lambs."—JOHN xxi. 15.

My dear children, you are all, I suppose, acquainted with the history of the apostle Peter, as it is related in the New Testament. You know that, though he loved Jesus sincerely, he had too high an opinion of himself, and was so confident in his own strength, that he declared, in the most vehement manner, that, though all men should deny him, he should never deny him, and that he was ready to go to prison and to death for his sake. Now, Peter really had a very great affection for Jesus, and when he spoke in this way, he spoke just as he thought and felt at the time ; but he did not know how weak he was in himself, and how unable to resist temptation, without the help of God's Spirit.

And, perhaps, there are some little boys and girls here this evening who are like Peter in this respect—who, when they see or hear of the great wickedness of other children, are very much shocked, and think they can never be guilty of acting in the same manner. Now, it is very proper that you should be shocked when you hear of young people who never pray to God, but who curse and swear, and steal and lie, and break the Sabbath, and are, perhaps, put into Bridewell for their evil doings, and it is very proper that you should resolve never

to follow their bad example ; but, then, you must not think that you are so good, that you can never do any of these things, but you must pray to God that he would keep you from sinning against him—that he would give you strength to resist those who entice you to do that which is wrong, and to enable you always to do that which is right. You know that when the prophet Elisha told Hazael of some of the cruel and wicked actions which he was afterwards to do, he was greatly offended that he should be thought capable of doing such things, and said to the Prophet, with great indignation, " Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing ? " And yet he was afterwards guilty of all these abominable actions. We do not know how great sins we may commit, if we are left to ourselves, if we are exposed to temptation, and if we fall into bad company.

In proof of what I have been saying, I will tell you a true and very sad story which some of you, perhaps, may have heard or read before :—A poor boy, who was in the Sabbath school at Stockport, in England, behaved so well and learned so fast, that he was set to teach the younger boys to read. About this time his father died, and his mother, being a poor woman, was obliged to send her son to a cotton factory, that he

might work or his living. At the factory he became acquainted with wicked boys, and soon began to copy their bad example. He forgot the good advice which his teachers had given him in the school; and, having thrown off the fear of God, he became a drunkard and a thief. Then he enlisted into the army, and was sent, with many other soldiers, into Spain, where he behaved very cruelly to the unoffending inhabitants. In the army he found plenty of bad companions, and grew more and more wicked. When the Spanish war was over, he and his companions came back to England. They landed on the coast of Hampshire, but not liking to get an honest livelihood by working, they took to stealing. They broke open several houses, but at last this young man was taken up and put in prison. Soon afterwards he was tried, found guilty, condemned, and hung on a gallows. Now, if this boy had been told when he was at school, and very diligent and attentive, that he would afterwards be so very wicked, and come to so disgraceful an end, he would probably have been very angry, and said positively that he would never do such things; and had he done so, it would only have shown that he was very ignorant how very wicked a heart he had by nature, and how very soon he might be led astray by the temptations of vicious companions. But had he prayed to God for his grace, and carefully shunned bad company, and read his Bible and other good books, he would have lived and died in a much more creditable and happy manner than he did. Even the best of men, if they do not watch over their own hearts, and pray for divine grace to help them, are sometimes allowed to commit great sins, in order to teach them not to depend on themselves, but on God. You know that Abraham, though he was called the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, was once guilty of gross dissimulation, in pretending that Sarah was only his sister and not his wife; and Jacob, though he was a very good man, told a lie to his father Isaac; and David, though styled the man after God's own heart, sinned very grievously and brought upon himself much bitter anguish of mind, and many dreadful calamities. Peter also, you know, was very confident in his own strength; and even when his Lord assured him that, before the cock crew twice, he should deny him thrice, he spoke the more vehemently, saying, "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee

in any wise." But how soon did Peter forget all these strong declarations and resolutions when he was brought to the trial! After Jesus was apprehended by his enemies, and led away to the palace of the High Priest, Peter lost all his courage and became a complete coward. He was afraid to be thought a disciple of Jesus, lest he also should be brought to trial before the judges of the country, and condemned to some severe punishment; and, therefore, when a young woman charged him with being one of the followers of Jesus, he asserted flatly that he was not, and three times repeated the same thing to different persons, declaring that he did not even *know* the man. Now, what was it that made Peter thus shamefully disown his Lord? It was the fear of suffering. But he ought to have been much more afraid of sinning; and he was afterwards fully convinced of this himself. Had he been faithful to his Lord in this hour of temptation, he would have enjoyed his Lord's approbation, and the testimony of a good conscience; and though he had been put into prison, or even killed for thus honouring Christ, he would not have suffered nearly so much pain as he afterwards did from the anguish of a wounded conscience; for, when he thought of his base conduct, he was exceedingly ashamed of it, and went out and wept bitterly. We should then never venture to sin in order to avoid suffering; for, if we do so, we shall certainly suffer much more in the end than if we had been obedient to God.

Perhaps, you may think you are in no danger of denying Christ as Peter did; but this is not the case. Some of you, I have no doubt, profess to love Christ and to honour Christ. Now, suppose you were in the company of some very wicked children who, you knew, would laugh at you, and mock you, and beat you, if you professed to have any regard to the Saviour, and that in order to please them, and to avoid being treated by them in this way, you said to them that you did not care about religion, and that, in order to give them a proof of it, you joined them in using bad language, and doing bad actions; would not this be just to do what Peter did—to deny your Lord for fear of suffering? Yes, indeed, it would; and I must tell you what Christ says about those who deny him in this way: "Whosoever denieth me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." You know the story of Shadrach,

Meshaeh, and Abednego, related in the Book of Daniel. How much more notable did they act than Peter on this occasion! When they were commanded by Nebuchadnezzar to worship a golden image which he had set up, they positively refused to do so, though he threatened that he would cast them into a burning fiery furnace if they did not obey. And why did they refuse to obey the command of so great a king? Because they knew it was sinful to worship graven images, and because they thought it right to obey God rather than man, and were more afraid of sinning than of suffering. Nebuchadnezzar was greatly enraged at them for not falling down and worshipping his golden image, and ordered them to be thrown into a burning fiery furnace. But God, who can always save those who trust in him, wrought a miracle for their preservation, and they walked through the fire without being in the least hurt by it, and came out of the furnace without so much as the smell of fire upon their raiment. Now, if Peter had honestly acknowledged his Lord, and trusted in God to protect him, it would have fared far better with him, and his fall would not have been held forth as a warning to all "who think of themselves more highly than they ought to think."

Well, what happened to him after thus shamefully denying Christ? Did he continue to deny him? Oh! no. He was soon brought to very deep repentance. We are told by Luke, that after Peter had denied his Lord for the third time, in the hall of the High Priest's house, Jesus, who had probably been brought in for a little without his knowing it, turned and looked upon Peter. And, oh! there was much in that look, children; it pierced Peter to the heart. It was a look which expressed strong disapprobation of his conduct. It was as if he had said to him, "O Peter, dost thou thus disown me in the time of danger; *thou* who didst lately profess the strongest attachment to me, and declare most solemnly that thou wast ready to go to prison and to death with me? What, then, am I to expect from others, if *thou* art thus ashamed of me?" But it was also a look of pity, and kindness, and compassion, which said to him, "Thou hast, indeed, sinned and done very wickedly, but I freely forgive thee, and am going to shed my blood for this and all thy other transgressions." This look melted Peter's heart. He could no longer restrain his tears, but went out and wept bitterly.

He was exceedingly grieved for the dishonour which he had done to his Lord, who had always been so kind to him. In short, he became a true penitent, and his sin, which was great, was forgiven him, and he was restored to the favour of his Master. But though Christ, after his resurrection, spoke to him in the kindest manner, and assured him of his forgiveness, yet he thought proper to remind him of his sin in a very tender and affecting way, as we are informed in the passage in which my text lies. He had thrice denied his Lord, and, therefore, Christ asked him thrice, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter was grieved because he asked him this question the third time, as it seemed to imply that Christ was suspicious of the reality of his affection to him. But this was calculated to have a very good effect on Peter's mind, and to make him more humble in future. When our Lord asked him the first time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me," he answered, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Our Lord *did* know it, but he required him to give a proof of it. "He saith to him, Feed my lambs."

You will, perhaps, now ask me, Who are Christ's lambs, and what is meant by feeding them? And I will endeavour to tell you. Christ's people, that is, those who believe in Christ, who love Christ, and who obey Christ, are frequently in Scripture called his sheep, and he himself is called their Shepherd. As the shepherd leads his flock to the green pastures and the refreshing streams, and watches over them, and defends them against all their enemies, who would devour them, so the Lord Jesus nourishes the souls of his people by the truths of his Word, and guards them against every danger. Now, those who have lately become Christians, or those Christians who are young in years are called the lambs of his flock, and to feed them, means to instruct them in the knowledge of divine things; to exercise a tender care over them to preserve them from those who would hurt them, and to warn them against the dangers and temptations to which they are exposed.

This, then, is what our Lord commanded Peter to do at this time, as an evidence of his love to him—to teach his young disciples about their souls, and the way in which they might be saved, and kindly to watch over them, and to do them all the good in his power. And never did Peter

forget this command of his Lord, but diligently and cheerfully obeyed it during his whole life. He never ceased to feed Christ's lambs and Christ's sheep till the day of his death; and when he was going to leave the world, he earnestly exhorted all the other ministers of Christ to do the same, as you will find in 1 Peter v. 2. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof."

Such, then, was the charge which Jesus gave to Peter after he had forgiven his sin, and received him into favour. And was it not very kind in Jesus to enjoin Peter to take care of the lambs of his flock—of his young disciples? Yes, it was very kind. But Christ has done something for them that was far kinder than that. He loved those lambs so much, that he came down from heaven, and became a man, though he was God's own Son, and lived in hardship and poverty, and died a shameful and painful death, that he might deliver them from Satan, and make them happy for ever in his presence in heaven. You know that Christ was infinitely glorious and happy before he came into this world; but such were his pity and love to poor perishing sinners, that he bore the punishment due to their sins in his own body on the tree. Hence Christ says of himself, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep," and for the lambs; too. He is, indeed, the good shepherd. No such shepherd was ever heard of as he for he has done such things for his sheep and lambs as fill heaven and earth with the deepest astonishment. You greatly admire the conduct of David, who boldly followed a lion that had taken a lamb out of his flock and attacked him, and slew him, and delivered the lamb out of his mouth. That was indeed, a brave and generous action; and David's flock must have been very happy and secure with such a shepherd. But Christ did something for his flock far more wonderful than this. He not only exposed his life to danger, as David did, but he actually laid it down for their sakes. You know that Satan, the wicked one, is represented in Scripture as a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour. We were, in our natural state, liable to be torn to pieces by this fierce and savage lion, and none could deliver us from him but Christ; and he could do this only by dying in our stead, and bearing the punishment which we deserved. But Christ did this most

cheerfully out of the great love wherewith he loved his flock. If you were in great danger at any time of being burned to death, would you not very much admire and love the person who would risk his own life to save yours, or who actually lost his life in kindly attempting to snatch you from destruction?

The following is a very affecting instance of this nature:—Some time ago, a house in a village near London caught fire in the night, and was burned down. The family who lived in the house were alarmed, and most of them were got safe out, when the father remembered that his dear little child was in bed up stairs in the house that was burning. How shocking to think of! How the father pitied the child, when he thought the child in danger of being burned to death! How full of sorrow and grief he was for his dear child! But what was to be done? He could not bear to think that his child should be burnt to death, and yet it was dangerous for anybody to go into the house, because it was on fire, and he knew that if he went up to the house, he might be burned to death himself. However, he loved and pitied his child so much, that he determined, if he could, to save its life. So he ventured and ran up stairs through the fire and smoke. He searched about for his dear child, but it was not to be found; for somebody else had taken care of it, and had carried it out safe. But how shall the good man get out of the burning house himself? He went back to the top of the stairs, but, by that time, the fire had become more furious; the stairs were burnt, and had tumbled down, and there was no other way to get out. Very sorry I am to tell you, and I am sure you will be sorry to hear it, that this kind, tender-hearted father was burnt to death.

Now, must not this father have loved his little child very much, before he could have rushed into the flames, and lost his life, in order to rescue it? And surely this child should have had a very strong affection for so very kind a father during its whole life. But Jesus has been much kinder to you than any earthly parent can be; for though he was the Great God that made heaven and earth, yet he descended from heaven and became a babe in the manger at Bethlehem, and endured the fire of God's wrath, in which you must have been burning for ever, if he had not borne it. And though he has gone back to heaven, where he was

before, and reigns on a glorious throne, yet he has still as kind a heart as ever, and he loves his lambs as dearly as ever, and he is as much concerned for their happiness as ever. And there is not a boy or a girl here this night that Christ does not wish to become one of the lambs of his flock, and to whom he is not willing to show as much kindness as ever he did to any one of his lambs. You know what he said on earth when his disciples would have hindered little children from being brought to him. He was much displeased with them for doing so, and said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Yes, children, the Lord Jesus Christ, though he dwells in heaven, clothed with unutterable majesty and glory, and though he be surrounded with ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels, who are always praising him, and though he be far more happy than it is possible for us to conceive, yet he is looking down upon every one of you here present, and saying to you, "Wilt thou be one of my lambs? I will feed thee, and cherish thee, and preserve thee, and bless thee, and make thee happy with me in heaven for ever." Now, my dear children, what do you say to this question which the Lord Jesus is asking you this night? Is any one of you saying, No; I will not become one of Christ's lambs: I will rather be one of the Devil's goats? You must, indeed, be the one or the other; but I beg of you to consider what is to become of the Devil's goats at the last day. They shall be put on the left hand of the Judge, and this shall be their sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But how different will be his language to his own sheep and his own lambs, whom he will place on his right hand, and to whom he will say, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." I hope therefore, that all of you are like a very young girl of whom I have read, who, being asked by a minister what she was thinking of, when she heard him preaching on that beautiful text, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs in his arms," &c., gave him this very excellent answer: "Truly," said she, "I was all the time earnestly wishing that I were one of Christ's lambs."

Now, if this be the case, you will, per-

naps, ask me, or at least you ought to ask me three questions: 1st. How may we become Christ's lambs? 2d. What will Christ do for us if we become his lambs? And 3d. What should we do for Christ, or, in other words, what should be our dispositions and conduct if we become Christ's lambs? In the remaining part of this sermon, I shall try to answer these three questions to you, and I hope you will be very attentive, and endeavour to understand and remember both the questions and the answers.

The *first* question I suppose you to ask me is this: How may we become Christ's lambs?

Now, I must tell you that this is not your state by nature. You all have sinful and wicked hearts, and you have all done sinful and wicked actions. What does the Bible say about this? It assures us "that our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God; that there is none righteous, no, not one; and that, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." And do you not feel that what the Bible tells you is true? Do you not feel an inclination within you to do that which is wrong, and which God has forbidden? and have you not often done those things which you knew to be wrong and displeasing to God? There is not a boy or a girl here this night who can say with truth, "I have never sinned against God;" and if any of you think he can say it, he must be exceedingly ignorant. If your hearts were right with God, you would always love him more than any thing else in the world; you would always delight to praise him and to obey him, and you would never feel any wish to do any thing which might be offensive to him; and you would be always affectionate and dutiful to your parents, and pleasant and kind to every one. But there is not a person on earth who has always done those things which he ought to have done.

Now, what do you deserve on account of your sins? Your catechism tells you that "every sin deserveth God's wrath: and curse both in this world and in the world to come;" that is, you deserve to be cast into hell and to be miserable there for ever and ever. Now, is not this very dreadful? You think it very hard to suffer severe pain for a few days; but though you were to suffer it for your whole life, or even for

millions of millions of years, it would be nothing in comparison with suffering it for ever. Now, if God had not pitied you, and sent his Son to save you, this must have been the wretched state of every one of you through all eternity. Well, what did Christ do in order to deliver you? He just did what you ought to have done, and suffered what you ought to have suffered; that is, he obeyed God's law perfectly, and he endured the punishment to which you were liable for breaking it. God the Father put him in your room and stead, and he declares, that for the sake of what he has done and suffered on your account, he is willing to forgive your sins, and save your souls. Now, the instant you believe that God is so kind and gracious as he says he is, and trust in his mercy through Christ for salvation, that instant you become one of Christ's lambs. You then have faith in him; and the Scriptures tell us, that every one who believes or has faith in Christ, shall be saved.

I am very anxious that you should understand this, for it is a thing of very great importance; and, in order to help you to understand it, I shall suppose that one of you has committed a very great fault against your father, for which he has threatened to punish you very severely. You know that you deserve this punishment, but being much afraid of it you leave the house, or try to hide yourself from your offended father. I shall suppose that your father is very kind, and very willing to forgive you, if he knew how to do it without injuring his authority, or encouraging yourself or any of the other branches of the family to offend him in future. Well, a person whom your father very much esteems and loves, and who pities you very much, agrees to do and to suffer any thing which your father requires in order to restore you to favour; and a messenger is sent to tell you this good news, and to assure you that your father demands nothing of you but to believe his word, to come and confess your sin, and to receive his forgiveness: if you believed his word and came to him in obedience to his command, then would you be restored to his favour, and be again very happy; and you would love both your father who was so willing to be reconciled to you, and the kind friend who put himself in your room, and did what you ought to have done, and suffered what you ought to have suffered. But if you would not believe that your

father would treat you so kindly, and were still suspicious that he would punish you, or if you preferred continuing in your present state of estrangement from him, and therefore refused to come into his presence, and confess your guilt, and ask the pardon which he offered to you, he would be more angry with you than he was at first, for this would show that you had a very mean opinion of him, and that you thought he would not keep his word.

Now, I hope you have some idea of what is meant by believing in Christ, for that is the thing which is necessary to make you Christ's lambs. You have all sinned against God, and he is, therefore, angry with you; but not being willing that you should perish for ever, he sent his Son into the world to save you. And the Lord Jesus was wounded for your transgressions, and bruised for your iniquities; and God tells you, that he is ready for his sake to receive every one of you that applies to him for salvation. Now, if you wish to become Christ's lambs, you must believe God's word when he tells you that you deserve to be cast into hell on account of your sins; and you must believe God's word when he tells you that he is willing, for Christ's sake, to forgive your sins, and to make you happy for ever; and you must acknowledge your transgressions, and implore his mercy, and give yourselves up entirely to him, that he may save you in his own way. You must be sorry for having offended so kind a father, and, depending on his grace, you must resolve to offend him no more. On your bended knees, and from your very heart, you must use some such language as this:—"O Lord, I have often sinned against thee, and deserve to be miserable for ever. But thou hast told me in thy Word, that thou art willing to save me for the sake of thy dear Son. O Lord, give me a new heart, that I may believe thy Word and do thy will. Thou art saying to me, my son, my daughter, give me thine heart. Oh! make me willing to give my affections to thee, that I may love thee with my whole heart, and serve thee sincerely during my whole life. O Lord, I trust in thy mercy, and humbly hope that thou wilt receive me graciously, and love me freely."

If you were in this way to pray to God, then you would become Christ's lambs. Now, do you think you understand this? I do not know whether you understand it or not, but I am going to tell you of a little

boy who understood it very well. This little boy, clad in patched and thread-bare garments, came one day to a minister's door, and told the servant that he had heard that her master gave away little books, and that he hoped he would be so good as to give him one. The minister then came to the door, and was instantly taken with his appearance. The following dialogue then passed between them :—

Minister. You ask me for a book; but perhaps you are hungry, and would rather have some breakfast.

Boy. No, Sir, I thank you; I have had a good breakfast given me by a kind lady; I should be glad if you would give me a book.

Minister. But you are poor, my boy; would you not be better pleased with some money?

Boy. No, Sir; money is but vanity, I should like a book better.

Minister. Why is it that you so much desire a good book?

Boy. Good books teach me about God, and the way to heaven.

Minister. And what is the way to heaven?

Boy. It is by praying to God to make me good, and by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ who died for sinners.

Minister. Why do you think that God will hear you when you pray to him? Do you deserve to go to heaven?

Boy. No; none of us deserve to go to heaven. We are all too sinful for that. But I hope that God will hear my prayers and forgive me, because he has said he will.

Now this boy was one of Christ's lambs; and if you pray to God and trust in Christ like him, you will also become Christ's lambs. But I must tell you, you will never be saved merely by hearing about Christ. You must pray to him, and believe in him; you must know that if a person were starving with hunger, it would not satisfy him to know that there was plenty of meat on the table, unless he went and eat it. And in the same way, if a man were sick and ready to die, he would not be cured merely by knowing that there was a medicine which had virtue to restore him to health. No; he must send for the medicine, and he must take it in the way that is prescribed to him. Many perish for ever who know a great deal about Christ, but who never sincerely applied to him for mercy. And would it not be very awful if any of you were to live and die without a share in the blessings of

his salvation? I hope none of you will go to bed this night without earnestly praying that you may become Christ's lambs. And, oh! how happy would you be, if you belonged to his little flock!

But this reminds me of the *second* question which I suppose you to ask me, namely, What will Christ do to us if we become his lambs?

1st. If you are Christ's lambs, he will provide for you every thing that you need both for time and eternity; that is, he will give you every thing that he knows to be good for you. You know it is the duty of a good shepherd to provide pasture for his sheep and his lambs, without which they would die, as they could not provide it for themselves. In like manner the Lord Jesus provides food both for the bodies and souls of his people. David was fully persuaded of this when he said, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Now, if you are Christ's lambs, you also may say with the sweet singer of Israel, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Though you should be very poor in this world, and though both your parents should leave you, the Lord will take you up, and he will dispose some people to be kind to you. There is no want to them that fear the Lord; for "he will give both grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Christ has every thing in the universe at his disposal; he has the hearts of all men in his hand, and, therefore, he will not withhold from those whom he loves, any thing which he knows to be good for them.

2d. If you are Christ's lambs, he will take the greatest care of you, and defend you against every danger, and every enemy to which you may be exposed. You know that it is the duty of a shepherd to watch over his flock, that they may not wander from the pasture or from the fold, and that they may not be attacked by the wolf, or any other savage beasts that wish to make them their prey. And as the lambs of Christ's flock are peculiarly weak and helpless, he thinks it necessary to take peculiar care of them. Now, the Lord Jesus will in like manner preserve you from the evils to which you are liable. Satan is an enemy to Christ's lambs, and he would tear them to pieces if he were allowed. Wicked men and wicked children are enemies to Christ's lambs; and they wish to do them all the harm they can. And hence they laugh at

them for being religious, and they try to entice them to commit sin and to join with them in their wicked practices. And these attempts are the more dangerous, because even those who believe in Christ and love him are not completely free from sinful inclinations, and, therefore, they sometimes yield to such temptations. Now, if the Lord Jesus did not continually defend you, you would certainly be conquered by some of these dangerous enemies. But his eye is continually upon you; his ear is ever open to your cry, and his arm is always stretched out for your protection.

Now, is it not delightful to know that you have such a Shepherd as Jesus to defend you, one who is everywhere present, who perfectly knows your situation at all times, who regards you with the greatest affection, and who has almighty power to deliver you.

3d. If you are Christ's lambs, he will guide you in peace and safety through the valley and shadow of death. You know, my young friends, that you must all die, and none of you know but you may die very soon. Now it is natural for young people, and even for old people to be afraid to die. They think it a very awful thing for their bodies to become corpses, pale, and cold, and stiff, and motionless, and then to be buried in the grave and become the food of worms. But they know it is still more awful for their souls to appear before their Judge, to give an account of what they have been doing in this world. Now, it is because their consciences tell them that they have sinned against God, and deserve his wrath, that they are so much afraid to leave this world. If their sins were all forgiven for Christ's sake, and if they were in a state of favour with God, they would not have the least reason to be afraid of death, unless it were for the bodily pains which go before it. Now, if you are Christ's lambs your sins are forgiven you for Christ's sake; and, therefore, in your ease the sting of death is taken away, for we are told that the sting of death is sin. A serpent is a very dreadful animal when armed with its sting, and with its poisonous fangs; but when it is deprived of these, it has no power to hurt us. The very look of the animal, indeed, may sometimes terrify us; but when its sting and its fangs have been taken away, it cannot do us any injury. So Christ's sheep, and Christ's lambs, being very timid creatures, are sometimes afraid

of the very appearance of the monster death, even though he has been deprived of his sting; but these fears Christ will in his good time remove. Hence David sings so beautifully and affectingly in the 23d Psalm, "Yea, though I walk through the valley and shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." As doubts, and fears, and terrors, are apt to seize upon those who are dying, death is in this passage represented as a walking through a dark and dreary valley, where we are liable every moment to stumble, and to fall into some frightful pit. Now, if you had to pass through such a valley, how would you rejoice to obtain a guide who perfectly knew the way, who had a light to direct your steps, and who would conduct you through in safety? Such a guide is the Lord Jesus to all his people; and, therefore, David declares that he would fear no evil, when he was passing through this valley, in which others are so greatly and justly alarmed. Jesus was with him to direct and comfort him; and, therefore, he knew that no evil would befall him.

Now, would not all of you wish to have the Lord Jesus to support and cheer your souls when you are going to die? Many children he has delivered from the fear of death; and if you become his lambs, he will also deliver you from it. Now, it is impossible to describe how great a blessing this is, and how happy those are who possess it. And there is none in the universe but Christ, that can give real peace and comfort on a bed of death. Ah! how exceedingly miserable are those children who are taken away from this world, while they are not Christ's lambs! How dreadful to think of their future state! Jesus will not receive them into his presence, but east them out for ever. Oh! think of this, my dear children, and pray earnestly that you may become Christ's lambs, that you may be prepared for death and heaven. But were I to continue speaking to you for a week, I could not tell you all that Christ will do for you if you become his lambs. I shall, therefore, only mention one thing more which includes them all; and that is,

4th. That he will finally bring you to more delightful pastures, and a more glorious fold in the heavenly world. How beautifully is this described in the following passage, Rev. vii. 16, 17:—"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst

of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." And, oh! how exceedingly happy will Christ's flock be in the mansions on high! There will be no more pain, neither grief nor sorrow there; nothing to disturb and nothing to annoy; but harmony, and peace, and love, and joy shall abound in every part of the happy land. There they shall see Jesus in all his glory, and be filled with unutterable delight; there they shall be clothed in robes of the brightest splendour, there they shall join with angels and archangels in adoring and praising God; and there with boundless bliss shall they sing the everlasting hymn of gratitude and praise "to Him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God." Many of Christ's lambs are already there, and how brightly they shine, how glorious they appear, how happy they are! They see God himself smiling on them with infinite love; they converse most delightfully with saints and angels; and with rapture they join with them in the transporting employments of the heavenly world. And there they shall dwell for ever as happy as it is possible for them to be. And, oh! my dear children, would you not all wish to be admitted at last into this most glorious place, to engage in all these delightful exercises, and to enjoy all this unspeakable bliss? I am sure you would, unless you are more foolish and wicked than I am willing to believe. Well, then, Christ obeyed his Father's law, and died a most painful and accursed death, in order that he might purchase heaven for his lambs, and bestow it on them "without money and without price." "I am the good Shepherd," says he; "the good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." If, then, you become Christ's lambs, all the happiness of which I have been speaking will be yours, and yours for ever.

And now, my dear children, should you not be very grateful to that kind Saviour who has done such great things for you? Should you not be very desirous to please and honour him in all things? Yes, indeed, you should; and it is very base, and very wicked to be unthankful and disobedient to him.

And this reminds me of the *third* ques-

tion which I suppose you to ask me; namely, What should we do to Christ, or, in other words, what should be our dispositions and conduct, if we become Christ's lambs? Now I would wish very much to tell you of these things, and to give you some good advices about your dispositions and conduct. But I have already kept you so long, that I must be done, lest I should weary out your patience. Were I to enter upon this subject, I might tell you what gentle, inoffensive creatures lambs are; and how mild, and patient, and meek, and harmless, and forbearing you ought to be. I might tell you how innocently playful lambs are, and exhort you to be like them in all your amusements. I might tell you also what useful creatures lambs are, and then urge you to be also useful to every person, and in every way you can—useful to God, by worshipping and obeying him; useful to your parents, by being submissive and dutiful to them; useful to your companions, by being kind and obliging, and affectionate to them, and useful to all men, by doing them all the good you can. It would require a long time to tell you about all these things; and, therefore, I must now finish this sermon, by giving you a very short exhortation.

What has been said to-night will, I hope, make some of you at least, anxious to become Christ's lambs. Now I must entreat you not to delay to come to Christ, lest you should die, and be called into eternity before you become his lambs. You have all been permitted on this occasion to hear another yearly sermon particularly addressed to yourselves, and I earnestly wish and pray, if consistent with the will of God, that you may hear many more such sermons, and that you may every year be growing wiser and better. But you do not know but that before this time of another year you may be in another world. Do you not just now remember the names of some who heard the servant of the Lord addressing them last year, but whose souls are now in an eternal world? And perhaps there are some boys and some girls here this evening, perhaps those who appear at present most healthy and most likely to live, who shall not be found in this assembly next year, but in the congregation of the dead. Is it not probable, nay, almost certain, that some among so great a number shall never hear another sermon after a communion season, and that while as large a congregation as usual is assembled to hear another servant

of the Lord, their eyes shall be closed in death, and their souls shall have appeared before the judgment-seat of Christ? Oh! then, think if you were to be among this number, whether you would go to heaven or to hell. Unless you are Christ's lambs you cannot enter into heaven, but be sent down to that dismal place where devils dwell, and none but sinners are; where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, and where you will be miserable beyond all description, and all conception, and miserable for ever. Pray, then, earnestly, my dear children, to the Lord Jesus, that he would save your precious souls. Read the Bible diligently. Cherish all those dispositions, and do all those actions which you know are pleasing to God; and carefully avoid every thing

which he has been forbidding. Be obedient to your parents, and take pleasure in making them happy. Be grateful and submissive to your teachers who are taking so much pains to instruct you and make you wise unto salvation. Be kind and affectionate to your brothers and sisters, your relations and friends. Be attentive and charitable to the poor, the sick, and the diseased; and, in a word, do to others as you would wish them to do to you. And, if you thus believe in Christ and obey him, he will do more for you, exceedingly more than you can ask or think. He will preserve and bless you in every situation of life; he will cheer and comfort your souls in death, and will then receive you into his glorious presence in heaven; that where he is, there you may be also, enjoying unutterable happiness for ever, and ever, and ever.

MAN'S OBLIGATION TO RETURN TO GOD;

A SERMON

By the Rev. JOHN DUNCAN,

Gaelic Chapel, Duke Street, Glasgow.

"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."—ISAIAH lv. 7.

MAN'S transgression or departure from the living God neither did nor could lessen his obligations. Bound previously to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, he is under the same obligations still; nay, he is under obligations to love the Lord with such powers and faculties as he has, not merely in his lapsed state, but as he had in his unfallen state. Whatsoever obligation was imposed then, (and obligation was laid, and could not but be laid, corresponding to the utmost extent of created power and faculty,) that obligation man is under still. Man cannot but be under this obligation. Every-where where there is intelligent mind, where there is consciousness, there is obligation to love the Lord Jehovah with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. Obligation to this duty is not founded upon grace. Inclination to discharge this duty does come of grace, but obligation to discharge it does *not* come of grace, but of

eternal and immutable law, as founded on the eternal loveliness of God; and where grace leads to the discharge of it, it leads to the discharge of the duty upon the proper score of its incumbency. It leads man to love God for that cause for which he ought to be loved by the whole creation—his eternal loveliness and excellence. We premise this, because sometimes we hear against the position, that law is the foundation of duty, the counter-position, equally true, that grace leads to the discharge of it. We know this, but we know that grace does not constitute the obligation, and that the eternal laws are the foundation of the obligation under which we are laid. Jehovah, therefore, as obligation remains, continues the claim of obligation. Not to speak of the obscurer intimations of this claim given by the light of nature, which is, as far as it goes, the voice of God speaking unto all men, we know that, at the judgment-seat of God, the perfect claims of his holy law will

be brought forward with regard to all the children of men. Wherever the voice of God in divine revelation reaches, it brings this claim along with it. The whole dealings of God are of right; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. One part of his procedure advances farther than another; but nothing in the more advanced goes to the overthrow of any thing that preceded it. There is, for instance, revealed in the Gospel a new covenant—a covenant of grace. While it reveals a way of salvation for transgressors of this covenant, it does not do it, as sinners may imagine, by in any way putting that covenant aside. It is, in short, a farther opening of his ways, but not a putting aside of any part of his doings as foolish or unnecessary. While, therefore, the Gospel presents a way for the justification of the ungodly, it does it so as not to lessen in any degree the bonds of accountability; it interferes not with, nor sets aside, any claim of God's holy and righteous law. If any exhibition of the Gospel be given which has in itself, or from man's misconception, a tendency to this point, it is so far antinomian gospelizing, or making void of the law, and thus a leading aside from the free grace of God. It is easily conceived by any foolish mind, how a sinner should be delivered by that which will destroy, or take down, or modify accountability; but it requires the wisdom of God to devise a way whereby accountability can be maintained, and those who deserve to perish be saved. It is easy to invite rebels to return to God, if there be a keeping out of view the cause of the quarrel between the rebels and God—that holy law against which the carnal mind is enmity, and to which it is not subject, neither indeed can be. Put aside that law, if it were possible, and we could get a whole world, the whole apostate universe to return to God, for there is no quarrel with God but upon the score of the law: and, therefore, speak of any thing which shall remove that law, which shall cause discredit to it, which shall cause it to be said that the law was too rigorous, and that Jehovah has treated us harshly—that we are in the right, and that he yields to us, which is the meaning of all false and perverted Gospel, and there is nothing in the apostasy of any fallen creature to prevent the hearty reception of such a Gospel. It needs no regeneration to believe it, but it needs regenerating grace to make a man unable to believe it. As God maintains his claim of love and obedi-

ence, so wherever he makes known his word he announces that claim. As he has not dropt the one, so he has not dropt the other; and he never will drop it, never will modify it, never will diminish the least particle of it. He claimed from the beginning, and he will claim to the end from all his intelligent offspring, that they love him with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; nor will he be served with any thing else. It were not good that he should shift his claim. If we should say, when man has apostatized, that God should demand less, then man has but to apostatize farther, and the claim should be lessened, because he has so much the more injured his own nature. If God should take down the claims of his law upon fallen man, because his faculties have been vitiated and injured, then in proportion as man degrades his own nature, God should come with less demands upon him, because his moral power is so much the less; and, therefore, the more sinful he becomes, the less duty ought to be incumbent upon him, which amounts to this, that God should not impute sin at all, but allow his creation to hate him, to disobey him as they please, and make them blessed notwithstanding. Jehovah, then, having a claim upon the wicked and unrighteous man, follows it out. If you say, that, having considered these words as a declaration of the grace of God addressing the most wicked of men, we now turn them into a claim of law pursuing him, we grant it. The words appear harmonious in both senses. They are a voice from the holy law of God addressing the transgressors and vindicating His claim, while, at the same time, they are words of grace. Wherever there is a wicked and an unrighteous man, and especially wherever the address of God reaches such a man, we are to think of him, and he is to think of himself as a being under obligation to God, as a being who is the subject of divine authority, as a being who is directly under the inspection of God, and who is responsible to God for all that he is, and thinks, and speaks, and does. What at every moment is required of that wicked and unrighteous man? To cease being what he is. This claim the law of God contains. Although the answering of his claim does not satisfy the law of God, which has a farther demand upon him because of wickedness already committed, yet the law requires that whoever is wicked and unrighteous is at this moment by the authority of the ever-

lasting God required to be holy, harmless, undefiled in heart, soul, strength and mind, and with holy, undefiled and upright heart to love Jehovah supremely. We may thus see how God pursues the wicked with his claim, and how upon every principle of equity the claim still comes to man to forsake all and return unto the Lord. Neither can repentance expiate sin, nor the expiation of sin put aside the necessity of repentance. Obedience now cannot atone for the want of obedience in the past, nor hinder the obligation unto obedience in the future. The wicked man, the unrighteous man, is addressed of God. We that are wicked and unrighteous are addressed of God. God makes a demand, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." The way of the wicked man is declared in these words to be displeasing unto God. What is a man's way? The whole tenor of his conduct. Every thing then is wrong in the conduct of a wicked man, for he is not bid in these words to alter or mend his way, but to forsake it. All that a man does is intimately connected with the whole current of his thinking. If we examine our speaking and our acting, we shall find that they proceed from our thinking. The unrighteous man is called to forsake his thoughts; God points out the evil streams as flowing from the evil fountain. If the thoughts be the foundation of the words and deeds, there can be no right forsaking of the way but what is fundamental—a forsaking of the thoughts. The demand, then, is a complete forsaking of the whole of the character in thought, in word, and in deed. This address, therefore, is directed to man as totally corrupted, and it places itself as an iron wall against all that corruption. It declares that every thing is wrong in a wicked man, and it will not tolerate any of that wrong for one instant. To them who have been accustomed to do evil—to them who are so accustomed to do evil, as that sooner may the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots, than that they, having been thus accustomed to do evil, can learn to do well—it says, neither hiding the corruption, nor the absoluteness of its own demands, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well."

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN DUNCAN, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT COOK, Clatt.

MAN'S OBLIGATION TO RETURN TO GOD ;

Sermon by the Rev. JOHN DUNCAN.—Concluded.

WHILE, therefore, the Word of God comes with the declaration of man's total depravity, it comes with its claim still to perfect conformity unto the holy law. It makes no concealment to gain a little outside obedience; it comes with no modifying claim, saying, "True, you are not what you ought to be; you ought to be a little better;" but it comes, saying, "You are altogether gone out of the way; and this is the way, walk ye in it." This demand is not addressed unto man as if he possessed in himself one particle of good to meet it, for then there could not be the universal demand to forsake every way and every thought. This implies that the whole of a sinner's way, and the whole of a sinner's thoughts are in direct opposition to God's address, and that God's address is in direct opposition to them; and it calls that their ways and their thoughts give place to that way which comes forth from the Lord Jehovah—that they present no opposition to it—that opposed as they are in any point they cease to oppose in every point. Let the wicked man forsake his ways and thoughts, his whole way and his whole thoughts, "and let him return unto the Lord." These words in connexion with the preceding, imply that the cause of his way and his thoughts being such as they are is a state of alienation from Jehovah—that his ways and his thoughts are such as they are, because he is away from Jehovah. The Scripture here, then, takes us a little farther than to the thoughts of men, opening up to us the cause of their evil thoughts. They are the production of a mind alienated from God.

The human mind was not created for independence; God did not make us to be as gods. He made us to be something better, to be dependent upon Jehovah, to

live, and move, and have our being in him, spiritually as corporeally; to behold his infinite excellencies, to be enraptured with them; in them to discover the ground of our own moral obligation because of the glory of God, and for Jehovah's sake to discharge every duty. God, in short, created the human soul for connexion and union with himself, to be acted on as an intelligent and voluntary agent by his actings, corresponding with, and willingly embracing them, and that thus man should think all his thoughts, speak all his words, and do all his works in God. When we have gone away from this state we assume to ourselves, though we do not attain it, a situation of independency; we become to ourselves the centre of the universe, instead of parts of it willingly and lovingly hanging upon him who is the light, and strength, and beauty of the whole, having no separate interests, but having for our first interest the glory of God, and for our second the good of the whole as connected with and flowing from the supreme and only true good. Instead of this we become, I say, as the centre of the universe to ourselves, enjoying thoughts and forming plans for individual good, which clash with the other parts of God's universe, and with the arrangements and perfections of Jehovah. We would be as gods knowing good and evil; we would depend upon ourselves and make the universe turn round, if we could, to serve us. But this it will not do. We are planets which should revolve for Jehovah's glory, for the good of them that love him; and if we coincide not with the great objects for which creation acts, it will act notwithstanding, and we, however unwilling, must act our part in that universal scheme of things wherein every thing is working together for good to them that love

God and walk according to his purposes. It is, then, a departure from God that is here pointed out, and nothing short of coming back again can please God. There never was a different law given, for the great comprehensive law involving all subordinate laws is, Come back again. You left your place. Come back to it—return—be submissive—depend upon me for life and for all things. Have no interest but mine. You are not your own, you are my creatures; you are not the highest, I am above you; you possess not in yourselves all excellence, I do; you possess no underived excellence, I do. Whatever excellence you had from me in creation, you have lost it, and I have lost you. You did wrong in going away; you did wrong in staying away. Come, therefore, back again. Let me be God, and be you just my creatures. That is the demand which God makes, and he cannot dishonour himself by letting go one iota of that demand. The state of departure from God is the source of ten thousand thoughts about the maintenance of this state of independency. It is, therefore, from this very state of independency that man is called to return. It is the business of the creature to obey God; and as for the ensuring of happiness which we are so apt to suppose we ought to ensure, that belongs to God. The desire to ensure self-happiness, and independence, and private good, is the root of sin. It blinds the eyes to the glory of God, who rejoices over all his works—who alone is to be served—who disposes of his creatures as pleaseth himself, and who takes effectual care that none lose by obeying him. We are anxious again and again to urge this, because nothing is more pernicious than light definitions of repentance. When men place it in a certain quantity of sorrowful or painful feeling—in the entertaining of certain speculative opinions—in any thing, in fact, short of returning from sin to God; when independence is not changed by every transgressor into a state of absolute submission to Jehovah; when men conceive that in being called upon to repent, they are called upon to do any thing short of undoing what Adam did in his disobedience, their repentance is not genuine. Adam stepped away from God into sin, and a sinner who repents turns away from sin unto God. It is not this or the other act of transgression that God is so incensed with, as the principle of disobedience itself. It is not so much the enormity of a crime—the injury it does to society—the degradation it brings upon your own name,

that God is incensed with, as the principle that you would do what the Lord forbids, or neglect what the Lord commands. That one can do so, shows a discordancy between the creature-nature and God; and it is this discordancy with which God is so infinitely displeased; and all disobedience to the divine command has its foundation nowhere but in an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. If man examines why he disobeys, he will find, universally, that it is from a notion that he will promote his happiness better by disobedience than by obedience. It is distrust of the truth that God makes all things work together for good to them that love him, that lies at the foundation of sinners not loving God; for, say they, if we love him we must obey him, and if we obey it would not be so well with us, as if we disobeyed him. It is distrust of the truth that God makes all things work together for good to them that love him, which leads to the violation of that command, "Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength;" for every man pursues only after that which, in some way or other, he conceives to lead to personal good. It is distrust of Jehovah's goodness that lies at the root of transgression. In short, man ceases to depend upon God for good, and then, depending upon himself, he seeks happiness by transgression. I appeal to all who are able to dissect the operations of their own souls: is this not the case? A departure, then, of the soul from God, as its supreme good, led the soul of man into a disobedience to God's authority, and, seeking to find happiness out of God, he sought it in a way which the law forbids: "Do every thing to the glory of God." Where the soul seeks for happiness, in any other way it must necessarily oppose the law of God, whose command is first of all, "Thou shalt love the Lord." If, therefore, we would have our thoughts and our way completely changed, we must give up seeking our happiness from any other than God himself; we must seek it absolutely and simply in the Lord Jehovah and in his being what he is. This is the beginning and foundation of a new way. We must, first of all, be satisfied that Jehovah, such as he is, be the sole portion of our souls; we must be contented with his being what he is, and it must be blessedness enough unto us that Jehovah is just what he is; then when the soul seeks no other felicity than the enjoying of God, it will seek no other rule of action than the will of God. When the soul is completely

satisfied and delighted that Jehovah is what he is, then it will be satisfied just to be what Jehovah wishes it to be. There cannot enter into the mind the thought of enjoying God by disobeying God—the thought of becoming like him, which is necessary to the enjoying him, by disobeying him, which is both the having and fostering the possession of a nature contrary to his. Now, to take men back to God is just what Christ came to do—is just what Christ is proposing in the Gospel to do. The question now is proposed in the simplest form. It is not merely, Will you go back? but, Would you be willing to be taken back to God? Jesus did not come to deliver from any thing else than the alienation from God. Jesus came to open men's eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan unto God. Those who, by divine grace, received him, turned from idols to serve the living and true God. Jesus loved his people and gave himself for them; he both redeemed them by his blood, and made them kings and priests unto God. Once they were afar off from God, but now they are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ sprinkles the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. They who believe in him are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, in which God hath from the beginning ordained that they should walk in them. The fundamental step of man's fall is the departing from God. When it was from God it must be unto sin, and a turning therefore, whithersoever, if it be not a turning unto God, is a continuing in sin. Unless there was a state where the creature could be altogether unconnected with God—unless God's claim could be realized by the creature's disobedience, the turning away from God must necessarily be the turning unto sin; and, therefore, any turning from one thing to another which does not meet the original apostasy—which is not a turning unto God as the chief enjoyment, and to God's will as the only rule of action, which two are inseparable, may be a turning from worse to better, but is still within the empire of sin, inasmuch as it is within the empire of alienation from God.

We had thought to be able to overtake the following clause, but upon it, it would be unwise at this period to attempt to enter. That clause holds forth to the wicked and ungodly the gracious encouragement which God is pleased to afford unto him as an inducement to return, and as a stay and support in the way of returning. But we

must content ourselves at present with noticing the exhibition of Jehovah's grace in the very command itself to return. While we are bound to return unto God, God is under no obligation, upon any claim which we can urge, to take us back. True, none do return actually who are not drawn by the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is bestowed only through the mediation of Jesus Christ; and, therefore, in this point of view, we may with safety say, that there is an obligation with God to receive all who do return, but this comes from the very consideration of the grace by which they do return. But, considering the obligation, and supposing that the man of his own strength was to fulfil that obligation, and to come back acknowledging that all was wrong, we are making a supposition which is impossible, for it is supposing a corrupted nature to grow good; but if it were possible, and if accomplished, it would infer no obligation to receive us. The divine thunderbolt might in all justice, be launched at the head, for the return did not put away the guilt of sin contracted; and the only way in which any do actually return is through an atonement, for it is through Jesus Christ and his atonement that repentance is given, as well as the remission of sins. But it is plain from the voice of the command, that even here there is somewhat of an overture of grace. The very command to return issued forth from God—although perhaps we could not say that it included so much, if God did not expressly add that he will have mercy, yet it seems at least to prepare the way, and to open up in the mind of a sinner an anticipation at least, to prepare the sinner, and to smooth the way for the declaration that He will have mercy. At any rate, when man went away it was not incumbent upon God to come seeking him. Divine justice being essential, man must be punished for going away; but God is not under any necessity to seek man back. What hath Jehovah suffered by our folly? The throne of the eternal God is as firm as it was from the creation of the world. The apostasy in heaven shook it not; the apostasy on earth shakes it not. The blessed Jehovah was blessed in himself before his creatures were in existence. When they conceived that iniquity which, in its malignity, goes to the destroying of His being, he was as secure of his being and of his perfections as ever. What need had He of man? How easily could he have annihilated him, or cast him for ever down into destruction! If he had needed creatures, he had but to speak, and

unnumbered worlds were, and were peopled with intelligences, to give him praise; but what need had he of them or of us? What need had he through the eternal ages, and from the created time, of them or of us? There was imposed upon him no need of the works of his hand. He imposed upon them the need of him, that they might contemplate, enjoy, and resemble him. Why should not sinners return? Have we become as gods knowing good and evil? Have we become able to do for ourselves without God in the universe? What good did our first parents get by departing from God? What good do we get by staying away? What worse could we be if we should return unto Jehovah? Would it do us any harm? Would we be worse in depending upon the King eternal, immortal, invisible, than in depending upon ourselves, poor, puny, and perverse as we are? Though it profited us we should not do it. A man should not do wrong for gain's sake. A man should prefer eternal right to every thing else. We should not do the wrong though eternal felicity were its consequence. But we have not only sinned, but wherein hath it in reality profited us? Putting aside the iniquity, if it were wrong to sin even for the sake of felicity, why should we continue to sin, to make ourselves better, when all the while we are only making ourselves worse? The thought that we were acting wrong in going away—that after all God was better than we thought him, and consulted for our interest better than we did ourselves, ought to make us think of returning to him; and if we desire some noble employment, and we all should desire what is most noble and excellent, what better thing can there be than returning to God? It is good to return from folly to wisdom; it is good to return from vice to virtue; it is good to return from sin to happiness; but it is best of all to return to God. God alone is self-existent, and the foundation of all that is noble and excellent is in him. To return, then, to anything, however excellent, short of returning unto God, is staying away from that which is best, as God is not only distinct from, but infinitely superior to all that is from him. It is putting up with what is infinitely short of what is best; but the cry to return to God, is the cry to return to that which is best to the absolute and unbounded good, even to Jehovah, whose name is so rich, that silent meditation on it may be more profitable than any attempt to explain it. And then when he invites us to return,

when he is at such pains with a creature whom he so little needs, and who is so unworthy of his regard; in short, when he shows his anxiety for his return, by sending line upon line, and precept upon precept, when he raises the cry, and the burden of his message still is, "Return to me, O Israel; return unto me, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity;" when God is wanting nothing but just that we should return unto him as our portion for ever—that we should give up the broken cisterns that can hold no water, and return to the fountain of living waters, to drink, and be filled, and made healthy and vigorous in the beauty of holiness; and when he comes seeking day after day, and hour after hour, are we to refuse him? are we to say, No, we will not return; keep thine invitations, there is no hope, for we have loved idols, and after them we will go? When God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses; when he hath committed to his Apostles and ministers the word of reconciliation; when they are as ambassadors for God and his own Christ, and are, as if God himself did beseech you, calling, "Be ye reconciled unto God," shall the answer of your souls be, We will not be reconciled unto God? Though God is seeking no propitiation at our hands; though God is not bidding us wait and become a little better before we return to him; though God is inviting us to have him for our God, and to be to him a people now and from this time forth, yet is it so that we will not—that the anger in our hearts against him shall be an eternal anger? You tell us of the blood of his Son expiating guilt. That may do well enough for those who will submit to go back again; but, for our parts, it is needless to tell us of appeased anger; our anger is not appeased, and shall not be appeased, not while we have existence; and as that existence shall be employed in promoting our happiness, in a way of disobedience, it is a revolt against that law of God which we neither love nor can love, because our whole nature is contrary to it. This alternative, my friends, or a return must be. There is no means of avoiding it. When God says, Return, you must return or you must shut your ears and harden your hearts. I proclaim, in his name, that it is the wicked and the ungodly that are addressed, and that address says, Return; do not go back: return unto God from whom you have departed: unto that God who presents himself in the Son of his love, speaking by the Spirit in his Word; unto

that God as a God promising to forgive, as a God who will abundantly pardon; and judge ye yourselves if there can be a middle way; if there can be an off-put between submitting to the Word of God and rejecting it; between returning to God and a direct new adoption of Adam's sin by the act of continuing for one moment in it.

We conclude, by remarking, that if so high are the demands of God, and so abundant the grace manifested, who among us does not feel the necessity of the omnipotence of God being exerted upon our souls in order to our compliance? If the whole way and the whole thoughts are to be abandoned, how can this be, unless new thoughts be put in us, unless Jehovah himself incline our thoughts to this his testimony? I know

that some will say that, in declaring this necessity of the effectual operation of God, we are just doing what is in our power to invalidate the address directed unto men as rational and accountable creatures. We cannot help this. It is the truth of God that it is a rational and beautiful thing to return unto God. It is a part of divine truth that man will not act in this way, unless he be made wise with a wisdom which arises not out of an unrighteous man's thoughts, which forms no part of the wicked man's way, but which comes from above. May the Lord vouchsafe us the spirit of wisdom; may he incline our hearts, and graciously invite us to return, and may he cause that our souls run after him. Amen.

THE LORD OUR HELP;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF CLATT, ON THE DAY OBSERVED WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF ALFORD, AS A DAY OF THANKSGIVING TO ALMIGHTY GOD, FOR THE LATE FAVOURABLE HARVEST AND ABUNDANT CROP,

By the Rev. ROBERT COOK,

Minister of Clatt.

"Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen. and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."—1 SAM. vii. 12.

THIS passage, my brethren, opens unto us a very interesting period of sacred history. Though God had condescended to take the Jews immediately into covenant with himself, and had been graciously pleased to become their leader and protector, yet their expectations of the divine guidance and support, were made to depend upon their constant and intimate adherence to himself, as their only Lord. The tenure, if I may so express myself, by which they were to enjoy the divine favour, may be well explained in the words of the Prophet Azariah afterwards announced to king Asa: "The Lord is with you while ye be with him, and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you." This latter alternative had been signally executed upon the chosen Israel, for the space of twenty years, previously to the period which my text brings under our notice. It had pleased God, in fulfilment of his threatenings, to deliver them into the hands of the Philistines, as a chastisement for their unbelief and disobedience. During the early part of the time of their subjection, it would appear that the Israelites had not recognised the finger of God in his

dealings with them; but, regardless of their special privileges, and duties, as God's chosen people, had yielded to the contagious influence of example, and commingled with the idolatrous worship of their heathen neighbours. But though God had for a time forsaken his people, he had not utterly cast them off. He raises up for them a deliverer, in the person of the Prophet Samuel. This chosen servant of the Lord has the true interests of Israel sincerely at heart, and deeply deplores their degeneracy. Animated with unabated zeal for the Lord God of Hosts, he proceeds from village to village, throughout the length and breadth of the land, in his efforts to bring them to a just sense of their sinful departure from the true God. Nor did his zealous exertions fail of the desired success. We read in the 2d verse of this chapter, that "all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." When Samuel had thus succeeded in awakening them to a deep sense of their great degeneracy, he proceeds still farther. He urges the heads of the several tribes, to concur in an avowed reformation, in the destruction of all their idols and images, and in the re-establishment of the worship of the true God; and he assures

them, that "if they do return unto the Lord with all their hearts, and put away the strange gods from among them, and serve the Lord only, that he will deliver them out of the hands of the Philistines." The Israelites had by this time felt by hard-earned experience, that in departing from their divine Leader, they had lost their best friend, and they readily comply with the Prophet's call. They did put away their false gods; and, during the whole period of their history, we are not presented with a more general, a more decided revival of religion, than that which at this time took place in the Jewish Church. But Samuel is still farther desirous of promoting the reformation which had so auspiciously begun. In order to give stability to their laudable purposes, he appoints a solemn fast, and orders the children of Israel to meet together at Mizpeh, to implore the divine forgiveness and countenance, by sorrow, lamentation, and prayer. When the Philistines heard of this general convention, they regarded it as the signal for war, and made immediate preparations for attacking the Israelites in their unguarded and defenceless state. But God's people, by his severe chastisements, had now been experimentally instructed wherein their great strength lay. They no longer presumptuously trust to a consecrated ark, as at the time when God had delivered them into the hands of their enslavers; they trust not to man's unsupported arm, but they seek for help where effectual help could only be found. "And the children of Israel said to Samuel, cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hands of the Philistines." They now speak to Samuel, as men in earnest. They not merely request him to cry for them, but *not to cease to cry for them.* They would remember that their fathers in a similar strait, were only successful against the Amalekites, so long as the hands of Moses ceased not to be held up to God, in the attitude of prayer. Samuel, therefore, does intercede for them. But under the guidance of prophetic inspiration, he knows that neither repentance, however sincere, nor prayer, however ardent, without faith, is of any avail. His procedure, therefore, demands our particular attention. Though he did not belong to the priestly order, yet unquestionably by divine authority, he officiates as a priest upon this occasion. "And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering, wholly unto the Lord; and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and

the Lord heard him." Here the prophet gives a direct intimation, that neither he himself, in virtue of his office, nor any of the people, however fervent their requests, could acceptably approach unto God, or expect deliverance at God's hand, unless through the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, thus typically exhibited. At the very moment, then, that Samuel is presenting the burnt-offering, and while the Philistines, elated with former victories, and confident of success, yet ignorant that they had now to fight not against Israel, but against Israel's God, are drawing near to battle against Israel, God made bare his mighty arm for the deliverance of his people: "and the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel." Here the divine answer to the believing prayer of Samuel was most clear and unequivocal. It would even appear, that the Israelites were entirely in a defenceless state, having neither sword, nor spear, nor bow; and those weapons with which they "pursued and smote the Philistines, until they came under Beth-eor," were the very weapons with which the Philistines had come armed to the field of battle, but having fallen before God's irresistible power, their swords passed into the hands of the Israelites, to enable them to complete that signal destruction, which the hand of God had so visibly begun.

It was to perpetuate the memory of this gracious deliverance, and to proclaim to generations yet to come, what God had done for his people, that Samuel erected the memorial which the words of my text bring under review. "Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." And he called the name of the stone, Ebenezer, which is, by interpretation, *the stone of help.*

We, my friends, are placed in circumstances in many respects very different, yet in others similar to those in which the chosen people stood to their almighty Leader. The Jewish theocracy, and a consecutive system of temporal reward and punishment, in accordance with desert, is indeed now no more. Yet the God of the Jew is still the God of the Christian. The same God still exercises a constant though unseen superintendence over the affairs of this world. He is still the hearer of prayer. He still as really, though not so visibly as in the case of his chosen Israel, does interfere for the

upport or relief of his penitent and believing people, and there is no less presented to us than to the Jew, a solemn charge to understand aright the lovingkindness of the Lord, and upon every spiritual or temporal deliverance, to erect an Ebenezer in our hearts unto that God "who hath hitherto helped us."

From this passage, in connexion with the portion of Sacred History from the 8th verse, we are forcibly taught, in the *first place*; That it is our especial duty, under the apprehension of any impending calamity, to seek unto God for deliverance by fervent believing prayer.

We stop not here too curiously to inquire what the issue might have been to the Israelites, had not Samuel interceded for them. We believe that Samuel's prayer formed as much a part of the divine determination as Israel's deliverance; and whoever would leave off prayer before God, under the delusion, that, as every event is already foreseen and determined, his prayers, therefore, cannot alter the purposes of the divine will, acts the same inconsistent and impious part as the husbandman, who would plead the divine determination as an excuse for his negligence and sloth. To every cavilling objection of the "disputer of this world," it is sufficient for the Christian to answer, that prayer, in the revealed record, is a duty of express injunction; that it is there declared to be the appointed channel through which every needful blessing must flow; that it is the Saviour's infallible assurance, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;" and that the Apostle expressly enjoins his converts to be "careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let their requests be made known unto God."

But we are here presented not only with an example of the necessity of prayer, but of importunity in prayer. "Cease not to cry unto the Lord for us." And similar is the apostolical injunction, "Pray without ceasing." It cannot be denied that prayer, with many, is too often a formal and lifeless service in which the heart seems to have no share. They do not come into the presence of the Majesty of heaven, as they would into that of an earthly sovereign from whom they had some favour to solicit; and the seeming indifference with which they draw near to God, too clearly testifies, that they are alike destitute of a just sense of God's eternal majesty, as strangers to the full value of the blessings they seem to implore. It is not thus with men in earnest. The fer-

vent language of entreaty flows from *their* lips. *They* ask because they are in need, and with the importunity of those who will not be put off without a hearing.

But the example of Samuel presents to us another indispensable requisite in acceptable prayer. It intimates to us that the prayer of faith only will prevail. The prophet had to approach the divine presence, under the darkening veil of types and of sacrifices. But the type has now given place to the anti-type, and the sacrificial lamb, to the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. The Christian must now draw near unto God, with an entire faith in the merits of a once-crucified but now exalted Redeemer, and ever-prevailing intercessor at God's right hand. *He* is now the appointed King on the holy hill of Zion, and every blessing that we need is of his purchasing, and must flow through him. "Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need." Be it yours, then, my brethren, always to approach unto God through Christ in every time of need. For temporal blessings, and for deliverance from temporal impending evils, qualify your requests in the language of submission, "not our wills but thine be done;" and God will not withhold, in due season, what is really good for you. But for spiritual blessings, it is the language of God to every one, "Ask what I shall give thee?" and ye cannot ask too much; ye may then open your mouths wide, and God will fill them; ye may then enlarge your hearts, and their utmost desires shall be satisfied; ye may then wrestle with God, and ye will prevail, for he never suffered any to perish at the footstool of mercy.

Secondly. We are taught by this portion of sacred history, that God will hear the believing prayers of his servants.

In what particular way God would be pleased to vouchsafe an answer to his prayer, Samuel neither knew, nor, I believe, did he set himself curiously to inquire. It might be by an angel of the Lord, as afterwards took place, when in answer to Hezekiah's prayer, an angel, in one night, smote in the Assyrian camp an hundred fourscore and five thousand men; or it might be, as happened in answer to Jehoshaphat's prayer, when at the very time that the children of Judah were praising the Lord, their enemies fell into confusion, and utterly destroyed each other. It was quite sufficient for

Samuel to know, that the God of Israel would answer his prayer in that special way which unerring wisdom would devise; and the way which God's wisdom upon that particular occasion did devise, was expressly such as clearly to demonstrate, that the thing proceeded from the Lord, and that the hand of man had no share in its actual accomplishment, that Samuel's prayer was graciously answered, and that Israel's God was thus declared in the sight of his enemies to be "the only living and true God."

We are far from affirming that prayers, offered up in faith, and "for things agreeable to God's will," will always be granted in the *season* or in the *manner* that the supplicants might either desire, or in their fallible judgment might deem most proper. No! This would be to usurp God's prerogative, and to substitute our own erring judgments in the place of his wise and all-disposing sovereignty. All that God permits us to do, is to approach him in importunate, believing prayer, leaving the result to his own unerring disposal. It may be, that our hearts are too cold or lukewarm, and God for a *season* covers himself with a cloud, that they may glow with increasing ardour: it may be, that they are yet unsubdued, and God hides himself, that by deep humiliation they may be brought to a fitter state for the reception of the divine blessings; or it may be, that the want of God's favour, or the absence of God's mercies, being long felt and deeply deplored, the divine blessings may at least be more highly prized. And to *him* who may have long felt the power of sin, and prayed for deliverance from its penalty, how reviving is the sense of the divine pardon! and how passing description the rest which the Christian enjoys, when after being long at the mercy of the un pitying waves of trial and temptation, he is at least restored to the haven of serenity and joy! and how must it enhance the value of even temporal mercies, which, though long delayed, arrive at last in the hour of greatest need!

Not only in the season, but in the *manner*, in which God is often pleased to answer prayer, we are presented with an admirable display of his wisdom and sovereignty. When the great Apostle fervently prayed that a severe trial might pass from him, was his request granted in accordance with its tenor? No! It was not, "I have heard thy prayer, be it unto thee agreeably to thy desire." Yet his prayer received a no less gracious answer. It was—"My grace shall be sufficient for thee: I will perfect my

strength in thy weakness." And will not the Christian's experience bear him out in entering into the feelings, and taking up the language of the Apostle? Say, *ye* who have been harassing yourselves by the apprehension of an impending calamity, but who have sought for deliverance or support in the Rock of ages, though the stroke may have fallen upon you, has there not been mercy in the rod? have you not been able to put forth a strength, of which you had formed no idea? and have you not felt a support that made you a wonder to yourselves? Say, *ye* from whom the desire of your eyes, and the chosen of your heart may have been taken away; *ye* from whom "lover and acquaintance" may have been snatched by the unsparing hand of death; *ye* from whom the support of your declining years may have been withdrawn, to leave you as you conceived inexpressibly hopeless; *say*, if you have earnestly sought unto God to avert the apprehended trial, or to give you the needful support in its endurance? have you felt no streams of comfort issuing from the heavenly throne, no support from the everlasting arms, no ray of imparted light to shed its cheering influence around you amid your darkness and despondency? Yes! Christians, *many* have; they have felt their prayers "returning into their own bosoms," to diffuse tranquillity there, and, I trust, that you too can add your feeble, but sincere, testimony to theirs.

But, farther, need I invite you to "the word and the testimony," to bear evidence that prayer often meets with a *direct* answer. Time would fail me to speak of Abraham, who was permitted to plead with God for devoted Sodom, and was heard agreeably to the tenor of his request—of Elias, who "prayed that it might not rain, and it rained not, and who again prayed, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit"—of Jehoshaphat, who, in the face of a powerful army, exclaims, "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but, oh, our God! our eyes are upon thee," and whose prayer was answered by the discomfiture of his enemies—of Daniel, whose God, agreeably to his request, did deliver him from the mouths of the lions—of dying Stephen, whose prayer was answered by the conversion of persecuting Saul—and of the same Apostle, along with his fellow-prisoner, who at the very time that they were "praying and singing praises unto God," the doors of the prison were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. But why need I mul-

tively examples? Does not the experience of every Christian bear witness to a prayer-hearing, and a prayer-answering God? What is it that diffuses light over the darkened mind, and brings peace to the troubled soul? What is it that gives strength for the combat, and support in the hour of affliction? What is it but fervent believing prayer! Nay, what is it that brings down blessings for Zion's good, and a country's weal—that is the best safeguard of a nation's prosperity? What is it but a devotional spirit imparting a noble impulse to patriotic zeal? Samuel, the devoted servant of God, was of more avail for Israel's deliverance, than their united armies; and after due allowance for the different circumstances in which as a nation we are placed, it ever will be so. If any national calamity should ever shed its desolation around us, it will be when the spirit of devotion is no more. And if we as a professedly christian land, are even given up to the power of our enemies, it will only be when the "righteousness which exalteth a nation" is gone, and no Samuel remains to intercede for our safety. To what, let me ask you, must we ascribe our *past* security in the midst of surrounding dangers and convulsions, but to the fervent prayers of the sincere servants of God? Yes! When the warrior went forth with his sword upon his thigh, it was then that the Christian repaired to the *closet*, that the feeble knees which could no longer bear him to his country's defence, could yet bend in humble prostration at the footstool of the God of battles, and that the trembling hands which were able to wield no other weapon, could yet wrestle with the "sword of the Spirit." It was then, too, that the Christian repaired to the *sanctuary*; when from this lower house supplication ascended to the temple above, and when from numberless, contrite, and believing hearts, many united voices of fervent intercession, effectually ascended to the throne on high.

We observe, *thirdly*, that it is our duty to recognise the hand of God in every deliverance.

When God made bare his arm for the help of his chosen Israel, so manifest was the divine interposition in their behalf, that it must have been the sentiment of every heart, "The Lord he is God. The Lord he is God." That the "Lord still reigns," is a truth that forces itself not less upon the conviction of the Christian than it did upon that of the Jew. Whatever be the instrument employed, religion

instructs us to refer every blessing and every deliverance to the hand of God. The man who "walks with God," discovers the finger of God in every event. He confines not his view to second causes, but through these he directs them upwards to the first Great Cause of all. Oh! my brethren, how it sickens the heart to think *how* many receive and use the blessings which come only from God! They talk of them either as matters of course, or the fruit of their own exertions, or the result of God's general appointments; but all the while they are drawing a line of separation between God and his works. Now, I would ask such, Do they conceive that they can assert any right to the least of God's mercies? They must surely answer, No! I would ask them, what do they mean by God's general appointments? What are these but the modes or ordinations by which God is pleased to conduct the arrangements of his providence? and being of his appointment, he can alter or suspend them to suit the purposes of his will. There are, indeed, times when some degree of reflection forces itself upon the most inconsiderate. Unless they wilfully shut their eyes, they cannot avoid espying the hand from which their mercies flow. It is to snatch *you* from the number of those who "regard not God," nor "consider the operations of his hands," that we have this day summoned you to God's house of thanksgiving. We would hope and believe that it requires no aid from us, to impress you with a sense of God's seasonable interposition. If ever there was a *season* wherein God displayed himself, as the covenant-keeping God of his people, it has been in the season that has now passed over you. I need not remind you of the fears and forebodings that struggled to gain the ascendancy in many a breast; I need not remind you of the almost unexampled gloom that hung over the season, and marked it in its progress; I need not remind you of the cry of apprehended want that was heard afar off, and near at hand; and still *less*, I hope, need I remind you of God's seasonable interposition. What more could God have done for you? At the very time that hope was beginning to falter—even at the very time that despondency was hanging down its hands—yet faith, with its single eye, was steadily directed to the throne of mercy, and many a Samuel "ceasing not to cry unto the Lord," to deliver our land from the ravages of want, with all its accompanying snares; *at the very hour of need*; if I may so express myself, even at the eleventh hour

of the season, the prayer of faith did prevail; God lent a gracious ear to the cries of his servants; the windows of heaven were shut; the rays of a cheering sun shed their ripening influence; the labours of the husbandman were blessed; the fear of want gave place to returning gladness; and, we doubt not, that, in the breasts of many, there was erected an abiding Ebenezer unto the God of seasons, because "he had hitherto helped them."

This leads me to remark, *fourthly*, that a public acknowledgment of gratitude is due to Almighty God for mercies received, and for deliverance from impending evils.

In perusing the history of the heathen world, we are particularly struck with the practice of perpetuating the memory of great events to future generations. When nations were delivered from impending calamities, or favoured with unlooked-for blessings, they raised the song of gratitude to those whom they esteemed their preservers. The praises of their deliverers were sung by the poet, and extolled by the historian; their statues adorned the cities which gave them birth; and other striking memorials were instituted to convey to future generations an abiding sense of the value of their services. If, from the heathen, we turn to the enlightened world, we shall find that the memorials which, in the *one*, were erected to the statesman or the conqueror, were, in the *other*, expressly instituted in token of gratitude to God—the great and only Deliverer. In the patriarchal ages, this practice was of frequent occurrence. When Noah left the ark, he built an altar unto the Lord, and offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving for his miraculous preservation. Abraham, in like manner, builds an altar unto the Lord; and Jacob, on his way to a strange country, as he rises in the morning, under the impression of the divine favour, takes the stone which he had placed as a pillow, and sets it up as a pillar of remembrance; and he is afterwards enjoined, by the divine command, to build, on the same spot, an altar unto the Lord, "who heard him in the day of his distress, and had been with him whithersoever he went." The same practice is brought under our notice in the words of my text: "And Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer; saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." This stone must have served to the Israelite, in every age, not only as a monument of the divine power, but as a memorial of the divine goodness, and must have inspired his heart with feel-

ings of gratitude to the God of his fathers. Nor, my friends, is an open expression of gratitude less incumbent upon the Christian than upon the Israelite. Ingratitude to God for his special mercies is highly offensive in his sight. An Apostle ranks, among the aggravations of the sinful state of the heathen world, their *unthankfulness* to God. And, think you, will *that* be matter of indifference in you, *which* was ground of condemnation in them? "Were there not," says Christ, "ten cleansed; but where are the nine?" And shall we rank in the hateful list of the ungrateful nine, and not return to "give glory to God" for his special deliverance? Let us not, then, demand this tribute from you in vain. Had it pleased God, instead of the existing profusion, to have sent scarcity and leanness over the land, as he justly might have done, how forbidding the prospect that might now have been presenting itself to the reflecting mind! The picture of coming wretchedness might have been sitting on many a countenance that now beams with an aspect of cheerfulness. The cry of want might have been assailing the ear of compassion, when the hand had not the power of administering relief; and the poor, and those who have none to help them, might, with trembling steps and wasted frame, have been traversing the land in search of that bread, of which there was little to give them. And too often does it happen that, when want stares its unhappy victims in the face, it proves the harbinger, the companion, the abettor of crime. Too often, when the iron grasp of want takes an enduring hold, does fraud, and covetousness, and dishonesty, and a direful train of vices ensue; and the peace of the community is broken, and its safety deeply endangered. From want, with its accompanying dangers, you have been preserved. To God, then, give thanks; for a gift that comes in season is doubly blessed. "Praise the Lord for all his benefits;" receive and use them as coming from his hand, and erect an Ebenezer in your hearts unto that God "who has hitherto helped you." And, my friends, on this day of thanksgiving, when we trust that your hearts are warmed with the kindly impulse of gratitude, let each give thanks to God for those mercies which his own heart best knows. Are there not *those*, within these walls, who entered upon life under a frowning aspect, with scarcely an earthly friend to take them by the hand, yet whom God has blessed with competence? Let *them* erect in their hearts an Ebenezer unto that God, whose

blessing "maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow" with it. Are there not here *those* whom God has brought back from the very gates of death, and of whose return the tears of surrounding friends gave proof that almost every ray of earthly hope had expired? Let *them*, too, erect in their hearts an Ebenezer unto the great Physician of the body, and, with the devout Psalmist, exclaim, "I was brought low, and he helped me." Are there not here, too, *those* who, in running their sinful career, have been arrested by the sovereign grace of the merciful Physician of the soul? Let *them*, too, erect in their hearts an Ebenezer unto *Him* who took pity upon them when they had no pity on themselves, and brought them into the number of his adopted children. And do I ask, are there not here, too, *those* whom, in the midst of their provocations, a long-suffering God has not yet cast off, but to whom he is still waiting to be gracious? Let *them*, likewise, adore God's forbearance. Let *them* give to him the glory, that the place where "mercy is clean gone," is not now their portion.

Fifthly. Let your recollection of God's past mercies inspire you with the feelings of future, unreserved confidence.

This was one great object of the prophet Samuel, in erecting a permanent memorial of the divine deliverance at Mizpeh. It was not merely to remind the Israelites of what God had already done for them; it was also to intimate to them, throughout every succeeding age, what God was still ready to accomplish for his penitent and believing people. This is one great and intended improvement of God's special mercies. Listen to the language of the Psalmist: "Thou hast been my help; therefore under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." "Because the Lord has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him so long as I live." It was in the same way that the Apostle improved the divine mercies: "God hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Let this be the manner in which ye improve every past deliverance. "If God has hitherto helped me, shall I not henceforward put my trust in him?" While many are tossed about by every wind that blows, and driven on the tumultuous waves of fear and of despondency, be it yours to repose in safety on the Rock of ages. "Commit your ways unto the Lord, and trust in him." Amid the difficulties and impending evils that may have hitherto overcast thy life, and thickened upon thee in its progress,

dost thou not clearly trace the interposition of a sustaining and over-ruling Power? And is not the same almighty arm still entitled to thy confidence? For temporal mercies, the promise has gone forth; it has ever had, and ever will have, its fulfilment. "Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." And while you look to the almighty Giver for every blessing that you need for the life *that now is*, let your firm reliance be placed on a reconciled God, through Christ, for every blessing needful for the life *that is to come*. Let your waiting eyes be daily directed to the Father of lights, and your daily prayers ascend for the effusions of his heavenly grace. If God, through his Spirit, has already begun a good work in you, trust not to yourselves, but to his sovereign power, for carrying it on to the day of the coming of the Lord. "Wait, I say, constantly upon the Lord; for whosoever trusteth in the Lord shall be even as mount Zion, that cannot be removed, but standeth fast for ever!"

Sixthly. Let me call upon you to testify your sense of the divine mercies, by an increasing devotedness to the service of your God.

Your praises and services can bring no accession to God's glory; yet your God, as the most sincere expression of your gratitude, does require you to surrender yourselves to the service of *Him* who has done so much for you.

Has God dispelled your fears, by opening his hand liberally to pour upon you stores of temporal blessings? The more abundantly you are favoured with bread to eat, look upon this distinguished mercy, as an urgent call upon you, to seek more earnestly after the "bread which endureth unto everlasting life." Beware of the danger of prosperity. Be on your guard, lest your hearts are lifted up to a forgetfulness of God, and the imminent danger of your immortal souls. It is a fearful denunciation, "I will curse their blessings!" When God sends daily mercies, implore his blessing along with them. If your temporal mercies enable you to serve your God with less incumbrance upon your minds—to do good to those who are less highly favoured by the gifts of Providence, and to provide yourselves, and those dependent upon you, against the fear of want, with all its dangers to the soul; they will have answered their intended purposes, and you should ask no more. Beware, then, of the engrossing and corrupting influence of prosperity. While you are blessed

with an abundant provision of the good things of a passing life, surrender not to them the homage of your hearts; for to this, God alone has the sovereign right.

But, *finally, are you* and your families monuments of God's preserving and sustaining mercy? Let your houses become Bethels unto the Lord. Be it yours, with noble emulation, to seek after the commendation bestowed upon faithful Abraham: "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." *Are you of those* whom a compassionate God has rescued from the very brink of the grave? Think where you now might have been, had not God, in mercy, laid his healing hand upon you. Look upon your deliverance as a proof that God, for your own soul's good, or that of others, has some great purpose for you to answer in the land of the living, and apply more earnestly than ever to the great end of your being. If you make no such improvement of your recovery, the sentence may soon go forth: "I spared them a little longer, but in vain; cut them down, that they cumber the ground no more." *Are you of those* whom God has snatched as brands from "everlasting burnings?" You will require no additional motive for living to that merciful Redeemer, who found you outcasts, and adopted you into the number of his children. The thought of what He has done for you, will surely bear the ascendancy in your hearts, and dictate the earnest inquiry, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" *Are you of those* who are trying to exhaust God's patience, and, being without Christ, are yet "without hope?" Surely, of all within these walls, your ground of gratitude is the greatest, that you are now listening to the warnings of a fellow-mortal, instead of the sentence of a fearful Judge, whose eyes to the sinner will be a "consuming fire," and whose voice will make his knees smite one against the other, and scarcely leave breath within him. "Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the

dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Were I to tell you of the man who is enjoying his slumbers, while his dwelling is enveloped in flames: were I to tell you of the man who, in a state of insensibility, is standing on the brink of a fearful precipice; I could present you with but a faint idea of the danger of the man who is heedlessly reposing in a state of spiritual slumber! In the *one*, the destruction of the body is soon likely to ensue; but, in the *other*, death spiritual and eternal is the impending penalty! Arise, then, lest ye be for ever fallen! You are encompassed by adversaries more dangerous far than the enemies of Israel—adversaries that are every day entrenching themselves more securely within the citadel of your hearts, and whom nothing less will satisfy than undisputed possession there. It was when the Israelites lamented after the Lord, and prepared their hearts unto the Lord, that a compassionate God was pleased to extend to them his mercy. Seek ye then unto God, from whom ye have revolted. Approach him by fervent, believing prayer. Cease not to cry unto God, until he shall have mercy upon you. The compassionate Redeemer, whom you may have hitherto despised, is waiting to be gracious unto you. Believe upon him with your whole heart. In his strength, seek to break off your sins by repentance, by scriptural righteousness. You will not cry unto God in vain. Your Redeemer will extend unto you the golden sceptre. He will speak peace to your souls. He will impart the enlightening, the purifying influences of his Spirit, to subdue the power of sin in your hearts, and to renew you in the spirit of your minds. He will weaken the power of your spiritual enemies, or strengthen you against their incursions. He will keep you by his grace, through faith, unto your everlasting salvation.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and ever. Amen."

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN CLAPPERTON, Johnstone.
SERMON by the Rev. WILLIAM M'DOUGALL, Kilmarnock.

THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST;

A SERMON

By the Rev. JOHN CLAPPERTON,

Minister of the United Associate Congregation, Johnstone.

"And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things."—MARK vi. 34

Of all our affections, compassion is one of the most amiable. We love and admire the person who pities the poor, the afflicted, and the wretched; and who, under that lovely and holy affection, does every thing in his power to relieve them. We think with delight and exultation of the tender and deep compassions of a Howard, a Brainard, an Elliot, and of many others whose names are justly inscribed in the pages of human philanthropy. They were the brightest ornaments of humanity—the friends of man and of God! But a far more compassionate personage than any of these, or any human being that can be named, is mentioned in the text—the compassionate Saviour of the world. "In all things he has the pre-eminence." If we know nothing about the compassions of Jesus, we know not what compassion is, and how it has been most brightly and affectingly displayed. Like his divine Father, Jesus "is full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

If we possess the feelings and sentiments not only of christians, but of men, we must love to contemplate the compassionate character. The eye of the mind rests on it with the same kind of tender delight with which the external eye rests on the green spots of the desert, or on the softest and loveliest flowers of the garden; or the compassionate man is to the selfish, cold-hearted, and turbulent portion of our race, what the gentle, noiseless, and fertilizing stream is to the turbid and desolating torrent. Shall

we not, then, habitually and with holy delight, contemplate the divine compassions of our Saviour? And be it remembered, that the compassion of Jesus is not merely a subject of abstract contemplation, but of great practical importance. He has had compassion on *us*. This is the sole spring of all our encouragement, hope, and consolation. But for divine compassion, what had our case been? Were Jesus not "a merciful and faithful High Priest;" were he not one "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way;" how could we approach him, or expect mercy and aid from him? But he is both in the highest degree. Let all guilty and perishing sinners, then, all christians, and especially the weak and timid, contemplate the compassionate character of the Saviour. You all need a compassionate Saviour—one who "knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." Look to him, come to him, believe on him; and may He himself, by the instrumentality of his own Word and Spirit, speak to your hearts, and then you shall know, better than I can tell you, that Jesus is a compassionate Saviour.

I. I shall briefly speak of the compassion of Jesus Christ; and,

II. I shall speak of the objects of the Saviour's compassion.

I. Of the compassion of Jesus Christ.

Compassion is a branch or modification of kindness of heart, or of benevolence. Under the influence of this amiable affection, we enter into the circumstances and feelings of

others; we make their sorrows and afflictions our own; we suffer along with them, and feel ourselves instantly and powerfully prompted to aid and relieve them. The term "compassion" signifies to sympathize, or to suffer along with others; and, therefore, while it is a most lovely affection, and the exercise of it yields the purest delight on the one hand; yet, on the other, it is always attended with uneasy feelings and painful sensations, and that in exact proportion to the strength of our compassion. Hence you will see, that when compassion is ascribed in Scripture, as it often is, to God, it must differ in some essential points from human compassion. We are compound beings, having not only bodies, but rational souls; and possessing not only the powers of understanding, will, and conscience, but instincts, affections, or passions. But "God is a Spirit"—a simple uncompounded being. In him there is no such thing as passion; and, consequently, no uneasy feelings or painful sensations can attend the exercise of compassion in him. It is the benevolent and ready tendency of his gracious nature to pity and relieve the miserable, when this is consistent with his sovereign and wise pleasure. "I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." This ready and benevolent tendency of nature, to pity and relieve the miserable, was one of the brightest and loveliest features in the character of the Saviour; and, from eternity, and as he was a divine person, it was exactly the same in him as in the other persons of the adorable Trinity. But in the person of Jesus Christ are now closely united both the divine and human natures; and, thus, when he was in this world, in the form of a servant and acting and suffering in our stead, compassion in him partook of the nature and properties both of divine and human compassion. He possessed not only the perfections of Godhead, but the sinless feelings and affections of manhood. "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God." In his present state of glory, he wears our nature, and will do so for ever; and he is said to be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"; yet, as his humbled suffering state is completely at an end, he is really and tenderly, though not painfully, impressed with our weaknesses, sorrows, and dangers. But the ease was widely different with him while in this world. It was then

a part of his humbled suffering state to take our infirmities on him, to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. In his human nature, he felt our sorrows and wretchedness as far as his sinless and unerring nature could feel them. He was then literally "moved with compassion." He felt as a shepherd does for his straying sheep; as a compassionate man for suffering humanity; as the incarnate Son of God, in the character of Redeemer, for perishing sinners. "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things."

II. I shall speak of the objects of the Saviour's compassion.

1. Sinners of the human race were the objects of his divine and eternal compassion. In common with the Father and Spirit, "He remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever." Ours was a state of wilful apostasy and rebellion, and, consequently, of justly deserved and great misery. He saw our misery in its true nature and dismal consequences, and he had compassion on our guilty and miserable race. His compassion was not of the sentimental speculative kind, which leads many to say to the naked and destitute, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;" but to do no more. No. It was real, deep, operative. He pitied sinners, "and so he was their Saviour;" and did and suffered all that infinite wisdom and justice saw to be necessary to procure eternal redemption for them. Think of Him engaging his heart to approach unto God as your surety and Redeemer; of Him being made flesh; of Him as "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" of his unparalleled sufferings; of his death on the cross: all were the result of his infinite and eternal compassion. "In his love and in his pity he redeemed them." What compassion, then, may once be compared with that of Jesus! In connexion with the gracious will of his Father, it was the sole moving cause of human redemption; and if we estimate, as we constantly and justly do, the strength of human compassion by what it prompts men to do and suffer to help and relieve its objects, form your estimate of the compassion of Jesus in the same way, and you will see "that it passeth knowledge." Who but He, who is full of compassion, could have pitied such guilty, lea-

some, obstinate, and ungrateful creatures as we are? and all these forbidding and revolting features of character were fully before his view from eternity. He looked on us when we were in our blood: divine compassion moved in his heart; and he cheerfully engaged "to humble himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Fellow-sinners! is there nothing attractive, nothing overpowering, nothing melting in all this? Have you justly and highly offended a fellow-creature, a worm of the dust, and shall the slightest indication of compassion in him towards you affect you even to tears, and make a lasting impression on your hearts? and shall the compassion, the tears, of a divine Saviour not attract your attention, fix your contemplations and move and melt your hearts? Be intreated to meditate on this compassion; and, among the many happy and holy effects that will follow, this will be one; the tears of genuine penitence will begin to flow. "The Lord turned and looked on Peter"—it was a look of melting compassion—"and he went out and wept bitterly."

2. During the time the Saviour was in this world, the condition of sinners daily moved his compassion. The Spirit of God has seen it meet to give us but very little information about the feelings and deportment of Jesus, from the time of his birth till he entered on his public ministry, at the age of thirty years; but that little information, taken in connexion with his character as Mediator, and one who was entirely free from sin, fully establishes the truth now stated. At the age of twelve years he said to Joseph and his mother, who had been seeking him sorrowing, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" and all along "the law of God was in his heart"—a heart full of love to God and to the souls of men. Can we, then, adequately conceive that tender and divine compassion, even in his boyhood, and as "he increased in wisdom and stature," which must have occupied and melted his heart; when he reflected, as he daily would, on the guilty and miserable condition of sinners, lying under the wrath of almighty God, exposed to everlasting destruction; and when he saw the great bulk of those among whom he lived, as he daily did, totally insensible of their condition, totally careless about the things that belonged to their peace, and doing what in them lay to draw down on

their heads the vengeance of heaven! If David, though but an imperfect saint, could truly say, "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word:" "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law;" if Jeremiah, another imperfect saint, could as truly say, "Oh! that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" and if many good men still, far their inferiors in holiness and spiritual sensibility, are often affected to tears, when they see immortal and accountable beings trifling with their best, their eternal interests, and running with frantic madness "upon the thick bosses of the bucklers" of the Almighty, oh! who can describe, or even conceive, the tenderness, the depth of the compassions, the yearning of the bowels, of the Holy One of God, of the kind and generous Saviour of the world, when he daily witnessed such scenes? He knew the whole value of the soul, for he engaged to redeem it; the great value of time; the power of God's anger; and the full extent of that punishment which sin deserves; and how, then, could he be otherwise than "moved with compassion," when he saw every day before his eyes the affecting spectacle of immortal creatures ruining themselves, being "taken captive by the devil at his will?" Were we more holy, were our spiritual sensibilities more acute, did love to God and the souls of men more entirely pervade our hearts, we could never look on thoughtless, self-destroying sinners, without being "moved with compassion."

And when the Saviour entered on his public ministry, while this general cause or compassion continued to operate in all its force, other causes of the same amiable disposition came into powerful operation. Think of the multitudes of diseased persons of all descriptions—the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lepers, those taken with palsy, the possessed with unclean spirits, laid at his feet, and imploring, or having others to implore for them, cure and health from Jesus; how must his compassionate heart have been moved! "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our

sicknesses." Think of the man among the tombs who had a legion of demons in him, and whom neither fetters nor chains could bind; Jesus cast out the unclean spirits, and afterwards addressed the man, when in his right mind, thus: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." When he saw the widow of Nain following the bier of her only son to the grave, "he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not;" and having restored him to life, delivered him to his mother. And to give only one instance more of this kind—the Saviour's compassionate behaviour when approaching the grave of his friend Lazarus: "When he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in himself, and was troubled. Jesus wept. And again groaning in himself, he came to the grave." All this was the effect of being "moved with compassion."

But I have been too long in considering the particular instance of compassion mentioned in the text. "When Jesus saw much people, he was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd." The sight of a multitude never failed to move the tender compassion of the Saviour's heart. When thousands once and again, out of all the surrounding country and villages, repaired to him in desert places, and waited on his ministrations for days together, he could not think of sending them away fasting, lest they should faint by the way. He had compassion on the multitude, and wrought a most striking and benevolent miracle on a few barley loaves and little fishes to afford them a meal. But the sight of the much people, or the multitude, at this time presented to his ever-benevolent spirit a different object for the exercise of compassion. With the words, perhaps, of the prophet Micah in his view, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd," the Saviour pictured this much people to his mind, as a vast flock of sheep having no shepherd to care for them; to make them lie down in the green pastures; to lead them beside the still waters; and to protect them from ravenous beasts of prey. Shepherds in abundance they had, such as the Scribes and Pharisees and the doctors of the law; but in his estimation, these were no shepherds. They cared for the fleece, not for the flock; they fed them-

selves, not the flock. They were dumb dogs, they could not bark—sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber; yea, they were greedy dogs which could never have enough, and they were shepherds that did not understand—they were blind leaders of the blind. The Saviour at this time saw a considerable portion of the lost sheep of the house of Israel wandering, starving, perishing. He was the Shepherd of the sheep. No wonder, then, that he was moved with compassion, and that he instantly began to act the part of the good Shepherd. He taught them many things—the good and the perfect way—the things that belonged to their peace. Perhaps he might say, as on another occasion, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." In this way he showed his compassion for the lost sheep of the house of Israel: and though "he came to his own, and his own received him not;" though the great majority of his countrymen treated him with neglect, or reproached and persecuted him, yet, during the whole course of his public ministry, he went about among them doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God; and when they remained incorrigible and impenitent to the last, he shed over their devoted city the tear, and addressed its inhabitants in the words of melting compassion: "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now they are 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, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

3. All his people, even the best and holiest in this world, are the objects of his compassion. All need it. What were they once? "The children of wrath even as

others." What are they still? "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." "For in many things we offend all." How often in their conduct have they transgressed the holy law of God; and in the frame of their minds, in their feelings, desires, aims and views, they have never in one duty, or one day, come up to what that law requires. What had become not only of such offending saints as Peter, Jonah and David, but of such as Paul, Isaiah, and even Abraham himself, had they not had a compassionate and merciful God and Saviour to deal with? Not only concerning Aaron who sinned a great sin in making the golden calf, but concerning Moses the man of God, who, in Kadesh, "sanctified not the Lord in the midst of the children of Israel," the Spirit thus testifies: "Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." With what heart-felt gratitude does Paul celebrate the grace and compassion of the Saviour towards himself! "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." And in reference to the whole Church, Micah thus says, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, that passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." What, then, are you? Are you strong in faith, giving glory to God? Are you walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless? Well may you say, and often, no doubt, have you said, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

4. The weak, the timid and doubting,

are peculiarly the objects of his compassion—who are weak in the faith, who are of a fearful mind, who are harassed with temptations, and borne down with poverty and oppression, vexations and bereavements. How does the Saviour act towards them? Let his own words, and they are words of tender compassion, declare: "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, he will not despise their prayer." "He will deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight." "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense, he will come and save you." "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." Think of the disciples. While the Saviour was with them in the world, they, for the most part, were weak in faith, not of very quick understanding, and full of the prejudices of their countrymen. But his whole history and theirs till his ascension, is the history of his condescension, forbearance and compassion towards them. How gently and tenderly did he deal with them—as a compassionate father with his children, as a wise and humane master with his pupils. "Who, then, is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light: let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself on his God." "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

APPLICATION.

1. Do you wish to have objects of compassion presented to your view? Think of the heathen, of the emancipated negroes, who have either no shepherds to guide them into the way of truth, or not one for hundreds whom they require. Let them share the compassion of your benevolent plans, of your prayers, and pecuniary exertions. Think of the congregations of unsound

unfaithful and careless ministers, who are fed with poison, and not with the sincere milk of the Word—who have none to care for their souls. Do what you can to supply them with pastors according to God's own heart. Think of your careless and wicked friends and neighbours around you; of the thousands, even in our own country, who are living without God and without Christ in the world; and display your compassion by caring for their souls, and bringing them to the knowledge of the truth. Think of multitudes of the young, and of little children, whose wretched parents either cannot or will not instruct, pray for, and admonish them. Have compassion on them, by doing every thing in your power to bring them to the compassionate Saviour, who took up little children in his arms and blessed them; and who says to you, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." Think of the poor, the destitute and disconsolate—what abundant objects of compassion!

2. This subject reads an important lesson to all ministers of the Gospel. We should be imitators of the compassion of Christ; and if we are, we never can look on our congregations, on a multitude of immortal and sin-diseased creatures, without being moved with compassion towards them. The care of souls is committed to us. Sinners are condemned already. They are wandering in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. They will not lay these things to heart. Death is at hand; after death is the judgment. Like Aaron of old, then, we are placed between the living and the dead. Many are daily, hourly dying of the plague of sin. What moving considerations—sufficient to excite the tenderest compassions of our hearts! Every time we look around us from our pulpits, we see several hundreds of immortal beings who are to be happy, or miserable for ever, and whose blood will be required at our hands. Shall we not, then, lift up the warning, the entreating voice, and say with Paul, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame; who mind earthly things?" or, with Jeremiah, "But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away

captive." By the mercies of God, then, by the compassions and tears of Jesus, we beseech you to consider your ways; your unspeakable need of Christ, and how you shall escape, if you neglect so great salvation. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved."

3. Will sinners have no compassion on themselves? Do ye not often weep at the tale of fictitious wo, at the sight of the poor, the hungry and naked, of the widow and orphan? Did you see a single human being attempting to destroy his natural life which is but a vapour, you would be moved with compassion, yea, filled with horror. But what are *you* doing? You are destroying yourselves—your own souls! Are you indulging the lusts of the flesh and of the mind—neglecting the great salvation, and scorning all admonition and reproof? You are rushing into the jaws of never-ending destruction! The end of these things is death; and yet will you have no compassion on your own souls? Has the compassion of the condescending, the entreating, the bleeding and dying Saviour, no attractions for you? Will you still despise his tears, his groans, his death, and his merciful warnings and invitations? Who, then, in heaven or on earth either can or will have compassion on you? "Who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest?" "Kiss ye the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

4. Let weak and timid Christians be encouraged. We have set before you the compassionate Saviour. Put your case into his hands. Trust in his compassion. "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." None ever perished that trusted in him. "For the Lord will not cast off for ever; for though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." Hear how tenderly he speaks of penitent Ephraim bemoaning himself under a sense of his guilt and worthlessness: "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I speak against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore, my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Amen.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT ESTABLISHED AND VINDICATED;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, CAMPBELL STREET, GLASGOW,

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"Once in the end of the world hath Christ appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."—HEBREWS IX. 26.

MANY ages had elapsed since the voice of the Almighty sounded through Eden in the delivery of the promise and the proclamation of mercy to man. Adam and his partner believed in the prediction, and at the early period in which they lived expected its accomplishment. Righteous Abel, in obedience to the divine command, and in assured expectation of the coming Deliverer, unhesitatingly offered his typical sacrifice. Faithful Abraham, looking through a long vista of years, saw afar off the distant day, and was glad. Moses spake to the Israelites of the Mighty Prophet who was yet to appear, for whom it became them to wait, and to whom their descendants would yield obedience. Isaiah gave a bold and a beautiful sketch of his mysterious character, and a clear and a condensed account of his ignominious death. In short, the eyes of the children of God for age after age were directed to the approaching period. The antediluvians, however, lived their hundreds of years, and all died, as Adam did, without seeing the great Deliverer. The priests ministered for a lifetime in the temple, and beheld no signs of Him whom all the sacrifices which they presented typified. The prophets, as they were severally moved by the Holy Spirit, spake of his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, and closed their eyes in the sleep of death, without obtaining a glimpse of Him to whom they all bore witness. Victim after victim stained the altar with its blood; year after year passed away; century after century rolled on; and still no appearance of Him for whom the faithful had all watched, of whom they had all spoken, in whom they had all trusted, and by whom they were all saved. Son after father from age to age indulged the same hope—wistfully looked towards the same undefined distance before them; but the wide waste of waters still met the eye without the speck of a sail all round the horizon. The darkness of night yet brooded over the earth, and not one precursory beam announced the approach of the great luminary of day. Still, however, the interesting era was

expected. Hope had not failed; faith had not wavered; God was not slack concerning his promise. The predicted period arrived; the fulness of time approached; the mighty Deliverer appeared; the mysterious work was begun. In the end of the world Christ came and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Now, it may be asked, why was not the promised Son at once given? why did not the Almighty Redeemer at once appear? why was not Jesus a member of the family of Adam? the son of Eve rather than of Mary? why did he not grow up to man's estate along with Cain and Abel, and exhibit before the first brothers of the human race the holy life which it became them to imitate? why did he not live, and suffer, and die about the beginning of time, that, thus early, men might know how great was the love of their Maker towards them, and how extreme His abhorrence of the sins they had committed? Would it not have been advantageous for every succeeding generation to be told of the holy life which Christ left as an example—of the awful death which he died as a sacrifice—of the glorious victory which he gained over the grave, and of the prevalent intercession which he was making in heaven? These are questions which are very easily asked, and as easily answered. The Almighty in his wisdom, seldom, in an instant accomplishes his purposes or finishes his plans; the operations of his hand, in general, are gradual. The light appears faintly in the dawn, long before it brightens into the full splendour of noon. The babe becomes the boy, the boy the youth, the youth the man. The winter by its mellowing power prepares for the budding of spring, the spring for the fructifying heat of summer, and the summer for the ripening and luxuriance of autumn. It certainly, therefore, is not astonishing that the Almighty, in a way somewhat analogous, should gradually prepare the world for the appearance of his Son—that by signs from heaven and sacrifices on earth—that by the songs of prophets and the shouts of angels, men should be made aware of his approach.

This became the more necessary as the Messiah was to appear but once, as it was only in one quarter of the world, and during one period of time that he was to live, and suffer, and die. But besides this, it is not to be forgotten that advantages, and great advantages, arose from delay. In the prophecies we have, as it were, a map of the Messiah's journeys, a history of the Messiah's deeds; these we can compare with the life of Jesus, and see if they correspond; and thus we can ascertain, in a way which, unless there had been delay, we never could have done, whether he was indeed the Mighty Prophet promised to the fathers, just as we can satisfy ourselves by bringing together the halves of a rock or a tree which have been severed from each other, that they originally formed parts of the same whole. For these and other reasons, some of which may be hid in the divine mind, it was in the end of the world, or, as the words might be rendered, in the end of the ages, at the conclusion of the Mosaic dispensation, that Christ came and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The object of the discourse shall be to prove that Jesus offered himself a sacrifice for sin; or, in other words, to establish and to vindicate the interesting and all-important doctrine of the atonement—a doctrine which lies at the very foundation of our holy religion; which is the life-blood of the christian system; which like a thread of gold is interwoven with the whole contexture of the law and the Gospel, and which is written as with a sunbeam upon almost every page of revelation. To deny it, is not merely to distort, but to destroy the Gospel; for it is from this pervading principle, and others necessarily connected with it, that it derives its delightful and distinguishing character. Let me have your attention, then, my friends, while I endeavour to establish and to vindicate the truth, that Christ offered himself an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of his people.

That man is a sinner, is a fact which is attested by observation, proved by experience, and asserted in Scripture. It is attested by observation: the sorrows which assail him, the diseases which attack him, the death which alarms him, and the judgment which awaits him, all combine in proclaiming that he has sinned against his Maker. It is proved by experience: the conflict maintained between the opposing elements in his bosom, the stings of an accusing conscience, the fears and the forebodings of the coming vengeance of Jehovah, all unite in

declaring his departure from his God. It is asserted in Scripture: its express and explicit declarations are, that in man dwells no good thing; that the imaginations of his heart are evil continually; that there is none righteous, no, not one; that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Since this is the case, since all the descendants of Adam have fallen from their integrity and forfeited their inheritance, the most important inquiry which can occupy their thoughts or engage their attention, is, the practicability of their being reinstated in the favour of God; and in the event of such a reinstatement being attainable, the mode by which an end so desirable can be gained. Now, it is a fact which every one versant in the history of the species most readily admits, that among the various tribes of the human race, whether savage or civilized, there seems to be a persuasion that it is possible to propitiate an offended Deity; and that this is to be effected, not by repentance for sin, nor by reformation of conduct, but by offering some sacrificial atonement, by substituting another in the room of the offender, and by devoting the innocent victim to the destruction to which the sinner was doomed. In this persuasion the blinded nations have led their flocks to the altar and consigned their children to the flames. Reason enlightened by revelation, at once perceives the inutility of these horrid, hateful rites, and laments over the ignorance and the infatuation of mankind, which could lead them to believe that the slaughter of an irrational animal could atone for the guilt of its proprietor, or the sacrifice of an unconscions babe wash away the sin of its parent. Yet, however cruel and criminal the mode of expression, however absurd the principle of believing that one sin may be atoned for by the commission of another of a still deeper dye, it is not difficult to recognise in these heathenish rites the general belief of the inefficacy of repentance and reformation in order to pardon, and the absolute need of an atoning sacrifice. The same principle is plainly recognised and powerfully enforced in the Word of God. There we are told that without shedding of blood there can be no remission; there we find that sacrifices were offered, according to God's command, by his ancient people—sacrifices which, though incapable of making an expiation, were intended and calculated to keep constantly before the mind of the worshipper the doctrine of the necessity of atonement in order to pardon, and to pre-

figure that great propitiatory sacrifice which in the fulness of time was to be offered for the sins of the world. Now that sacrifice which unenlightened reason perceived to be necessary, but sought in vain to obtain; that sacrifice to which all the Mosaic institutions pointed; that sacrifice in the faith of which patriarchs, and priests, and prophets lived and died—that sacrifice was offered by Jesus of Nazareth when he bowed his head amidst the sympathizing throes of nature, and when, from amid the darkness which at noonday overshadowed the land, he exclaimed in the accents of victory, “It is finished!”

Though we had no other ground to go upon than the simple singular fact that the innocent Jesus suffered and died, we should have quite enough to warrant us in asserting that he suffered and died for the sins of others, that he became a victim for human transgression. We admit, indeed, that the death of Jesus, when considered merely by itself, proves nothing more than that he fell a victim to the malice and malignity of those who crucified him; but then we hold, when taken in connexion with the indisputable fact that he was without spot and blameless, that his sufferings and death can be accounted for on no other principle consistent with the perfection of the divine moral character and the divine moral government, than on the principle that he suffered and died as the substitute or surety of guilty man. That under the government of a wicked king the best of his subjects should be despised and detested, that they should be dragged before tribunals and be doomed to live in dungeons, and sentenced to die at stakes, I can easily believe, and many, many a page in this world's history will confirm me in my belief; but that under the reign of a righteous prince the same proofs of mal-administration should be given, is an opinion which the most credulous among mankind could not be induced to adopt. At such a time we should expect to find that the wicked should be punished for their doings, and the righteous rewarded for their deeds; that no dungeon should be the abode of the upright, and no scaffold be stained with their blood. Now, upon the same principle, were the Governor of the universe the very opposite of what he is—were he a God of impure eyes looking with complacency upon iniquity—were he one in whose presence holy angels could not dwell, and in whose company devils would delight, then we should expect that a just man and a perfect man

like Jesus should be doomed to feel the effects of his dread and dire indignation. But since holy, holy, holy, is His name, since justice and judgment are the basis of his throne, and the perfection of purity the essence of his character, then we might expect that the immaculate Jesus, instead of being loaded with punishment, should be heaped with reward. Supposing for a moment that he was a mere man, and he is admitted almost on all hands to have been a perfect man, how, I ask, is it consistent with the divine justice and goodness, that such a person should be made liable to suffering and doomed to death? It is as inconsistent with the principles upon which the divine moral government is established, as if Adam had been driven from the garden and had been doomed to descend into the grave, while the wily tempter had not entered the sacred enclosure, while the fruit of the forbidden tree remained untouched. It is as inconsistent with the principles upon which the divine moral government is established, as if Gabriel were to be banished from heaven, while he remained pure as he came from the hand of his Maker, or while he continued employed in the service of his God.

For the diseases which assail the best and the holiest of men, for the death which lays them low in the tomb and reduces them to putrefaction, and from putrefaction to dust, I can very easily account; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and every sin deserves punishment here and punishment hereafter. But how shall we account for the sufferings of Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, whose character was a beautiful combination of all the great and amiable moral qualities, of all the active and passive virtues, like the colours of the rainbow, so mixed and blended together as to form absolute perfection and loveliness, and who was, therefore, entitled to every comfort which the consciousness of perfection could bestow? How shall we account for the circumstance that he who was not a mere man, but a man in union with divinity, was visited with calamities so numerous, so varied, and so severe, as to surpass, not only all that we in our present state can experience, but all that we in our present state can conceive?

I know, indeed, that it has been maintained by those who deny the divinity, and with it the atonement of Jesus Christ, that his humble life, and severe sufferings, and

ignominious death, were intended merely as proofs of the divinity of the mission on which he came—as evidences of the truth of the doctrines which he preached—as illustrations or exhibitions of the virtues of fortitude and patience in the most trying and terrible circumstances. Now, I cheerfully concede, and I rejoice in the concession, that these ends were gained by the Saviour's incarnation, and sufferings, and death; but then I hold they were but the subordinate ends of these most astonishing events. I hold that his sufferings and his death cannot be accounted for in this way, either upon a principle of necessity or upon a principle of justice. I affirm, that his sufferings and his death cannot be accounted for in this way upon a principle of necessity. The divine character of his mission and the truth of his doctrines are supported by a host of other arguments which, when allowed to operate with their full force upon the human mind, will be found to be altogether overwhelming. The train of unquestioned and unquestionable miracles which he wrought; the striking fulfilment of Old Testament predictions in the history of his life and in the manner of his death; the rapid and resistless advances of Christianity throughout various quarters of the world, in the midst of much opposition, and unaided by anything like princely power; and the striking and blessed changes which it accomplishes on the character and the condition of man wherever it is preached—all these afford the most indisputable evidence that it is the religion of heaven. There could be no necessity, therefore, for our Saviour to suffer and to die, to prove what, by these and other arguments, was placed altogether beyond the possibility of honest doubt. And with respect to the other end represented as gained by the Saviour's sufferings and death, the illustration of the virtues of fortitude and patience, in the most trying and terrible circumstances, even though we should admit that these could not have been exemplified without the Author of Christianity submitting to degradation and death, we would still hold that this end might have been accomplished without his being subjected to sufferings in his body and his soul, which defy description, and exceed conception. We would maintain, what must be evident to every one from the mere statement, that this end would have been gained by his being subjected to just as much suffering as the greatest of human sufferers were doomed

to endure. But we know that there were no sorrows like to his sorrows; that his visage was more marred than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men; that time would fail us to tell what he suffered from his friends, and his foes, and his Father. Had there been no other end in view by the sufferings and the death of Christ than that to which we are at present referring, we are fully warranted in asserting, that there was a thousand times more suffering inflicted than what was necessary to gain this end—a circumstance which we cannot suppose would ever be allowed to take place under the government of a wise, and just, and merciful God—a part which an affectionate Father would never, never have acted towards an only-begotten and well-beloved Son.

But we not only assert that the death of Christ cannot, upon the system we are endeavouring to expose, be accounted for upon a principle of necessity, but also that it cannot be accounted for upon a principle of justice. Granting for a moment that Christianity could not be confirmed and illustrated in any other way than by the sufferings and the death of Christ, we must give up the opinions which we hold with regard to the moral attributes of the divine character, before we can lead ourselves to believe that the most obvious principles of justice would be disregarded to accomplish these ends. Desirable as it may be to prove the truth of the doctrines of heaven, and important as it may be to set before man an unerring example to direct his steps, they are procured by means altogether unjustifiable, when the innocent Son of God is apprehended and judged, condemned and crucified. Thus, then, it is evident that this system will never account for the sufferings and death of the immaculate Jesus. But, grant that Jesus suffered and died as an expiatory victim—that, standing in man's place, he met with man's punishment, and you at once see a reason for all that he endured. Admit this, and you do not wonder that the Saviour suffered and that the Saviour died. You do not wonder that the substitute of sinners should be treated as a sinner, or that he who stood in the room of those who provoked the vengeance of the Almighty should have outpoured upon him the vials of his wrath.

Some, indeed, may be disposed to tell us "that at this they greatly wonder; that this is the objection which they have above all others to the doctrine of the atonement: that

it represents the innocent as suffering for the guilty, and that such a mode of procedure in their estimation can never be reconciled with the justice and truth of God, who will render to all according to their works." That this is an objection that has proved startling to many, is not to be denied; and that it has something like force in it, is not to be concealed; and this being the case, I trust, my friends, you will not consider your time as mis-spent in listening to a few of the reasons by which it may be repelled. Let me have your attention to the three following remarks:—I meet the objection, by considering the nature of the person that suffered: by reasoning from analogy: and by showing that the objection bears as much, if not more, against the system of our opponents than it does against ours.

I. Let us consider the nature of the person that suffered. And I call upon you to remark, that this is a case of absolute peculiarity—one to which we can find no parallel.

In the first place, the divine person who undertook the work of redemption was perfectly independent. He was free to plan and to execute his design. He was possessed of the power to go through with it triumphantly. He could do and suffer all that was necessary for the accomplishment of the important undertaking, without sustaining anything approaching to discomfiture. Listen to his language, and learn from it the readiness with which he engages in the work, the resoluteness with which he pursued it, and the confidence with which he anticipated its triumph: "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God. Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again; this commandment have I received of my Father."

Secondly. Let it be observed, that he was not taken unawares. He was not hurried into an engagement, the nature of which he did not understand, or the direful and dreadful effects of which he did not anticipate. No. He had a perfect knowledge of all that was requisite to the accomplishment of his undertaking. The height from which he was to descend, the stable in which he was to be born, the cottage in which he was to be brought up, the carpenter's bench at which he was to toil, the wilderness in which he was to be tempted, the garden in which he was to bleed, the judgment-seat at which he

was to be condemned, the cross he was to carry, the thorny garland he was to wear, the place in which he was to die, the grave in which he was to be buried, the mountain from which he was to ascend—all met his eye when he agreed to be the substitute of guilty man. The conduct of the unbelieving Jews, of the perfidious traitor, of the timorous disciples, of the pusillanimous judge, of the unfeeling executioners, and the unthinking rabble, the dreadful withdrawal of his Father's countenance—all were foreseen, foretold, expected. Every step he was to take, every pang he was to endure, every sigh he was to heave, every groan he was to utter, every drop of blood he was to lose—all were foreknown and anticipated. Before the commencement of the dreadful tragedy, how minutely did he predict it! How ardently did he desire that his baptism of blood might be administered! He saw the end from the beginning. Before his eye all futurity lay open. He knew all things; he knew when his hour was come; he knew when the mighty work was finished; and, like the wounded conqueror, he expired on the field, uttering the accents of victory!

In the third place, it is to be remarked, that his engagement was perfectly voluntary. According to the view we have taken of his person, it was impossible it could be otherwise. Being the mighty God, equal with the Father, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, he had no superior whom he was bound to obey, and, therefore, he would not have violated any obligation, though he had never lived on earth, died on Calvary, or interceded in heaven. His manifestation in the flesh was an act of sovereign, as well as mysterious, condescension; and, in all that he endured, in the nature he assumed, he was a willing sufferer. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." "Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

II. But, in answering the objection, that the doctrine of the atonement represents the innocent as suffering for the guilty, I reason, in the second place, from analogy. We find in the dispensations of Providence, both

individuals and communities plunged into extreme distress, and enduring acute suffering, and exposed to death, in consequence of the commission of sins in which they had no share. None of the descendants of Adam acted any part in the commission of that sin which robbed him of his innocence and drove him from Eden. The thing was impossible; not one of them as yet occupied a place among created intelligences; yet, in consequence of this sin, they were all made sinners; in consequence of this sin, they were all doomed to die. The babe of a day or a week old had no share in those acts of iniquity which induced the Almighty to take vengeance on the antediluvians, and to sweep them by a deluge from the face of the earth; and yet it was engulfed in the same waves, and drowned in the same waters, with its ungodly parents. The family of the drunkard do not join with him in partaking of the intoxicating draught; and yet they are doomed to experience the baneful effects of their father's dissipation. They are left to grow up in ignorance, to live in poverty, to fall victims to vice. Here the same difficulty is connected with these dispensations of Providence that is brought to bear against this doctrine of grace.

III. But, in the third place, I shall now take up the subject in another light, and endeavour to show, that the objection we are considering bears as strongly against the doctrine of our opponents as it does against ours. You will remark, that the whole point and power of the argument lies in the fact, that the sufferer was innocent, *entirely* innocent. In Jesus we behold an innocent person exposed to suffering, from the first hour of his existence down to the moment of his death. This holds true, whether we admit or deny his expiatory sacrifice. Though the doctrine of the atonement had never been mooted either by ancient or modern theologians; though it had been preached from no pulpit, and published in no body of divinity, it would have been as true, as that the sun shines in the firmament of heaven, that Jesus suffered and died on the cross of Calvary. The facts are unalterable, whatever may be assigned as the reason of their having happened. If he did not suffer in our stead; if he did not die for our sins, but, simply as the objector would have it, to

evince the truth of his testimony, and to exhibit for our imitation an example of patience, still this is suffering for us; this is dying for our advantage; and, that being the case, the objection bears as strongly against the system we are opposing, as it does against the system we have been endeavouring to establish. It is still the innocent suffering for the guilty: so that we conceive we have here the objector on the horns of a dilemma; he must either give up the objection, or solve the difficulty which he himself has raised. It has been well remarked, if there was no injustice in inflicting sufferings on an innocent person for an inferior end, surely there could be no injustice in inflicting the same sufferings on the same person for an end incalculably superior. Your time will not permit me, my friends, to pursue this subject farther at present, nor to bring forward the important practical lessons which may be deduced from it; but I cannot conclude without remarking, that the doctrine which we have been endeavouring to establish and vindicate is one which is supported in Scripture with a clearness and an abundance of evidence in grand proportion to its magnitude and importance. Take the following as a selection from the mass of proofs that might be advanced both from the Old and New Testaments, from the predictions of prophets and the preaching of Apostles: "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." "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." "For the transgression of my people was he stricken. He shall bear their iniquity." "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "He gave himself for our sins." "He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN MITCHELL, D.D., S.T.P., Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. PETER M'MORLAND, Paisley.

TRUE GRACE;

A SERMON,

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

“Exhorting, and testifying, that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.”—
1 PETER v. 12.

GRACE, in scriptural language, denotes, in general, free favour to the unworthy—to the guilty. Accordingly, the Gospel, which proclaims salvation freely to all, is here denominated “the grace of God.” This designation, in this reference, occurs in other passages of the New Testament. “I beseech you,” writes Paul to one Church, “that ye receive not the grace of God in vain,” *i. e.* the Gospel of salvation, and the dispensation of saving mercy through it. “The grace of God,” says he, addressing himself to another society of Jesus, and applying the term to the Gospel still more obviously, “which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.”

Now, the Gospel may be considered in three views. First, and most characteristically, it may be contemplated as a *promise* of life and salvation through Jesus Christ; indeed, as a cluster of exceeding great and precious promises altogether free, and fraught with the richest blessings: “This,” saith John, “is the promise which he hath promised us, eternal life;” “and this life is in his Son.” Again: the Gospel may be viewed as a *testimony*, in which the messengers of the Lord of Hosts, as faithful witnesses, announce certain great facts; call the attention of the world to them; proclaim the grace of God to man as associated with

them; claim the faith of mankind in them, and protest against the unbelief of those who refuse—appealing to the judgment of God, as that which shall confirm the truth of their testimony, as well as avenge the guilt and disobedience of such as slight or gainsay it. “None of these things,” cries the magnanimous Apostle of the Gentiles, “move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.” “We have seen, and do testify,” saith John, “that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” Lastly: the Gospel is frequently represented as a promulgation of privilege, involving, of course, a prescription of duty, pointing to the hope of man, explaining the plan of salvation through the cross of Christ, and inculcating upon all the necessity and the importance of immediately embracing this way of life, and availing themselves of that “grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Obviously, the apostle Peter, in our text, while he doubtless includes the first of these considerations, is viewing the Gospel immediately in the two last, as an *exhortation* inculcating duty, and as a *testimony* proclaiming truth, and inviting men to improve it. And he employs both expressions to indicate his own earnestness in the address, as well as the deep interest which they had in acting upon it. “I exhort and testify,” would he say, as the sum of my writings, and the scope of my ministry, “that this is the grace, the true grace of God wherein ye stand.” He calls his Gospel, his record

concerning salvation, as well as that of his brethren the *true* grace of God, because, in contradistinction from all false and delusive methods of recovery for fallen man, it was the only sure basis of hope—that which could alone justify the dependence of the sinner, or ensure the salvation of the perishing.

This is the view which we apprehend is peculiar to the passage, and which, as a truth of great importance, we propose at this time, through divine aid, briefly to illustrate.

We exhort and testify, then, with Peter, and with all the Apostles, that the method of redemption proposed in the Scriptures, and proclaimed in the Gospel, by sovereign mercy reigning through the cross of Christ, is the *true grace* by God—that alone which is founded in fact, which can yield satisfaction to the reflecting mind, or will be realized at last; and that all other plans of salvation which men have invented or adopted, however specious they may appear, or confidently they may have been put forward, and recommended, as calculated to honour God, and magnify his mercy, will and must prove delusory, and, if persisted in, destructive. This is evidently a question in which we are all deeply concerned; and let us, my brethren, apply ourselves to the solution of it with that serious attention, and that openness to conviction, which become sincere and candid inquirers after the truth, and that truth in which our everlasting interests are involved.

Now, there are *five* opinions which have been entertained on this all-important subject, viz., That God can, and will overlook sin as a matter of course, flowing from his infinite benignity; that he will accept of external rites and oblations as a compensation for moral guilt and crime; that he will be satisfied with the obedience which man can render in his present imperfect state, as the ground of pardon, of acceptance, and of eternal redemption; that if not, he will at least accept of such obedience, when set off and recommended by the interposition of the Saviour, as *jointly* the price of salvation; and that nothing but the grace of God, reigning through that righteousness of Christ, which is the result of his obedience unto the death, in the room of sinners, as recorded in the Sacred Volume, and published in the glorious Gospel, can lay a solid foundation for our hopes, or ultimately ensure our immortality. The last is that which we conceive the apostle Peter here denominates *the true grace of God*; and

we shall endeavour in the sequel to show, that the four first are totally inadequate and unsatisfactory, and that the fifth alone can be admitted, according to the doctrine of Scripture, or the dictates of reason, as either suitable to our state, or satisfactory to a reflecting mind. Come, then, and let us “reason with you before the Lord.” Let us, with the Bible in our hands, subject each of these opinions, in succession, to the test of divine truth, as well as of enlightened consideration, and draw that conclusion which both shall seem to warrant. “We shall speak as to wise men, judge ye what we say.”

I. There are those who expect ultimate salvation on this principle, that God from his great goodness will overlook sin, and decline to punish it as a matter of course.

This is an opinion which hardly any of you will avow, and perhaps none of you will advocate. Yet it is congenial to the corrupted mind; has been not only adopted, but argued by others; and, there is reason to fear, is secretly entertained by very many. Nor, let this apprehension seem to be spoken lightly or hazarded rashly; for it is susceptible, we conceive, of proof. All of us, when we think seriously, and speak candidly, must admit that we are sinners, great sinners. Scripture asserts that we are, and conscience, corroborating the testimony of the Word of God, condemns us in many things. Melancholy facts support, and illustrate, the evidence of both. For, are our hearts given to that God who made them, who claims them, who is the proper object of supreme love and desire, and who alone can fill them, and should reign within them? How often is God not in all our thoughts? How much of our lives is spent, I will not say in positive vice, yet, in the pursuit of vanity and of the world, without acknowledging, or designedly serving him, to whom we owe all homage and all obedience? How low our gratitude; how cold our love; how small and utterly inadequate all the returns we make to this great Being! We might, in truth, carry the matter much farther, and state the case much higher; but we wish to carry your convictions along with us, and accordingly have made the representation of guilt such as we apprehend must at once be admitted by all.

Now, that God knows, and cannot but disapprove such a spirit, and such conduct, will not be denied or doubted, we presume, by any one. Neglect of God is the essence of all crime; practical transgression is open

insult to his majesty, and rebellion against his rightful authority and holy laws. Both must be unspeakably provoking to the eyes of his glory. How, then, are we to escape the consequences of his anger and our transgressions? Many think that he must overlook all; that, in consistency with his boundless benignity, he cannot punish ultimately the trespasses of any; and that sinners shall be saved at last, as a matter of necessity and of course. Perhaps none of you will venture openly to espouse these sentiments; but have not "your hearts been secretly beguiled, and, perhaps, soothed amid the commission of crime by them?" Do you not rest upon such hopes, and betray that you do so by utter carelessness about spiritual salvation in every form, and upon every other ground? Certainly, there were those of old who did so; and, as human nature has not been essentially changed in the course of ages, we may presume, that there are those still who embrace such opinions, and act upon them. "The sinners of my people say," (is the testimony of God concerning the Jews in the time of Amos) "the evil shall not overtake or prevent us." And, again, saith God by Zephaniah, "The men that are settled upon their lees, say in their hearts, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." And, at an earlier period of his history, this is represented by Moses as language which might be justly ascribed to them, though equally indicative of sottishness and of impiety, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, and add drunkenness to thirst." Such impunity, indeed, would be amazing "grace," on the part of God, (*i. e.*, free favour to the guilty); but is it "*true grace*," is it such grace as can be imputed to him without impiety? Assuredly not. It is totally incompatible with his revealed characters. For if He be "the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, longsuffering and slow to wrath, abundant in goodness," it is also testified of him that he is "abundant in truth, and will by no means clear the guilty." It is irreconcilable with the dictates of right reason; for, as the poet says,

"A God all mercy, is a God unjust."

And it is opposed to the honour and interests of the divine government. What would be the consequences? How fearful, how sweeping, how disastrous! Then Jehovah would be conceived as conniving at sin, and as accessory to the iniquity

of the universe; then indiscriminate lenity would necessarily embolden crime; then the foundations of law, and order, and justice, and practical goodness would be subverted; then no distinction would be made, in the last and great day of God, betwixt good and evil, the righteous and the wicked; then the enemies of "the Holy One and the Just" would be treated even as his friends; fiends would be accepted no less than seraphs and saints; hell would be emptied, and heaven filled with rebels unreconciled, with criminals unconverted, and with reprobates unchanged and unsanctified. In short, this hope, which the careless and the wicked are so apt to entertain, is a principle of the most flagrant impiety, of the most atrocious licentiousness. It, indeed, is not *the true grace of God*. Reason and Scripture alike disavow, and repudiate it. But,

II. There are many who would not be thought to adopt this hypothesis of necessary impunity to the unbelieving and impenitent transgressors of every class, arising from the goodness of God—and yet conceive that *he will accept of external rites and oblations*, of religious forms and observances, as a compensation for the neglect of duty, and for the violation of his holy law.

This is an idea somewhat more plausible, and has accordingly been explicitly entertained, and avowed, by a much greater proportion of mankind. It, in truth, enters into the essence of all false religions. The sinfulness of man is universally supposed in them, as in the true religion; but it has been imagined by their adherents, that Deity can be propitiated by various ceremonies and sacrifices, especially by those that are expensive and bloody. Upon this principle, it is obvious, every institute of paganism is constructed. Whether the worshipper tortures himself, or torments and slays his victim; whether the incense rises, or the blood descends; he retires from the scene of penance, or from the altar of offering, with the persuasion that he has appeased the divinity, and become entitled to such blessings as he has to bestow. Nay, the Jews, who ought to have known better things, were impressed with this belief. Accordingly, amid the perpetration of their crimes, and the denunciations of their prophets, they cried out, not only without trembling apprehension, but with boastful confidence, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these!" And is there not reason to fear, that there is too great a leaning to forms, under the clearer light of

the Gospel, and among all parties of Christians. Do you not see, from day to day, some of one class for example, though sunk in carelessness, or addicted to vice, deluding themselves with the hope that penance and prayer, the confession and the mass, rites and ceremonies the most frivolous and unintelligible, can atone for guilt, propitiate God, and save the soul? Nay, among the disciples of a purer faith and simpler institute, may we not detect an undue dependence upon the mere ceremonial of service? Examine your own hearts, my brethren, I entreat you, and inquire whether your coming hither from Sabbath to Sabbath, and your punctual attendance upon the ordinances of divine grace, even though you be conversant only with forms, though you hardly hear, immediately forget, and never improve what is said, does not secretly soothe your consciences, and inspire you with the hope of final salvation? I fear it does so in more cases than we are aware, or may be willing to acknowledge. Indeed, this is a delusion which formalists and hypocrites constantly practise upon themselves—a vain and fruitless ceremonial by which they think to impose upon God. And such, alas! will be the confidence of not a few professing Christians to the last. “Many,” “as our Lord testifies, “will say unto him, in the day of judgment, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? (Matt. vii. 22.) Have we not “eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.” To whom he will profess and say, “I tell you, I know you not whence you are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” (Luke xiii. 26, 27.) Thus the fatal delusion will be cherished by multitudes to the end; and they will be scarcely awakened from their flattering dream by the peal of the last thunders.

Now, were Jehovah to accept of appearances instead of realities, of forms instead of actual services, and of heartless obedience instead of holy conduct, this might be accounted grace indeed; but is it such grace as we dare impute to God? Is it *true grace*? Is it such, that you would venture to rest your eternal all upon it? I hope not. And, if you did, you would act a part the most foolish, and entirely contrary to the most explicit testimonies of Scripture. The very question is proposed, and the answer given, in the book of the prophecies of Micah: “Wherewith shall I come before

the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with calves of a year old; will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” Listen, also, to the sublime argument and expostulation of God, addressed to his ancient people, who had fallen extensively into this sad error: “Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

III. But, abandoning the hope of salvation exclusively by external rites, there are some who think that this is *to be attained by human obedience alone, and by such obedience as man can render in his present sinful and imperfect state.*

That God prefers the obedience of the life to mere ecclesiastical rites, is certain. “Hearken,” cried Samuel, as the interpreter of the mind of God to Saul, when the latter had transgressed a command of positive duty, under the pretence of reserving something for the oblations of Jehovah, “hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” And saith David, inculcating the same truth, and speaking by way of preference, “Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

But the obedience of man, in its best form, you know, is greatly defective. How little is there of enlightened view, how little

of holy principle, how little of filial love, how little of disinterested regard, how little of grand and godlike aim, is there in the services of the best! Verily, they are sinfully imperfect in every view.

Were God, then, to condescend to accept these sinful and imperfect services as the ground of hope, how liberal, how generous, would he appear! But would this, I ask again, be "*true grace*"—grace such as we may ascribe to Him, and as the Scriptures represent to be the principle of his moral government? Unquestionably not. Can God, think you, accept that which is greatly, or altogether, without holy principle, without godly spirit, without honourable aim? Much more, can he render immortality as the recompense of obedience so essentially and criminally defective? "If we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away," (and surely all may confess what the best must acknowledge,) can heaven be the appropriate reward of such agents and doings? Nay, rather might not God say to such, as he said to his ancient people, "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy Governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person, saith the Lord of Hosts?" No, verily: this maimed, tarnished, bloated righteousness, the all-seeing and holy God cannot, will not, sustain as the proper price of eternal life. If we would "acquire life" by this means, "we must keep the commandments perfectly." "Blessed alone are they who do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city." Neither, then, is this the right way of salvation; neither is this the *true grace* of God.

IV. Some, however, conceive that, though they dare not depend upon their own righteousness alone, yet, *as aided and supported by the righteousness of Christ*, it may justly become the ground of their hope, and be considered as the true grace of God.

This is an old, a general, and a very plausible hypothesis among the professors of the true religion, and the ostensible friends of the Gospel. Some have ascribed more, others less, to the righteousness of Christ; but all have concurred in placing their own obedience in the foreground, and resting their hope of salvation, ultimately and especially, upon their personal doings.

And were this foundation conceded—

were this plea admitted, there would be grace on the part of God—grace in the appointment of the Saviour—grace in the obedience and atonement of the Saviour, and grace in the acceptance of human merit, (if so proud a name may be attached to so poor a thing,) as the price of "eternal redemption." But this is not the *true grace* of God; for, I ask you, my brethren, where in Scripture is our Saviour's righteousness spoken of as only a secondary thing, subordinate to human worth? Where is it represented under the degrading character of a make-weight—of a certain supplementary provision to human infirmity—of a sort of accessory to human goodness—of an authorized appendage to human merit? Is it not, on the contrary, uniformly asserted to have done all—to have, in the emphatical language of the Prophet, "finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, sealed the vision, and confirmed the covenant?" Are not human doings represented as utterly excluded from the meritorious ground of our hope, though indispensable to its evidences, and inseparable from the enjoyment of its grand results? Assuredly: "we are saved by grace," saith the Apostle, "through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any should boast." And, again, in another passage, which, by its reiterated antithesis, seems intended to preclude all possible mistake or cavil: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." Nor is this all. Speaking in the name of all saints, he thus emphatically acknowledges, in the most pointed terms, their great demerit, while he ascribes all to the free grace of God, flowing through his appointed channel of salvation: "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, and deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his merey he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus our Saviour; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs of eternal life." Thus the association, of which we are speaking, which appears so spacious, and of which some are so fond, is unknown to the Scriptures, and

as presumptuous and unhallowed as it is unauthorized. Neither, then, *in this* have we found the *true grace of God*. But,

Fifthly and finally, there are those who, rejecting this heterogeneous admixture, and every other ground of dependence that is human, *rely for acceptance and salvation, solely upon the grace of God, as it "reigns through the righteousness of Christ unto eternal life."*

You have often heard of this scheme of salvation, and, I trust, in some measure understand it. By it, the mediatory interposition of Christ, including his service and his sacrifice, especially the atonement made to God for sin in his death, is represented as the *only price* of redemption; and the mercy of God flowing to sinners, even the chief of sinners, through faith in this glorious medium, as the great cause of our salvation. Now, that this is the view given in Scripture, the plain doctrine of the Bible; it should seem, especially after what has been already said, there ought to be no remaining; I think there can be no reasonable doubt. Hear, accordingly, how the apostle Paul speaks on this most exalted and interesting subject, in a way greatly analogous to the representation of his brother Peter, in the passage before us, and calculated to throw light upon it: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." One declaration of holy writ, of which the meaning is clear, you know, is as conclusive as a thousand; and, therefore, we think it unnecessary to multiply citations in proof of this point. Suffice it to say, in the language of our text, that this is, indeed, "the true grace of God"—the grace of redemption *pure*, and *free*, and *rich*, and *high*, and *infallible*: *pure*, without any intermixture of human merit: *free*, springing from the sovereign good pleasure of Jehovah alone, and from no necessary impulse of his nature, or controlling necessity, or incidental exigency, of his government: *rich*, exceedingly abundant in every respect, applicable to all, adequate for each, and fraught with the noblest blessings to our fallen race: *high*, grand in its conception, glorious in its character, admirable in its provisions, heavenly in its results: *infallible*, on which we may rest without the fear of disappointment, and in which we can rejoice without the dread of delusion.

In particular, this is the only plan of salvation which places the divine generosity in

the most unexceptionable and attractive light; while it satisfies justice, condemns sin, secures the honours of the divine law, extends the reign of goodness, and brightens the glories of the moral empire of God. On this subject we cannot but avail ourselves of the statements of an original and energetic writer, once a minister of this very city, and a powerful defender of the doctrines of free grace. "This method of salvation," says he, "magnifies justice in the way of pardoning sin, and mercy in the way of punishing it. It shows justice more awful, than if mercy had been excluded; and mercy more amiable, than if justice had been dispensed with. It 'magnifies the law, and makes it honourable.' It magnifies the criminal who broke the law; and the respect put upon the law makes him honourable likewise. Yea, this is so contrived, that every honour done to the criminal, is an honour done to the law; and all the respect put upon the law, puts respect upon the criminal; for every blessing the sinner receives is for the sake of obedience and satisfaction made to the law, not by himself, but by another, who could put infinitely greater dignity upon the law; and the satisfaction of that other for the sinner puts the greater dignity on him that he is capable of. Both the law and the sinner may glory in the cross of Christ. Both of them receive eternal honours and glory by it."*

Such is "the true grace of God," in which his people have all along stood, in which alone they have delighted to stand, and which prophets and Apostles, all the sacred writers, and all the servants and saints of God, with one consent, adopt for themselves, and recommend to you.

We also, my brethren, "exhort and testify, that this is the true grace of God." Accept it as such; bless God for it; rest upon it; and be persuaded, that it is only by doing so that you can, on good grounds, rejoice in "hope of the glory of God."

Ask yourselves, my hearers, with an earnestness and an anxiety suited to the magnitude of the interests depending upon the result, whether you have yet been led to occupy the position of the primitive believers referred to in our text. They know that "other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, even Jesus Christ." Happy are they who have been enabled to build for eternity on this "Rock of Ages;" for "the

* M'Laurin's Sermon on glorying in the Cross.

foundation of God standeth sure ; having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his."

If any of you, as I fear is the case, have not yet done so, oh! be persuaded to betake yourselves to this "rest," ere it be too late. "Behold," saith the Lord God, "I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth in Him shall not be confounded." If ye have doubts, or have been led to occupy any other ground for eternity, we invite you to try the validity of the reasonings that have been laid before you in support of the true method of salvation revealed in the Gospel; and if you find it satisfactory, as I trust you will, to act upon it. Above all, "search the Scriptures"—search them with a prayerful spirit, with a simple aim, and we cannot doubt but the consequence will be a conviction, that "this is the true grace of God," and the only hope of guilty man.

Let not those who have already taken up this position, so sure and so safe, be "moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which has been preached unto them." Beware of depending for salvation upon any thing without Christ, or short of Christ and him crucified. Beware of being led astray by the error of those who, however sincerely, seek, by specious reasonings, to beguile the hearts, and mislead the faith of the simple. Beware of believing any doctrine, or adopting any theory in religion, which leaves Christ out of the system, or which gives him only a subordinate place in the scheme—which involves only a slight reference to him; or which, in short, does not lead you to "rely upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered in the Gospel." Alas! there are some who, as the Apostle says, "preach another gospel," which yet is not the true gospel—the gospel of the grace of God—the glorious gospel of the blessed God our Saviour, and which tends to mislead and to ruin precious immortal souls. "From such turn away."

Ye who have believed through grace be reminded, that it is not sufficient to have taken up your standing on this ground once. You must maintain this position every day, by a steady faith; you must continually strengthen it, amid the various exercises of the divine life, by coming to Christ daily as to your "stone of life." On the righteousness of the Saviour, you must ever rely for acceptance, in all your approaches to God. To the grace of God, as reigning through this

righteousness, you must always have recourse, for strength in your holy work and warfare; as well as for consolation amid all the varied ills of life—in short, for whatever you need as spiritual beings, at all times, under all circumstances, and amid every emergency. You must renounce all false and lying refuges—all selfish dependence. "The true circumcision," are those "who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." The proper language of every saint is that of the man according to God's own heart: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." His grand triumph may be expressed in the words recorded in the prophet Isaiah: "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; in the Lord I am justified, and I will glory."

Yet beware, we beseech you, of turning the "grace of God" into licentiousness. The very thought of this is abhorrent to a pious mind; and be the revolting perversion far from each of you. Remember that true grace is invariably the parent of all practical goodness. See, then, that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teach you, according to the tenor of a passage we have already quoted for another purpose, to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," "adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," and "looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of Him who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."

Finally, let every one of us beware of resisting the grace of God; beware of "receiving it in vain." Be admonished that grace, slighted or rejected, is the greatest crime of which we can be guilty, as it is sinning against the richest mercy of God, and our own highest hopes and interests. On the contrary, let all of us, without exception, seek and strive that we may be to "the praise of the glory of the grace of God." Now, my beloved brethren, may grace, mercy, and peace, be multiplied to you, "through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." And may the God of all grace, who hath called you to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you; and to Him be dominion and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FRUITS OF DRUNKENNESS;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE NEW NORTH CHURCH, PAISLEY, SEPT. 1834.

By the Rev. PETER M'MORLAND.

“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.”—ISAIAH v. 11, 12.

HAVING been waited on, brethren, with a request to draw your attention on this day to the practice denounced in the text; and having been informed, at the same time, that all the ministers in the town, of all denominations, had been waited on with the same request—to which, I understand since, they have all agreed—knowing the fearful prevalence of the sin, and grieving over it as the prolific cause, not only of much personal and domestic misery, but as a great national evil; and believing that a simultaneous movement of this kind might, under God, be productive of the happiest results, I could not refuse, yea, I willingly agreed, to take up, along with my brethren, the subject of intemperance; so that you, and, I trust, through you, others also may be warned, exhorted, and reproved.

What is the light in which the Word of God leads us to look upon this prevalent and spreading evil? “Nor thieves,” says Paul, “nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”—a statement which it would be well, if it were well pondered by us all. “The drunkard and the glutton,” says Solomon, “shall come to poverty; and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.” “Let us walk honestly as in the day,” says Paul, “not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying”—enumerating this sin, among those works of darkness, which every one must cast off who has put on the Lord Jesus. And what striking lessons are taught us, by those examples of this sin which the Word sets before us, for our warning and direction! The intoxication of Noah teaches us to shun it, as that which may lead to the greatest unseemliness. It was when he was overtaken with wine that Lot committed that great sin, of which it is a shame even to speak—showing us how far we may be led, and how fearfully we may wander from the paths of virtue, and what lasting stores of repentance we may lay up for ourselves,

when the intellect is clouded through “strong drink,” and the passions, having slipped their leash, and escaped for the time from the control of reason and of conscience, rage like the very furies after all the objects of unlawful desire, and assert a short, but lamentable, reign of turbulence and wrong. And, moreover, we find that when David, being left of God for a season to his own evil passions, meditated the murder, for it was nothing less, of Uriah the Hittite, whom he had already so grievously wronged, that “he made him drunk”—teaching us that the giving of strong drink, and, more especially, that the giving of it to *excess*, is by no means that proof of friendship for which it is commonly taken; but that under it there may lurk, as there often does, a murderous intention; and even where there may be no such intention, still there results, not the less certainly, the murder of reputation or of peace. Reflect, then, on these examples, and what this sin led its victims into, and then you will understand the true light in which this sin is viewed in Scripture, and what are the poor hopes which they, who are the slaves of it, are warranted to entertain; yea, rather, to speak more correctly, from what hopes they are totally excluded.

Let us glance at the effects produced by this enormous evil, and the calamities that invariably follow in its train.

I. In reference to the individual himself, who is its victim.

It may, perhaps, be made a question by some, When may a man be regarded as intoxicated, and what may be the number of offences, say, which would entitle him to the character and name of *drunkard*? And there are many who, speaking peace to themselves when there is no peace, shield themselves under the indefiniteness of this expression. But though there may be some difficulty in saying at what precise point on this side of evident drunkenness a man may be said to have become intoxicated, yet we

all know in what intoxication essentially consists, viz., in the obscuration of the light of reason, so that it is no longer able fully to exercise its functions; and, therefore, the moment this light has become partially eclipsed, and the moment, perhaps, that that exhilaration begins, which always urges onwards and craves for more—at that moment we may say, that as the individual is in a state of alarming danger, so the process of intoxication has commenced; and, therefore, many a man may be strictly and truly said to be intoxicated, though he does not “reel and stagger like a drunken man.” And though, in like manner, there may be some difficulty in saying when a man is to be ranked among the class of drunkards, whether great excess once in a year, or partial excess once in a month, say, should stamp the name upon his forehead, and rank him among the troop of the abandoned; yet there can be no doubt of this, that such are the practices which do constitute the character of a drunkard, that these practices, if persevered in, will assuredly grow into habits, and lead on to “more ungodliness;” and that all these are sins—sins of drunkenness, which God hates to look upon, which must all be repented of ere they can be forgiven. And this ought to lead all to avoid them diligently, not only as sins themselves, but as tending infallibly to conduct us down the slope of ruin into the lowest depths of mortal humiliation, to which the *descent* is easy; but to *ascend* again, *that* is, indeed, the labour and the difficulty.

No man ever became a drunkard all at once, in ordinary cases I mean; for some have become so instantaneously through the pressure of affliction, and from the impulse of despair; but, in ordinary cases, no man becomes a drunkard *all at once*; he is led on by degrees; and the foundation of that character is commonly laid in joy, though the superstructure be the very monument of grief. It is not the intoxicating beverage that allures at first, (for, in general, the natural taste rejects it,) but the “harp and the viol, and the tabret and the pipe,” that are in the drunkard’s feasts—that hilarity which, innocent perhaps in itself, brings at that time a snare, and that good companionship which, while it dispenses its joys, spits its venom; and it is not so much the liquor that sparkles in the glass, as the wit that sparkles from the lips, and the humour that sets the table in a roar, and the eloquence that kindles the eye with fire, and, as it flashes, launches thunderbolts, that present all the attractions

at first to deluded victims, and make them “continue until night till wine inflame them.”

By and by, however, they come to like the beverage, not on account of the company it brings together, but *for itself*; and, remembering its exciting and exhilarating qualities, have recourse to it at other seasons; first, along with others, for they could not think to drink *alone*; and then in private by themselves, for they cannot want the drink—finding on each occasion some excuse to silence conscience, and to keep themselves up in their self-esteem; till at last, going onwards in their downward career, their drink becomes as necessary as their daily food, and they live with an appetite always craving, and an intellect seldom clear; and what are the invariable accompaniments and consequences?

1. The intemperate man is brought into constant contact with the most worthless companions, who have no fear of God before their eyes, and who lead him on, step by step, till they plunge him into utter and irremediable ruin. “I was the song of the drunkard,” says the Psalmist, speaking in the person of Jesus, meaning that he was their byword, their reproach, and the theme of their merriment. And the text, while it tells us the peculiar nature of their enjoyments, tells us also this as their unhappy characteristic: “But they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.” You would go forth, assuredly, upon a fruitless errand, were you to search for the fear and reverence of God in the haunts of drunkenness; you would be searching for the living among the dead; for there the name of “Christ” is never heard, except as the subject of their song and ribaldry. And when a poor mortal is fairly drawn into a whirlpool like this, how is it possible for him ever to escape, surrounded as he is by difficulties that bar him in on every side, and bound as he is to such society by the likings of his depraved heart? It would be wonderful, indeed, could he escape from the magic circle of such joys, spell-bound as he is; and if, in spite of all the power of that ridicule which he dreads, and the tyranny of those overgrown habits he has formed, he could yet prevail to tear himself away from those boon companions, all whose enjoyments are darkened with the very shade of death. The becoming involved with such companions, is one of the invariable accompaniments of intemperance; and as, among *them*, all evil will be

fostered; and all good laughed and mocked at, so this fosters and aggravates all its other attendant evils.

2. Indulgence in strong drink tends to the eclipse of intellect. This effect may not be exhibited at first. On the contrary, in the first stages of the sin, the opposite result may appear; for the intellect may be frequently seen putting forth its strongest efforts, and the imagination may be seen soaring in its loftiest flights, when the bowl has lent its stimulating influence to the natural powers. This is granted. But have you never seen these same faculties, which the exhilarating draught awakened, for more powerful efforts, by the very same influence, deprived of all their wakeful energy, and steeped in an oblivion, the most complete and the most melancholy; so that far from being capable of bursting forth with more than common brilliancy, they become incapacitated for the performance even of their common functions? Besides, it is a well-known fact, that a long course of habitual insobriety tells not only on the body, but on the mind; and, as it weakens the health, and destroys the activity of the one, so it diminishes and paralyzes the strength and vigour of the other. Who sees not the degradation to which intemperance, as thus viewed and thus exhibited, reduces every human being who is its victim? For, what is it that raises man above the level of the brute creation? Is it not that reason which has been said to be the candle of the Lord within him? And what is it that constitutes the very perfection of humanity? Is it not an intellect well trained for all purposes of reasoning, and of eloquence, and of sound philosophy? This it is that forms the distinguishing ornament, first in itself, of man, and then, in its cultivation of civilized man; and this alone is what we have to boast. In quickness of eye, in swiftness of foot, in keenness of scent, in muscular vigour, in almost all bodily properties, we may be, and are, surpassed by the inferior animals around us; and were it not for the gift of reason, we would long ere this have become their prey. By that reason, however, we have been able to subdue the lion's strength, and outstrip the swiftness of the roe, and to bring down even the eagle from his lofty flight. By that reason we have been enabled to ascend the heavens, to tell the system of the universe, to measure the worlds that revolve on high, to predict their motions and appearances, and to enumerate the causes of

them all. By that reason are we enabled to gather the honey of moral truth, and to lay it up in store—to rear systems, to refute errors, to conduct the affairs of nations, and so to balance conflicting circumstances, as to make them contribute to the benefit of man. By that reason, rightly directed, we become acquainted with the very principles of the government of the Almighty, and are able to go back to causes, and forward to effects, so that we may well look upon man's chief dignity as being seated there. But to have the very pillar of man's excellence thus shaken or defaced; to have the very light that is in him quenched, though but for a season, or flickering only with an ineffectual flame; to have that high attribute, by which he is supremely distinguished, overcome and overborne, and to have the low passions of inferior natures triumphing on its ruins—in these must surely be concentrated the very essence of human degradation! Nebuchadnezzar, driven from the society of men, dwelling with the beasts of the field, and eating grass like oxen, underwent a degradation *similar*, but we cannot say *superior*.

3. Look at the effects resulting, when the orb of reason has undergone this dread eclipse. Then is an inlet afforded for all wickedness, and every crime may find a perpetrator. The strong man of the house being bound, the passions arise like robbers, and rifle his goods. The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, are all permitted to riot in unchecked fury. The monarch of the soul being, for the time, dethroned, the subjects spend themselves in the work of anarchy; and many a step has been then taken, and many a deed done, the consequences of which have haunted the perpetrator through all his succeeding track of existence, making his days wearisome, and his nights a burden. This has filled our jails with prisoners, our ships with convicts; has crowded our scaffolds with their miserable victims, and has thickly peopled hell with her inhabitants. And I doubt not that many who now hear me, will at once be ready to acknowledge, that in such seasons the saddest pages of their history have been written; and that these were their very harvest times of crime and misery. Here I need not particularize—that work will best be done by the conscience of each.

4. No one can sin with impunity; and even in this life, we often see transgression closely tracked by its attendant punishment. But of all sins, that of drunkenness seems

to be peculiarly visited with retribution here; for the loss of reputation invariably follows indulgence in the habits of intemperance. Not only does the intemperate man waste his property, the loss of it may sometimes be the result of circumstances over which he has no control, but he also wastes that "good name which is better than riches," the general loss of which proceeds in almost every instance from misconduct. Every right-thinking man knows the value of a good name. He toils to acquire it; he fights to preserve it; he knows that "he that takes his purse takes trash," but that he that tries to deprive him of his good name, robs him indeed; and therefore does he sit and watch this as the richest jewel in his crown. Who can possess any influence in society? who can promote the cause of God on earth? who can carry on even his secular business, unless he possess a fair reputation, and a good name? But who can trust, who can respect, who could honour a drunkard? His very name becomes a reproach, and pity and contempt are his sole award. These are some of the effects of this sin, then, as respects the individual himself:—that his society consists of those who are themselves on the highway to destruction, and who lead him step by step in the same ruinous career; that indulgence in strong drink tends to the eclipse of intellect; that it urges on to all wickedness and to every crime; that it leads to the loss of character, and the consequent abandonment of friends—effects sufficiently dreadful surely to urge every one who feels himself in danger, to flee immediately from its snares; though, while we contemplate it in such disastrous effects as these, let us never forget, at the same time, and chiefly, to look upon it as a sin explicitly condemned by God, and entailing on the soul that is its victim, everlasting death; for "drunkards," it is written, "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

II. In the second place, let us glance shortly at its results, as far as the drunkard's family is concerned. If there be one corner of our earth, where the air of paradise may still be breathed by man, it is surely in the peaceful, happy, contented family circle, where there flows "the smooth, calm current of domestic joy." This is the only Eden left us; and there flow the only "still waters" which earth can give back to her inhabitants. Kind sympathies, calm affection, unbetrayed confidence are there; and, escaping from the cares of the world, the anxieties of business, and the clashing inter-

course of men, who that has a happy home, does not experience the most exquisite delight in fleeing ever to that quiet sanctuary where he finds peace beside his hearth? And what man, who has ever tasted joys like these, would not look upon the ruin of his domestic happiness as the most appalling of all his desolations? *Let* the storm rage without; *let* the stem of his prosperity be shivered, and his hopes of advancement be laid dead upon the ground, the man who has a *home* still untouched, and who breathes the balmy atmosphere of Eden within his dwelling, however humble it may be, has himself to blame, if he be altogether wretched. And no ruin can be conceived more tremendous than when the roof-tree of a man's domestic happiness falls in, and leaves him a home, but without its joys. *He* is an enemy indeed, who casts a brand into that temple, and envelopes that altar in destructive flames. But this intemperance does.

No one can express the hopes or the joys of a mother, when she sees her son walking in the ways of virtue. She is more deeply interested, perhaps, in his good name, than in aught else besides on earth; and her bosom warms, and her hopes rise, as she hears him pointed out as a pattern to his companions, and sees him walking with firm step in the paths of rectitude. But, in proportion is her sorrow, when she sees the son that she has born and nursed, becoming a worthless profligate, an outcast, and a drunkard. And, oh! my young friends, is it nothing to mar *her* peace, and to tread down *her* springing hopes that bare you, by following practices that will be *your* ruin, as they are *her* agony? Is it not cruel? is it not unmanly? is it not ungenerous? You make her very heart a desolation; you render her home no scene of happiness to her, because it is polluted by the presence of a son, a drunkard.

But it is especially to parents that I would address myself. And though I trust I speak more to the absent than the present, yet if there be one parent here whose conscience witnesseth against him, that he or she (for female intemperance has risen to a mournful height) is chargeable with frequent intemperance, or has any liking for intoxicating drink, I would say, "Think of the desolations that you are working in your sphere." You are bound to "provide for your own;" how do you this? You labour, and you earn. Your earnings may be poor, but how comes it that you have so much to squander upon drink? The truth is, you

provide *not* for your own; your families are starving and in rags, while you are selfishly and cruelly spending all their means; and your homes become unhappy to you, because you meet there, in consequence of your own misconduct, nothing but the look of want, and the language of reproach.—You are bound to wait upon God in his ordinances. You tell us in excuse you have no proper clothing. Tell us conscientiously, whether this be the result of your circumstances, or the result of your intemperance. We venture to say, that what you spend on strong drink would clothe you sumptuously, and make you a blessing to your children.—You are bound to set a good example before your children, and how can this be done while you continue what you are? Think that you do not stand alone in life—that from you an influence descends upon your children, and that not only your own blood, but theirs will be on your head; because your training has nursed them in wickedness, and your example has led them on, till they have become ripe in iniquity, before they have attained maturity of years. Oh! my friends, think on this process as going on in almost innumerable families. The Sabbath day spent in one round of alternate drowsiness and drinking—even the children called on to partake, and that holy day spent in all the brutality of vulgar profligacy; and then will you see what cause we have to fear for the ungodliness of the rising generation, unless means are vigorously used to counteract the evil, and God in mercy bless the means. Intemperance is thus silently but too surely sapping the very foundations of society; and the ravages of the pestilence are nothing compared with *its* desolations. Who, then, that has any regard either for the glory of God, or for the welfare of his country, would not gird on his armour to meet the enemy in the gate?

Thus have we set before you a very hasty sketch of this comprehensive subject.

Weigh, brethren, the pleasures and the pains, the accompanying delights, and the consequent distress. Go to the haunts of drunkenness, and you will find there enjoyments, we deny not; for “the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe,” are in their feasts—every thing pleasant to the eye and ear, and perverted taste of man. Enter the room

unseen, but observing all, where the votaries of intemperance are met in all the glory of enjoyment. Where on earth could be seen such another sight of ecstatic joy? There is not an eye but is beaming with transport, and there is not a heart but beats in rapturous delight. The song is there, and where the song is, must there not be happiness? The ready laugh at even the feeblest glimmering of wit, the grasp of friendly hands, and the thrill of quick sympathy, and the glow of kindest affection are there; the ready promise to stand by each other is profuse; and many a joke is shot from many a practised bow against poor and provident sobriety. The glow of fervid eloquence is there, communicating its quick impulse from heart to heart; and, like a band of brothers, do they sit in joy, as if all with which they were connected were confined within the limits of that happy room, no world without with which was connected one care or one anxiety.—Care! it is no word in their vocabulary; it stands for *nothing* with which *they* seem acquainted. No shade from its unsightly wings darkens one corner of their souls; no croak from its discordant throat disturbs the melody of their delight. Who so churlish in his disposition as to grudge them their happiness? who that would not rejoice in seeing so many human beings absolutely bathed in an overflowing flood of enjoyment?—But, remember, “all is not gold that glisters;” nor all the coin that circulates, good and true. Scenes like these are the very hotbeds of crime, the very nurseries for hell: there Satan busies himself in fanning the fires of lust, in kindling the flame of sinful enterprise; there that character is in the act of forming, or is giving proof of its formation, which necessarily brings on the loss of reputation; which tends to the weakening of man’s most glorious powers; which sheds bitterness and sorrow on many a mother’s heart; which brings up in ignorance and rags many a starving family; which tears up every manly and every generous emotion, and pours a deluge of misery over the face of nations. Look, brethren, “on this picture and on that,” and judge righteous judgment. “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES BARR, D.D., Port-Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BRODIE, Glasgow.

ON ZEAL;

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE SYNOD OF GLASGOW AND AYR,

By the Rev. JAMES BARR, D.D.,

Port-Glasgow.

"For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."—ROMANS x. 2.

THE conversion of Paul to the faith of the Gospel did not weaken the strength or cool the ardour of his affection for his kindred and countrymen, the Jews. He pitied their delusion, mourned over their unbelief, and daily poured forth his soul in prayers for their welfare. They reproached him as an apostate from the truth, and hated him as an enemy to God and to godliness; they pursued him with unrelenting malignity, thirsting for his blood; they made frequent attempts, by open violence and concealed treachery, to put him to death; and, in various instances, he narrowly escaped the snares they had laid for his destruction. "Of the Jews," says he, "five times received I forty stripes, save one; once was I stoned;" and yet he never ceased to testify to the Jews, as well as to the Greeks, repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. He could solemnly declare: "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved." Fidelity impelled him to expose their errors, and condemn their impenitence; but charity inclined him to notice what was commendable, and, as much as possible, to palliate what was criminal. In so far as he was able, he testified in their favour: "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God; but not according to knowledge." They were

honest in their zeal; but honesty can make no atonement for dangerous errors or perverse abuses. They were ignorant, but they shut their eyes to the light; and to their other crimes added the guilt of refusing to be instructed, and of saying, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. The Apostle here ascribes to the Jews an essential and most valuable property of the Christian, and, more especially, of the ministerial character. Their zeal he pronounces to have been fatally defective. From their defects let us learn what ought to be the distinguishing properties of zeal in us.

I remark, then, that the testimony of the Apostle ascribes to the Jews,

I. An essential and most valuable property of the Christian, and, more especially, of the ministerial character. Zeal is a term of which it is easier to conceive than describe the precise import; and there are few terms to be met with in the Sacred Volume whose meaning has been more grossly misunderstood or more injuriously perverted. Two things seem to be included under it. The one is ardour, as opposed to lukewarmness; the other is activity, as opposed to remissness. It implies, that the object which has called it forth is held in the highest estimation by us; that our hearts,

engaged in the love, and animated by the desire of it, prompt us to make every practicable effort, and dispose us to submit to every necessary sacrifice, in order to secure its attainment. Christian zeal is the lively and commanding exercise of christian principle and feeling, expressed in the diligent observance of christian worship and duty, and put forth in the devoted pursuit of christian character and usefulness. It consists in the warm and affectionate exercise of the graces of the Spirit, issuing in the decided and growing production of the fruits of the Spirit. It is founded on an enlightened and firmly-rooted conviction of the truth of the Gospel in general, and of those doctrines, in particular, which the Gospel reveals concerning the state of man as a sinner, the offices of Christ as the Saviour, and the influence of the Spirit as the sanctifier; and it discovers itself by a steadfast adherence to these precious truths, by a readiness to defend them against every attack, and a willingness to suffer for them to any extent; by an earnest desire and active endeavour to recommend and communicate them to those who are ignorant of them, or hostile to them; above all, by a habitual study to exemplify their purifying and practical influence in a conversation becoming the Gospel. In its exercise, zeal, like charity, must begin at home. Personal holiness is its first concern; its second is relative usefulness. The man who searches abroad for evils to remedy, and overlooks those which attach to himself, is either a hypocrite or a fool, or both. There does not exist a more dangerous enemy to religion than he who discovers an ardent zeal in contending for its doctrines, and contributing to its interests, whilst he is living in the open and avowed violation of its requirements. So long as others can reply in the Proverb, "Physician, heal thyself," our wisest counsels and most vigorous efforts for the religious and moral improvement of others will be resisted, or repelled with indignant contempt. But zeal, though it begins, does not terminate with ourselves. It feels for the honour of God and the souls of men; and to advance the one, and save the other, it prompts us to the use of every mean we possess, and to the exertion of every energy we can command, by resisting the progress of error and wickedness, and by promoting the diffusion of pure and undefiled religion over the world. It aims especially at the prosperity and improvement of the visible

Church, by a steady and persevering endeavour to rectify existing abuses, to discountenance prevalent vices, to recommend neglected duties, to convert sinners from the error of their ways, and to build up the faithful in the hope and holiness of the Gospel. It is good to be thus zealously affected in a good thing. The production of this character was the gracious design and is the happy effect of the Saviour's death; "for he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." When this principle is wanting, religion is an empty name—a lifeless carcass. But though there cannot be religion without zeal, there may be zeal without religion. It has been as frequently and as fervently exercised in defending a bad cause as in promoting a good one. The votaries of infidelity set forth an example of zeal which the friends of truth would do well to imitate. Of the Jews, Paul could say, "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God." Their zeal possessed both ardour and activity in a high degree; yet it was essentially defective. It was "not according to knowledge." They acted under a blind and irrational impulse, which urged them to a course of conduct equally at variance with the discoveries of truth and the demands of duty; and which, the more powerfully it was felt, became the more sinful in its exercise, and then more injurious in its effects. It may be proper to specify some of the more prominent defects of that zeal of which the Apostle, in these words, described the general character. It was exerted in contending for matters of

1. Inferior moment, and neglected those which were of supreme importance. The Jews expended the strength of their zeal on points of form and ceremony, and overlooked the weightier matters of the law, scrupulously straining at gnats, but greedily swallowing camels. Those who are most ignorant or indifferent in regard to what is essential, are invariably the most violent and tenacious in regard to what is circumstantial. In proportion as men understand the nature and feel the power of divine truth, they learn to exercise candour and forbearance in every thing that is secondary and subordinate. Liberality, it is true, may be carried to a dangerous extreme, but so may intolerance; and it is better to err on the side of charity, than to incur the imputation of bigotry. The zeal of the churchman

must consist with the spirit of the Christian. The object of zeal is to make converts, not proselytes—to bring accessions to the Church from the world, not to transfer the members of one religious denomination to another. We are to contend for the faith of the Gospel, not about modes of worship and government. These are important to religion, but they are not the thing itself. We should remember, that it is not a connexion with the visible Church, even in its purest form, that constitutes a Christian; that the Christianity which avails to salvation is, not that which we put on by an outward profession of the Gospel, but that which is put on by the Spirit of God, wrought in the heart by the power of God, which consists in the love and likeness of God, and which prepares for the full and everlasting enjoyment of God. Here is an object that is fitted to call forth the most devoted zeal, that is infinitely worthy of all the ardour we can feel, and that will eternally recompense all the activity we can exercise. “He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.” It is to be observed, moreover, that the zeal of the Jews was, in the manner of its exercise,

2. Ostentations and presuming, and was, therefore, a zeal not according to knowledge. They wore broad phylacteries, said long prayers at the corners of the streets, and gave alms, sounding a trumpet before them, that they might be seen of men. Their noisy piety had in it nothing of love to God. They prayed without reverence, and gave thanks without gratitude. Their deeds of beneficence were not the expressions of charity, but the effects of vanity and selfishness. They compassed sea and land to make proselytes, not from a desire to glorify God, and to do good to men, but to advance their own influence and reputation. Our Lord saw through the disguise of their fair professions and their hollow sanctity. He condemned the principle on which they acted; and had their principle been good, he would have had reason to find fault with their practice. He inculcated a course of conduct quite the reverse of theirs, not only in the spirit, but in the manner also. The devotion which he inspires is not that which obtrudes itself on the public eye or ear, but which prayeth to Him who seeth in secret, and who will reward openly. The zeal of which he approves, is not that which assumes useless singularities, and is even nig-

ing its claims to public notice and admiration, and makes up in the loftiness of its pretensions and forwardness of its efforts, what it wants in sincerity of purpose, excellence of principle, and utility of operation but that which entertains the fear lest our good be evil-spoken of, and solicitously avoids giving occasion to them that seek occasion to blaspheme the worthy name wherewith we are called. The influences which he confers, descend not in sudden impulses and overwhelming impressions, but in the silent yet powerful energy that purifies the heart, and produces in the life the peaceable fruits. It is not the men that make the most noise that do the greatest good. Some who have attracted the largest number of followers on earth, may, at last, be seen surrounded with few converts; whilst others who pass through the world unheeded, and hardly known beyond the immediate scene of their labours, shall have many for a crown of joy and rejoicing to them in the day of the Lord. But I remark, once more, that the zeal of the Jews was, in its spirit,

3. Overbearing and uncharitable, and was, therefore, a zeal not according to knowledge. They excluded from the pale of the true Church, and from the privileges of God's family all who did not think as they thought, and do as they did; and arrogated to themselves, and to the members of their communion all that was sound in faith, genuine in principle, or valuable in character. They denied to others the right of judging, which they claimed for themselves; and, had their power corresponded to their inclination, they would speedily have exterminated the Christians who dared to oppose them by consigning their bodies as well as souls to destruction. It would have been well had the intolerant spirit of the Jews died with themselves: but from their time it has descended to our own; and has, in this liberal and enlightened age, made its appearance in a form more offensive, if possible, and to an extent more injurious than it ever assumed even in the most degenerate portions of the Church, and the darkest periods of her history. When we see individuals setting themselves up as the only true Christians on earth, denouncing the religion of the whole world, except their own, as a system of selfishness and idolatry, asserting that they alone have received the teaching and possess the influences of the Spirit, we know not whether most to pity

or to blame. Of a truth, they are least likely to be in the right, who most confidently declare all who differ from them to be in the wrong. Allowing them to be correct in their doctrinal views, they are, at all events, sadly defective in spirit and temper. What authority have we to maintain that no man can be a Christian who does not hold our sentiments, and worship under our form? In his case, there may be a superstition which we condemn, and imperfections of character which we deplore, and obstacles to devotion from which we are happily exempted; but let us beware of limiting the grace of God: let us hope that acceptable worshippers are found in connexion with every existing variety in the formalities of christian devotion. As perfection is not attainable here, neither probably is uniformity. Overlooking external distinctions, let us feel and act in the spirit of the Apostle's prayer, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" and regard as our brethren in Christ all who hold him as the common head, and in whom we discern the proofs of his love, and the impressions of his likeness; "for neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." Such are some of the most prominent defects of that zeal which Paul here attributes to his countrymen the Jews; from their defects let us now learn what ought to be the

II. Distinguishing features of zeal in us. To escape the charge which the Jews deservedly incurred, we must, it is obvious, possess and exercise an

Enlightened zeal formed and regulated by clear, comprehensive and correct views of truth and duty. This is necessary to give it a proper direction; to guide our judgment in the choice both of objects and of instruments; to restrain it from the pursuit of unworthy ends, and from the use of unwarrantable means. Without this, zeal is a most dangerous principle. It magnifies trifles into matters of essential consequence; converts forms into substances, shadows into realities: there are no extravagances which it will not practise: there are no cruelties which it will not perpetrate. How many sad proofs of its ruinous tendency stand recorded in the page of history! Before his conversion, Paul had zeal, but it was not according to knowledge. Speaking of himself, he says, "As concerning zeal, persecuting the Church;" he did it ignorantly

and in unbelief, supposing that he was doing God service. To escape the charge advanced in the text, we must possess and exercise a

Pure zeal; a zeal influenced by the motives which the Gospel presents, animated by the spirit which grace infuses; free from every mixture of pride or selfishness, or party spirit, or ambition; actuated by an honest concern to advance the glory of God, in connexion with the best interests of mankind. Jehu boasted of his zeal for the Lord; but he had no higher aim than the gratification of his own ambitious views. In requesting our Lord to command fire from heaven for the destruction of the Samaritans, who refused to receive him, the disciples discovered an ardent, but an impure zeal; they spake under the influence of national prejudices and irritated feelings. To avoid the charge advanced against the Jews in the text, ours must be a

Prudent zeal: guarding against every avoidable occasion of offence to others; displaying all the wisdom of the serpent in selecting the fittest means, and the most favourable opportunities of doing good, and employing them with a tender regard to the feelings, and in so far as the interests of truth will permit, even to the prejudices of others. Destitute of this property, zeal is calculated to do far more harm than good. It seldom fails to defeat its own object; awakens aversion where it should conciliate love; raises suspicion where it should engage confidence; provokes opposition where it should produce co-operation; is like a vessel in full sail in a dangerous sea, without either ballast, or rudder, or compass. In cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant, Peter showed the warmth of his zeal; but it was an imprudent zeal, incapable of benefiting his Master, and calculated only to bring down the resentment of the people on himself and his fellow-disciples. To exempt us from the charge advanced in the text, our zeal must be

Peaceable as well as prudent; calm and deliberate in its exercise: prompting to no foolish extravagances, or violent excesses either in word or deed; disposed to put the most favourable construction on the language and conduct of other men, and discovering in all its movements a sincere regard for their welfare: not intolerant or overbearing in its spirit; not loud or ostentatious in its pretensions; but humbly proceeding in its career of usefulness, having

in it nothing of the impetuosity of the torrent ; but like the noble river without noise in proportion to its depth : mild and conciliatory, willing to sacrifice much, and to endure all things for the preservation or the recovery of peace ; not chargeable with blind intemperate enthusiasm ; restrained within reasonable bounds, aiming at important objects, and for the attainment of these, employing suitable means and in a becoming manner. To exempt us from the charge conveyed in the text, ours must be a

Decided zeal, above the meanness of all temporizing accommodations, disregarding the fear of man, determined to pursue the path of duty, fully prepared to stand by the consequences ; deterred neither by the contempt of the learned, nor the scorn of the proud, nor the ridicule of the profane, nor the reproaches of the calumnious. The exercise of christian zeal may be expected to bring down on its possessor the censures of worldly men, both without and within the limits of the visible Church ; they both dread and despise it ; it condemns them, and, therefore, they condemn it ; they denounce it as cunning hypocrisy, or self-righteous presumption, or blind fanaticism ; but the friends of Christ must rise above every consideration either of fear or shame, and be willing to go to him even without the camp, bearing his reproach. Above all, in order to escape the imputation conveyed in the text, our zeal must be

Fruitful : not evaporating in words ; but abounding in deeds of usefulness : it must appear, not in our professions of attachment to the great truths of the Gospel ; not in the fluency with which we can talk about them, nor in the ability and promptitude with which we contend for them, but in the moral influence which they exert, and in the practical effects which they produce. "By their fruits ye shall know them," is the standard by which alone its genuineness can be ascertained : a standard equally applicable in judging ourselves as in forming our opinion of others. And its language to all is, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." The exercise of an enlightened, pure, prudent, peaceable, decided, and faithful zeal in religion is incumbent on all

Who make a profession of the Christian faith. They serve a Master who is supremely worthy of it ; they are engaged in a work

that cannot be accomplished without it. He was zealous in their cause, and it would ill become them to be indifferent in his. We do not follow him at all, if we do not follow him fully. He not only acted but suffered for us ; we should, therefore, not only serve, but be willing to suffer for him. All this is due not more to his claims than to our salvation. We must strive, if we would enter in at the strait gate. We must press towards the mark, if we would gain the prize of our high calling. We must give all diligence, if we would make our calling and election sure. But surely the

Ministers of Christ lie under a peculiar and most pressing obligation to maintain the exercise of a holy and devoted zeal ; and in that view it is now submitted to my reverend fathers and brethren. In us the want of zeal would not only be fatally criminal but inhumanly treacherous. As stewards of the mysteries of God, we owe it to Him whose commission we bear ; we owe it to them whom he has placed under our pastoral superintendence ; we owe it to ourselves as his responsible servants ; we owe it to the prosperity of the Church to which we belong ; we owe it to the cause of truth, and the salvation of immortal souls, to labour with all the ardour and activity of a most devoted and self-denying zeal in finishing the work he has given us to do. To this we are bound by our own solemn and deliberate engagements—engagements which involve the most awfully momentous interests ; to this we are directed by the examples of ministerial fidelity which the histories of Christ and his Apostles recommend to our imitation ; to this we are encouraged by the promises of grace effectual and sufficient, with which the Scriptures so liberally furnish us ; and to this we are invited by every consideration either of duty or interest, that can operate either on our hopes or our fears ; by our regard to the glory of God, our concern for the kingdom of Christ, our compassion for the souls of perishing men. Let us, then, make full proof of our ministry, esteeming it our highest honour, and feeling it our greatest happiness to be employed in such a service. Let us give ourselves wholly to these things ; thus shall we not only save others, but our own souls also ; and receive our recompense in the approving testimony, "Well done, good and faithful servant ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." May the Lord grant us mercy to be faithful, and to his name be the glory. Amen.

SIMON BEARING THE CROSS;

A SERMON, PREACHED AT THE DISPENSATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, CAMPBELL STREET,

By the Rev. ROBERT BRODIE, A.M.

"And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross."—MATH. xxvii. 32.

WHILE there are many things omitted even in the latter and more amply detailed part of our Saviour's history, which it might have been interesting to know, both in respect to his own deportment and that of his disciples, there are circumstances related which we may suppose might, without injury, have been suppressed. Among these some, perhaps, might be disposed to include the incident recorded in the text. They would have wished, at least, that something more had been given in the way of explanation.

These feelings are in every way improper. The evangelists were not left to their own discretion in what they omitted or recorded. And though the design of the higher agency under which they acted is not always apparent, we may rest satisfied that it was characterized by wisdom. There are many things in the natural world, the design of which is not at first obvious; but we are not, therefore, to infer that they are useless. The inference would be equally unjust if applied to the facts and statements of the Bible. These are, in some cases, so constructed as to task the faculties. If faithful to the duty required of us, we shall generally find our reward in the discovery of evidences, before unperceived, of the veracity and consistency of the sacred record. How far this remark holds true in regard to the case before us, will appear from the sequel of this discourse.

Cyrene, the place to which Simon belonged, was the chief city of a district of North Africa. It contained many Jews and converts to Judaism. From this city Simon appears to have come to attend the passover at Jerusalem, at a time when travelling was neither so cheap nor expeditious as it is at present. He required first to take ship for some port in Palestine, and from thence to journey on foot to the Jewish capital. What a reproof does his conduct in this matter convey to many among ourselves! You acknowledge, like

the "man of Cyrene," that the ordinances of christian worship are enjoined by the same divine authority as those given by Moses, in obedience to which Simon acted; and that they are recommended by promises not less encouraging. Your observance of them subjects you to no expense and to little trouble. Yet even, in cases where neither bodily indisposition nor any other necessary impediment can be pleaded, multitudes absent themselves from observances which the Redeemer has engaged to honour with his presence, descending not in tempest and darkness as at Sinai, not in tongues of fire, and a rushing wind, and the shock of an earthquake, as at Pentecost, but in the gentle but powerful influences of his grace.

Whether Simon was sprung from Jews who had emigrated to Cyrene, or had been proselyted from heathenism to Judaism, has been a subject of dispute. From the name Simon, which is Jewish, some have adopted the former opinion. This, however, is not of itself conclusive. In becoming a proselyte to Judaism, and on receiving the initiatory seal of the covenant, the time at which it was customary for names to be given, he might have adopted one peculiar to those who professed that religion. This is the opinion to which the phraseology employed would seem to point, when he is called "a man of Cyrene." This form of expression occurs in other parts of Scripture, where the meaning does not appear to be doubtful. We are not aware that it has been denied, that it was a native Macedonian that appeared to Paul in vision. But the expression used to describe him, is exactly similar to that which is here applied to Simon: "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." Acts xvi. 9. Although up to this period he appears to have known nothing of Christ, afterwards he became a disciple; and if ancient ecclesiastical tradition is to be credited, obtained

the crown of martyrdom. His sons, too, are in a parallel passage (Mark xv. 21.) referred to as persons well known among the members of the primitive church.

Happy was it for Simon, however revolting the means were to his feelings at the time, that he was brought into connexion with the cross. And happy will it be for you, if, in some instances you are, like him, compelled to do what inclination would lead you to decline. Happy, too, will it be for you, if you are this day led by the exercises of a communion Sabbath, to a more intimate acquaintance with a Redeemer, and with the doctrine of a Redeemer's cross. From that cross the ignominy has departed. The rainbow of the divine mercy now encircles it. Not Pilate, but God omnipotent, has inscribed on it, "Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews." Where the voice of a king is, there is power; and, in the present instance, there is power to deliver from guilt and pollution, to raise from despondency, and to fill with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Ascended Redeemer, we are met in thy name, we wait for thy blessing. Let that Spirit of conviction, who descended on Simon, transforming him from an unwilling cross-bearer to a devoted martyr, descend on those who shall this day witness in symbols a Redeemer's crucifixion, impressing on their souls the moral glories—the displays of power, wisdom, holiness and grace, that are associated with a Saviour's cross.

I. We may derive from this narrative a confirmation of our faith.

The incident mentioned was either a real occurrence or a fabrication. If it was a real occurrence, we might expect that the circumstances connected with it would be in accordance with the customs of the period and country, and with the narratives of the other evangelists. It is not, however, every coincidence of this kind which would be a proof of veracity. If any person had fabricated such a narrative, which, however, there could be no rational motive for doing, he would have studied that what purported to be facts, should correspond with the customs of the period and country, and likewise that the narrative of one Gospel should correspond with those of the others. But the correspondences would, in that case, have been broad and obvious, or they would not have served the purpose of the writer. This is not the character of those coincidences which are to be found in the evangelical history. Many of them, on the con-

trary, are of that minute unapparent kind which would not be perceived by a cursory reader; which require close examination before they are discovered; which afford clear evidence of being undesigned, and which can only be satisfactorily accounted for by admitting that the writers were honest chroniclers. That the coincidences suggested by this narrative are of this description, will be seen if you consider, first, the agreement between the circumstances, incidentally, and by implication referred to, and the mode in which crucifixions were anciently conducted; and, secondly, if in regard to one point in which there is a departure from ancient usage, you consider the explanation which is afforded by circumstances alluded to in different parts of the evangelical history.

In illustrating the first class of coincidences, those which have a reference to the customs of the times, I shall not insist on the expression, "as they came out," that is, out of the city, as implying that crucifixions were not within the walls. This is too well known to require to be more than noticed. But there is another which calls for more extended remark. It is not said that he was led to the cross, but that when he was led out, the cross was taken out along with him. This does not agree with the customs prevalent among us in regard to capital punishments. Among us the apparatus of death is prepared for hours previous to the time fixed for the execution. The sad and solemn notes of preparation reach the ears of the criminal in his solitary cell. Every sound of the workman's hammer is a dagger to his heart. His flesh shudders and his spirit sinks within him. But though the circumstances incidentally alluded to in the text are, in this respect, at variance with our views and practices in such cases, they are in exact agreement with the Roman mode of crucifixion. The cross was not erected till the criminal and his attendants reached the place of execution, it being part of the ignominious sentence that the transverse beam should be carried by the criminal himself from the judgment-hall through the city to the fatal spot. The design was good. It intimated to the criminal that he was himself the author of his dishonour. It seems to say, Hast thou not procured this for thyself? So far, then, as relates to the time at which the cross was erected, there is an exact, though evidently undesigned, agreement between this history and the Roman

practice. But how was it that, in conformity with the custom above referred to, it was not our Lord who bore it, but a different person? If there is an agreement in one particular, there is thus a discrepancy in another. The explanation of this will enable me to illustrate the second class of coincidences, that which exists between this passage and other parts of the evangelical history.

In remitting, in the case of our Lord, that part of the punishment of crucifixion, which required that the condemned party should be the bearer of the cross, there is nothing to lead us to suppose that compassion was the motive. Pilate was the only person influentially connected with these scenes likely to have been actuated by this feeling; but the case had now passed from his hands into those of persons from whom no such humane motive could be expected. Not certainly from the Jews. The demon of cruelty appears to have taken possession of their minds, extinguishing not only the feelings of humanity, but of reason. There were no means so base that they did not resort to, in order to give effect to their enmity. At one time they employed towards Pilate the language of intimidation, and at another that of servility. They suborned false witnesses to accuse the object of their malice, and invoked on their own heads, and on those of their children, the guilt of his death. As compassion was not the feeling of the Jews, as little was it the feeling of the Roman soldiery. As if crucifixion and its prescribed legal accompaniments had been too light a punishment, they gratuitously made additions of their own. "They stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand, and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed and smote him on the head!" From these references it is evident what the motive which led them to fix on Simon for carrying the cross was *not*. What it was may be inferred from the circumstances recorded in other parts of the evangelical history.

In John xix. 17, it is said, "And he, bearing his cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha." The discrepancy between this statement, which represents Jesus himself as bearing the cross, and that contained in our text, is more in appearance than reality. In the text it is implied that

the cross was borne by our Lord part of the way. It was not in the first instance that Simon was fixed on for this office, but subsequently to Christ leaving the judgment-hall, and when he was on the way to Golgotha. The only satisfactory reasons for this will be found in the bodily circumstances of our Lord. If you look to the scenes which preceded his being led out to Calvary, the agony in the garden, and the scourging, and the exhaustion and debility which these induced, you will see that the reason why the cross was laid on Simon was because Jesus was unable to bear it.

That this is not a conjecture resorted to merely for the purpose of getting rid of a difficulty, will be evident from a fact incidentally mentioned, a fact which his extreme bodily exhaustion can alone account for satisfactorily, that before sunset he had expired. To this circumstance, not in connexion with the incident in the text, but with other particulars, there is a prominence given in Scripture. The law of Moses, Deut. xxi. 22, 23, expressly required that the body of the criminal should be buried on the day of execution. To suffer it to remain exposed till next day, would have been regarded a pollution of the land. To have permitted this in the present instance, would have been peculiarly objectionable, as the next day was the Sabbath, and one of peculiar solemnity. The Jews, therefore, who, though they hesitated not to inbrue their hands in innocent blood, would have been shocked at this breach of a ceremonial observance, applied to Pilate to have the legs of those who had been crucified broken, and their bodies taken down from the cross. The breaking of their legs was for the purpose of despatching them. The mention of this, as part of the request, implies, that they considered it would be necessary, and that they would not be dead. They had good reason for the expectation. It is related that Andrew the apostle, who, according to ecclesiastical tradition, was crucified, lived two days on the cross. And though it should be said that the account of his martyrdom can be regarded as no better than a legend, it is certain that some have lived for a still longer period. The two malefactors were alive, and on them the operation of breaking their legs was performed; but for our Lord it was not necessary, as he was already dead. The object of the above remarks has been to show that the departure, in the case of our Lord, from the usual mode of conducting

crucifixion, by which the criminal bore his own cross, as appears to have been done by his fellow-sufferers, and at first contemplated likewise in his case—a departure which cannot be accounted for on any principle of sympathy, becomes plain, if we suppose that he was, from bodily exhaustion, unable for the office. This supposition is rendered probable by the circumstances which preceded, and morally certain by the premature termination of his sufferings on the cross. I ask, then, if this harmony between statements, at first conflicting in appearance, does not furnish us with a strong internal presumption of the historic truth of the narrative. It is not fiction, but reality. Christ *was* led as a lamb to the slaughter. From the judgment-hall to Golgotha, the track was marked by his blood. It flowed from his hands and feet, staining the cross and the ground on which it stood. The great expiatory sacrifice has been offered up. The veil of the celestial temple has been rended. From every people, and kindred, and tongue, from the men of Cyrene, and from the citizens of Jerusalem, the song has been raised, “Salvation be to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.”

II. We may see an affecting illustration of our Saviour's love.

The narrative should impress us with the depth of his sufferings. In adverting to this subject, our thoughts are almost exclusively directed to the act of crucifixion. We think of its painful and lingering nature. Among civilized nations it is the object, at the present day, to shorten the agonies of the criminal. Even that instrument, invented in the earliest stages of the revolutionary history of France, and which derived its name from its inventor,* which formerly and still awakens in our minds such strong sensations of horror, derived its terrors chiefly from its novelty. Death, inflicted in this way, is the work of an instant. The one moment every limb of the criminal is uninjured; the next he is a headless trunk. It has been common, on the other hand, among nations who are destitute of the light of revelation, both in ancient and modern times, that ingenuity has been racked to discover the means of prolonging and aggravating torture. Crucifixion, which was not sanctioned by the laws of God, but originated with those who knew him not, being a Roman punishment, not a Jewish, is a case in point. Even a heathen

writer has said of it, that it ought not to be an object of sight or of conversation, or even of thought.* It is not, however, so much to the sufferings of the cross that the incident we are considering directs our attention as to those which preceded it.

1. The preliminary sufferings were marked by severity.

So much was this their character, that it may be questioned whether he could have survived, even if crucifixion had not followed. The scourge was not inflicted by the Romans in the restricted form required by the Mosaic institute. “Forty stripes save one,” was a phraseology unknown to a Roman ear. That this punishment could not, as regarded a free citizen of Rome, be inconsiderately administered, no one acquainted with Paul's history can be ignorant. But there might be in its infliction, in other instances, as much pure barbarity as distinguishes the military penal codes of some Christian nations. I grant that even on this supposition there was not in the infliction itself reason to conclude that it could be so fatal as our remarks would seem to represent. There are other considerations, however, which ought not to be overlooked. The scourging of the criminal always preceded crucifixion, and, for obvious reasons, heightened its sufferings. But, in our Lord's case, it was, on the part of Pilate, intended as a substitute for crucifixion, and might, therefore, without imagining, as some have done, that there was a repetition of this punishment, have exceeded the usual degree of severity; and though, even in that case, it might not in ordinary circumstances have endangered life, it was otherwise in the circumstances we are now considering. So worn down with fatigue was the body of our Redeemer, that, though only thirty years of age, he had more the appearance of fifty. This is the only satisfactory explanation which can be given of the remark made by the Jews, when our Lord told them, that “before Abraham was, he was.” “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?” On a frame not naturally robust, and thus debilitated, the effect was such as has been already mentioned. It was not to the agonies of the cross only that the language of ancient prophecy might be applied. “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like to my

* The guillotine.

* Ab oculis, auribusque, et omne cogitatione hominum removendum esse.

sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Before a nail had pierced his hands or feet, his physical strength sunk under the tortures to which he was subjected.

2. The preliminary sufferings were marked by ignominy.

To the ignominy which, in general estimation, attached to crucifixion, there is a reference made by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, when he says, that Christ "endured the cross, and despised the shame." The fortitude which, in this last particular, Christ is, in the passage quoted, represented as having displayed, was of no common kind. All know the ignominy which among us is attached to the gibbet. Not confined to the sufferer himself, it very improperly, in many cases, extends to his relatives. But these revolting feelings, strong though they be, convey a very inadequate idea of the disgust and abhorrence with which a Roman or a Jew regarded the punishment of crucifixion. By the Roman it was associated with all that was degrading in rank and infamous in crime. It was the punishment of a slave, and not even in his case, except he was a murderer or rebel. To the revolting ideas, with which this punishment was regarded by the Roman, the Jew added others peculiarly his own. On the man who was hanged on a tree, though in strict conformity to the penal awards which the law of Moses sanctioned, that law pronounced a curse, thus consigning him to the abhorrence of all those who recognised its authority. But with double abhorrence would he be regarded who incurred this curse, not under the forms which the law prescribed, but under forms which obtained among a people whose customs and whose name excited detestation. Perhaps few circumstances are more illustrative of the feelings to which I am referring than the incident noticed in the text. Our Lord having after trial been found unable to undergo the task imposed on the criminal of carrying his cross, not so much from its weight as from his great physical weakness, it became necessary to substitute another in his place. And why should not one of the soldiers, appointed to conduct the crucifixion, have been selected? The reason may be found in the particular I am illustrating. The lowest soldier in the lowest grade of the Roman army would have felt himself irrecoverably degraded if an oppor-

tunity had thus been given to apply to him the epithet of *bearer of the cross*. To have seized on a Jew out of the crowd for this office of infamy, was what the Roman commandant might not have been disposed to attempt. An insurrection of the populace might have been the fruit of his temerity. At this juncture, an individual was seen making for the city, whose features sufficiently indicated that he was not of Jewish, but of foreign extraction. Him they fix on for the degrading office; but even he, though belonging to a race doomed to be the servants of servants, had not so far lost the feeling of personal respect as unreluctantly to undertake it. Contemptuously as the Roman soldiery might regard this Cyrenian, in him they beheld the native of a district whose inhabitants had disputed with Rome the sovereignty of the world; the countryman, too, of a general, (I need scarcely say that Hannibal, the Carthaginian, is referred to,) whose military doings are still household words; who surmounted with a motley mercenary train, the most formidable of nature's barriers; who encountered on their own soil the foes of his country; who, but for the party divisions of the home counsels of the government, at all times the bane of a nation's prosperity, would have made the African capital the mistress of the world, and whose name, even when old and expatriated, and a dependent on a foreign court, made the haughty senators of Rome tremble. This Cyrenian they could not have bribed, they "compelled" him to bear the cross—omen we regard it, that though man may obscure the intellectual image which God has alike imprinted on his intelligent offspring, that it is not in man's power utterly to efface it, and that there are now as formerly, times and seasons in the retributive providence of the Most High for the oppressed to vindicate the inalienable rights of their being, and not to brandish only, but to break their chains on the heads of their oppressors.* When Simon was met by the cavalcade issuing from Jerusalem, he knew nothing of the history and character of the interesting sufferer on whose account he was laid under requisition. But he did know, for it was an African punishment as well as a Roman, the ignominy which attached to crucifixion and its accompani-

* This discourse was delivered before that legislative act had passed which gave freedom to 800,000 of our fellow-subjects.

ments. It was the gleaming blades of the Roman soldiery alone, which constrained him to submit to the office which, in the proud spirit of military domination, they imposed. There was one, however, by whom that domination, unjust though it was, was not resisted. To the cross with all its circumstances of agony and ignominy your Redeemer was a willing victim. "Thinkest thou," said he, when the armed band came to apprehend him, and when Peter drew his sword in his defence, "thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" Had this power been lodged with the man of Cyrene, not a soldier would have returned to tell to Pilate the story of the crucifixion. The same fate would have attended them which attended the men sent to apprehend Elijah. Fire from heaven would have consumed them. In the hands of Jesus this power was harmless to his bitterest foes. It was exerted, indeed, on the approach of the band. They were suddenly struck to the ground. But this was only as an evidence of the reality of the possession. It was the flash of the lightning, not its destructive force. Stipulating only for the safety of his attendants, with meek submission he gave himself into the hands of the soldiery.

III. We may see an incitement to christian obedience.

1. There is an incitement to the observance of the *self-denied* duties of our religion.

You are not called on to bear the cross in the same sense that Simon was. But you are called on to suffer whatever hardships or inconvenience may attach to the profession of the Gospel, and to obedience to its precepts. In discovering a backwardness to comply with this demand, you stand opposed to your own interests. The degrading office which Simon was so unwilling to undertake, appears to have been the means of introducing not only him but his family to the knowledge of the Saviour. Of these, and advantages like these, will you deprive yourselves, if you decline the self-denied duties which still constitute the badge of discipleship. It is commonly said, no cross, no crown. With equal propriety may it be said, no cross, no consolation. He who has sacrificed nothing from the principle of love and gratitude, cannot have received the fulfilment of the promises made to persons of this character. The

cross in all its forms he endeavours to avoid. His feelings are purely selfish. His thoughts are earthly; and his prospects are as earthly as his thoughts. A stranger to Stephen's conflicts, he is a stranger likewise to his privileges. Not a companion with John "in tribulation and in the kingdom of God," he is not a partaker of his enjoyments. With the former he has never seen "the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." With the latter he has never by faith walked the streets of that city, "which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." It is for every one whom I address to ask himself, What in this respect is his experience and his character? If any imagine that no duties are now required that correspond in humiliation with the office imposed on Simon, it is a proof of his ignorance of the practical requirements of Christianity. What is meant, let me ask, by "not being ashamed of Christ and of his words, before a sinful and adulterous generation?" What is meant by "going forth unto him without the camp bearing his reproach?" These passages clearly show that the scandal of the cross yet remains; and if you feel, as you ought to do, the sublime principles of your religion, you will not by worldly compliances, endeavour to escape it. If the difficulties encountered are great, the encouragement is not small. He on whose account they are endured, is not one to whom, like Simon, you are a stranger. He has redeemed you unto God by his own blood. And when he requires of you the most, it is infinitely less than he has himself endured, and endured for you. Calm, and meek, and dignified, he has, as a sufferer, gone before you.

"You tread the path your Master trod,
You bear the cross he bore,
And every thorn that wounds your feet,
His temples pierced before."

Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

2. There is an incitement to the observance of the public ordinances of religion.

Little did Simon, when he left his home to worship at Jerusalem, contemplate the advantages that followed. It would have been no proof that his attendance was altogether without fruit, had there been nothing remarkable either in occurrence or in feeling. On such occasions God may not be in the earthquake or fire, but in the still small voice. There would have been the satisfaction that he was acting in obedience to the authority of Him "who has never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain." There were a thousand ways in which God might, unperceived by the worshipper, have rewarded his religious services. But, in the present instance, the effects were not such as to leave, either on the mind of the individual himself or of others, any doubt of the benefit received. The results were not, however, even here, at first, of an agreeable character. They led him to undergo what he only submitted to from force. But on the same stalk with the prickle and the thorn, were the flower and the fruit. This should operate in your case as an encouragement to the observance of New Testament institutions. That God who overruled all the occurrences above described, who ordained that Simon should be entering Jerusalem at the time that Jesus, sinking under the cross, was leaving it, is still present in his ordinances, and he may humble you under the Word, as he did Simon under the cross, for the express purpose of "exalting you in due time."

But while you thus see the general inducement which you have to the observance of religious ordinances, derived from the

fact of the advantages which in this way were obtained by an Old Testament worshipper, there is a special inducement to the observance of the ordinance which we are now met to commemorate, connected with the circumstance that all the advantages flowed from the sight of and communion with a crucified Redeemer. In consequence of the compulsion put on Simon, he saw the fulfilment of ancient prophecy—"the Messiah wounded for our transgression, and bruised for our iniquities." What was typically represented in the ordinance of the passover which he had come to Jerusalem to celebrate, was really effected by that great act of expiation which he was privileged to behold. The outstretched arm of divine justice was arrested. Deliverance was obtained from a more degrading vassalage than that which man exercises over man—deliverance from the bondage of sin and Satan. The blood of "the Lamb without spot or blemish," was by faith sprinkled on his heart. It is the same spectacle which in symbols is this day seen by you—a spectacle in which you are all equally interested with Simon, and from the contemplation of which you may derive the same spiritual advantages. Influenced by the great sight here exhibited, the religion which, like that of this African previous to his knowledge of Christ crucified, has been at best only the religion of types and shadows, may become the homage of the heart and affections, deriving its vital energies from faith in the atoning sacrifice of him "who was numbered with transgressors." This was the religion and the spring of the religion of confessors and martyrs. May the exercises of this day strengthen it in you. Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by WILLIAM FLEMING, D.D., Glasgow.
LECTURE by the Rev. J. ANDERSON, Helensburgh.

RELIGION OUR CHIEF CONCERN ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE COLLEGE CHAPEL,

By WILLIAM FLEMING, D.D.,

Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Glasgow.

“ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”—MATTHEW vi. 33.

IN formerly discoursing from these words, it was proposed,

I. To explain the language, and to fix the meaning of the precept.

II. To delineate the nature, and to vindicate the reasonableness of the duty which it enjoins.

III. To state and illustrate some of those arguments which should lead to its performance. And,

IV. and last place. To explain the special promise which is here annexed to it.

The first and second of these heads have already been discussed.

In explaining the language of the text, it was remarked that this phrase, “the kingdom of God,” is of frequent occurrence, and various signification in Scripture.

Sometimes it means the kingdom of Providence—that kingdom which ruleth over all ; which is wide as creation and lasting as eternity ; which neither the convulsions of nature nor the revolutions of empire can shake ; which remains unmoved amidst all the changes which agitate the earth and its inhabitants ; which maketh every thing work together for good, even the wrath of man and the rage of elements contributing to the accomplishment of its mysteriously beneficent purposes.

Sometimes, again, the kingdom of God means the kingdom of the Gospel ; that kingdom which Daniel prophesied would be set up ; which John the Baptist announced to be at hand ; which Jesus Christ proclaimed as come ; which his Apostles preached and the Gentiles believed ; that kingdom of truth and righteousness which hath gradually been extending its limits

and its influence, and which at last will cover the earth as the waters cover the channels of the sea, and banish ignorance and vice as the sun scattereth the darkness.

More frequently, however, the kingdom of God means the kingdom of glory ; that kingdom in the heavens which is filled with the presence, and lightened with the glory of God ; that state of pure and undisturbed felicity into which Christ will conduct his faithful followers.

The phrase, the righteousness of God, is also of frequent occurrence, and various signification in Scripture. Sometimes it means that moral duty which God hath enjoined—that obedience to his commandments which is our reasonable service. At other times, it means the merits of Christ, which become the end of the law for righteousness unto them who believe. And resulting from these two, there is a third meaning which the phrase very often has, especially in the New Testament Scriptures, namely, these sincere and humble endeavours after holiness, which, proceeding from faith in Christ, are acceptable unto God through him.

With regard to the meaning of these phrases as they occur in the passage before us, it is obvious that the kingdom which we are called to seek is not of this world ; it is that kingdom which is in the heavens—that kingdom of happiness and immortality which was our birthright, and which we forfeited by sin. But blessed be the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath gotten us again to a lively hope of a

resurrection from the dead to an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled and unfading. Now, it is through the Gospel that we have this hope; so that whether we explain the kingdom as referring to the happiness of heaven, which is the end of our salvation, or to the faith and practice of the Gospel, which are the means of it, we make no difference in the signification of the text. And, perhaps, it may not be improper to consider it as including both these ideas, and interpret the kingdom of God as referring to the happiness of heaven, and the righteousness of God as referring to the way which leads to it, and thus view the precept as comprehending the whole business of religion.

To seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, then, is, in other words, to mind religion and its duties. To seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, is to seek them above all other things. This supreme regard which religion claims for itself, is founded in the constitution of the human mind, which must necessarily obey some one ruling principle of action, and in the importance of its objects, which deserve and demand our first and deepest interest. But while religion claims the chief, it allows inferior things to hold their inferior place; and the discharge of its duties neither dispenses nor interferes with the pursuit of any necessary or laudable object. He who fixes a purified and steadfast eye on eternity and its interests, looks to a star which at once illuminates and cheers his way. He walks with integrity and prudence through every path in society, and the dignity and virtue which adorn his character, are a triumphant refutation of all the charges of enthusiasm with which he may be assailed. The moderation with which he follows the business of life, may be denominated indifference by the worldly. The temperance with which he tastes its pleasures, may be miscalled austerity by the gay. The calmness with which he regards its honours, may be mistaken for insensibility when compared with the feverish pulse of the ambitious. It may even be conceived and admitted, that, on a weak or a warm mind, eternity and its interests may have so overpowering a sway as to beget a coldness towards the things of the world which prudence cannot altogether sanction. But this only proves, what ought never to be denied, that religion, like every thing else, is liable to abuse. To hear some speak, however, you would imagine that religion was the only thing in which there was any danger of excess. But have you not seen the victim of avarice bustling

from one scheme to another, and in the midst of his many devices to grow rich, neglecting those acquirements which give to wealth its lustre and its value, and without which it is worth nothing—immindful of the claims which kindred or society may make upon him, and allowing his burning thirst of pelf to scorch and wither all the finer affections of his bosom, rendering him blind to every thing but the lustre, deaf to every thing but the chink, insensible to every thing but the hard grasp of gold? Have you not seen the man of pleasure fleeing from the delusion of one shadow to the pursuit of another, forgetting all the duties and enjoyments of life for empty visions which mock and fatigue him, and hurrying on in his giddy career in spite of all the cares and of all the calls which should sober and impede his progress? Have you not seen the man of ambition living neither to himself nor to his friends, but to a thankless posterity; despising the substantial advantages of the present for the empty breath of unborn generations; shaking himself free of all the charities, or, as he calls them, the encumbrances of social and domestic life, and climbing the steep and solitary path for the glitter of some bauble that adorns its top? Go, then, it may be said, to our adversaries—go, wipe these extravagancies from the conduct of your men of the world, before you raise the cry against those who, in making religion their chief concern, make all that is virtuous in this life, and all that is glorious in the next their own; and keep your names of folly and enthusiasm till you find some worse for those who, with the brightness of eternity before them, exhaust the energies of an immortal spirit in pursuing the shadows of a short and evil night.

But without dwelling longer upon any preliminary matter, it may be proper to proceed to the third general division laid down in the method, and which is to form the subject of the present discourse; namely, to state and illustrate some of those motives which should lead to the performance of the duty recommended in the text.

In urging men to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, or, in other words, to make religion their chief concern, two strong arguments may be drawn from the excellence of its objects and the certainty of obtaining them. As an argument which should lead to the performance of the duty recommended in the text, consider,

I. The excellence of the object which it proposes—the kingdom and the righteousness of God.

The language of Scripture is graciously

accommodated to the views and feelings of man, and the things of eternity are very often spoken of under figures which are taken from the things of time. The word kingdom naturally calls up to our mind the notions of wealth and power, of dignity and honour, the chief objects of human desire and human pursuit. And it is in order to elevate our conceptions, and to stimulate our endeavours, that the happiness of heaven is held out to us under the notion of a kingdom; that the salvation of the soul is represented as the attainment of a crown. But it is a kingdom which cannot be moved; it is a crown which fadeth not away; it is a kingdom to which the passing glories of earthly power are but the pageants of a day; it is a crown to which the gilded ensigns of human dignity are but the baubles of childhood. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the good things which God hath prepared for the righteous." Even in that kingdom which he hath set up on earth, we can see the marks of a goodness and wisdom which are infinite; although the bounties of nature are abused by the folly and wickedness of man, and sin hath thrown a dark veil over the pure munificence of creation in which, as in a glass, we might have contemplated the glories of its Author. In the kingdom of grace, we have a more illustrious display of the character and perfections of our heavenly Father, who, in sending his Son to seek and to save that which was lost, hath abounded towards us in all prudence and mercy. But our weak faculties cannot fully comprehend what passes the knowledge of angels, our narrow bosoms cannot contain a love which is infinite. Much less can we form any adequate conceptions of that kingdom which is the consummation of all the plans of God, or look upon the brightness of that glory in which all the rays of the divine majesty are concentrated. This much, however, we know and can understand, that the kingdom of heaven is a state of pure and lasting bliss. Every thing which is imperfect shall be done away. God will subdue all things to himself, and display the full riches and glory of his attributes. All shall be peace and joy, for all shall be righteousness and purity. There shall be nothing to hurt nor to destroy. The tears shall be wiped from every eye; and sorrow and sighing shall flee for ever away. The insufficiency which marks every earthly enjoyment, the uncertainty which attends every worldly possession, shall be alike unknown; and the unsetting Sun of Righteousness shall con-

tinue to pour forth his cheering rays on an ever-blessed people. In a word, the happiness of heaven is equal to the capacities of an immortal being, pure as the desires of a spirit made perfect in holiness, and lasting as the ages of eternity.

Is not this, then, an object worthy of our highest ambition. If the imperfect enjoyments of this life can awaken our desires and stimulate our exertions, the surpassing felicities of heaven should call forth greater ardour and activity. If the transitory things of time can attract our attention and occupy our thoughts, the enduring substance of eternity should be regarded with deeper interest, and followed with more steady purpose. In short, if the body and its wants can exercise our prudence and our industry, the salvation of the soul deserves to be the object of our most earnest concern—the end of our most strenuous exertions.

Had we never been taught to lift our eyes to heaven and the kingdom that is therein, we might have been excusable in setting our affections on the things of earth. But with a hope within us that looks beyond the narrow limits of time; with a soul that aspires above the delusive objects of sense; with a Gospel that hath brought life and immortality clearly to light; with a Saviour who hath abolished death and risen triumphant from the tomb; who hath ascended to the glory of his Father, and prepared a way for us to follow him; with a whole cloud of witnesses who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises, what excuse can we offer for preferring to the peace of righteousness and the glory of heaven the vanities and struggles of a short and evil life.

Let us overrate and pursue them as we will; let us adorn them with all the colouring of a deceitful heart, and seek them with all the avidity of perverted feeling; let success attend our labours, and pleasure crown our pursuit; let every thing we touch be gold, and every thing we hear be song; yet we must leave all our possessions and all our joys. In a few years—God only knows how few—we must go hence, naked and helpless as we came; for we brought nothing into the world, and we can carry nothing out of it. We may waste all the days of our appointed time in the pursuit of shadows, but we cannot give to shadows an enduring substance. We may seek the things of the world with our whole soul, but we cannot impart to them a share of its immortality. We cannot live; they cannot last always. We may gather them thick and close around us; we may wrap ourselves up in them as

in a garment; but they must drop, like the mantle of Elijah, in the passage from time to eternity. We may add field to field, and heap to heap; but the dark and narrow house must hold us all at last. Under the stroke of death, the body, and all that ministered to our wants, our comforts, and enjoyments—all that adorned its beauty, or flattered our pride, must sink together in the dust; while the soul, naked and trembling, must enter a world of spirits, where this world and all that it inherits can be of no avail. And although we could carry with us the objects of our affection, or the fruit of our labours; although we could hold up in our right hand the hard wages of our toils and eares; although we could bear upon our foreheads the blushing honours of our ambition or intrigue, how cheap, how vile would they appear, when viewed by the light of immortality! How unworthy of engrossing the thoughts and absorbing the faculties of beings who were formed to enjoy, and who have been called to seek the kingdom and the righteousness of God! How would one beam from that glory which is in the heavens, dim the lustre of all that seemed great, and wither the bloom of all that seemed fair on earth! How would those objects, which the mists of passion and the delusions of the world invest with importance, shrink into their native insignificance before the splendour of truth and the magnificence of eternity!

He who has led a life of the most indefatigable and prosperous worldly-mindedness, whose plans of aggrandizement have been devised with a prudence which defied disappointment, have been pursued with a steadiness which laughed at exertion, and have issued in a success which, by its bursting luxuriance, has almost satisfied the craving of avarice; he has not, in his uncounted treasures, what can weigh more than dust in the balance against that kingdom which is the inheritance of them that are sanctified. There is not, in the spoils of earth or sea, a pearl that would bear the blazing glories of that crown which shall circle the brows of the just. There is not, in art or science, a fairer accomplishment than the beauties of that holiness which adorns the souls of the righteous. The brightest objects of human ambition, the loudest titles of human fame, are emptiness to that honour which cometh from above. All wisdom is folly to that wisdom which is unto salvation. All riches are nothing to the riches of Christ. "A man is not profited although he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

Let us, therefore, instead of troubling

ourselves about many things, attend to the one thing needful. Instead of following after the pomps and vanities of the world, let us, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality. Let us not spend our labour for that which neither satisfies nor endures; but "choose in time that better part which shall never be taken from us," and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Another argument which should lead us to make religion our chief concern, may be drawn in the

II. From the certainty of its rewards.

When it is said, in the latter clause of the text, that if we "seek first the kingdom and the righteousness of God, other things will be added unto us," it is obviously implied that these great objects shall themselves be obtained. And in the parallel passage of the Gospel according to Luke, this is put beyond all doubt; for it is written, "Fear not; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It is, indeed, said elsewhere, that "many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." But, in that passage, seeking is opposed to striving; it is a seeking of the kingdom of God without his righteousness; in short, it is not seeking first, but a fruitless desire to die the death of the just, without leading their life—a saying, "Lord, Lord," to Him whom they have not acknowledged in all their ways. And although it be true that all have not faith, and that all are not saved, this should only quicken us to repent and believe, to the saving of our souls. If many be called but few chosen, then should we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; then should we strive to enter in at the strait gate, and press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God.

But instead of doing so, there are many who take up the parable of the unprofitable servant, and represent the Lord as a hard master, reaping where he hath not sown. There are many who attempt to cover their neglect of religion by crying out against the narrowness of its promises, the arbitrariness of its grace, and the uncertainty of its rewards; complaining of some dark and capricious power which regulates the destinies of eternity, damping all their hopes, and discouraging all their exertions. But are these persons, it may be asked, equally querulous and equally cautious in other matters? Do they never put forth their hand till they are sure of their object? And do they tell, or do they profit by, the bitterness of their disappointment in cases where religion is not concerned? Do they who are

thus fearful of serving God for nought show the same caution in not yielding themselves the slaves of sin, the sure paid wages of which is death? Is Mammon whom they worship a more gracious divinity than that God whom they despise? Is the world which they love a kind master that plentifully rewards its servants, and do its objects never escape or deceive those who pursue them? Ah! Christians, it is long since delusion was written on all its promises, and vanity on all its possessions; and yet, although the hand of time, in effacing every thing else, hath only graved more deeply, and blazoned more strongly, the characters of this inscription, the children of this generation are as eager and worldly as if they had never read it, or as if the experience of ages went for nothing. The sea is a treacherous element, and hath swallowed up many with their treasures; yet men still tempt its perils, still vex it with ships, keen and steady in the pursuit of wealth as water is unstable. The path of ambition is steep and dangerous; many have been cast down sorely wounded; yet others have not been wanting to follow their steps, to meet their reward, and add to the number of this idol's victims. The field of glory is full of death; the laureled band who retire from it may soon be counted. But who can tell the numbers of the slain; and yet the living lay it not to heart, but rush into the emptied ranks, as if the grave at length were satisfied, and victory were now a sure and bloodless prize! Pleasure is a fair enchantress, who, for a while, mocks her votaries, and at last leaves them to weariness and disgust. Yet her ways are as crowded as if the roses which adorn them were deprived of their thorns; as if the shadows which flit along them could settle into realities; as if, in wounding others, she had unstunged herself. In short, we cannot open our eyes upon the world without seeing multitudes wandering, like troubled ghosts, in disappointment and despair; the young mourning over hopes which have been blasted; the gay crying out against joys which have cheated; the covetous in bitterness for their riches, which have made to themselves wings and flown away. And yet, although at every step they stumble upon the ruined fortunes or prospects of others; although every object which they gain be the loss of one and the envy of many, the pulse of men beats as high, their countenance shows as bright, their desires are as warm and eager as if the world and its objects had just started into existence; as if the emptiness of its honours, the deceitfulness of its pleasures, and the

uncertainty of its riches, were still to prove; as if the curse of sin had not yet begun to work, and the sighs and groans which rise on every side of them were the songs of labour that had been satisfied, and the shouts of ambition that had been crowned.

But they who thus struggle against the tide which turns the affairs of the world; they who brave the billows of that mighty flood, which sets in to sweep away the counsels of the prudent, and the devices of the crafty; they whose courage rises with danger, whose hope brightens amidst uncertainty, whose ardent desires will even overlook impossibilities, are cold and timid when urged to make religion their business. They whom, in worldly concerns, neither risk nor labour can intimidate; they who will stake their all upon the merest accident, and then compass sea and land to make it turn in their favour, refuse to seek the kingdom of God, till they see its gates thrown open before them, or to stir for the salvation of their soul till they obtain some immovable security for the success of their labours; and in the face of offers that are free as the light of heaven, and open as the arms of mercy; in the face of promises which are rich as the treasures of eternity, and sure as the word of God, they stand asking questions, when they should be believing, and repenting, and working righteousness.

It ill befits vain man to question his Creator. The brightest seraph that adores and burns, seeks not to know the counsels of his God, but flies in speedy silence to perform his will, then bows in veiled humility before the throne. But man, whose path is error, and whose will is sin, usurps a privilege which neither dignity nor innocence can claim; and, instead of doing those things which are revealed for him and for his children, pries into those secret things which belong unto the Lord. It may, perhaps, be said that guilt is suspicious, and needs the strongest assurances to remove its fears. But it must be the hardest and the blindest unbelief which can resist such promises as these:—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." "Turn unto me, turn unto me, why will ye die?" "Seek the Lord, and ye shall live." He never said to any, Seek ye my face in vain. "The Lord is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will be withheld from them who walk uprightly." "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him unto death, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things." "He is not willing that any should die, but that all should

come unto repentance." "He hath set forth Christ to be the propitiation for sin, and will in no wise reject them who come through faith in his blood." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved." "Have your fruit unto holiness, and fear not, for the end shall be everlasting life." "He who hath promised is faithful; the testimony of the Lord is sure." "The strength of Israel cannot lie, and he is not a man that he should repent." "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but the Word of God standeth fast, and his mercy endureth unto all generations." In ourselves we are but weak, but in the Lord there is righteousness and strength. If we ask, we shall receive: if we seek, we shall find. If we come boldly to a throne of mercy, we shall obtain grace to help us in every time of need. We shall be enabled to advance from one degree of holiness and comfort to another, till at length we become meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. We shall increase in conformity to the law and to the image of Christ; and at last, when he appears, we shall also appear with him in glory. "I know," said an Apostle, "in whom I have believed:" "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, will give to me; and not to me only, but to all who love his appearing." "In loving the world, or the

things of the world, we may pierce ourselves through with many sorrows." "But wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." "Mark the perfect, and behold the upright; for the latter end of that man is peace. He need fear no evil. Goodness and mercy shall follow him all the days of his life. He shall dwell in the house: he shall reign in the kingdom of God for ever."

I have thus finished what was proposed in at present discoursing from these words, and have illustrated two of the strongest arguments in favour of the duty recommended in the text.

To conclude. Since the happiness of heaven is the noblest object which can engage our attention, and since it may be finally attained by all who truly seek it, let the kingdom and the righteousness of God be the great objects of our desire and care. Let not the things of the world make us forget our eternal destiny; let not the pleasures of life render us insensible to the joys of religion; but let us assure ourselves that in the ways of wisdom, and in the ways of wisdom only, shall we find peace here or blessedness hereafter. Let us, therefore, set our affections upon those things which are above, and "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

And may He, who hath called us to his eternal glory, give us grace to attain it, and to his name in Christ be praise!

NAAMAN THE LEPER, AND THE LITTLE HEBREW MAID;

A LECTURE, FROM 2 KINGS v. 1-14,

By the Rev. J. ANDERSON,

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In the beginning of these verses we are told, that "Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable." The greatness of Naaman is not asserted only; the reason of his greatness is also assigned; "because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria." The greatness of Naaman was a military greatness; over the enemies of his country he had been successful in war; and, among others, over the Israelites. Little did Naaman think who it was that "had taught his fingers to fight, and his hands to war;" little did the Syrians think as they went out to meet him on his return from the war, clad with the spoils and followed by the trophies of victory; little

did they think while, in their songs and shouts of triumph, they exulted over the God of Israel, that that very God it was who had led on their armies to victory; yet so it was; for by him, that is, by Naaman, it is said, "the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria."

Such was Naaman's greatness, and such its reason; but was there no cloud in his sky: was there no crook in his lot? Alas! there is a cloud in every one's sky, a crook in every one's lot, a *but* in every one's history. "Naaman was a great man with his master, and honourable: he was also a mighty man in valour; *but* he was a leper." He was the victim of a loathsome and an incurable disease; so loathsome, that, in all

likelihood, the meanest boor and the rudest kind in Syria would not have exchanged conditions with Naaman the leper.

Having received some insult, which he burned to avenge, or smitten with the curse of conquest, the desire of pushing it farther, the king of Syria resolves upon a second invasion of Judea. Naaman is appointed to conduct it; it is made, and is successful. He returns laden with booty, and followed by a long train of weeping captives. Among these captives there was a little maid; who this little maid was we are not told, save that she was of the land of Israel. Struck with her appearance, Naaman's wife selects her from among the captives for herself. Thus, it is said, "she waited on Naaman's wife." Notwithstanding all his greatness—the greatness he had risen to in the court, and the glory he had won in the field, this little maid of the land of Israel saw that her master was unhappy; she saw that he was a leper; she saw his sufferings, and she felt compassion for the sufferer. Reflecting on the loathsome disease of which he was the victim, she thought of her native land, and of the Prophet that was in Samaria, of whose miraculous power she had heard so much; and it occurred to her, that if her master were to apply to Elisha, that he would heal him of his leprosy. Hereupon she said unto her mistress, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy." Such was the suggestion of this little Hebrew maid—a suggestion, be it remarked,

First, of great Benevolence.

It is scarcely possible to conceive of any greater injury that one human being is capable of inflicting on another than that which Naaman had inflicted on this little Hebrew maid. Dear to our heart is our native land, its fields, its cities, its temples, its people. Her native land he had invaded at the head of hostile armies, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter;" its fields he had wasted; its villages, its cities, he had reduced to ashes; while multitudes of their inhabitants he had slain with the sword, and multitudes he had carried away captive. Dear to our heart, and precious as the light of the sun, as the air of heaven, is liberty. Of this precious gift Naaman had deprived this little Hebrew maid. Among the multitudes he had carried captive in war, whom he had torn from country and from kindred, she was one. The circumstances of her capture are not recorded. Though not known to us, they were well known to, and well remembered by her. The fire, the blood, and the desolation by which the track of

invading armies is marked, produce impressions on the hearts of their victims, which are not likely ever to be effaced; deeply, indelibly engraven these circumstances, no doubt, were on hers. Such were some of the wrongs inflicted by Naaman on this little Hebrew maid. The invader of her country, the spoiler of her hopes, the desolator of her home, the blasphemer of her God, how did she regard? For all the evil he had inflicted on her and hers, did she design and desire evil to him in return? His sufferings did she regard with internal satisfaction and with secret delight? Was the eye with which she saw them an eye of horn? Was the heart a heart of steel? No, that eye was an eye of pity; that heart was a heart of flesh; evil she had received, but evil for evil she had no wish to return; for all this evil her only desire was to return the greatest good. Hence her suggestion, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

Let us go and do likewise. Has any one injured us, shall we injure him or them in return? Shall we return evil for evil? Shall we plead the evil they have done to us as a reason and justification of the evil we would do to them? Be this far from us. This were not to act like a Christian; this were not to act like this little Hebrew maid; for evil received, let good be our only return; do others curse us, let it be our care to bless them; do they spitefully use us, for them let our worst wish be forgiveness; for them even, let ours be the opening of a forgiving heart, and the reaching forth of a friendly hand. Thus shall we do what is lovely in the sight of God and man, and thus shall we resemble this little Hebrew maid, whose benevolent suggestion we have now been considering—a suggestion from which it were well if thousands, who bear the christian name, and indulge the christian hope, but who live in the element of evil-wishing, evil-speaking, and evil-doing, would learn that such is not the element in which a man, far less a Christian, should live. From this suggestion, may we and they discover the beauty of benevolence; may we cease to be satisfied with being just merely; may we cease to be the mere, though loud, and long lamenters over the sufferings and sorrows of mankind; but of these sufferings and sorrows may we be the actual soothers and the actual lesseners; of the wretched may we cease to be the careless spectator, the cold questioner, or the cruel despiser; but, like this little Hebrew maid, may we become their kind and their ready reliever. Thus, like her,

whatever may be our lot, and whatever our station, in that lot and in that station we will find opportunities of doing good. In every house into which we enter, we will leave a benefit, and among every people, with whom it may be our lot to sojourn, a blessing.—Nor was it the suggestion of great benevolence, but also of great modesty.

Her relation to Naaman, his high station, and her own lowly condition, she did not forget. "Naaman," she remembered, "was a great man with his master, and honourable; and a mighty man in valour;" while she was one of his humblest menials—a captive taken by him in war, and one of his household slaves. His dominion over her, though founded in force, she acknowledges as if it had been founded in right. She speaks of him in the language of respect and reverence; she speaks of him as "her lord;" into his presence she does not rush unbidden; on the strength of her message even she does not presume. She goes to her mistress; she bargains for no reward; but, with a loving heart and a modest tongue, she informs her of her errand: "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

Nor was it the suggestion only of benevolence and modesty, but of a higher principle than either—of a true faith. The faith from which this suggestion proceeded must have been of great strength. She was, be it remarked, a mere child; the prophet that was in Samaria, for ought we know, she had never seen, nor of his having healed the leprosy had she heard. She knew, however, that he was a man of God; that to God nothing was impossible. She knew that, possessed of miraculous power, he would not fail to exert it, if, in so doing, God would be glorified; for whose glory he lived, and for whose glory he had received the endowment of miraculous power. Persuaded that the exercise of his miraculous power, in this instance, would tend greatly to the glory of the true God, she is confident, that if application is made, the miraculous power will be put forth, and that a cure will be performed. Hence her language, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he *would* recover him of his leprosy." She does not say, it is possible he might; she does not say, it were at least worth the travel and the trial; but he *would* recover him of his leprosy. Thus, though young in years, she was old in grace; she was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Such was her suggestion. Of this suggestion, what was the

history and the issue? This let us now consider. Under the direction of an overruling Providence it was not uttered in vain; it was carried to the ear of Naaman. "One went in and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel." Thus uttered and thus carried, how was it received? Did Naaman consider himself as too high to receive a recommendation coming from one so low? No. Disease can tame the haughtiest, and make even the loftiest stoop to the lowest. It was thus with Naaman. The moment he hears the suggestion, he hastens to act upon it. He repairs to the king of Syria, and from him he receives a letter to the king of Israel. With this letter of introduction, with a numerous retinue of attendants, with a great quantity of gold, and with several changes of raiment, he sets out for Samaria. He arrives, and is introduced to the king of Israel. He presents his letter of recommendation; it is read. The effect of this letter on the king is recorded in the 7th verse: "He rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me." The leprosy, be it remembered, was an incurable disease. At the request of the king of Syria, the king of Israel was thus naturally shocked—shocked at its blasphemy, as if he were in the stead of God, that he should recover a man of his leprosy. He seems to have suspected, moreover, that, in making this unreasonable request, he had some sinister and secret design; that it was a political fetch; that all that he wanted was a pretext for a quarrel—an occasion for a new war. Hence his language, "Wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."

It would appear that, at this moment, Jehoram had no recollection of Elisha; that the king of Israel had forgotten the man of God. We often forget those in our prosperity, to whom we have applied, and from whom we have experienced relief in our adversity. It was thus with the king of Israel. Though Jehoram, however, has forgotten Elisha, Elisha has not forgotten Jehoram. Having heard of Naaman's arrival, of its occasion, of the king's distress, he sends to him, saying, "Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a Prophet in Israel."

At the request of the Prophet, in the 9th verse, we are told, that "Naaman came with his horses and his chariot, and stood at

the door of the house of Elisha." The Prophet himself, you will observe, does not appear; neither does he invite even Naaman to enter. Instead of this, he sends a messenger to him with these words: "Go and wash in Jordan, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." At this reception, and especially in receiving this message and prescription—a prescription so different from what he had expected, Naaman is offended. The reception, he evidently considered, was unworthy of so great a Prophet to give, and of so great a man as himself to receive. To the prescription of the Prophet, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times," he refuses to submit; that he should wash in a river at all, he saw no necessity. It was an unlikely mean, he thought, to effect any desirable end; but if there was a necessity, were there not other rivers besides the Jordan? Were there not the rivers of his native land, rivers whose waters were as clear, and whose banks were as fair, as those of Jordan? "Were not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? might he not wash in them, and be clean?" thus saying, "he turned and went away in a rage."

Such was Naaman's conduct—conduct unreasonable and foolish. It is the right of the physician to make up his own prescription, and in his own way. If we expect the cure, we must submit to the prescription. If we expect the ends, we must use the means. To expect a cure in any other way would be unreasonable. To reject a prescription, because of its being disagreeable, would be weak as childishness; but to reject it, as Naaman did that of Elisha, because of its simplicity and facility, would be the height of madness. In the cure of bodily disease, there are few who act like Naaman. Desirous of health, we will submit to any remedy, however painful; even when both painful and unlikely, we will give it a trial. Thus do we act in the case of bodily disease. But are there not many who act differently in the case of spiritual disease? Are there not many whose conduct here agrees in every respect with that of Naaman the leper?

In a spiritual sense, all men naturally resemble Naaman. Was Naaman a leper? They are sinners. While all men resemble him in condition, many resemble him in conduct. All men are sinners. All men are not convinced that they are; some are. Thus convinced, having heard of a Saviour, they come to Him through the medium of his Word or ministry, seeking salvation. Like Naaman, at the door of the Prophet,

they wait for an answer; like Naaman, they receive it, and like Naaman with it they are offended. The prescription does not agree with their preconceptions and their prejudgments. The way of salvation they consider as unworthy of God to prescribe, and unworthy of them to obey. Respecting their own preconceptions, they say, with Naaman, respecting the rivers of his native land, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may we not wash in them and be clean." It is to this description of persons that we would now address ourselves.

Was Naaman a leper? Dear brethren, you are sinners; you are infected with a moral, a spiritual leprosy—a leprosy more loathsome and more deadly than that even of Naaman. The Word of God, which contains a description of your disease, contains, at the same time, a prescription for its cure. In sin, there are two things which it may be said constitute its disease—guilt and pollution: guilt, by which you are excluded from the favour and fellowship of God on the ground of unworthiness: pollution, by which you are excluded from his favour and fellowship on the ground of unfitness. Unrighteous and unholy, it were a thing at once unrighteous and unholy that we should be received into the favour and fellowship of a righteous and a holy God. Guilty and polluted, we thus lie under the interdict of God—an interdict which shuts us out from heaven, from entering within its gates, from sharing in its felicities, or holding fellowship with its inhabitants. Lying under this tremendous interdict, it becomes a question, of all others the most important, How is it to be removed? This can be effected only by the removal of its reason—by the removal of our disease. But how is this to be removed? How are we, who are guilty, to be made righteous? How are we, who are polluted, to become pure? These questions, if answered at all, must be answered by God. If the question of our guilt is to be settled, it must be settled by the Lawgiver—not by the law-breaker; by the judge on the bench—not by the criminal at the bar. If God may, and God will forgive sin, it is for God to say that he may and that he will. If God has found out a way in which, in perfect consistency with the entireness of his character and the integrity of his government, he may receive sinners back into his favour and fellowship, it is for him not only to find, but to fix it. It is not for us to speak about conditions; it is not for us to stand upon the terms; it is for him.

In whatever way, then, God may choose to forgive sin, to justify and save the sinner, in that way the sinner must seek forgiveness; in that way seek and submit to be justified and saved. In whatever way forgiveness is offered, in that way it must be received; otherwise it cannot be received, for otherwise it is not offered. Two things, then, are here to be inquired after:—Is there forgiveness at all, and in what way is this forgiveness to be obtained? These inquiries have been answered. Where? In the Word of God, there we are informed that there is forgiveness with God. That this forgiveness is of all, and for all; that of this forgiveness God is making a free gift unto all men; that it is to be had for the seeking, the claiming; that to claim it we are as welcome as God can make us, provided always that we will take it as it is offered, fully and freely for Christ's sake; that if we will but make his merit our plea, this plea will never be challenged, nor one pleader of this plea ever be condemned.

Such is the way, then, in which forgiveness is to be obtained, in which we are to be made righteous, by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone. Such is the way in which the interdict of a broken law is to be removed, and in which we are to be restored to the favour and fellowship of God.

Dear brethren, you are guilty; you have done that which is wrong; you have perverted that which is right; you have offended the justice of God. For this offence are you aware that you must be put upon your trial; that the tribunal of justice is awaiting your appearance. Have you thought of this? Have you thought of any line of defence? Are you prepared with any plea? Will you plead guilty, or not guilty? Will you put in a plea of innocence? Innocence! Oh! no. I will not mock you, I will not mock you, by supposing that you think of any such plea now, or that you will use any such plea then; if you know any thing at all, you must know that you are guilty; that the wages of sin is death; that the soul that sinneth it shall die. Must you then die? Must the law take its course? Must that sentence be pronounced which, if once pronounced, shall never be repealed? No, you need not perish; there is no necessity that you should. You have no righteousness, it is true, of your own; but God has provided a righteousness for you. This righteousness the Gospel offers to you. Submit but to this righteousness; make it yours, as you may, by faith, and that tremendous interdict, which is lying upon you, which is written

against you, will be repealed—repealed wholly, and repealed for ever. Accepted as righteous now, as righteous you will be accepted and acquitted hereafter. Yes, and on that day, which is to reveal all character, to review all life, and to decide all destiny, the gates of heaven will be thrown open for your entrance—those gates which are now barred against you, and on which these words, so fatal to the pretensions of the unrighteous, “None but the righteous enter in,” will continue to be inscribed for ever.

Another question there remaineth still to be disposed of. In sin there is not only guilt to be forgiven, there is pollution to be cleansed. As pollution is part of our disease, purity is part of our remedy. How, then, are we who are naturally in soul, body and spirit polluted, in soul, body and spirit to be purified? Here it may be remarked, that of salvation holiness is as essentially a part as forgiveness, and that it is as necessary. Can no man enter heaven who is unrighteous, neither can any man who is unholy, if guilt excludes from heaven on the ground of unworthiness, pollution does so on the ground of unmeetness. Let me press this on your attention: you are, I will suppose, unholy; you love sin; you live in sin; you love this earth, and the life that is led on this earth. Why? Just because it is a sinful earth, and because it is a sinful life. It is because it is ever making sinful provision for your sinful nature, and has ever an answer to your sinful cry; and is ever affording you sinful opportunities for your doing your sinful will, and seeking your sinful pleasure. It is on these accounts that this earth is so agreeable, and this life, notwithstanding all its sufferings and sorrows, so desirable. In proof of all this, suppose that you were to hear of a newly discovered country—a country into which sin had not entered, and in which suffering and sorrow were unknown—a country in which there was no sinful provision for a sinful nature, and no sinful answer ever returned to a sinful cry, and no sinful opportunities afforded to a sinful being for the doing of his sinful will, or the seeking of his sinful pleasure. Suppose that you were translated to the borders of this newly-discovered country; that ascending some lofty eminence it burst upon your view; that on this lofty eminence every sight that met your eye, and every sound that met your ear, were such as to assure you that in truth the country, on the verge of which you were standing, was a country unvisited, unpolluted by suffering, by sorrow, and by sin; would a country of this description be the country on which

you would wish to enter, and in which you would desire to dwell? Leaving the lofty eminence on which you stood, would you hasten to enter on the clysium of moral beauty and moral bliss that lay smiling below? No; you would not, you would hasten to descend; but it would not be to enter on that clysium of moral beauty and bliss. No, turning to the dark and polluted world that you left behind you, you would hasten to enter on it; and when you first touched its polluted soil, and first breathed its polluted air, and first mingled in its polluted scenes, and first entered on its polluted existence, the language of your heart would be, this is our rest, here will we dwell, for we have desired it.

If we would enter heaven, then, we must be holy. Oh! my brethren, loving as you do all that God hates, and hating as you do all that God loves; approving all that God condemns, and condemning all that God approves; rejoicing in all over which God grieves, and grieving over all in which God, and angels, and heaven, and the universe rejoice, marvel not at what is written: ye must be born again. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

Here, then, the question returns, how are we to be made holy? As this is a question which God only can answer, this is a work which God only can perform. For the work of sanctification, man is just as inadequate as he is for the work of justification. To change his character he is just as incompetent as he is to change his condition: this, then, be it remarked, is the work of Christ; that it is the work of Christ, it is not necessary at present to show. Suffice it to say, that not only is this the work of Christ, but that this work is performed by him for us and in us in a certain way; that it is not to be sought, and not secured by us, but in this way. What, is it asked, is this way? It is by faith. Are we justified by faith, by faith also we are sanctified. Unless a man, then, have faith in Christ, unless he have respect to the merit of Christ, for the Holy Spirit, unless he plead that merit for the Spirit he can no more be sanctified, than without receiving the righteousness of Christ he can be justified. Every attempt to subdue the power and to wash away the stains of sin not made in this way will be ineffectual. Many such attempts are no doubt made. Of these attempts made in ways alien to that now said to be the only efficient way, it may be said, These are the Abanas and the Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, in which men wash that they may be clean, but in which they wash in vain. What Paul said of the Jews in respect of righteousness, may be

said of such in respect of sanctification, They have not attained it, because they have sought it not by faith, but by the works of the law. It is the Spirit of Christ, then, through whose aid only we can hope to weaken the power, and to wash away the stain of sin. Without his aid we are no more able to begin or to consummate our sanctification, than we are to see without an eye, or to hear without an ear. Sanctification, then, is not the *first* work of an unbeliever; it is no more his *first* work than it is the first work of a housebuilder to begin with the roof before the foundation, or of a shipbuilder to begin with the mast before the hull. If a man, says an old writer, require his servant to go and pay a sum of money, but to go first to the bank and draw it, it is the duty of the servant to pay the money, but not his *first* duty, this would be to draw it: thus it is with us, you are unholy; it is the will of God that you should be holy; for this is the will of God, our sanctification. But, in order that you may be holy, it is the will of God that you believe in Christ, and look to him for his Spirit. This is God's work, and such is God's way; such is the order of salvation; such is the arrangement of his wisdom for the accomplishment of his mercy; such are the words inscribed on the cross of Christ—that cross to which every sinner is directed to look for salvation, "Believe and live." To the natural man this arrangement seems inverted and unnatural. He would first work and then win; he would do and live; he would be sanctified here, and justified hereafter. Hence his tears and his prayers; in these his language is, "May I not wash and be clean?" We answer no, you may not, you must not. This is your way; it is not God's way. What then is to be done? Take the answer of the Prophet addressed to Naaman, as addressed to you, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and you will be clean." With this injunction Naaman, as you are aware, at last complied. With what effect? Into the Jordan sea he goes down, a loathsome and polluted leper—a leper loathsome even in the eye of love. Beneath its charmed waters he bows himself seven times—seven times, according to the saying of the man of God. He returns to the days of his youth; his flesh becomes like the flesh of a little child; he is clean. Thus was the faith of the little maid of the land of Israel justified; thus was the saying of the man of God fulfilled; thus was the appointment of God vindicated; thus was Naaman healed. What a change in a few moments did Naaman, through his complaisance with the saying of the man of God, through his

washing himself seven times in the river Jordan, undergo, what a difference between Naaman now and Naaman formerly! Yet not more striking is the difference between Naaman's present and former condition, than is the change which those undergo who have believed on the Son of God, who have washed in that fountain which has been opened for sin and for uncleanness; who, like Naaman, have bowed themselves beneath the charmed waves of the river that maketh glad the city of God. It is a common taunt cast in our teeth, that after all there is little or no difference between the saint and the sinner. Now, the difference is not so great, we confess, as it ought to be. But let us not be unjust to the Church of Christ; let us not be unjust to the grace of Christ; let us not be unjust to the power and the efficacy of his ordinances; let us not be unjust to the christian character. What! no difference between the believer and the unbeliever, the saint and the sinner; no difference between the man who lives without God in the world, who lives just as he would live if there were no God, and as if he knew there were no God, and the man who believes in God, who loves the God in whom he believes, and who acknowledges him in all his ways? No difference between the man who refuses to acknowledge, worship and serve God, either as his Maker, Preserver, or Redeemer; who worships and serves the creature more, yea, rather than the Creator who is God over all, and blessed for ever, and the man who acknowledges, worships and serves him as his Maker, and Preserver, and Redeemer, submits to his authority, does his will, seeks his pleasure, and lives for his glory?

No difference between the profane swearer, the horrid blasphemer, and the man who fears and trembles at the naming of the great and dreadful name of God; between the one who never uses it but to profane it, and the other who never uses it but in his praise? No difference between the breaker and profaner of the Sabbath, and the man who remembers the Sabbath day to keep it holy; between those who on this hallowed day are to be found in the streets, in the fields, along our shores, or in the taverns, and those who are to be found in our temples?

No difference between the unrighteous and the righteous; between the cruel husband who assails his helpless wife with bitter words, and fells her to the earth with brutal and bloody blows, and the husband that is kind, and tender, and loving? Between the parent who neglects the education of his

children, sends them forth on society to disfigure, to burden, and to curse it, and the parent who trains up his children in the way they should go, and who sends them forth on society not to disfigure but to ornament it, not to curse but to bless it.

No difference between the children who honour their parents, and those who dishonour them; between those who plant their dying pillow with thorns, and those who strew it with flowers; between those who neglect them when living, and desert them when dying, and those who honour them in life, and comfort them in death?

No difference between the man whose heart is filled with malign dispositions towards God and man, and the man whose heart is filled with love—love to God and to men—men of every country, of every cast, and of every colour?

No difference between the man whose heart and whose hands are stained with sin, and the man whose heart is pure and whose hands are clean?

No difference between the man who is dishonest, the deceiver, the unjust, and the man who in all his dealings is open, just and honest?

No difference between the liar and the man who loves and who speaks the truth, whose promises are as sure as bonds, and whose words are as sacred as oaths?

No difference between the man who is unreconciled to God, who envies and grieves at the good of his neighbour, and the man who is reconciled to God and to all his ordinances, is content with his own lot, nor grieves at the lot of his neighbour, but rejoices even to know that it is than his own a brighter and a better?

No difference between the man who shows by all that he loves, and all that he lives in, that he is fit only for the society of the fallen and the lost, and that he is ripening for their pains, and pollutions, and punishments, and the man who shows by all that he loves, and all that he lives in, that he is fit for the society and the services of the sanctified and the glorified, and that he is ripening for their joys? No difference—all difference; all the difference there is between light and darkness; all the difference there was between Naaman when, a polluted and a loathsome leper, he went down into the river Jordan, and when, "restored to the days of his youth," he came forth clean, his flesh fresher than a child's. Thus is wisdom justified of her children, and thus in the economy of grace, as in that of nature, does God vindicate his ways.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. W. MACKENZIE, Comrie.
SERMON by the late Rev. D. MARR, Edinburgh.

NATURE AND USE OF LIBERTY;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE VACANT PARISH OF TRINITY GASK,

By the Rev. W. MACKENZIE,*

Minister of Comrie.

“As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”—1 PETER ii. 16.

THIS epistle was addressed, not to inhabitants of one country, but “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.”

Though all residing within the compass of the Roman empire, they were in different provinces, under different governors, and were ruled through different institutions, usages and laws, administered by various degrees of wisdom. In the context, the Spirit of God, by the Apostle, gives them the rule of their obedience to the civil governments, verse 13, “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man.” To call civil government an ordinance or appointment of man, seems to contradict what is said in Rom. xiii. 2, where it is called “the ordinance of God.” But this difficulty is easily removed. That there shall be some civil government, is the ordinance of God; “whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” But of what particular form the civil

government shall be, is the ordinance of man; for each state may be either monarchic, aristocratic, or democratic; ruled by one, by a few, or by the majority; or may have a happy mixture of these three great forms. This is entirely a matter of human prudence and arrangement, the Bible equally sanctions them all; but whatever the form of civil government established in a city or nation may be, to that ordinance of man the Christian is bound to submit. “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man;” and that not only to the “supreme” authority, whether that be lodged in the hands of a “king,” or of any other person or persons whomsoever; but also to inferior rulers and magistrates, who are “sent by,” or derive their authority from, the supreme rulers. This exhortation to civil obedience is confirmed in the context by five arguments or reasons:—1st. Because the Lord commands it, “for the Lord’s sake.” This argument is expressed in different words in Romans xiii. 5. “Wherefore ye must needs be sub-

* The decease of Dr. Brugh, of Trinity Gask, on 23d July, 1834, (it is believed) occasioned the first vacancy of a parish after the rising of the late General Assembly. The following was the only sermon preached there between the 8th August, when the church was declared vacant, and the 2d September, when a presentation was laid before the Presbytery. This sermon having been much misrepresented, as a firebrand thrown among the people, notice almost judicial having been taken of it, and many of his brethren, biassed by false reports, having spoken about it to the preacher, he has felt himself called upon to give it to the public verbatim, as delivered to the congregation of Trinity Gask.—*Manse of Comrie, Nov. 15, 1834.*

ject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake," &c. Not only for fear of incurring the wrath of your governors, but also from a conscientious regard to the authority and command of God. But this reason limits the duty of civil obedience by the will of God. No ruler or government has any authority from God to command what is wrong; and it cannot be the will of God that subjects should do any thing morally wrong at the command of their rulers. "For the Lord's sake," we are to submit to the right commands of our rulers; and for his sake, also, we are not to submit to their wrong commandments. 2dly. Because of the good end of every ordinance or form of government among men, verse 14, "For the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise," the protection and cherishing "of them that do well." For the sake of this its end, ye ought to submit yourselves to government. 3dly. Because, verse 15, "It is the will of God, that with well-doing," by the submission of believers to their magistrates, they should put a gag in the mouths of foolish and wicked men, who rage against the people of God as if they were rebellious subjects to magistrates. 4th. Because, verse 16, christian "liberty," or our exemption from the obligation of obeying unlawful and sinful laws and commandments, is not to be made an excuse for indulging our own wilfulness and malice, or for throwing off just and due obedience to our rulers. Christian liberty exempts no man from the duty of giving obedience to magistrates and civil rulers. 5th. Because these four duties of Christians are closely and inseparably united together, verse 17, "Honour all men; love the brotherhood; fear God; honour the king." We are to despise no man, but to render unto every man the respect due to the station wherein God has placed him; we are to love those of the household of faith with a special affection; we are to fear God; we are to render his due honour and obedience to the magistrate. And unless we perform the list of these duties, we cannot sincerely perform any of the three former. A disloyal rebellious subject neither fears God, nor regards man, nor loves the brethren.

It is at all times a duty of stewards well instructed into the kingdom of heaven, to be like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old, and to give the household of Christ their portion of meat in due season. It seemeth to me that

at this particular season the subject in our text is suitable to your circumstances. It having pleased the Master of the vineyard to call away to his account your late pastor, you are now to be called upon to perform your duty in reference to the appointment and call of a new pastor. On the manner in which you discharge this duty, the salvation of your own souls, and of those of your children and children's children, may be said to be suspended; you are placed in new circumstances; you may have a difficult and painful duty to perform; many eyes will be upon you, and perhaps your conduct may be followed by the most important and extensive consequences. Let us, therefore, with humble and earnest supplications for the guidance of the Spirit and Word of God, attend to the directions in our text, which seem to be so very applicable to your present circumstances: "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."

There are two things set before us in this verse very worthy of our attention, especially in the times in which our lot is cast: **LIBERTY, AND THE RIGHT USE OF IT.**

First, Liberty. Liberty or freedom is much spoken of in our day. For the sake of liberty, reform to the uttermost is urged and demanded in Church and State. But the word may be in people's mouths without its meaning being in their minds; and men, by pursuing a false kind of liberty, may become more thorough slaves than before, even as they become more ungodly and wicked by embracing false religions. Liberty may refer either to the body or to the mind. Bodily liberty is the body being free from all that prevents its obeying the will of the mind. Mental liberty is the mind free from what prevents its obeying the will of God. This is the highest degree of freedom which a moral creature can possess. Satan was not content with this, and sought to be free from obedience to the will of God, and by so doing he became a devil; he tempted our first parents to seek a similar liberty from the will of God, and to make themselves as gods; and, by yielding to his temptation, they made themselves and all their posterity subjects, companions and heirs of devils. The liberty which many plead and write for in our day, which is, that every man do what pleases himself, that every man follow his own will, or, in other words, to be quite plain, that the will

of the people be the supreme law, is just the liberty of the devil. The question simply is, Whether God's will or man's will is to be the highest—is to have the command on earth? The devil would have man's will to be chief, because, in that case, he would have every thing his own way. But let all the philosophers, politicians, legislators, infidels, liberals, radicals, voluntaries, upon earth say what they will, we will assert, on the authority of the eternal God, that entire and unreserved obedience to God alone is true liberty. This is the liberty spoken of in our text, "As free, and using your liberty as the servants of God." This highest degree of liberty is adverted to by Christ in John viii. 32. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin..... If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." It is spoken of by Paul in Rom. vi. 18, 19: "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. But now, being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." And in 1 Cor. vii. 21, 22. "Art thou called being a *slave*? care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman; likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." They that are not made free by Christ, are slaves of sin and Satan, have not mental liberty, whether they be kings or subjects; they that are the servants of God are essentially free, though in the lowest stage of bodily slavery; we may add, that they who are renewed and sanctified by the Spirit of God alone have true liberty, they only serve God; "for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." 2 Cor. iii. 17. And we may close these our general remarks on the nature of mental liberty, by saying, that it consists in obedience to the will and law of God, that it is bestowed by the Son of God, and that it is wrought in us by the Spirit of God.

There are three principal kinds of mental liberty, which may be called *spiritual*, *civil*, and *religious liberty*.

I. *Spiritual liberty*. This is the peculiar property of the elect people of God; all

others are under spiritual bondage. Spiritual liberty is a willing and hearty obedience to the will of God. It is the real liberty of the soul; it is being a subject of the kingdom of God; it is deliverance from every thing that keeps the soul from doing God's will on earth, as it is done in heaven. We have defined mental liberty as being the mind free from all that would keep it from obeying the will of God. Spiritual liberty is the mind being free of every inward restraint, that keeps it from obeying, or makes it unwilling to obey the will of God. Mankind are naturally in spiritual bondage; and although they possess freedom to follow their own wills, they are under many ties which keep them from following the will of God. "God suffers all nations to walk in their own ways." Acts xiv. 16. But no nation and no person of themselves choose the way of God. They have not spiritual freedom so to do; they are the servants of sin.

What, then, are those things which keep men in bondage from doing the will of God? These are,

1st. *Spiritual Death*. All men are by nature, "dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. ii. 1. When the sentence was executed upon Adam, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" he and his posterity came under the power of spiritual death. All men are born spiritually dead; they "must be quickened and born again," ere they be spiritually alive. There must be spiritual life ere there can be spiritual obedience or liberty. It is the Spirit of God that makes souls spiritually alive; and it is he that makes spiritual life act forth in spiritual obedience; and thus it is true, that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," where he is not, there is bondage. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

2d. *Spiritual Darkness*. Being dead, sinners are blind; they are "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." Natural men see not the beauty of God's holiness; they cannot see the excellency and glory of his moral perfections; there is a veil upon their hearts. The Bible and preaching can convey no spiritual light, no true discovery of God to a spiritually blind soul; and, therefore, not knowing God aright, not understanding his holy perfections, his will, or his law, how can the natural man freely obey Him, more

especially as his mind is occupied by false and erroneous views of God, and his perfections and will?

3d. *Spiritual Depravity.* The natural mind hates God, and loves what God hates; "the natural mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7. There is a deep, incurable, native enmity against the true and living God. This is original depravity. There is no love to him but hatred, no desire to serve him, "but depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways;" there is a cleaving to the world and the things of the world, a "forsaking the fountain of living water, and a hewing out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." And there is a separate and distinct opposition to every part of God's law and will. It is enough that God has forbidden any thing; the sinner for that very reason seeks to do it. God commands "thou shalt not covet." "Indwelling" sin, taking occasion by this commandment, works in us all manner of concupiscence, *i. e.* of coveting, "For without the law sin was dead," was inactive. Hatred of God, love of sin, pride, lust, envy, wrath, strife, emulations, covetousness and such like, keep the depraved soul in bondage, under the slavery of vile unholy desires and passions whereto the will is enslaved, so as that it cannot serve God.

4th. *Dominion of the Devil.* When man sinned he was sentenced to death, and he was, consequently, given over to the dominion of "him who hath the power of death, that is, the devil." On earth Satan tempts his servants to sin; in hell he torments them for their sins. But in earth and hell they are his captives, his subjects, his slaves. "Verily, I say unto you," said Christ, "whosoever doeth sin is the servant of sin;" and, surely, the servant of sin is the servant of the devil. The whole world lieth in the wicked one. "They that are dead in trespasses and sins, walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Eph. ii. 1, 2. By the condemning sentence of the law sinners are given over as the legal captives of Satan; his captives, and through their depravity they are his willing servants, a ready prey to all his temptations; "the strong man armed keepeth his palace;" sinners "are led captive by him according to his will." Such, then, are some of those

things which keep men in spiritual bondage, from doing the will of God.

How is liberty procured for such slaves? Christ is the Redeemer, the Deliverer of the captives, and the bestower of spiritual liberty. "If, therefore, the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Christ became the Head of the elect, in order that he might make them free. On earth, by "fulfilling all righteousness," he "obtained eternal redemption for us," a right and power to deliver his people from all that prevents them from being the servants of God, and to make them free as the servants of God. By suffering death according to the sentence and curse of the law, he obtained right to deliver his people from this sentence, and from its executioner, to pardon their sins, and to deliver them from that dominion of Satan, which is the worst part of their bondage." Col. ii. 15, and 1 Peter ii. 24. By his obedience to his Father, he procured, according to the condition of the covenant of grace, the Holy Spirit to bestow upon his people. And by his Spirit Christ is able to quicken their dead souls, to enlighten their blinded minds, and to sanctify their hearts, to give them life, light and holiness. By opening their understandings, he can make them able to understand the revelation of God which Christ has given in the Word, and by creating clean hearts, and renewing right spirits within them, he can make them willing to love the Lord and to do his will. Thus Christ has obtained the right and power to bring all his elect into spiritual liberty, from death, blindness, depravity, condemnation and captivity.

Having thus procured, how does Christ bestow spiritual liberty upon his elect people? By proclamation and by power, or by his Word and his Spirit. By his Word he proclaims "that he hath procured deliverance for captives." Isaiah lxi. 1. "The Lord hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." He declares, that Satan's right to hold sinners is broken, that the curse of the law was poured out upon himself, that he is exalted a Prince and Saviour to give "deliverance from spiritual death, darkness and depravity, and that he will deliver all that come to him." "Turn to the strong-hold, ye prisoners; by the blood of the covenant the prisoners are delivered out of the pit wherein there is no water." Zech. ix. 11, 12. Thus liberty is offered to all sinners without respect of per-

sons. "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But none will accept the offer of liberty; none will receive the Deliverer; none will take freedom from every thing that prevents them from serving God. Although all are suffered to "follow their own ways," to do what they please, none will accept liberty until by power they are made free. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there," and there alone, "is liberty." The Spirit is sent along with the Word, and calls elect sinners effectually. He puts spiritual life in the dead soul; he convinces of sin, and misery, and bondage, and coming torment; he enlightens the mind to see Christ as able and willing to give perfect freedom, and to make us the servants of God; he changes our wills, and inwardly persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ as our Deliverer, as he is freely offered to us in the Gospel. It is at the hour of effectual calling that spiritual liberty begins to be possessed. Then it is that the strong man armed is cast out of his dominion over the soul; then is the "brand plucked from the burning;" then is the sentence of condemnation reversed, and the sinner is justified, and shall never come unto condemnation, "but is passed from death to life;" then the soul begins to love God, and to delight inwardly in his will; to mourn for, loathe and strive against sin, and to seek to glorify and serve God; to learn his will with child-like docility from his Word, to look to Christ for daily grace and forgiveness, and to pray for the Holy Spirit to carry on the work both of delivering from all remains of spiritual death, darkness and depravity, and of bringing at length unto the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Spiritual liberty is not perfectly possessed in this life; it is not perfect until we "be with Christ, which is far better;" until "that which is in part be done away, and that which is perfect be come." "There is no condemnation, indeed, to them that are in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii. 1. "Satan has lost his right, and his dominion over the believer," Luke xxii. 31. "And sin shalt not have dominion over you," Rom. vi. 14. And believers do "know the voice of the good Shepherd, and follow him;" "they know the truth; the truth makes them free." John viii. 32. "And being made free from the reigning power of sin, and made the servants of God, they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." But

there is still "a law in the members that wars against the law of the mind, and brings the believer into captivity, to the law of sin which is in the members," so that the believer is often forced to cry out, "Oh! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 23. But there is an advancing and growing liberty. "The house of Saul waxes weaker and weaker, and David waxes stronger and stronger." The believer "goes on from strength to strength," serves God better and better in the Gospel of his Son, "by the spirit mortifies the deeds of the body," knows God more clearly, and loves him more perfectly, until at length at death, the soul being made perfect in holiness, is perfectly free to serve God without any tempting devil, ensnaring world, or unmortified lust, and does his will for ever and ever, perfect love and liberty; his will perfectly at one with the will of God. Such is spiritual liberty; such are those things that keep men in bondage from doing the will of God; such is the way in which Christ has procured spiritual liberty for his people, and the manner and time of his bestowing it upon them.

II. We are now to consider the second kind of liberty, *civil liberty*. On this we must be brief. By the fall men have not only become enemies to God, but also to each other. They neither keep the first nor the second table of the law. They set up other gods; they make images; they blaspheme the name of God; they break his Sabbath, and they also refuse due honour to their superiors, inferiors, and equals; they kill, commit adultery and drunkenness, steal and rob; they speak and swear falsely. If men were permitted every one to follow their own wills, earth would be a very picture of hell. Murder, adultery, robbery and perjury, would break all the relations that bind men together, would destroy all property, and at last destroy all mankind. Men would prey upon each other like the most savage beasts. In order to keep mankind in outward obedience to the will and moral law of God, he has ordained that there shall be governors on earth, to whom he has delegated power from himself, the chief Ruler and Lawgiver. They are "the ministers of God for good" to men; their power is "the ordinance of God." Because they stand in the room, and use the authority of God, they are called gods in Scripture. "I have said, Ye are gods." Psalm lxxxiii. 6. "By me kings reign, and princes decree

justice." Prov. viii. 15. In upholding the moral law, the civil magistrate has authority to punish the transgressors of it, even to death; "for he is a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil;" he has a "sword" committed to him which he is "not to bear in vain." Rom. xiii. 4. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed." Gen. ix. 6. God gives the civil magistrate authority to punish the open breakers of the moral law by bodily punishments, such as stripes, fine, imprisonment and death. God reserves to himself the farther power of punishing the inward, as well as open transgressors of his law, by the punishment of both soul and body in hell. The civil magistrate is to enforce both tables of the law, and I can find no part of the New Testament which abrogates the authority possessed by the Old Testament magistrates to punish, by civil pains, obstinate idolators, blasphemers, and Sabbath-breakers; as well as murderers, adulterers, robbers, and false swearers. But the civil ruler, besides enforcing the expressed precepts of the moral law, has authority to command what is not contrary to the law of God, according to the different circumstances of the people over whom he rules. For example, he may command a particular kind of money to be used, and that no one make it but those appointed by himself; and every commandment, not contrary to the law of God, issuing from a ruler, whether the ruler be an emperor, king, president, or Parliament, is binding upon the subjects of that ruler, and they who disobey it, disobey God. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake." While men are not all the servants of God, and free from depravity, there cannot be civil liberty without civil government; because each man is naturally disposed to wrong his neighbour. No man loves his neighbour as himself, or does to others as he would be done by; and, without civil government, the weaker would be the slaves of the stronger. But civil government, punishing evil doers, and forcing all to pay outward respect to the moral law, is the guard and defence of liberty; for its end is to prevent all from breaking the law, and to give liberty to every man to keep it. Civil liberty then depends upon the laws of men, being according to the will of God, and on their being strictly and impartially enforced. It is not the form of government that makes men civilly free. There has

been the worst slavery in places where the people had the power of appointing their own governors. There has been the greatest liberty where one man ruled a nation, and the reverse. The nearer the law of a country comes to the moral law of eternal justice, which is the will of God, and the more strictly it is enforced, the more civil liberty is enjoyed there; because, in obeying the laws of that country, men serve God, which is liberty.

Any human law or ordinance that is contrary to the will of God is not to be obeyed by the Christian. He is not to sin—to act contrary to the will and law of God for any power on earth. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Acts iv. 19. The Christian is not subject to unlawful commandments; and if the ruler enforces his sinful orders, the Christian must submit rather to suffer than to sin, as the people of God have had to do in all ages, "taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods," and even the burning of their bodies. But on no account is the Christian to refuse submission to any ordinance of civil government, which is not opposed to the will of God. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, not forbidden by God, for the Lord's sake: so that by well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

The Christian is free from all obligation to submit to any ordinance or laws contrary to the will of God, and he is free to serve God, and so far as the civil government does not interfere with this liberty, it is not opposed to civil liberty, and it is to be most submissively obeyed. Thus have we seen something of the nature of civil liberty, which consists in being under laws and government not opposed to the will of God, but in obeying which we obey and serve God.

III. We now turn to *Religious Liberty*.

We have seen what is liberty in the State: let us now consider what is liberty in the Church.

In the State, it seems that God has clothed civil magistrates with much discretionary power, and has ordered subjects to submit themselves unto every ordinance of man not contrary to the law of God. But in the Church there is no discretionary authority committed to any, but merely to see that "all things," commanded directly or indirectly by God, "be done decently, and in order." 1 Cor. xiv. 40. Christ has given

particular directions both as to his Old Testament and New Testament Church. "See," said he, "that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." Exod. xxv. 40. Heb. viii. 5.

"Teaching all nations to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Mat. xxviii. 20. Not a pin of the tabernacle is to be altered. "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish therefrom." Deut. xii. 32. There is a prescribed doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church. All that is essential is prescribed and contained in the Bible, the only and perfect rule of faith and practice, and that only is left to the discretion of men which relates to decency and order.

If, therefore, liberty be to be free from every hinderance to serving God, religious liberty is to be free from every church ordinance, as to doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, which is forbidden or not authorized by the Bible, and not to be hindered from serving God, and seeking his grace by every one of his instituted ordinances. So far as this freedom is not to be found in any church, so far it deprives its members of their rightful religious liberty. A Christian has a right to wait upon every ordinance of Christ in the manner he has prescribed; and he is not bound to subject himself to, or approve of, any ordinance not appointed by Christ; and he is bound to disapprove, and, in his place, testify against every thing in the visible Church contrary to the will of Christ. If any church professes and teaches error, it so far deprives its members of the liberty to hear the voice and truth of Christ; if it prescribes modes of worship not instituted, it deprives them of their liberty to worship God acceptably, and seek his grace in the way he hath promised to bestow it; if it deprives them of the power of performing any duty or obeying any command, say the command, "beware of false teachers, which come unto you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves; by their fruits ye shall know them;" then so far it deprives them of their liberty to obey the will of Christ. Only a church that is in all respects according to the will and appointment of Christ, affords to its members perfect religious liberty, and such a church never has existed yet. As there is no perfect spiritual liberty here, so neither is there perfect religious liberty. No church teaches all truth infallibly without mixture

of error; no church has perfect purity of worship, nor are the rules of discipline and form of government in the word perfectly understood, or perfectly applied by any church on earth.

Some churches, indeed, such as our own, have a higher degree of conformity with the pattern in the Bible than most others; but the only perfect church is in heaven, and there only is there perfect religious liberty, as there only is perfect spiritual liberty.

We ought, indeed, to pray and to labour in our respective spheres, to bring the Church on earth as near the pattern as possible, (Is. lxi. 1—6); but it is great ground of thankfulness when a church prescribes no ordinances directly opposed to the will of Christ; for it gives much religious liberty, a greater ground still when all its ordinances are authorized by Christ; it gives more, and the greatest of all when all Christ's ordinances are prescribed and practised perfectly. Such a church, if it were on earth, would give perfect religious liberty to all its members.

We now advert,

Second, To the *use* of liberty, having seen the nature of liberty and its three chief kinds. Our text having reminded believers that they are free, gives them three hints as to their use of liberty, "using your liberty not for a cloak of malice, but as the servants of God."

1. Liberty is to be used. Liberty is an invaluable blessing; it comprehends all others. It puts man in a situation to attain the chief end of his being, which is, "to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever." To procure and to proclaim liberty, Christ came, and suffered, and died. The preaching of his gospel is the sounding of the trumpet of the jubilee: "Liberty to the captive, the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound." Liberty is the blessing Christ promises to believers: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed." It was by the promise of liberty that false teachers allured their disciples: "While they promise to you liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption." Liberty is the watchword of the patriot, the battle-cry of the soldier. For liberty the martyr has died. Liberty distinguishes the free man from the slave, the civilized from the barbarian, the saint from the infidel, the angel from the devil, heaven from hell. The devil enslaves;

Christ makes free. Liberty, then, or freedom to serve God, is to be used, and never to be sold, or bartered, or betrayed, or lost. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free," said the Apostle to the Galatians, when certain persons sought to impose upon their church the repealed ordinances of the ceremonial law, "and he not again entangled with the yoke of bondage." Gal. v. 1.

The spiritual liberty which Christ hath purchased is freely offered unto all men. Sinners are commanded, on their peril, to use this liberty, to receive Christ as their deliverer from spiritual death, darkness, depravity, and Satan's dominion. Heavy laden, and weary with hard bondage, all sinners in this house are commanded, and invited, and entreated, to come to Christ, that they may find rest, to learn of Him who is meek and lowly, and to take his yoke upon them, which is perfect liberty. This is the first use of spiritual liberty, to receive it as freely offered to us by and with Christ. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely." They who have been made free by receiving Christ, and being made partakers of the Spirit of the Lord, are to use their spiritual liberty. We are to rest on Christ for pardon and deliverance from Satan, and to come to Him continually, in the exercise of faith, for his Holy Spirit to work in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure; to make all the graces of the Spirit to grow in us, and to render us more completely free from sin and the servants of God. And in order to serve God, we are to use our freedom through Christ from condemnation, and from the dominion of sin; for it is by having "our consciences purged by the blood of Christ from dead works that we serve the living God;" and it is by "reckoning ourselves, through Christ, dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God," that we prevent sin from "reigning in our mortal bodies, that we should fulfil in it the lusts thereof," and that we "render our members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Rom. vi. 13.

Believers are also to use their civil liberty, not to submit to unlawful and wrong ordinances, by whomsoever imposed, and to use all their lawful rights as subjects of civil government, so far as by them they can in any way serve God and obey his law. Paul, when about to be unjustly condemned at Cesarea, appealed to Cæsar at Rome. He made use of the laws of the country to de-

fend his own life and enaeracter. When about to be beaten with stripes, he pleaded that he was a Roman citizen, and thus escaped stripes. And when beaten at Philippi, openly uncondemned, he refused to go out privately from the prison, at the request of the magistrates, but said, "Nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out." Thus he cleared his own character as a minister of Christ, and prevented dishonour from being done to his Master's cause, through him so far as he could help it.

And believers are to use their religious liberty. When the Jewish faction in the Church would have insisted to impose circumcision on the Gentiles, Paul steadfastly resisted. He refused to circumcise Titus, who was a Greek. Gal. ii. 3, "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you." Rather than not serve Christ by publicly professing, and preaching, and hearing his Gospel, the Apostles and primitive Christians suffered the extremes of persecution even to death. Rather than submit to the unscriptural doctrines and ordinances of the Popish Church, the Reformers laid down their lives, and preferred to have their bodies burnt before disobeying Him who hath power to east both soul and body into hell fire. Rather than submit to prelaey and its kindred corruptions, our fathers counted not their lives dear unto themselves; but, forsaking all that was dear to them on earth, when they could no longer enjoy with these the pure ordinances of Christ, they wandered forth "to mountains, and dens, and caves of the earth, being destitute, afflicted, tormented."

If they made such sacrifices to purchase for us the religious liberty we enjoy, in a Church which has Christ as the Supreme and only Head, and has such scriptural doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, will ye not, my brethren, "contend earnestly" for the possession of these ordinances among yourselves and your children, administered in purity and power by a pastor after God's heart, who may feed you with knowledge and understanding? If God in his providence has been pleased to add to your religious liberty, so that you are now able to obey the commandments, "try the

spirits whether they be of God." 1 JOHN iv. 1. "Beware of false prophets." Matt. vi. 15. "Receive in the Lord such teachers as Epaphroditus with all gladness, and hold them in reputation." Phil. ii. 29. "I beseech you, brethren, ye know the house of Stephanas, that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints, that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth." 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16. I say, if God has been pleased to add to your liberty, so that you can forbid that any man be made your pastor, who is not qualified according to the rule of the Word of God, then, brethren, use this liberty, and use it boldly, and use it without flinching to the right hand or to the left, for fear or for favour; for whosoever basely gives up his religious liberty, especially in so awfully important a point as this, is at heart a Judas, who would sell his soul and his Saviour for a picce of money, or for something that will perish in the using, and perish with himself for ever. Fear not the face of man. Let no man make merchandise of your souls. Let no man trample upon your liberty. "Give place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel may abide among you."

But the Apostle is taught by the Spirit to guard against the perversion of liberty, and the turning of the name of liberty into a covering and cloak, and pretence for maliciousness. Liberty is holy and pure. Her name has often been prostituted to that harlot slavery, even as the scarlet whore of Babylon usurps the name of the pure Spouse and Bride of the Lamb, the Catholic Church. The worst excesses that ever disgraced the earth have been perpetrated under the names of religion and liberty. Liberty, civil and religious, has been, and is, the watchword of base slaves of corruption, agents of the devil, who are working for the slavery of mankind, by turning the nations from their professed subjection to God. It is not the first time that Satan has transformed himself into an angel of light.

But Christians must watch against the tendency in themselves, and the attempts of the devil and the world, to make them turn their civil and religious liberty into "a cloak of maliciousness." Let not avarice, pride, desire of power, envy of your superiors, discontent with your own lot, be clothed over with the name of a desire of civil liberty; remember that whoso resisteth or opposeth lawful rulers and commands, resist-

eth and opposeth "the will of God, and shall receive to themselves damnation." Alas! how much of human passion, party-spirit, maliciousness, are at the root of the present movements in our civil condition! The prince of this world is exerting himself with exceeding power and skill to turn the present excitement of men's minds on political subjects to his own advantage; and except the Spirit of the Lord raise up a standard of genuine freemen, spiritually free to turn the battle, popery in the Church, the law and the Gospel disowned by the government, infidelity pervading the mass of the people, and true religion and liberty laid prostrate in the dust, will be the trophies of Satan's victory, in bringing in slavery, under the holy name of liberty, setting up his own will as the rule, instead of the will and law of God. No doubt all this at last will be turned to his confusion; and liberty, the service of the One only living and true God through Jesus Christ, shall at length be enjoyed by all men and all nations; but, meantime, we and our children may suffer bondage, and millions may be going down to hell.

But, brethren, instead of dwelling upon the danger of making civil liberty a cloak for maliciousness, great and imminent as this danger is in our day, let us rather consider the sin and danger of turning religious liberty into a cloak and mask for the indulgence of unholy feelings. And to speak at once to the point:—Suppose that, according to the existing law, one were to be proposed as pastor for your acceptance or rejection, if you were to reject him from mortified pride, because the proposer did not hearken to your requests, or treated you haughtily, this would certainly be using your liberty to reject the person proposed as a "cloak for your own maliciousness."

The Gentile believers had a right to reject circumcision; but if they rejected this and the other ordinances of the Mosaic ritual from motives of pride, passion, or scorn, or from desires to vex, annoy, or be revenged on the Jewish teachers and converts, this would be using their liberty for a "cloak of maliciousness." This the apostle Paul guarded them against: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Gal. v. 13. "Dearly beloved brethren, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

Brethren, bring no strange fire of maliciousness to mingle with the pure flame of zeal, for the honour of Christ, the good of souls, the peace of Sion, the prosperity of Christ's gospel, cause, and kingdom, here and elsewhere.

Touch not the ark of God with the unhallowed hands of passion and pride. Remember the death of Korah and Uzzah! If, after comparing the life and doctrine of such person as may be proposed for your pastor with the standard of God's infallible Word, the great repository of all church law, and putting up earnest prayers for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you be persuaded that such a man is not qualified, according to the Bible, to watch for your souls, use your liberty to prevent his being placed as pastor of this parish, and spare not trouble or expense, and fear not persecution in so doing. But whoever proposes him, and in whatever spirit, if himself be a man of God, receive him as a gift of God, a pastor after his own heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. The law of honour, which is too often the law of Satan, would say, Be not trampled on by any man; if he do not treat you well, defeat him if possible. But what says the law of God? (See Rom. xii. 17—21.)

The last direction the Apostle gives for the right use of liberty, is to use it as the servants of God. The servants of God alone have liberty to use: all others are the slaves of Satan, sin, and corruption, whatever names or forms of liberty they may have. Spiritual liberty is the root on which civil and religious liberty grow. These never existed, or could exist, where spiritual liberty was not known, and in some measure possessed. Oh! then, my hearers, seek to be spiritually free. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Be the servants of God, believe in Christ, repent of your sins, ask and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then your names will be enrolled among the free men of the universe. You will be citizens of "the Jerusalem which is above," and "is free;" and you will be qualified to possess and to extend civil and religious liberty on earth.

Use your civil and religious privileges as the servants of God. Abhor the infidel, and detestable, and damnable doctrine now so loudly taught, that liberty is not obedience to the law of God; that our civil

privileges are not to be used for the service and glory of God. Oh! it is a depth of Satan; and the dragon has brought many professed members of Christ, ministers of the once flourishing Secession Church, to be his preachers, and to teach this doctrine of pretended liberty, but really tending to enslave to Satan. As subjects of civil government, and as electors of your rulers, use your liberty as the servants of God; if not, you use it as the servants of Satan; "for he that is not with me," said Christ, "is against me."

And, especially, your religious liberty, prize it, and use it, and seek to extend it as the servants of God. Remember that your only supreme and infallible rule and law, as members of the Church of Christ, is the Word of God. Follow this rule then. Be faithful servants to your Master in heaven. Leave consequences to him. Do ye your commanded duty. Value a preached Gospel as the highest earthly blessing. Count an unspiritual, and slothful, and faithless ministry as one of the worst curses you and your children can suffer. Use every appointed and legal means of obtaining the Gospel and a faithful ministry. Take heed that every step you take in this affair be according to the word and will of God, for the glory of Christ, and under the guidance of his Spirit. Seek that Christ may be glorified, and his Church edified. Plead his promises. Jer. iii. 15, "I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Is. lxii. 6, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence." 1 Cor. xvi. 13, 14, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity." Phil. i. 27—30, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." Amen.

OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, LOTHIAN ROAD, EDINBURGH, ON SABBATH, 2^D FEBRUARY, 1834, PREVIOUS TO THE DISPENSATION OF THE SACRAMENT,

By the late Rev. DAVID MARR, A.M.

"Behold, the hour is at hand."—MATTHEW xxvi. 45.

EVERY man, when acting his part upon the stage of time, has found that some of the most important events of his life depended upon his decision and firmness, and that frequently he has been placed in circumstances where the destinies of his future life were suspended upon the results of a single event; and when contemplating the approach of that interesting hour that was to decide his fate, his hopes and his fears have been excited to the very highest pitch, and he has felt a solicitude and an anxiety which well nigh overwhelmed his soul, as he exclaimed, "Behold, the hour is at hand." The statesman, who has some political measure pending in the courts of parliament, upon which his fame and his prospects depend, anticipates the day of trial, when his favourite scheme shall either be lost or gained, with an agitation and an emotion which lay hold upon every faculty of his mind, and render it impossible for him to think of any thing else, as the sand-glass of time reminds him that the decisive hour is at hand.

The leader of the embattled host anticipates the coming conflict, amidst the stern struggle of opposing armies on the field of blood, with an awe and an agitation deep and overwhelming, which makes him count, with harassing anxiety, every passing moment, till that awfully important hour arrives when he shall be either crowned as a victor, or loaded with the disgrace of a defeat. Often has the fate of kingdoms and empires been left to the decision of an hour, and that hour of inconceivable importance to millions. Often have the rights and the liberties, the freedom or the slavery of a nation, depended upon the result of a contest where valour, and patriotism, and magnanimity, struggled hard amidst the clash of arms and the din of war; and their bosoms have beat with trembling anxiety, as from lip to lip the important announcement passed, "Behold, the hour is at hand."

But, my brethren, although we could put together all the interesting anticipations, all the distressing and conflicting hopes and fears, all the important deeds and destinies that were ever suspended upon any hour in the world's history, they would instantly sink into insignificance, compared with the vast and eternal interests of innumerable myriads which were suspended upon the results of that hour, which our Saviour declares in the text to be at hand. The fate of kingdoms and empires is nothing compared with the fate of the universe, upon whose destiny it was to bear its decision for eternity. Heaven and earth were deeply interested in this hour; angels of glory had looked forward to it with every increasing interest; and now as it approaches, they looked down to witness the solemn spectacle of a Saviour groaning beneath the burden of a world's atonement. They would hover around the dark and gloomy summits of Calvary, with those harps in their hands which had celebrated his birth on the plains of Bethlehem, ready again to sound them in a song of joy, as they returned to heaven, testifying that the Son of God had conquered.

This hour was important to Jesus himself. He looked forward to it with great interest, saying, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And he went a little further, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt;" and he prayed, that if it were possible the hour might pass from him; but, blessed be God, it did not pass from him, and the result of it is now the joy and the rejoicings of the Church in heaven and earth. It is the song of the redeemed below; and whilst eternal ages roll on, angels and redeemed spirits shall strike their golden harps to celebrate

the glorious victory of that hour, as they circle the throne of God and the Lamb. "Behold, the hour is at hand." In discoursing from these words, we shall, first, consider the preparations that were made for this hour; secondly, the circumstances which attended this hour; and, in the third place, the glorious consequences of this hour.

We are, first, to consider the preparations which were made for this hour; and here we observe, that preparations were made for it in the counsels of eternity. Before the creation of the world, the three persons of the Godhead devised a scheme for the redemption of man; the whole plan of salvation was formed from eternity. Christ, the second person of the Trinity, became surety for fallen and guilty man; and the Father, as sustaining the honours of Deity, covenanted with the Son to accept of his obedience, and sufferings, and death, for us, as a complete satisfaction to his offended justice. Every thing to be accomplished by the Son in his mediatorial character, was stipulated and agreed to in the counsels of heaven. In the character of wisdom, the Son is represented in Scripture as telling us how he was set apart to the mediatorial work: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled; before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world." What a glorious and sublime view does this give us of the wisdom, and goodness, and mercy of God, that our salvation was a theme which occupied the divine attention before we had a being; that the events which transpired upon Calvary took their rise from a covenant which was framed before its foundations were laid! That mercy had anticipated our necessity, in opening the fountain of healing waters before sin had polluted the soul; and that a medicinal

plant of renown had been raised, and a physician provided before disease, and sickness, and death had entered into our world! Has not this love a height and a depth, a breadth and a length, which passeth all understanding?

In the second place, preparations were made for this hour by the institution of sacrifices early after the fall of man. We are informed, that after the eyes of our first parents were opened, and they knew that they were naked, God made coats of skins and clothed them. It is generally understood, that these must have been the skins of those beasts which were slain in sacrifice, for we have no account that they could be slain for any other cause. Man had no permission from God to eat animal flesh till after the flood. When he was expelled from paradise, Jehovah said, "Thou shalt eat the herb of the field;" but unto Noah he said, after he came out of the ark, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb have I given you all things." When God clothed our first parents with the skins of these beasts which they had slain in sacrifice, he might intend to remind them of their being clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, whose death and atonement for sin were shadowed forth by these first offerings. The institution of sacrifices was a great step in preparing for the coming of Him, who, by the once offering of himself, was to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and make reconciliation for iniquity." The sacrifices of the Old Testament Church, were the most pointed and particular types of the Lamb who was to bleed upon Calvary. They exhibited clearly the vicarious nature of his death; they convinced men that a propitiatory sacrifice was absolutely necessary, in order to satisfy an offended God, and laid the foundation of faith in the Redeemer, which, although it had to look forward through the dark vista of many ages, yet was then, as it is now, the means of salvation.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JOHN SMYTH, D.D., Glasgow.
SERMON by the late Rev. D. MARR, A.M., Edinburgh.

ON JUSTIFYING RIGHTEOUSNESS IN CONNEXION WITH TRUE
FAITH;

A COMMUNION SERMON PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH,

By the Rev. JOHN SMYTH, D.D.,

Minister of St. George's Church, Glasgow.

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."—GALATIANS ii. 16.

THE main design of this epistle is to vindicate and enforce the doctrine of justification by faith, which certain Judaizing teachers had attempted to subvert. This cardinal article of christian belief had been endangered not only by those self-righteous instructors, but by the countenance which Peter had, indirectly, given to their tenets in compromising the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free. "When Peter was come to Antioch," saith Paul, verses 11—14, "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For, before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, (public errors require public correction,) If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews." Such conduct is glaringly inconsistent and reprehensible. So differently had Paul acted, that he would not sanction

the initiatory rite of the Jewish faith in the case of his friend Titus, lest the false brethren might pervert such a concession into an argument for the perpetuity of the ceremonial law. To them "he gave no place by subjection, not for an hour," that the truth of the gospel might continue with the christianized Galatians. These incidental notices were mainly valuable in relation to the light which they diffused over the precious truths contained in the text: that *men*, "whether Jews by nature, or sinners of the Gentiles," are not "justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ."

The view here presented will, I trust, be both an appropriate sequel to the exposition of the decalogue which was brought to a close last Sabbath; and an equally suitable preparation for the sacred service in which we have so near a prospect of engaging.

It is not my present intention to enter into a critical analysis of the words, law, justification, and faith, as used by the Apostle; because it requires merely an ordinary measure of sagacity and candour to perceive that they are to be interpreted in the usual acceptation of scripture phraseology. Neither is it necessary to institute an elaborate inquiry as to whether the ceremonial or moral law be more immediately

intended as exclusive of justification; it being the evident design of the Apostle, to show that human works, in other words, obedience of any kind rendered by sinful man, is destitute of *meritorious* efficacy in the sight of God. The distinction, indeed, between what was ceremonial and moral in the Jewish institute, although founded on a scriptural basis, has, we apprehend, been somewhat indiscriminately insisted on, and with hurtful consequences. Whatever was prefigurative of New Testament blessings, received a glorious fulfilment in the mission of our Lord; and, as no value attached to any rite apart from the intrinsic worth of the great oblation, the observance of the Jewish ceremonial was, in the first instance, *no* ground of justification, and became nugatory whenever the *one sacrifice* of atonement was presented to Jehovah. The moral law, as embodied in the statutes of the decalogue, which may be briefly summed up in perfect love to God and our brethren, was plainly obligatory on all men, whether Jews by nature, or sinners of the Gentiles; and could constitute no ground of justification, unless obedience to it in every jot and tittle, from the first moment of conscious intelligence, were rendered. But this, no mere man since the fall had done. All flesh had corrupted their way: there was none righteous, no, not one. The hope of justification, therefore, by the works of the law, whether embodied in perishable types of divine appointment, or in enduring statutes of universal applicancy, was a hope which ought to have expired with the entrance of sin into the world. It was irrational to entertain it, inasmuch as enlightened reason disclaims aught that bespeaks imperfection in a creature as meritorious of acceptance with the perfect God. It was presumptuous to entertain it, because Jehovah's laws addressed mankind as sinful; and, for this cause, needing forgiveness even in their holiest approaches to his presence. And it was most dangerous to entertain it; for hope founded on error and embracing delusion shall be swept away as a dream when a man awaketh. Paul had once fondly cherished such illusory expectations, and had long tenaciously clung to them. But, when awakened by the Spirit of God to perceive their fallacy and perilous character, he abandoned them as refuges of lies; and was affectionately solicitous that others, whether Jews by nature, or sinners of the Gentiles,

should likewise relinquish all confidence in the works of the law: "for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

In the sequel, let us with the divine aid and blessing, direct our meditations,

I. To the doctrine of Justification.

II. To the nature of that Faith by which we are justified.

III. To some of the Evidences which Scripture furnishes of a justified condition.

We have, first, to offer a few remarks on the doctrine of justification. On this subject, it is to be feared that great misconception prevails even among the professed disciples of Christ Jesus. There are two extremes, especially, into which many are betrayed in regard to this fundamental tenet. The first is, the error of those who conceive of justification as originating with the creature instead of the Creator. The second is, the exclusion of man, not only from meritorious acting, but from all concern in the reception of the boon. In the former, sinners, like ancient Israel, attempt to establish a righteousness of their own, not submitting themselves to that which is of God through faith. In the latter, justification is regarded as an act of the divine government passed from eternity, and irrespective, therefore, of the production of moral character in the predestinated objects of it. Against both delusions we ought to be vigilantly on our guard. The one is fraught with *legal* confidence, the other with *antinomian* license. Sacred Scripture is alike adverse to both; providing at once for the supreme glory in the scheme of salvation, and for the growing purity of all whom it is intended to benefit. That we may attach distinct ideas to the word justification, it is necessary for us to consider it in reference to the attributes and revealed will of the divine Lawgiver. "It is God that justifieth;" and the principles, accordingly, by which his decision is conducted are those of unerring wisdom, and unchangeable excellence. The administration of Jehovah towards fallen and depraved creatures, would cease to be perfect if it infringed on any of those declarations which had been made to them in a state of sinless purity. Now, what was the revealed ground of justification or acceptance to our first parents before the crown of innocency had fallen from their heads? Was it not a spotless and unceasing conformity to the will of their heavenly Father? Life, which was inclusive of all blessings, whether in posses-

sion or in prospect, was the promised reward of unswerving obedience. Did the revolt of man, then, break the moral tie between perfect holiness and perfect felicity? Did it relax the claims of the great Lawgiver on the homage of his subjects; and is he *now* satisfied with a less pure and less exalted devotedness to his will? The supposition is altogether inadmissible. *Justification is vouchsafed to rebellious men, on precisely the same ground as if they had continued steadfast and immovable in their allegiance.* Unfallen Adam must have been accepted through unspotted righteousness. Adam, a voluntary and self-convicted traitor to his God, can receive no mark of divine clemency which does not recognise as its basis, righteousness, yea, perfect righteousness. But give earnest heed to this difference, that in the former case the righteousness would have been his own; in the latter, it is that of his surety. Still the *principle* of justification is one and the same: nor is the reason of such perfect identity involved in mystery. Is it not evident, that the requirements of God from his creatures must be distinguished by consistent regard to his own adorable character, as "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" It was morally impossible that He should have receded from his original demands, without a virtual acknowledgment that they were, in the first instance, unreasonably severe. Whatever scheme shall provide for remission of sin and gracious acceptance to the fallen, must vindicate the honour of Jehovah, and the equity of the law as originally promulgated. No announcement of mercy to pardon, no breathing of compassion to the lost, however consonant to the mind of God, or needful to the wanderers from his favour, can reach one guilty individual, until the claims of holiness and justice be fully magnified and made honourable. We behold, accordingly, in the gospel method of justification all difficulties solved, all obstacles to a harmonious display of the divine perfections removed, grace uniting with rectitude, absolution from guilt with punitive infliction on *Him* who made reconciliation for iniquity. The Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations were at one with the Christian in the revealed ground of acceptance. The bleeding, although spotless victim presented at the altar, was a confession that the life and the all of the offerer had been forfeited by sin, and that the law of righteousness

was as pure and obligatory as at the first. True believers worshipped the holy Lord God, as also merciful and gracious, confiding in the unsullied and sacrificial obedience of the promised Redeemer. To them, as to us, justification was granted as an act of forgiving love, extended by the *just God and the Saviour.* Of them, as of believers now, the language of Paul was accurately descriptive: "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? "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; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Justification includes pardon of sin, whether original or actual, and acceptance as righteous. Both are due to the voluntary substitution of the Son of God in our nature, who, by active obedience, fulfilled the law to the uttermost; and by penal suffering redeemed us from its curse. We do not profess to explain *all* the reasons of this method of justification. It is sufficient for practical ends to know, that the "only wise God" himself appointed it, and that it subserves the peace, the purity, and the final happiness of the world, by the obedience of faith. In this scheme human works are completely excluded. The origin, the progress, the revelation, the execution of it are all alike divine. It was devised in the counsels of unsearchable wisdom, flows from the unmerited riches of sovereign compassion, and glorifies the divine government in the estimation of all orders of intelligent beings. "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David, also, describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

II. We are, secondly, to examine the nature of that faith by which we are justified. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, *but by the faith of*

Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law."

Here it will be proper to premise the relation which faith bears to the justifying act of God as an instrumental, but not efficient cause of our acquittal from guilt, and restoration to divine favour. This distinction may be illustrated by a simple example. A man is famishing for lack of food. He is informed of a specific method by which his wants may be supplied; he gives full credit to the communication, on what he considers sufficient evidence. Unless he did so, death would be inevitable; but his faith has saved him from destruction, because, without such belief, no application to the only quarter of supply would have been preferred. Now, it is in a sense analogous to this, that we are justified by faith. The precious information reaches us, that the obedience and death of the Redeemer constitute a complete title to the forfeited favour of God in behalf of every true penitent. Faith receives this information with grateful sincerity; lays hold on it as the means of restored life and nourishment to the soul. Without faith, whatever benefit the tidings might convey to others, they could prove of no service to us. In order to our deliverance, they must be fully credited and practically acted upon. Yet, it is not our faith that imparts a right to the blessings of redemption, more than to the sustenance provided for the perishing body. Faith simply connects the needy, but unworthy recipient with the glorious and munificent Giver. It is the opening of the mouth for the bread of life; the stretching forth of the withered hand towards the divine Physician; the assumption of the protecting robe against the inclemency of the storm. We are justified by faith, but not because of faith. Were it otherwise, a boon of divine mercy (for "faith is the gift of God") would confer a title to the possession of itself; in other words, man would make Jehovah his debtor, and grace would be no more grace. A very moderate exercise of reflection must convince every one, that our belief can furnish no meritorious ground of justification, more than our repentance, our knowledge, our charity, or any other christian attainment. Whatever constitutes a foundation of acceptance with God must be perfect. No taint of sin, no im-

perfection must attach to it. But the faith even of genuine disciples is imperfect and variable. In some, it resembles a grain of mustard seed; in others, it is fruitful an hundred fold. Nay, in the same individual it is, at one time, vigorous and unclouded; at another, weak and fitful as a leaf shaken by the tempest. Were faith, accordingly, the ground of justification, the basis of hope would be shifting and unstable, incapable of sustaining to-morrow what it upheld to-day. Let it be, then, borne in mind, that the perfect work of the Saviour is the object of faith, and nothing in the creature; that Christ Jesus, and not any holy affection of ours, is imputed to us for righteousness. "In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory."

Having offered the foregoing remarks, as necessary in the way of caution against a self-righteous dependence on faith, instead of an exclusive reliance on him who is made of God righteousness to all that believe, let us inquire more particularly into its nature, as connected with the justification of sinners. The first property of justifying faith which merits consideration, is its divine origin. Like every other good gift, it cometh down from above. Scripture abounds with proofs of this position: "No man," saith our Lord, "can come to me, (a very frequent mode of describing faith,) except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." When Paul commends the faith of the Philippians, he says, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ to believe on him." And he observes, in regard to the spiritual resurrection of the Colossians, that "it had been effected through the faith which is of the operation of God." Hence we perceive an important distinction, at the outset, between a merely speculative or historical assent to the truth of God, and that holy exercise of man's heart with which he believeth unto righteousness. Of such slight account is the former regarded by God, that it is predicated as attainable not only by unregenerate men, but by the spirits of darkness; for even the devils believe and tremble. But the faith in Jesus Christ, which clings to his merits for justification, is of celestial descent; is implanted in the soul by the Holy Spirit, without whose omnipotent agency mankind are never withdrawn from a vain confidence in human deservings, how unworthy soever of divine approbation. "When God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines

into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," we become partakers of *justifying* faith. We are then united to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Federal Head of all believers, and are beheld *in Him*, the Beloved, as without spot and blameless.

2. Another quality of the faith to which the text directs our thoughts, is its appropriating character. We may admit the existence and value of many things in which we feel little personal interest. Events affecting the welfare of others produce a slight impression on us, unless we identify ourselves with them. The same general law obtains in regard to our spiritual and immortal welfare. Without calling in question a single fact or doctrine of the Sacred Word, we may be unmoved by its most solemn and touching representations. So long as they are not made to bear with direct energy upon our own hopes and fears, we listen to them as a tale that is told, and offer to them the homage of our admiration. It is otherwise when the slumbers of spiritual death are broken; when the soul, aroused from its lethargy of delusion, is constrained by a blessed necessity to survey existing realities; to behold itself with all its immortal powers condemned of heaven, and shivering on the brink of ruin. *Then* the light of everlasting truth, so long shut out, as by the iron barriers of a prison, pierces the thick gloom, and discloses the man to himself in his true characters, of sin, and ignorance, and helpless debasement. Instead of boasting, as heretofore, of good deeds and virtuous aspirations, his language is, Behold, I am vile: unclean, unclean. God be merciful to me a sinner! But whither shall he betake himself for remission and acceptance? What shall allay his feverish restlessness, and assuage the anguish of his soul? To what rock of safety shall he flee amid the tempestuous heavings of a stricken conscience? Will he be satisfied with mere generalities, as that Christ Jesus died, and that he needs not, therefore, to despair of mercy? Or will it relieve his troubled spirit to hear of salvation for the lost in the Saviour's righteousness, without any conviction of his own personal concern in it? Assuredly not. Whilst we avoid with fear and trembling the hasty conclusions to which an unscriptural assurance of the safety of their state leads some, let us beware likewise, of

the dangerous notion that true faith is compatible *with the habitual absence of personal confidence* toward God as our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. A measure of appropriation is indispensable to justifying faith. If the believer cannot say at all times of the Lord, "He loved *me*, and gave himself for me," he is dissatisfied with this state of incertitude, and ascribes it not to any deficiency in the provisions of grace, but to the sin that still dwelleth in him—to remaining darkness, infirmity, and corruption. In the experience of the true believer, faith must attach itself to Christ as a Redeemer sufficient not only for other sinners, but all-sufficient for him; it must lay hold on his doings and sufferings, as supplying *him* with a sure ground of confidence; and he must be enabled to adopt the language of the Apostle: "I know in whom I have believed. God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." "What things were gain to *me*, these *I* counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and *I* count all things but loss for the excellency 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." Phil. iii. 7—10.

3. We must not quit this head without adding, that the faith which is connected with justification is not only of divine origin, and appropriates on scriptural evidence the sole ground of acceptance, but that it is also inseparably conjoined with all other christian graces. Grievous mistakes have proceeded from putting asunder things which God hath joined together in the bonds of sacred union. Thus, faith has been often viewed as a simple act of the understanding conversant with certain doctrines, whilst its relation is the affections of the heart and the virtues of character has been greatly overlooked. But the Word of God presents a widely different view. It describes faith as "working by love, performing its offices under the influence of holy affection to God our Saviour, who first loved us;" as "purifying the heart," by bringing all its sensibilities into contact with the truth, through which we are sanctified; and, as overcoming the world, by disclosing to us the certainty and the glories of a higher existence, "faith being the substance of

things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Such, brethren, is the faith by which all who believe are justified. It rests on Christ Jesus as its object. Its origin is divine; its acts are those of appropriation, and its exercise is connected with all other christian graces. It gives sustenance to hope, depth to penitence, and expansion to charity. It is the proximate cause of our justification, and it embraces the truth by which alone we are regenerated, sanctified, comforted, and eternally saved. Was it surprising, then, that Paul affirmed of his Jewish brethren, converts with himself to the glorious Gospel: "Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law."

Having considered, first, the doctrine of justification without the works of the law; and, secondly, the nature of justifying faith; the third point to which we would direct your meditations, respects certain scriptural evidences of a justified condition.

III. This part of the subject has been, to a certain extent, anticipated under the preceding head; but its importance entitles it to more extended consideration. When we speak of evidences of a justified state, you will readily perceive that we allude to those indications of it of which we are personally conscious, and those likewise which are open to the observation of others. The former include all devout affections and habits cultivated under the fostering power of the Holy Ghost, which may be briefly expressed in a "conscience void of offence towards God and man." The latter embrace those external manifestations which our temper, converse, and ordinary transactions supply, including "whatsoever things are true, just, honest, pure, lovely, and of good report." Some persons have a sensitive apprehension on the subject of evidences, as if they were a very doubtful test of genuine discipleship. Instead of reflex exercises on the state of the heart, they prefer frequent contemplation of the objects of faith. Look outwardly, it is said, to Christ's obedience unto death, and thence let light, and peace, and holy joy, be drawn. Inward researches often terminate in grief and disappointment. They are surrounded with the intervening clouds of mental weakness and christian imperfection; nay, the more delicacy of conscience, the greater tremulousness in judging righteous judgment. The part of wisdom and of

safety is to neglect neither. We must direct the eye of faith frequently to the glorious object of all confidence, that we may have distinct, and enlarged, and comforting apprehensions of the fulness of his sacrifice, and the completeness of his obedience. Without such exercises we shall be in danger of presumptuous trust or of premature dejection. But, in "looking to Jesus," we shall perceive that, be our past transgressions ever so numerous or aggravated, "his blood cleanseth from all sin" those who repent and believe the Gospel. Thus, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Still, brethren, the duty and necessity of ascertaining what reception we have given to the justifying grace of the Gospel, are not thereby diminished. "Examine yourselves," says the Apostle, "whether ye be in the faith;" and the obligation is as peremptory now as it was in the days of primitive Christianity. Human nature, although subject to various modifications of minor consequence, is, in all essential respects, the same. The sources of error are always at hand. Temptations to self-deception, springing from inward depravity, and from our two leading adversaries, Satan and the world, are restricted to no age of the Church militant. The duties of every station are arduous, if conscientiously fulfilled; and there are trials which all must endure who shall be made meet for the kingdom of God. Hence arises the extreme importance of minute, serious, and prayerful investigation as to our state before God; hence also the necessity of being jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, lest we be deceived with a name to live, whilst we are dead before God. In this examination, it is of the first moment that we engage in it under a heartfelt impression of our proneness to self-deception—of our liability to be misled by partial views of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, which dispose us to an over favourable estimate of ourselves. If we are duly sensible of our danger, we shall accompany our inquiries with humble and importunate prayer to the "God of all grace," that he may enlighten us in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Nothing will excite greater anxiety than the prospect of being guided to right conclusions as to our spiritual condition. We shall each one of us seek to know the whole truth, and shall, by a diligent comparison of our hearts and lives with the standard of righteousness, through

the blessing of the promised spirit, arrive at a solid and settled conviction. In comparison of this knowledge, every other acquisition vanishes into the merest insignificance. The question, Am I in a justified state, or am I still under condemnation? is one to which no parallel can be adduced, whether viewed in reference to present safety, or to the prospects of a judgment to come. The settlement of it decides on all that is replete with the issues of eternity. To an inquiry thus momentous, is it not indispensable that we bring a serious, humble, honest, and prayerful spirit? that we sift again and again every complex feeling, that we repeatedly examine ourselves, and that we beseech God to "search us, and know our hearts; to try us and know our thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and to lead us in the way everlasting." Such examination is at all times seasonable; but it is peculiarly needful in the view of a communion table, and we, therefore, reserve a few additional observations, connected with the present head, for the fencing of the Sacramental Table.

Fencing of the Communion Table.

In reverting to the evidences of a justified condition, as indispensable to acceptable communicating, the

1st. Which we mention is a profound conviction of the necessity of the Saviour's righteousness. "The whole," said our Lord, "need not a physician, but they that are sick." "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The scheme of salvation assumes throughout, as its basis, man's condemned and helpless state as a transgressor. Its character is *that of a remedial provision for spiritual diseases*. The pure and holy do not require it. Hence firm and serious convictions of sin become necessary in preparing the heart for a due estimation of its benefits. Have we, brethren, been thus enlightened and convinced by the Holy Spirit as to our lost and miserable estate? Have we seen the law of God to be holy, just, and good, exacting perfect obedience as that by which alone its claims are honoured and its designs subserved? Have we surrendered every hope of acceptance as springing from creatures, whom transgression has separated from Jehovah, and felt that, whilst the law is spiritual, we are carnal, sold under sin? Contemplating the bright purity of the divine character and the spotless glory of God's law, have we

"abhorred ourselves," and with self-loathing have we put our hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, and cried out, Unclean, unclean; "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Unless such be our experience, we have no part nor lot in the justifying righteousness of the Son of God. The innocent need no absolving from guilt; their justification rests on an altogether different ground. They are the guilty, the rebellious, the morally diseased, who are invited by the Gospel to a Saviour's substitution. "He suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God." Nor is it merely in reference to the commencement of spiritual life, that the conviction of a better righteousness than our own is necessary. Every subsequent part of the life of faith recognises the same great truth; for, in proportion to the enlargement of our views, and the depth of our religious affections, is the growing persuasion that all our righteousnesses are polluted, and that faith and hope must, to our dying hour, centre on Him who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

2d. Another evidence of a justified condition which we notice, secondly, is habitual thankfulness of spirit for the "faith of Jesus Christ," and the righteousness to which it cleaves. Wherever there is a deep sense of the evil of sin, and of our consequent need of a Redeemer, gratitude is felt and expressed by the believing soul. "It is one of the dark features of the unregenerate that they are not thankful;" that they receive all from God, but refuse to give to him the homage of their hearts. When true faith takes possession of the soul, it worketh by love, and is productive of lively gratitude to Him who loved us, and *from* whom all our blessings flow. Have you, brethren, felt the glow of christian thankfulness diffused over your spirit whilst you recall the memory of Jehovah's goodness and grace? Has a sense of personal demerit, and of inability for your own deliverance, rendered God's appointed method of restoration especially precious to your souls? Do you hail the tidings of remission, and peace, and great joy, in the proclaimed salvation of the Gospel, as graciously suited to all your wants and to all your woes? Is Christ Jesus, in the divine constitution of his person as God manifest in the flesh, in the perfection of his obedience, in the meritorious efficacy of his death, and in the fulness of his redeeming

compassion, regarded by you as "the chief-est among ten thousand, and altogether lovely?" Do you love much, because much has been forgiven you? And animated by lively gratitude, is it the language of your souls, on this day of sacred Communion, "What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward us? We will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. We will pay our vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people." "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." "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. Amen."

3d. A third evidence of a justified condition is a consistent course of holy living. This, brethren, is doubtless the most satisfactory of all tests of an interest by faith in the righteousness of Christ Jesus our Lord. States of affection and feeling are unstable; are dependent on numerous contingencies. The pulse of hope, or gratitude, or joy, is at one time high; at another so feeble, as hardly to give intimation of its existence. Emotion, therefore, is at best an irregular and uncertain criterion of the spiritual life within us. But a course of living formed on the enduring principles of the Gospel, directed under the Spirit of God by a sacred regard to the divine authority, and a devoted sense of obligation, furnishes proof at once *direct* and of easy application to every one who is anxious to decide aright as to his

spiritual state. Besides, the test just specified is in most evident harmony with the designs both of the law and of the Gospel. The one is our schoolmaster unto Christ, teaching us the absolute necessity of his justifying righteousness as revealed from faith to faith. The other demonstrates the unchangeable obligations of the law; supplies the motives and the strength requisite for new obedience; inculcates the duty of abstinence from ungodliness and worldly lusts; and of living soberly, righteously, and godly in the world; of being redeemed from all iniquity, and of being purified unto God a peculiar people zealous of good works. Whilst we are taught to rely implicitly on the complete obedience of our surety for the restored favour of Jehovah, we are solemnly warned of the danger of neglecting any one of the laws of righteousness. How earnestly does Paul remonstrate against abuse of the doctrine of our text, in the verses immediately following verse 17 *in finem*: "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. 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."

OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION;

A Sermon by the late Rev. DAVID MARR, A.M.—Concluded.

My brethren, what gratitude is due to God, and how ought we to rejoice, that we have now a clearer light than that which beamed in these first ages. We have now the fullest evidence that Christ has offered himself, the just for the unjust; he is now set before us in the Gospel a propitiation through faith in his blood, "as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." We are now assured that he hath shed that blood which cleanseth from all sin, and that the sacrifice which he offered has been accepted by our heavenly Father, as

a complete atonement for all our offences. Altars need no more be raised, blood no more to flow, the smoke of sacrifices no more to ascend; for we are called to renounce every altar but the cross, and every sacrifice but the Lamb which bled on Calvary. But another preparation for this hour, was the separation of a particular people from the rest of the world to be the peculiar people of God, although the Church of God had existed on the earth since the first promise of a Saviour was given to man. Yet the call of Abraham may be regarded as a kind

of new foundation laid for the visible Church of God, upon which it was to stand forth more gloriously and more prominently, until Christ himself should lay for her a foundation broad as the earth, and lasting as eternity. Abraham is represented in the Scripture as the father of the faithful, because in a direct line from this patriarch the desire of all nations was to come. He is the root whence the visible Church through Christ, Abraham's root and offspring, rose as a tree distinct from all other plants—a tree which has now spread wide its branches over the world. And although the branches are broken off, yet the Gentile nations are grafted in; and this tree will one day spread its boughs from sea to sea in loveliness and luxuriance, and at last be transplanted from the uncongenial climate of this world to flourish for ever in the climes of immortality.

The separation of the Jews to be a peculiar people, the ordinance of circumcision as a mark of Abrahamic descent, the promulgation of the law amidst the thunders and lightnings, the blackness and darkness of Sinai, the institution of various rites and ceremonial observances, the communication of many cheering and pointed prophecies and promises respecting the Messiah, were all preparatory for this hour. The world by this means was prepared for the reception of a Saviour, and for a purer and a better light than it had yet received; for with all these blessings and peculiar advantages, the Jews were sinking in idolatry and ignorance. Darkness was covering the earth, and gross darkness the people. Let us bless God that we live in an age of the world, and in a country more highly favoured than even Judea; they had but the glimmerings of the morning light, we have the beams of the meridian sun; they saw but the shadow of good things, we have the substance; they laboured under the bondage of burdensome rites, we are made free with the liberty of the Gospel; they saw but darkly as through a glass, now the types and sacrifices are removed, and in the Gospel feast of the supper, we see Jesus Christ set before our eyes crucified and slain.

But, again, the incarnation, the birth and public life of our Lord, were all preparation for this hour. It was necessary for our redemption, that Christ should become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. By his active obedience he fulfilled that law which

we had violated; he magnified it and made it honourable; he displayed every virtue and every disposition of a perfect and a holy Being. The radiance of divinity shone round all his actions; love glowed in his bosom; mercy walked at his right hand; peace went before him; power was in his word, omnipotence in his arm. He confirmed all his heavenly doctrines by miracles; the elements of nature were subject to him, and confessed him their Lord; the grave heard his voice and opened her doors. Death heard his word and released his victims; and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, trembled before him, saying, "I know thee, who thou art, the holy one of God." He prepared his disciples for the trials that were before them; and having completely fulfilled the preceptive part of the law in our stead, the time drew on when He was to have its penalty inflicted upon him as our substitute, when he was to bear our sins in his own body upon the tree, and expiate them by sufferings and death, which also we cannot explain; and this made him cry out, with emotions of which we can have no conception, "Behold, the hour is at hand."

Let us now, in the second place, consider some circumstances which attended this hour. First, it was accompanied with all the pains and sufferings which men could inflict. As the eventful life of the man of sorrows drew to a close, human malice and indignation, prompted by the fiends of darkness, seemed to gather themselves up to the highest pitch of their fury. As he drew near to Calvary, the cloud gathered deeper and darker, the tempest of malignant passions raged with redoubled fury, and the cup of suffering was mingled with every ingredient which hatred and cruelty could suggest. Popular feeling, like the ocean roused indignantly with the northern blast, assailed him with all the rancorous and revengeful animosities of malevolent passion, "Away with him, away with such a fellow from the earth," was the universal cry, shouted in execration by the infuriated multitude. They called him a traitor, a winebibber, and friend of publicans and sinners. They spit in his face, and blindfolding him, strike him with the palms of their hands, saying in mockery, "Prophecy to us, who was it that smote thee?" The lowest menial of the court unfeelingly treated him; for it is written, "that the servants did strike him

with the palms of their hands." Verily, he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; for he was literally stripped and scourged in the judgment-hall, he was treated with the most cruel injustice; for although his innocence, even in the eyes of a heathen judge, was clear as noonday, yet he was delivered up a sacrifice to popular passion.

He was arrayed in a robe of mock royalty. They put a reed into his hands for a sceptre, and a crown of thorns upon his head, and, bowing the knee in derision, cry out, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Whilst they lead him away to crucifixion, he is compelled to carry his cross, although his body must have been weakened and lacerated with previous scourging. Well might he exclaim at this hour, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Every kind of malice, of insult, and of boiling indignation, was heaped upon him; every ingredient of wo was poured into his cup, and every species of contempt was conglomerated in the scoffings and hissings of an infatuated people. Yet he suffered all with a calmness and a composure which bespoke the divinity that dwelt within him. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers, is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

But, again, we observe, that at this hour Christ was deserted by his friends. If there is a time when the endearing consolations of friendship fall upon the heart like the summer dews that refresh the parched flower, it is in the hour of sorrow, when the storms of adversity blow, and the sun of prosperity sealed up behind the darkness of the thick cloud. And often has the voice of affectionate friendship cheered the unfortunate; often has the face of a faithful friend done good as a medicine, smiled away the gloom of melancholy, and wiped away the tear that rolled down the cheek of distress. But Jesus, the Saviour and the friend of man, was left alone in the hour and power of darkness. Comforters found he none; his disciples forsook him and fled; one of them betrayed him, and another denied him; and when the most unjust and false charges were brought against him, none of them were

near to vindicate his innocence, or sympathize in his condemnation. Ingratitude sickens every human heart; it breaks down the strongest powers of resolution and confidence, and often intimidates the heart which open and avowed hostility could never have moved; but all this Jesus sustained unmoved and unaffected. And if ever ingratitude was found robed in its darkest shades, it was upon this occasion. The beloved John, the bold Peter, and the pious James, could not stand now; but blessed be God, that when human hearts trembled with fear, and bent before the surge like the tender sapling before the stream, the Saviour of men, full of goodness, and love, and power infinite, stood the battle and braved the danger.

This hour was also accompanied by the hiding of his Father's face. The saints on earth have frequently mourned in melancholy sadness when the light of God's countenance has been withdrawn, and the dark shadows of despair have intervened between them and the sun of all their hope, and the source of all their joy. And if they have felt sad and sorrowful upon such occasions, how would our Saviour feel, who had enjoyed the light of his Father's countenance from eternity; who had been daily his delight, rejoicing always before him? Of the depth of that agony which seized upon his spirit in that awful hour, angels nor men can form no adequate conception; nor even in eternity will they be able to ascertain the full amount of the travail of his soul, when he exclaimed, "Eli, Eli, lama sabaclthani? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is an unsearchable mystery which no finite mind shall ever thoroughly understand; but our consolation is, that, by his agony, he wrought out our redemption, dispelled the heavy and lowering clouds of wo and wrath which hung over us; and by these sufferings, he hath sent forth the joys of a consolatory light even to the confines of the eternal world, which illuminate the dark covering of the grave, and enable us now to live in the hope of a glorious immortality.

The visible appearances of nature also testified the awfulness of this hour, when the Lord of nature was suffering. The works of creation were moved, and the elements of nature were alarmed; the heavens grew black, and the sun was wrapped in darkness and gloom, as if ashamed to look upon the tragic scene; the earth trembled and

groaned, as if responding to the Saviour's cries, which still lingered on the breeze; the perpetual hills did bow, and the rocks burst asunder, as if the universe was convulsed in the agonies of death; the graves were opened, and the dead arose, and walked about the streets, as if to add to the gloomy horrors of the scene. In this hour an event was transpiring of the most important nature. The Lord of heaven and earth was suspended upon the cross. He who gave to the sea his decree that the waters should not pass his commandment; who set the sun in the heavens, the moon and all the stars; whose voice spake into being the universal frame of nature, and gave to her all the laws which regulates her vast machinery, He was suffering, and every human bosom seemed devoid of sympathy. Nature alone seemed to sympathize with her Lord; and, by her convulsions, testified that this hour was big with importance and awfully solemn.

We shall now, in the third place, shortly consider the glorious consequences of this hour. First, it opened up a way into the favour and forgiveness of God. The death of Christ is the only foundation of a sinner's hope; for, by the shedding of his blood, he has opened up a new and a living way to the holiest of all, whereby sinners find acceptance with God. By the disobedience of one, many were made sinners; but, by the obedience of one, many are made righteous. The death of Christ is not only the most wonderful event that ever transpired in the universe, but it is the only thing which can save a sinner from eternal condemnation.

We can be justified only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, by the sprinkling of his blood upon our souls; for the language of Scripture is, "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. By this blood, the vilest transgressors are washed and sanctified. Many who are now in glory, were once black with sin, and stained with every impurity; but they have been washed, and justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord; and by the Spirit of our God, "they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" therefore are they before the throne of God. Christ has, therefore, made peace between heaven and earth by the blood of his cross; and

those who take shelter from divine wrath under the cross of Calvary, are justified and cleansed from all unrighteousness, and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Again, by the death of Christ, all the blessings of the covenant of grace are freely communicated to believers. The covenant of redemption, which was made between the Father and the Son from eternity, contains in it many exceeding great and precious promises, many inestimable and eternal blessings, which are all made over to the believer, in consequence of Christ, our surety, having completely fulfilled the conditions of the covenant. It is called a covenant of grace, because its blessings are free and unmerited on our part. In this covenant, we have the assurance of the love of God: "I will heal their backslidings, and I will love them freely." "Behold, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." "If a man," says Christ, "loveth me, he shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and make our abode with him." The believer also enjoys peace of conscience: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you." When the conscience is thus sprinkled with the blood of the atonement, it is in tranquillity; and in contemplating Jehovah through the covenant of grace, the peace of God is felt, which passeth all understanding; "for there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." But the believer in this covenant does not remain stationary; he grows in grace. He who planted the seed, takes care that it shall spring up and come to maturity. He who laid the foundation-stone of a sinner's salvation, has provided to make the superstructure complete; and the God of mercy, who first called us into the kingdom of grace, will at last safely land us in the kingdom of glory. But, again, in the hour of Christ's death, the pillars of Satan's kingdom were shaken to their foundation. His throne and his power trembled when Messiah, Prince of Peace, ratified the covenant with his own blood, which gave him dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the end of the earth. When Christ was suspended upon the cross, then he put his foot upon the serpent's head, and bruised

his power. By his perfect righteousness and complete atonement, he obtained a right to the fulfilment of the Father's engagement, which was to put all things under him, and make him governor among the nations; and, from that moment, the cross of Christ has gone forth conquering and to conquer. Heathen temples have crumbled to the dust. It has stood the fires of persecution, and the rage of infidels; and soon the Turkish Crescent must fall before the cross; and ghastly superstition shrink from the light of the Gospel; for Christ must, and will, reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.

Finally, we observe, that this hour brought a revenue of glory to the divine name. Redemption is wholly of grace; it originated in God's free favour; its progress is secured by his faithfulness, and its consummation will be effected by his power. In the salvation of sinful and immortal souls, by a plan so wonderful as that of sending his own Son to lay down his life a ransom for us, his glory is made great; his holiness and his justice, his truth and his goodness would have still remained in all

the effulgence of divine glory, although the prison gates of hell had been shut upon all the children of men; but now his mercy shines in glorious splendour; now mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have mutually embraced each other; now there is a glorious harmony in all his attributes. By the work of redemption, a higher note has been added to the music of the heavenly choirs. A loftier anthem has been introduced into the psalmody of the Church of the first-born in heaven. The myriads of redeemed spirits, which have been added to the heavenly host, by the atonement of God's eternal Son, cease not day nor night to strike their harps in celebration of redeeming love; and angels who have kept their first estate, raptured with the sentiment of the song, join the concert, and pour forth a stream of heavenly music, melodious and powerful as the sound of many waters, such as doth please the ear of God. And it is a theme which shall never be resigned, but a subject which shall be always new; for redemption is the science and the song of all eternity. Amen.

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT CAMERON, East-Kilbride.
LECTURE by the Rev. JOHN EDWARDS, Bridgeton.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST AND ITS ENEMIES DESCRIBED;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. ROBERT CAMERON,

Minister of the Relief Church, East-Kilbride.

“They are the enemies of the cross of Christ.”—PHIL. iii. 18.

THE important doctrine of salvation by the obedience and suffering of a crucified Saviour has, in every age, been very differently received by different classes of mankind. To the Jews of old, as we see from their conduct, as well as the express declarations of Scripture, it was a stumbling-block. They expected a Messiah, indeed, but it was a Messiah appearing in much temporal splendour—a Messiah who should free them from Roman thralldom, and exalt them to a proud pre-eminence over surrounding nations. With their minds preoccupied and biassed by their delusive expectations, they would not receive as the expected Deliverer one who, when he came, was so eminently a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; hence, they persecuted him during all the time of his public ministry among them, and at last prevailed in nailing him to the cross; while even to this day, as a people, though widely scattered, they are living in the continued rejection of him. But as the cross of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, so to the Greeks or more learned among the Gentiles it was foolishness, connected in their minds by the influence of a false philosophy which caused to err. Blinded by conceit of mind and the influence of a false philosophy, they could not conceive it possible how the world could be benefited by the cross of Jesus. Indeed the whole procedure of God, in accomplishing man's salvation, is a mystery to the natural mind; and they who, like the philosophizing Greeks, reject whatever they cannot understand, and reduce every thing to the level of their own capacity, must fre-

quently err. The Jews were misled by their fond hopes of temporal grandeur, and many of the Gentiles by the high opinion they entertained of their own abilities and attainments, and they became its decided enemies. So has it been in every age; for while many to whom its importance is made known, receive the tidings with joy, and glory in them as the power of God to the eternal salvation of their souls, multitudes treat them with contempt; and of thousands even of those who make a profession of religion, the declaration of the Apostle in the text will be found true: “They are the enemies of the cross of Christ.” In treating this subject, I claim your attention to the following topics:—

I. I shall inquire what we are to understand by the cross of Christ.

II. Show who are the enemies of it.

I. I shall inquire what we are to understand by the cross of Christ. These words sometimes refer to the instrument of torture on which the Saviour hung, when, in the accomplishment of man's salvation, he was extended on the accursed tree, a spectacle of wonder to earth and heaven. But at other times the meaning is much more extensive, including in it the sufferings which he endured on that tree, and the blessings which result from those sufferings, as constituting the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. It is in this enlarged acceptation that we propose to consider the words as used in the text, and accordingly shall call you to consider the cross of Christ as the foundation of our hope, the source of our spiritual enjoyment, that which furnishes the lead-

ing theme of the gospel ministry, the proper and legitimate object of our boasting and triumph, and the pledge of eternal life and glory.

1. The cross of Christ is the great foundation of our hope as fallen sinners. It was upon the cross that Jesus made an atonement for the guilt of man, and procured salvation for all that believe. By him (an Apostle tells us) we have received the atonement. He hath purchased the church with his own blood, and by it he hath redeemed his people to God. When man sinned and fell, mountains of transgression stood in the way of his access to his Maker; these man, guilty man could not remove, for he could make no satisfaction for his transgression; yet such was the case of man, that without satisfaction to the dishonoured law and offended justice of God, our whole race must eternally have perished. And as man himself could make no satisfaction, so neither was there any creature able to render it for him. Hopeless, therefore, so far as their own or the creature's aid was concerned, stood the guilty and fallen race of rebellious Adam. But while we were in this deplorable, this hopeless condition, Jesus the Son of the Highest espoused our cause, and engaged to bear the punishment due to our sins; and, oh! how severe were the sufferings, how exertiating the agonies of the Messiah while making atonement for sin. His sorrows, indeed, pass understanding. But he successfully accomplished his glorious enterprise, and triumphed over every foe, by which means he rescued multitudes of fallen men from everlasting ruin; for such was the divine efficacy of his blood, that it completely washed away the guilt of the iniquities of all his people, of every age, and of every nation.

Stand still, then, and for a moment contemplate the cross of Christ in this aspect. It presents a most astonishing spectacle. Here we behold the just One suffering for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. To this wonderful exhibition well may all our eyes be turned, and frequently should we, as it were, look back to Calvary, and meditate on the precious blood there shed for guilty man. By this one sacrifice, the sacrifice of himself, Jesus perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And well might his sacrifice produce the effect, for its excellence was as great as our sins were heinous. An infinite majesty was offended, an infinite Saviour made satisfaction, our sins were the sins of finite creatures; but Christ's suffering were the sufferings of a person of infinite worth. By the personal union of the divine

nature with the human, a dignity was conferred on the sufferings of that human nature—an infinite dignity which was as inseparable from these sufferings, as the divine nature is in his person inseparable from the human. As the union of his nature remained firm in all the time of his sufferings, therefore the efficacy of his divinity mingled itself with every groan in his agony with every pang he endured, with every cry he uttered, as well as with the blood which he shed on the cross; in a word, the divine nature which could not suffer was joined to the suffering flesh, in order to render these sufferings saving. Through the cross of Christ, we now see death made the way to life, and shame the path which leads to glory; for the ignominy of the cross is the recovery of man. Sin is eternally condemned while the sinner is eternally rescued. Here, then, in the cross of Christ, is the foundation of all our hopes. To the sinner viewing futurity, without at the same time looking at the cross, the prospect is truly appalling; worse than shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it; but when the cross is brought into view, that changes the scene, and inspires a hope blooming with immortality.

“O, then, poor trembler on life's stormy sea,
When dark the waves of sin and sorrow roll;
To him for refuge from the tempest flee,
To him confiding trust thy sinking soul.
For, oh! he came, he died to calm the tempest-toss
To seek the weary wanderer, and to save the lost.”

2. The cross of Christ is the source of our spiritual enjoyments. All the high and holy enjoyments which, as Christians, we possess, flow to us from the cross of Christ. To mention all the rich blessings we possess as interested in the cross of Christ, would require a length of discussion and illustration altogether improper to be attempted in one section of a single discourse; we can but advert slightly to a few, and we will see that they all flow from his mediation for us, and so are evidently the fruits of his cross. It is the Christian's privilege to enjoy a peace of soul in the midst of the most painfully harassing circumstance; a peace so important, that he would not part with it for all that the world can offer in its place; a peace which the Apostle emphatically describes as the peace of God which passes all understanding, and which keeps the heart and mind through Christ Jesus. It is his privilege to possess a joy in his soul, even when external appearances are the most threatening and distressing; a joy with which a stranger intermeddled not, and which the world can neither give nor take away; a joy exceeding

great and full of glory. It is his privilege to have access to God on his throne of grace by a new and living way, and to enjoy communion and fellowship with him there, and also in the various ordinances of his appointment; and that all these are enjoyments of a very high order, the slight description we have given is sufficient evidence.

New all these high and exalted enjoyments come to us through Christ, and are the fruits of his obedience unto death; for without his cross, without his mediation, not one of them could ever have been ours. He is the source of our peace, and it was his dying legacy to his people; but he becomes our peace, because by his death he hath harmonized the justice and mercy of God in their exercise. He is our joy, for if we joy in God it is through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom also we have received the atonement, and without his death no new, no living way of access to the throne of grace would ever have been opened for us; but banished from the presence of God, as Adam was from paradise, all hope of communion with him, or enjoyment of him, would have been for ever annihilated. The blood of Christ, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, is that which hath been sprinkled on the new and living way of access to God on his mercy-seat; and by which alone we have fellowship with the Father. Here, then, it is plain, that as all these privileges flow to us through the mediatorial work of the great Redeemer, his cross must be viewed as the source of all our spiritual enjoyment. Here, then, let our hope, here, let our joy be placed; and while the man of the world is continually crying, "who will show us any good," let our anxious prayer be, that God, for the sake of his Son, would lift up the light of his countenance upon us; so will he put more joy in our heart than the wicked experience when their corn and wine are most abundant.

3. The cross of Christ furnishes the principal theme of a gospel ministry. True it is, indeed, the Gospel furnishes the christian minister with numerous and richly varied topics on which to address those who hear him. In his discourses to them, he may go back to that eternity which is past, and speak as Scripture guides him of the everlasting love of God, and of the covenant of peace between the Father and the Son; he may expatiate over all the numerous pages of scripture revelation, as he traces its important discoveries downwards, from the first promise given to fallen man, to the

judgment of the great day, when the mediatorial scheme shall be completed; and he may, under the direction of prediction, look forward to that eternity which is to come, and dwell on the white robes, the palms of glory, and the sweet anthems of the ransomed of the Lord, when they shall all be assembled before the throne of God and of the Lamb. But in treating on all these subjects, he must still have respect to the cross of Christ as that which gives them unity and excellence, or he will mar their beauty, and lessen their importance. Indeed, the cross of the Saviour runs through the whole series of scripture revelation, so that remove the cross and the venerable fabric of our holy religion falls to the ground, and becomes a broken and disjointed mass. True it is, indeed, the separate parts viewed individually, may still present to the view a certain degree of beauty, just as some remains of beauty may be discerned in the fallen pillars of a ruined temple; but still it is the cross, the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, that gives solidity, beauty and consistency to the divine fabric of Christianity.

A very few words will set this point in a proper light. Without the doctrine of the cross, of what advantage would the covenant of grace or its promises be; of what advantage could they be if that blood which confirms them, and on the shedding of which they all depend, had never been poured forth? Without the cross, how could eternal redemption have been obtained for us? or how could the Holy Spirit have been bestowed to fit us for heaven? Without the cross, without an interest in a crucified Saviour, what joy could we have had in God, what peace in our own bosoms, what triumphing in Christ, and what hope of glory? Yet these are all of them important topics of a gospel ministry; with all these subjects, nay, with every topic connected with them, the cross of Christ must be conjoined, or we preach not the gospel faithfully. This was exactly the plan pursued by the Apostle Paul and his fellow-labourers in the earliest and purest age of the Church, as we fully learn from his writings. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord;" and again, "brethren, when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." And to quote no more, "we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and

Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." And thus must it be with every minister who would wish to enjoy the blessing of God upon his labours; for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus; and wo unto them who preach not thus the Gospel.

4. The cross of Christ presents the most legitimate object in which we may triumph, and of which we may boast. Various are the objects of which men make their boast, and in which they glory. Some boast of their ancestors; but illustrious ancestors often only serve to make the worthlessness of their descendants more conspicuous. Some boast of their wealth, but what is wealth at best but shining dust; it often makes to itself wings and flies away. Some boast of their honours; but a breath made them, and a breath can dissipate them. Some boast of their learning; but the injuring or displacing a small fibre in the brain may, in one little moment, not only deprive them of this, but even of reason itself. How foolish, then, is it to make our boast of any of these things, many of which are so worthless, and all of them so uncertain; such conduct lamentably evinces the weakness of men.

But to glory in the cross, to make our boast in the death of Jesus, is legitimate, proper, wise. So it appeared to the Apostle, when he exclaimed, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus was it ever with him, and with all who truly love the Saviour; thus it ever will be, they openly exult and rejoice in their connexion with him as the crucified Redeemer; they are neither ashamed nor afraid to avow it to the world, nay, have a holy pleasure in doing so. Witness, in proof of this, the language of Paul, when taking leave of his friends at Miletus: "Now, behold, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things which shall befall me there; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Nothing, you thus see, could deter this eminent Apostle from discovering the warmth of his affection to the Redeemer, and glorying in his cross; and this, as I have already said, is in a measure the case with all those who are his genuine people. So highly do they love and esteem him; so much do they prefer him to every thing else, that neither

difficulty nor danger, neither fear of death nor hope of life can make them conceal or dissemble their affection for him, and their joy in the glorious work which he accomplished. Persecutors may threaten them, yet will they exult in him: death may stare them in the face, yet will they stand firmly triumphing in the cross, for they know in whom they have believed; they know that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor the world, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from his love. They know that he will be their guide and guardian during the stormy voyage over life's tempestuous ocean, and will at last introduce them to the haven of undisturbed rest and repose. They, therefore, exult in him, and in the glorious work which he accomplished. Mistake me not, ye of tender conscience. I readily grant it there are different degrees; for the love of all to Jesus is not equally ardent; the preference of all is not equally great, nor the assurance of his love and favour equally strong in all; and, therefore, all do not glory in him with equal exultation. But still all his people, in a greater or less degree, glory in their divine Saviour; they all, in a greater or less degree, prefer his cross to every thing else; and they all, in a greater or less degree, are ready to discover their attachment to him, in defiance of the threatenings and persecution of the world.

5. The cross of Christ bestows a pledge of everlasting life and glory. There is, indeed, an intimate and indissoluble union between the cross of Christ and the Christian's crown of glory. By his death and resurrection, Jesus has opened the gates of heaven, and disclosed the glories of immortality to the view of his followers; thereby he has dispelled the gloom which thickened around the grave, and set eternal life clearly before our view. Through his dying and rising again, amid all the vicissitudes of our present state, we can look forward to a better country, and with joy and triumph contemplate, as the place of our everlasting residence, that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Because Jesus became obedient to the death of the cross, all his faithful people shall in due time be arrayed in white robes, and seated on thrones prepared for them, with crowns of glory on their heads. In a happier land than this, the Lamb shall lead them and feed them, and they shall follow him whithersoever he goeth; they shall be regaled with the precious fruits which grow in the para-

dise of God, and shall shine as the brightness of the firmament for ever and ever. Revolving ages, as they pass over them, shall neither diminish the measure of their felicity, nor tarnish the lustre of their glory. Eternity shall roll on in its endless course, but the pillars of their throne shall remain immoveable; their crowns shall sparkle with everlasting brilliancy, and, in rapturous joy, they shall for ever celebrate the praises of God and of the Lamb. Now, all this felicity, and all the hope of it is the fruit of the cross; hence the question and its answer in the Book of the Apocalypse: "Who are these, and whence came they? These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne, and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them, and be their God."

So great in excellency and in glory, then, is the cross of Christ; and while we thus contemplate it, we would be ready to conclude, that it would be impossible that any rational being should hear of it and not triumph in it; but, alas! the reverse of this is the true state of the matter. The text tells us, many are its enemies. To show who they are, to whom the character belongs, was our second

division, but its illustration must form another discourse.

To conclude, the subject we have been considering plainly evinces, that Christ crucified must be our only hope as fallen sinners, and the exclusive ground of all our confidence towards God. This is the way to heaven, and there is no other. "Hence," said Jesus, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." While others are forming plans of their own, and vainly hoping for salvation on the ground of their alms giving, their benevolence, their religious observances, and trusting by these to form a ladder by which they shall ascend to heaven; or, in equal delusion, hoping that, by the merits of Christ, joined to these our imperfect services, they shall gain acceptance with God; let us, while we feel, acknowledge and endeavour to evince the sanctifying tendency of the doctrine, trust entirely to his merits, who on the cross finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; so in the Lord shall we have righteousness and strength; in him we shall be justified; in him we shall glory, and in due time we shall be glorified with him for ever and ever. Amen.

THE EXPEDIENCY OF CHRIST'S DEPARTURE TO THE FATHER;

A LECTURE,

By the Rev. JOHN EDWARDS,

Minister of the Relief Congregation, Bridgeton.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. 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: of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."—JOHN xvi. 7—11.

To sensitive hearts, hearts which have been attracted to each other by kindred emotions, and bound in close union by ties of endearment, nameless as they are numberless, there is something exquisitely painful in the thought of being severed from each other by death. The soul feels as if it were about to lose a portion of itself—as if the thread that bound it to life were snapping asunder—as if it were relinquishing all that formed the subject of pleasing recollection in the past, or delightful anticipation in the future. The barriers by which selfishness had formerly confined the stream of its affections, are now borne down by the resistless tide of its feelings; all the life and energy

of its past emotions seem as if collected and concentrated in the one absorbing feeling which now fills the heart. If the beloved individual has been one, who has excited not merely our love, but our expectations—one whom we fondly hoped would have risen to honour and distinction, and shed the radiance of his glory over all with whom his fortunes were connected, the pain of bidding a final adieu just becomes doubly overwhelming. Disappointed hopes mingle their bitterness with the agonies of struggling affection. Such were the mingling feelings which now agitated the bosoms of our Lord's disciples. The character of their Master was peculiarly fitted to gain upon the sus-

ceptibilities of their hearts. It was a union of all that could command their reverence or excite their love. In its lowest point of view, it was a specimen of perfect humanity, in which the energy of a lofty soul was blended and mingled with the mild benignity of a feeling heart; and which, not to have revered and loved, would have argued the destitution of all that is ennobling and interesting in the character of man. To bid farewell to their beloved Lord, was, therefore, no common-place parting. But whilst the departure of Christ involved the rupture of their dearest earthly ties, it seemed, moreover, to carry in it the death-blow of their fondest and longest cherished hopes. He whom they "trusted would have redeemed Israel," broken by the arm of his power the yoke of his country's slavery, and established his empire on the ruins of tyranny and oppression, now spoke "of departure" and death, in reference to himself; disgrace, poverty, and persecution, in reference to them. Conscious of their own weakness and inexperience, and deeply impressed with a conviction of his perfect competency to protect and direct them, they clung to him, in the simplicity of their hearts, with a confident reliance, that the perfection of his character would counterbalance the deficiencies of their own. But now to be forsaken by their Leader; to be flung upon a persecuting world, the supporters of a despised, and apparently, sinking cause, without an arm to shield, or a wisdom, superior to their own, to guide them, was more than their hearts could bear. They were, therefore filled with inexpressible anguish; they stood around him in wordless grief; they have no language but looks and tears, none daring to ask him, "Whither goest thou?" "because sorrow had filled their hearts." God's providence, however, in reference to his children, always proceeds on this principle, that all events, however painful to their feelings, or apparently destructive of their hopes, shall ultimately issue—triumphantly issue in results more advantageous than even those which their largest desires had anticipated. We shall soon find that it was so in the case of the disconsolate disciples.

Verse 7. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

By the departure of Christ, the disciples were to sustain a loss, which, in their view, would leave them bereft of all they loved, and disappointed in all they had expected.

But they were wrong. Christ assures them, on his veracity, that his departure would be highly "expedient" to them. And why would it be expedient? For this reason, that his departure would be followed by the coming of the Spirit. Now, the presence of the Spirit would be highly advantageous, nay, was absolutely necessary to the disciples for various reasons.

They had embarked in an undertaking in which they would peculiarly require the *inward consolation and comfort*, which it is the blessed province of the Holy Spirit to impart. They were to be employed by heaven as agents in the execution of a work which would expose them to danger, and involve them in difficulties, which had never before fallen to the lot of man to face or endure. Their "field was to be the world;" and like their Master, who had not where to lay his head, in a world which himself had framed and fitted up, they were to wander homeless and friendless, as lambs in the midst of wolves; encountering, wherever they travelled, the ruthless violence of the lawless mob; enduring, wherever they proclaimed the name of Jesus, the merciless cruelties of a crafty, powerful and selfish priesthood; struggling, wherever they resided, with the crushing arm of a tyrannical and intolerant magistracy. Bonds and imprisonments, tears and watchings, and blood and strugglings unto death, were to be the attendants—the ceaseless attendants of labours, which were to close only with the last breath of life. And as if the furious malignity of a world lying in wickedness, for whose rescue they were to choose, and unrepiningly submit to these endurances, were insufficient to render their trials severe enough; they were to wrestle, not merely with flesh and blood, but with all the power and malevolence of the fiends of hell. In one word, they were to live, literally live, a life of living death. Assuredly, then, if there be a principle of heavenly strength and consolation, which, when implanted in the soul, no power in earth or hell can enslave—by means of which the faithful follower of Jesus is armed with fortitude to encounter every difficulty, to brave and vanquish every danger, and exultingly triumph over every calamity, which the unrestrained malignity of men or devils can inflict; if there be such a principle, as assuredly there is, the Apostles, of all others, stood most in need of its animating, supporting, and soothing influence. To plant and nourish this principle in the soul, is the province, the allotted province of the Spirit in perfecting the saints. Destined, therefore, to

embark in this war of toil and struggle, appointed to make the first inroads on the territories of Satan, whilst yet he was fresh and vigorous, and glorying in a prostrate world, it was even more than barely "expedient," that the commissioned Comforter should pervade and animate the bosoms of the disciples with his heavenly influences, ere yet they had started in their career of perils.

But, moreover, they needed his *teaching*, as well as his supporting influence. The thoughts of a temporal prince and an earthly kingdom still lingered in their hearts, dazzled their perceptions, and obscured their views of the pure spirituality of Christ's mission to our world. Whilst the slightest leaven of this earthly mixture remained in their hearts, they were utterly incompetent to teach the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour. How could their teaching be of any avail to others, whilst they themselves were involved in the grossest ignorance, and needed to be taught! "I have yet," said Christ, who well knew the deficiency and imperfection of their views, "I have yet many things to say unto you: but now ye cannot bear them. Nevertheless when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth."

But, farther, this expediency does not merely turn on the consolation with which he would fill their hearts, and the enlargement of views which he would impart to their understandings. His presence was, if possible, still more necessary *to give efficacy to their labours*, in attempting the spiritual renovation of the world. In this work, knowledge is nothing without power. No effort merely human, however well directed, can produce upon the character of the sinner that change which, in reference to the understanding, is such an illumination as qualifies it for the reception of divine truth; which in reference to the will, is an energy sweetly constraining it to yield obedience to the dominion of holiness; and which, in reference to the heart, is an elevation of the affections and desires from earth to heaven, from things degrading to the character, and destructive of the happiness of an intelligent being, to objects, the contemplation and love of which impart to the soul a dignity befitting its nature, and fill it with a bliss and a beauty, the one sweet as the other is lovely. No effort merely human, we repeat it, can do this. It is the work of the Spirit of God; and without his co-operation and agency, the masculine eloquence and resistless argument with which Paul made the conscience-searched

sinner tremble, and persuaded the groveling voluptuary and thoughtless worldling to embrace the Gospel; the fearless intrepidity with which Peter defied the face of danger, whilst he rushed to the reproof of crime; the heavenly mildness and persuasive amiability with which John wooed and won the hearts of men to a God of holiness and love, were all in vain; and, without the co-operation of heaven, would have proved as abortive in revolutionizing the hearts of mankind, as did the ridiculous dogmas of the self-righteous Pharisees. "The excellency of the power" was, and ever will be, "of God."

Now add to all this, that they could only enjoy the bodily presence of their beloved Lord in one place, at one time; whilst every where, and always, with one equally as the whole; in a word, whenever and wherever "two or three were gathered together in his name," the Spirit would be present, to comfort and support them in the midst of their sorrows, to illuminate their understandings, and crown their efforts with success. Their loss, by the departure of Christ, in the view of which, naturally enough, we confess, they were filled with sorrow; for who but a heart of stone would not have felt the bitterness of anguish, in losing such a friend; their loss, we say, was thus to prove their gain. Ah! how little do we know what is best for us, and how well it becomes us to bow, with cheerful resignation, to the will and appointment of heaven, in the faith and assurance that all things, however unwelcome in our limited views, shall ultimately issue in our greatest good. The pains with which our heavenly Father visits us, shall prove the channels of our pleasures; our sighs shall issue in our songs, and our defeats pave the way to our triumphs.

But here the question will be asked, Why was it necessary that Christ should be cut off by death, ere the Spirit could be given? "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." We might reply, that Christ purchased the influences of the Spirit by the blood of his cross. We do not like this phraseology, however, as it seems to imply that the Spirit needed an inducement, in order to co-operate in the salvation of men. The Spirit was as willing that man should be saved, and as ready to co-operate in effecting that salvation, as was the Father or the Son. The redemption of man was the joint counsel and is the joint work of a three-one God. They said, "Come let us make;" and they equally say, Come let us save man. The proper view is this:

According to the divine plan, the work of the Son must precede the work of the Spirit. It behoved Christ to vindicate the honour of God's government; to preserve, undiminished, the sanctions of his laws; to satisfy the demands of his justice; to clear away the barriers which reared themselves between the guilt of man and the pardoning mercy of God; in one word, it was the province of the Son to work out a salvation for man; and this once accomplished, it was the province of the Spirit to apply and carry that salvation into effect. Therefore was it *necessary*, as well as "expedient," that Christ should now leave his weeping disciples, tread the wine-press of his Father's wrath, submit to death, and finish the work which had been given him to do. Till this was accomplished, the Spirit could not come. The atonement of Christ, Christ crucified, was to be the instrument by which he was to subdue a world that was up in rebellion against God; it was to be the "sword of his strength," which he would gird upon his thigh when he rode forth in the chariot of the Gospel conquering and to conquer. The work of Christ, therefore, was the necessary precursor of the work of the Spirit; and thus having executed his own part in this astonishing and mysterious enterprise, Christ had claims on the Spirit for the execution of his; and hence, says he, "If I depart, I will send him unto you." All things must be done in order.

What, then, is the work by which the Spirit is to follow up the atonement of Christ, carry into effect, and crown with success the scheme of man's redemption? We look for an answer to the next verse.

Verse 8. "When he is come, he will reprove," or, as it stands in the margin, he will *convince*, "the world."

The first effect, then, which the Spirit is to produce on the heart of man, in order to render the atonement of Christ available in rescuing him from the destruction to which he is exposed, is to carry home to his soul a moving conviction of his ruined character and condition. The most alarming effect which sin produces on the soul of the sinner, is the utter insensibility to his danger in which it wraps him. He fancies himself safe, whilst destruction presses upon him on every side. He imagines himself well, whilst a withering disease is preying on his vitals. He resembles one who has swallowed a deadly poison, which first lures him into a deep sleep, and then kills him. If the sinner is to escape destruction, he must be aroused. Nothing can be done for him, whilst the lethargy of sin spreads its dead-

ening insensibility over the energies of his soul. To stir up a slumbering conscience, therefore; to open the sealed eyelids of the sinner on the extent and spirituality of the divine law; to place before his soul, in its darkest colours, the wrath of an angry and avenging God; to make him feel that he is utterly undone, so far as his own efforts are concerned; in short, to fill his bosom with an alarm, which shall completely strip him of the false peace—the perilous security in which, at the risk of his soul, he is slumbering—to do this, we say, is the first aim of the Spirit of Grace, when he operates on the heart of man. Strange work this, you will say, for one whom, in reference to the blessed influence which he exerts upon the soul, the Saviour has styled, emphatically styled, "the Comforter." The title is not by any means descriptive of the commencement of the Spirit's work. No. In this stage the sinner is like one who is cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye. He is tearing away his soul from what it loves and clings to with infatuated ardour. He is breaking up habits which have been rivetted to his character by every feeling of his bosom and every action of his life. The tearful eye, and the trembling heart—the awakened conscience, and the accusing spirit, are the sinner's companions here. But still this is the Spirit's way to lead him to solid peace and enduring comfort: The wounds of thy Spirit are wounds of love. Sin is a deep-rooted gangrene, which must be cut out if it is to be healed. The wounds which it inflicts in the soul must be opened and cleansed ere they can be successfully or permanently closed. This painful part of the process over, the Spirit will appear to the sinner in his true character, as one sent by a compassionate Father, to console and support him under the trials and troubles of this life, and prepare him for, and animate him with, the hope of that which is to come.

The conviction which we have thus viewed in its general aspect, the Saviour proceeds to break down into several parts: "He shall convince the world of sin, 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: of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." There is not the smallest doubt but Christ intended, by these words, in the first instance, to describe the miraculous agency by which the Holy Spirit would carry conviction to the consciences of multitudes by the preaching of the Apostles. By the miracles which he enabled this little and devoted band of

chosen messengers to perform, and by the pointed efficacy with which he winged the words which they spoke, multitudes were convinced of the heinous "sin" they had incurred, in deliberately disbelieving, rejecting, and crucifying the Son of God—of the spotless "righteousness" of the Redeemer, who was evinced to be the approved servant of the Most High; to have finished his work, and rendered a meritorious obedience to the laws of heaven, by the fact that he was raised from the dead, received up into glory, and seated like a triumphant conqueror at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and, finally, multitudes were convinced that an hour of "judgment" was speedily approaching, when Christ would award to an assembled universe the righteous retribution of their deeds, inasmuch as Satan, "the prince of this world," appeared, by the success of the Gospel, and the consequent discomfiture of his plans, and dismemberment of his empire, to be conquered, judged, and condemned, and about to be hurled from the throne of usurped dominion, which he had planted in the midst of our prostrate world. But though the words, in their primary sense, certainly refer to the miraculous agency, by which the Spirit would give efficacy to the preaching of the Apostles, they are, moreover, equally descriptive, and equally intended to describe the internal work of conviction and reformation which, in every age and country where the Gospel has been preached, he has been carrying on in arousing men from the death of sin in which they slumbered, and drawing them to holiness and to God. In this point of view, then, they demand a more particular consideration.

"He will convince the world of sin, because they do not believe on me." In other words, he will convince men of the sin of unbelief, and the guilt they have incurred by rejecting the salvation of Christ. Now, here two important questions occur:—Why is unbelief a sin? and why is it selected from other sins, as the point towards which the Holy Spirit directs the shafts of conviction?

In reference to the first question, the scoffer has affirmed that unbelief is no sin. It is no difficult matter, however, to detect the fallacy of the assertion. Only consider the source from which unbelief flows, the evil dispositions of heart which it implies, and in which it originates, and you will readily discover the heinousness of its nature. A corrupted and rebellious heart is the uniform source of the rejection of the Gospel. Men will not bow in the humility of faith, to the authoritative voice of God,

when he speaks to them by his Son from heaven: and why? Just because their hearts are swollen with pride, and have never felt the movements of that humility and submission, with which every announcement of an all-wise and omnipotent Creator ought to be received. Just because they are inflated with proud rebellion, and feel not the important truth, that man is strong only as he feels himself weak, and as he is led from a consciousness of that weakness to place all his trust and dependence on God. Men will not believe the declarations of the Most High, when he warns them of the danger to which as sinners they are exposed, and the death to which as impenitent sinners they shall inevitably be consigned. And why? Just because their hearts are in love with sin; just because their desires and affections are all bent downwards towards its groveling and soul-debasing indulgencies. Men see no loveliness in the beauty of holiness, and feel no force in the moving entreaties by which a God of purity endeavours to win them over to the love and the pursuit of those objects which are not more pleasing to him than profitable to themselves. And why see they no beauty in holiness? And why do they not acknowledge and feel the moving entreaties of a God of love? Just because their depraved hearts are pervaded with a deep-rooted hatred to all that is pure in the sight of heaven; and are inveterately averse to all that God loves, and blindly attached to all that he hates. Men cannot believe any thing so good concerning God, or so honourable to his love, as the moving exhibition of compassion towards a ruined world, displayed in the gift and death of his Son. And why? Just because they feel no emotion of love towards God; and, therefore, they are incompetent to understand or believe how he can feel any emotion of love towards them. Thus unbelief originates in, and argues the existence of dispositions the most debasing and sinful, which can occupy a place in the bosom of a rational being; and, springing as it does from such dispositions, it partakes of their sinful and hateful character, just as the fruit follows the nature of the tree on which it grows, or the stream participates in the qualities of the fountain from which it flows. It is just the filthy excrescence of a filthy soul, the legitimate offspring of pride, love of sin, aversion to holiness, enmity to God and contempt of his authority; in a word, the result of a heart depraved, and a judgment disordered.

We have cleared the way for the second question, which will bring us into more im-

mediate contact with the verse at issue. Why does the Holy Spirit single out the sin of unbelief as the point towards which he directs the shafts of conviction? Why, just because it is the most ruinous of all sins. Other sins may, nay, shall be forgiven, if a man believe; but if he die in unbelief, though his soul were stained with no other sin but itself, his salvation is as hopeless as the conclusion of eternity or the reversion of doom. "He that believeth not shall be condemned." Thither, then, does the Spirit direct the arrow of conviction, just as the skilful physician, where there is a complication of diseases, makes his first applications bear on that disease which most alarmingly threatens the destruction of his patient.

But, moreover, unbelief is the root of all other sin, the fruitful source of all iniquity, the prolific parent of those numberless violations of heaven's law, which finally plunge the soul in hopeless perdition. In striking at unbelief, then, the Spirit is laying the axe to the root of the tree. Other sins may be lopped off; but whilst this is suffered to remain, no more is done towards that complete reformation of heart and life which the Gospel contemplates, than is done towards the cutting down some lofty oak, when we have merely lopped off one or more of its wide-spreading branches.

On this point it is, that the efforts of a well-aimed gospel ministry should principally bear. If men were thoroughly convinced of the sin and folly of rejecting the Gospel, if they could be persuaded thoroughly to believe, and cordially to embrace the heavenly doctrines which it teaches, the issue would be, that they would frame their lives by the holy precepts which it enjoins. We may reason a man out of his drunkenness and dishonesty; but if unbelief is suffered to remain, there is left the root of bitterness, which will shoot forth its branches in a thousand forms. Sin reigns dominant in the world, because faith has so little place in the hearts of its inhabitants; the Gospel is not believed, and, therefore, its precepts are not practised.

The sinner is now arrived at that stage in which, feeling that he has made God his foe, and that destruction treads close upon his footsteps, he is anxiously inquiring what shall I do to be saved? Whither shall I flee to be shielded from the wrath of broken laws, and an avenging God? Here, then, the Spirit just again interposes, and pierces his heart with a new arrow of conviction. He convinces the sinner "of righteousness."

First. The sinner is made to feel his need of a righteousness superior to his own, and underived from himself. He is made to read the appalling truth, that he has no moral worth of his own in which to trust, in the sinfulness which characterizes every action, and the pollution that pervades every feeling of his past life; he is made to read the impossibility of doing any thing to satisfy the demands of God's law, in the deep-rooted aversion which he feels to every thing like holiness and the moral inability that paralyzes every energy of his soul; he is made to read the purity and extent of the divine law, in the enlarged conceptions of the holiness of Jehovah's character, which now burst upon his soul; in a word, he is compelled to look outwards from himself, inasmuch as he can find no resting place in the wide waste of spiritual desolation that pervades his bosom, on which his hopes can alight, and rest, and live.

But, *secondly*, the sinner at length finds safety and peace in the conviction of the free and all-sufficient righteousness of Christ. An angry law, with all its threatenings and demands, hangs thundering over his head; but in Christ he finds a "righteousness," not merely sufficient, but more than sufficient to meet all its exactions. A God of holiness and justice has promulgated that law, and is pledged to maintain, undiminished and unrelaxed, the sanctions on which it rests; but in Christ the sinner finds a "righteousness" that is perfectly sufficient to vindicate the character of that God, to leave him just, whilst he is the justifier of the ungodly." A heart of hostility to God, and aversion to holiness, unfits him for holding communion with the Author of his spirit, or engaging in those services which are not more the duty than the privilege of those who are reconciled to heaven; but in Christ he finds a "righteousness," that exerts a mysterious influence on his soul, disarms him of his hostility to God, roots up his aversion to holiness, and leaves him clothed with the image of heaven.

This conviction of the all-sufficiency of Christ's righteousness, the sinner is not required to hold without evidence. "He will convince the world of righteousness," said Christ, "because I go unto the Father, and ye see me no more." Now what is the evidence of the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness? Why, it is just the fact, that Christ has gone to the Father. God alone know, and, therefore, could alone fix what would satisfy the demands of his laws. The fact, therefore, that he has received Christ back to the arms of his love, bestowed on

him the glorious crown of mediatorial honour which he now wears, and seated him for ever in the highest place of distinction, at his own right hand, is the evidence—the irresistible evidence, that the stipulated satisfaction has been rendered; that the law has been magnified and made honourable; that the Lawgiver has been completely satisfied; that an everlasting righteousness has been brought in, and the glorious enterprise of man's redemption completely achieved. With this great truth carried home with energy to his conviction, the sinner feels it impossible to doubt the all-sufficiency of his Redeemer's merits. In the triumphant language of exultation, he hails him as the Lord his righteousness; and unhesitatingly adventures on his omnipotent arm the whole weight of his soul, convinced that he who holds him up is the mighty God.

And here let me pause, to put a single question: Why is it, notwithstanding the righteousness which has been provided for the justification, and notwithstanding the evidence which we have of this provision, that multitudes still cling with infatuated fondness to their own righteousness, as the source of hope and the foundation of confidence in the sight of heaven? The reason is this; the Spirit has not yet been operating on their hearts as a Spirit of conviction. Pride and unbelief still retain the dominion in their souls. They have not yet realized the deep malignity of sin, or the spiritual worthlessness and weakness of their own character; they are blind, literally blind to the holiness and extent of that law, whose requisitions they presumptuously imagine they can implement; they have yet to learn what is the nature of that righteousness on which a God of holiness will look with satisfaction. Their staff is a broken reed, the foundation of their hopes is a sliding quicksand. For, be assured, my friends, that every other foundation, but the righteousness of Christ, will prove too narrow, and too feeble to bear up under the weight of an immortal spirit; that all these refuges of lies will be swept away in the hour of judgment, and will finally leave those who have trusted in them “naked, shivering, guilty, and condemned, to perish from the presence of their God for ever.

Having brought men to embrace that righteousness which will procure their acceptance in the sight of heaven, it is next the aim of the Spirit to train them to personal holiness; and, for this purpose, he gives force and efficacy to those motives to

virtue presented by the Gospel. He convinces them “of judgment.”

One great reason why men persevere in a course of iniquity, and feel no painful disquietude whilst living in a state of rebellion against heaven, is, because they entertain no realizing apprehensions of a future judgment. The influence of their passions and prejudices blinds them to the solemn truth, that, if man be destined for immortality, and if there be a God above, there must be an hour of judgment in which the character of God shall be vindicated—the righteous rewarded, and the wicked punished. They reason, we should rather say, delude themselves into the belief, that God takes no note of their conduct; that he is altogether such a one as themselves, and that one end will be to the righteous and the wicked. The movements of natural conscience, we confess, may occasionally operate to shake this belief, by stirring up doubts of its accuracy, and presenting more forcibly to the soul the evidence of the important truth, that an hour is on the wing when justice and judgment will be fully executed. These movements, however, are but momentary feelings; they are speedily absorbed in the ceaseless whirl of sinful indulgence, into which the sinner plunges as an antidote to his fears; or if they do keep their place in the soul, notwithstanding the sinful efforts to banish them, it is only ultimately to involve the hapless individual in dark and overwhelming despair. It is only in the heart, which is the subject of the Holy Spirit's operations, that the conviction of this momentous truth dwells permanently, and acts as a powerful and resistless stimulant to holiness of character and diligence in duty. He alone can bring the heart into that state in which it permanently and beneficially feels that it is in the presence of its God, that an eye of omniscience is upon it; and that He who now looks on as an impartial observer and recorder, will yet appear in the character of a Judge. And it is only when this conviction is inspired and regulated by him, that it is stripped of that alarm with which it is conjoined, as it occasionally exists in the minds of the ungodly. He who has been led by the Spirit to take shelter in a Redeemer's righteousness, feels completely prepared for the scrutiny of judgment. He knows that his Saviour will be his judge; and that the power which will condemn and sweep away the ungodly and impenitent, is pledged for his acquittal and rescue. He hails the hour of judgment, therefore, with joyful anticipation, as the

period in which his Saviour will be illustriously glorified in the total overthrow and destruction of all his enemies; in which all the proceedings of God, in reference to this world, from which the ungodly have so often impugned and calumniated the truth and holiness of the Most High, will be completely cleared up and vindicated; and in which all the despised and persecuted followers of Jesus will be pronounced righteous through his merits, and admitted into the regions of everlasting glory and felicity.

This conviction of his safety in the hour of judgment—that hour the most terrible of all others, in the apprehension of the ungodly, is not adopted gratuitously, or held without evidence. He sees the power of his Saviour, as the Ruler and the Judge of the universe, evinced by the fact that he is now “judging the prince of the world;” in other words, that he is “destroying the works of the devil;” casting him as lightning to the ground; carrying forward the purposes of his grace in the face of every obstacle which his power or his malice can invent; baffling and disappointing him in every scheme of his cunning to degrade and enslave the souls of men. With these facts in view, the believer can say, “If my Saviour is thus able to judge and overthrow the prince of this world with all his power and malignity; and if he hold in his hands the government and control over the affairs of the universe, which this implies, then, verily, is he competent to hold me up in the hour of judgment.” I will not fear; for thus do I know, that my Redeemer liveth and reigneth; and that when he shall appear to wind up the mighty plan of his providence, my sentence will be, “come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world!”

Having thus gone over the ground which we proposed, we shall now close the discourse with a single reflection. How admirably and how mercifully adapted to our circumstances are the provisions of the Gospel! Suppose Christ to have done all that he has done; suppose him to have yielded that perfect satisfaction which rendered it consistent for the Lawgiver to pardon sin; suppose him to have brought in an everlasting righteousness wherewith to clothe the sinner in the beauty of holiness; and

suppose him to have set clearly before the eyes of men, the great and operative truths of immortality and judgment; suppose all this to be done; and now suppose the Spirit to have been withheld, what, on these suppositions, would have been the issue? Why, Christ would just have died in vain; and men would have perished—perished as certainly as if no Saviour had been provided. What would it avail that pardon was proclaimed, whilst man felt no conviction of sinfulness, and, consequently, no need of forgiveness? What would it avail that a justifying righteousness was provided, whilst man, in the unsubdued pride of his heart, was fully satisfied with his own? What would it avail that the great doctrine of a future judgment, and the other important truths which it involves, were clearly developed as incentives to holiness, if man was too blind to see these truths, and his heart too hard to be affected by them? What does it avail the individual who is labouring under some life-destroying disease, to be told that there is a fountain in a foreign clime in which, if he were to bathe, he would recover, if he have neither the strength nor the means to travel to it? What does it avail to the safety of the man who is dying of hunger, to be surrounded with the richest viands, if he is unable to taste them. But these illustrations go but half-way in delineating the situation of the sinner. None of them brings out the whole case. The fact is, that man of himself is not only unable to embrace the salvation of Christ, but he is unwilling as he is unable. He not only cannot travel to the fountain, but he *will not* travel though he could. Oh! the depth, then, of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! Here is not only a remedy, but an agency by which that remedy is applied and rendered efficient. Here one Messenger is sent to provide pardon; and another is commissioned after him, who is not to leave the rebel until he has convinced him that he needs the proffered pardon, and constrained him by arguments of love, to embrace it and make it his own. Verily, the Gospel is a covenant well ordered in all things, and sure. To these truths may the Spirit add his blessing, and render them instrumental in convincing men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BURNS, D.D., Paisley.
SERMON by the Rev. DANIEL KELLY, A.M., Campbeltown.

CONFORMITY TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST;

ACTION SERMON PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, PAISLEY, ON THE SACRAMENT
SABBATH, 30TH NOVEMBER, 1831,

By the Rev. ROBERT BURNS, D.D.,

—
“*Being made conformable to his death.*”—PHIL. iii. 10.

THE death of the Son of God is presented to us in Scripture in three different lights; in each, and in all of which, its value and importance in the christian system peculiarly appear. It claims our regards, in the first instance, as the noblest expression of divine love to man; as the infinitely meritorious price of our redemption; and as the only safe groundwork of the trembling sinner's hope. In the second instance, it is presented to our hearts and feelings as the strongest and most endearing motive to holiness of life; and, in this view, the “love of Christ” in dying for us, is invested with a “constraining” influence to disengage our minds from secular and selfish aims, and to lead us to “live to the praise and to the glory of him who died for us, and who rose again.” Once more: it is proposed to the spiritually minded believer in a light entirely distinct from either of these, and yet not less deserving of deep and serious regard; namely, as a suitable pattern of imitation; and this is the light in which the Apostle views it, when he speaks, as in the text, of his “being made conformable to the death” of the Redeemer. The scene of Calvary is considered in these comprehensive words, as an object and a theme which we are attentively to study; as a specimen of patient and willing

endurance, the principles and the motives of which we are carefully to ascertain; and as a practical development of character, according to which we are to form the temper of our minds and the tenor of our lives. Conformity to the death of Christ, was one of those lofty spiritual attainments at which the holy soul of St. Paul assiduously aimed. He assigned to it a preference over all natural gifts, all literary acquirements, all secular honours. It was an object on the full realization of which in personal experience he was supremely bent, as his highest interest and his truest felicity.

Let us endeavour to analyze this eminently distinguishing feature of christian attainment.

I. There is conformity to the grand and essential *principles* involved in the momentous fact, that the divine Saviour *died!*

We form a very low and inadequate conception of the death of the Redeemer, when we view it merely in the light of a singularly affecting and deeply mysterious historical event. It is so, truly; but it is an event which involves in it certain great principles, lying at the foundation of all our best conceptions of the moral character and government of God, and most vitally connected with the hopes of man as a guilty and helpless being. Such

a momentous event as "the decease accomplished at Jerusalem," the theme, by anticipation, of sublime celestial conference on the hallowed mount, does not present itself to us in an insulated point of view, but as connected, and most vitally connected with the whole scheme of the divine economy regarding man. That Christ Jesus gave himself for us, and "was delivered for our offences," and "poured out his soul unto death for the redemption of his purchased possession;" these are very plain and simple statements of fact, and they may be very easily acquiesced in as such by the mind. But our ideas of their real importance and extent will be very contracted and very imperfect indeed, if we place them not in near and inseparable relationship to the great truths which they presuppose and involve. The principles on which the solemn tragedy of the Saviour's death proceeded, are such as these: that Jehovah is a holy and just being, and that evil cannot dwell with him; that the scheme of the divine administration implies the punishment of sin as well as the reward of righteousness; that the moral law of God is just a transcript or visible representation of his own all-perfect character, and as such must be vindicated in all its honours and in all its claims; that the right of God to the obedience of his creatures is derived from truths, and facts, and principles, which are equally unchangeable with the character and perfections of Jehovah himself; that satisfaction must, from the very nature of things, be given to the demands of God's all-perfect law, before the transgressors of it can be admitted to the blessings of mercy; that "without shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins;" that to the eyes of all intelligent creatures God designs to exhibit a solemn and deeply affecting lesson illustrative of the malignity of sin, and the danger of rebellion against the government of the universe; and that the moral attributes of God were pleased to require for their display, on a magnificent scale, such a scene as that of mount Calvary, and such a series of events as those connected with the death of Jesus of Nazareth. "*It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*" Hebrews ii. 10.

These are the essential principles on which the death of Christ proceeded, and to

these the mind of a believer must and will be conformed. He acquiesces in them as worthy of God, and as essentially involved in all our just conceptions of the grand scheme of redeeming grace. He looks on man as a guilty being, and on God as a righteous Judge. He admires and adores the holiness and the rectitude, as well as the mercy and the love of Jehovah. He contemplates with wonder and with holy awe, the union of these attributes in the scheme of pardoning grace; and beholds with supreme delight "mercy and truth meeting together; righteousness and peace embracing each other"—where? at the foot of the cross! So far from viewing the principles now set forth as at variance with our best ideas of the character and government of God, he sees in them the brightest beams of the glory of Him "whom his soul loveth," and "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," he is "changed into the same image." Thus in opposition to the infidel who derides the scheme; the Socinian who extracts from it all its value; and the self-righteous man who seeks to achieve a salvation for himself; the true believer, like the great Apostle of the Gentiles, is "made conformable to the death of Christ," in its grand and prominent principles; not only assenting to the fact, but approving of it, and delighting in it as the noblest display of the perfections of Deity. Unlike the crafty Jesuits who were ashamed of a suffering Saviour, and who studiously kept the cross out of view, *his* feelings and his language are those of the Apostle, when he exclaimed, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Gal. vi. 16. "I am determined not to know any thing among you, but Jesus Christ, and *him crucified.*" 1 Cor. ii. 2.

2. There is conformity to the death of Christ in the *motives* which prompted to it.

The inspired writers represent the death of the Redeemer as the result, and as the expression of love to God and of love to man. It was the result of love to God, whose honour required to be vindicated, and whose law demanded obedience. It was the result of love to man, whose fallen state engaged the energies, while it awakened the compassion of the benevolent Redeemer. He came into the world on a message of love, that he might "seek and save that which was lost;" and the same feeling which dictated his advent, pervaded the whole

compass of his words, his deeds, and his sufferings. "This is the love of God, that he laid down his life for us." It would be vain to expect that a creature such as man should be able to imitate, in any adequate measure, this leading motive of the Saviour. It is a love which "passeth knowledge," and by consequence surpasseth imitation. Nevertheless, under the agency of the Spirit of grace, we may catch a portion of the same excellent and lovely spirit which actuated the Saviour; we may receive and cherish the impression of those benignant rays which beamed from his sacred countenance. We may be placed so near to him by faith as to experience, in some good degree, the assimilating influence of that love wherewith he "loved the Church, and gave himself for it;" and in this sense, we may be said to "love him, because he first loved us." We may follow him, though at an awful distance; and through the omnipotent agency of grace, we may gradually approximate to his resemblance. We may be conformed to the love of Christ in his death, by cherishing in our hearts a correspondent feeling towards God and towards man; by giving to our Creator and our Redeemer the highest place in our affections; by consecrating all the members of our bodies, and all the faculties of our spirits to his service, as instruments of righteousness; and by aiming to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind. Thus will the love of Christ "constrain" us to live not to ourselves, but to Him "who died for us, and who rose again." Indeed, there is a high and holy necessity for believers becoming thus conformed to the death of their Saviour, because otherwise it would inevitably fail of its designed effects in regard to them. The man who is not excited, by a view of the Saviour's death, to love God with supreme regard, and to love his neighbour as himself, may rest assured that he hath never drawn near to the hallowed scene of the Redeemer's sufferings with suitable feelings and dispositions of mind; that he has never truly beheld "the Lamb of God" by the eye of faith; and that his heart has not yet been melted by the genial influences of the cross.

While the Saviour, in dying for us, was animated by love to God and to man, as the commanding principle, he was at the same time influenced by a kindred motive, namely, a holy desire to glorify God in the destruction of sin and the advancement of universal

holiness. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Sin had invaded our world, and that globe on which God had stamped the image of himself, became one wide field of spiritual desolation. Satan had erected his throne among men. The glory of God was tarnished, and the cause of rectitude and of purity was in danger of being for ever lost. The Son of God gave himself up to death, "that he might destroy him that had the power of death;" that the perfections of Deity might be conspicuously displayed; that the rights of the divine government might be vindicated; and incentives the most powerful furnished to the love and to the practice of holiness. These were the motives which actuated *him*, and to such motives must we be conformed. We *are* conformed to them, when we aim at the divine glory in all our actions; when we wage war against all sin; when the interests of God and of holiness find the first place in our souls; and when all we think, and speak, and do, tends to God as the grand and only centre of attraction. They only are conformed to the Saviour, in whose hearts love to God and to the Saviour occupies the first place, and in whom this ruling motive operates as a universal principle of holy obedience.

From the motives which influenced the Redeemer in dying for the ungodly, we are naturally led to notice,

3. The *ends* for which he died, and the manner in which a believer may be conformed to the death of Christ in them.

That Jesus died as a martyr to the faith, and as an example of patient endurance, is certain; and in these respects, although subordinate to the grand end, all his followers are unquestionably called to conform themselves to his death. Did he die as a witness to the truth? Then must we conform ourselves to this design, by acknowledging the reality and divine original of the truth thus strongly attested, and thus tenderly recommended to our inmost feelings. Nor must we acknowledge simply that truth, as a matter of abstract speculation. The faith of the Gospel must, in our personal and individual experience, be accompanied with a deep and cordial sense of the value of truth; a conviction of its absolute necessity and divine suitability to our every want; a delighted acquiescence in it, and an enlightened approbation of it, as in all

things worthy of its Author; and all this united with a practical resolution to live under its influence.

But while we allow that Jesus died to accomplish such purposes as those now adverted to, and while we maintain the necessity and duty of conformity to these, we believe on the ample basis of revealed testimony, that the death of the divine Redeemer was designed to secure ends every way more valuable to man as a guilty, and impure, and utterly helpless being. He died that he might expiate the guilt of sin, having become "a sin-offering for us, and borne our sins in his own body on the tree." He died, that he might "redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;" and "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." To these noble and truly gracious ends of the death of Christ, we must be completely and willingly conformed. We are so conformed when we cheerfully acquiesce in the divine appointment of a Mediator, and in the plan of salvation through him; when we acknowledge from heartfelt contrition that we are guilty creatures, and altogether unable to rescue ourselves from ruin; and when, by faith, we cast ourselves wholly and unreservedly on the grace of God through a Redeemer. Did Jesus die that he might expiate the guilt of our sins? Then do we conform ourselves to his death, in this view of it, when "we look upon him whom we have pierced by our sins, and mourn" with godly sorrow. Did Jesus die that he might open up a new and living way of access to God through "the rent vail of his flesh?" We conform ourselves to his death in this view of it, when we approach unto God by faith in the blood of atonement, and repose on the promises of mercy, as these are ratified by the blood of the Saviour. Did he die that he might rescue us from the *dominion* of sin, as well as from its guilt? We conform ourselves to this special purpose of his death, when we become the subjects of the sanctifying grace of his Spirit; when we turn from our evil ways; and study to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world." In fine, did Jesus die that he might save sinners of every name and of every degree? We conform ourselves to his death in this view of it, when, with our own salvation, we seek the salvation of

others; when we strive to lead sinners to the Saviour, and when we pray that the triumphs of Messiah's cross may be multiplied. The man who is not thus conformed to the great ends of the death of Christ, places himself in direct opposition to the will of God, and practically rejects "the great salvation."

4. Lastly. We must be conformed to the temper and spirit of the Saviour's death.

"Jesus suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." In the days of primitive Christianity, the disciples of the Saviour were frequently called to conform themselves to Christ, by enduring sufferings and death in his cause. We are not exposed, as they were, to the fury of unprincipled persecutors, and we are seldom in danger of being compelled literally to follow Jesus "bearing his cross;" and yet, in every age, the disciples of Jesus must labour, and suffer more or less in his cause; and at all times are they required to imbibe the Spirit, and to imitate the example of their Lord in suffering.

Jesus suffered and died voluntarily and with cheerfulness. Of his own will he undertook our cause, came into our world, and laid down his life for us. "I am the good Shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." We must be conformed to Jesus in his death, by doing and suffering according to his will with cordial readiness of mind. It is the willing service of the heart which he demands, and which alone he has promised to accept. It is not the service of the body alone which he requires; it is the homage of the soul also. It is not the constrained act of obedience he approves; it is the pure, and practical, and animating principle, whence all true obedience flows.

But, farther, Jesus suffered unto death with patience and holy resignation to his Father's will. The language of his soul, throughout the whole affecting tragedy of the cross, was this, "Not my will, but thine, be done." "When reviled, he reviled not again." It was not the stubbornness of mere philosophy he displayed, but the willing subjection of a holy and devout mind, to the appointments of infinite wisdom and love. He yields up his soul unto death, not because he could not avoid it, but because for holy and benevolent purposes he chose to suffer. The disciples of Jesus are called to conform themselves to his death, by imitating the patient resignation with which he

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endured the agony of the garden, the contumelious revilings of Herod and his men of war, the ignominy and cruelty of the cross. They must be resigned to his will, because *it is* his will, and, like himself, must ever be holy, and just, and good. Thus do they "bear about with them in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

Again, Jesus died with *meek benevolence*. He prayed for his murderers. He exerted an act of mercy in favour of the expiring criminal by his side; and, in all the exquisite tenderness of filial love, he commits his bereaved parent to the charge of the "disciple whom he loved." Christian benevolence is a heavenly flame, lighted up in the soul by the love of the Redeemer in dying. It warms and animates the believer throughout the whole sphere of his earthly pilgrimage. It stimulates to "the labour of love;" and, in the closing scene of mortal existence, it beams on his countenance, and breathes forth in those faltering accents of tenderness with which he commits himself, and those dearest to his heart, into the hands of his Father in heaven.

Finally, Jesus died in the full exercise of *lively faith*; for his language is, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." "For the hope set before him he endured the cross." Believers are called to conform themselves to the death of their Lord in this instance also, by cultivating the same spirit of faith. The truths and the promises of the Gospel are set before us most clearly, and with the fullest evidence; and these must be the foundation of our hope, and the fountains of our peace in life and at death. A future world, with all its grand realities, is disclosed to us; and we must walk by faith, and set our affections on things above. Even in the darkest night of adversity, we are permitted and required to resign ourselves, with holy and humble confidence, to him who causeth his light to arise on them that are in darkness. By habitual exercise must we strengthen the sacred principle, that so when the world disappears amid the shadows of its own creation, and we are about to launch away into the vast ocean of eternity, we may be enabled, with our dying Redeemer, to say, individually, "Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit."

II. We shall now deduce, from the subject thus analyzed, those illustrations of the scheme of practical Christianity which it is designed and fitted to unfold.

1. We have here a very satisfying illustration of the truly *practical character* of the doctrine of the atonement.

Those who deny this essential part of the christian scheme, commonly represent it as a matter of pure speculation. No mistake can be more gross and fatal than this. The death of Christ we have seen exhibited at once as a motive to obedience, and as a model of imitation. Redemption by Christ, having for one of its main objects deliverance from the power of sin, and the promotion of universal holiness, is admirably fitted to cherish in the heart a love of practical godliness, and a persevering desire of its attainment. Do we then hold the doctrine of Christ's atoning death as the anchor of our hope sure and steadfast? God forbid that we should hold it in unrighteousness. Did "Jesus give himself for us, that he might cleanse us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works?" Then let us aim steadily and perseveringly at the honour of "being the living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men."

2. We learn from the subject before us the inseparable connexion betwixt faith and holiness.

Those who undervalue the importance of faith in the christian system, generally consider it in the light of an act of the mind, which has no necessary relation to temper and conduct. They overlook entirely the peculiar character of those objects on which faith rests, and which all carry along with them a highly practical influence. We have seen that those leading principles, which are the objects of faith, are by no means matters of pure abstraction, but have a direct control over the heart and the life. What, then, is the obvious inference? It is, that the act of the mind by which we accept or embrace these principles, must have a necessary connexion with practical godliness. The truths of the Gospel cannot be brought home to the mind, and of consequence cannot be applied to any definite end, unless they are believed. Does the love of Christ, in giving his life for us, tend to excite in us a corresponding love towards him? We must first *believe* that Jesus died for our sins, and confide in him as our Saviour, before love to him can find a place in our hearts. The inseparable relation of faith to holiness on the one hand, and of holiness to faith on the other, as that of cause and effect, is, indeed, so obvious,

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g but spiritual blindness or un-
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n access to the mind, nor possess over it
eir legitimate influence. Without holi-
ess, again, there can be no genuine faith ;
for the graces of holiness are the fruits and
effects of faith. Hence the necessity of
self-inspection, to ascertain whether we pos-
sess those ingredients of the christian char-
acter. If you have faith, you will study to
evidence its reality by the deeds of practical
obedience. If you have it not, seek it in
the use of means, and particularly by ear-
nest and persevering prayer to Him "who
giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

3. Lastly. The subject enters deep into
the essentials of christian experience, and of
the christian life.

Real religion does not consist in the mere
use of means, without any practical refer-
ence to the end they have in view. The
institutions and the ordinances of religion
do not constitute religion itself ; they are

only the means of leading the soul to God,
and of thus implanting in it the principles
of genuine piety. As the instrument of pro-
ducing and cherishing real religion, they are
well fitted to attain their object, and as such
they ought to be used with diligence and
perseverance. But practical godliness im-
plies something more than the outward per-
formance of a few formal acts. In the words
of our text, it is a "conformity to the death
of Christ," in its primary and essential prin-
ciples, in the motives which led to it, in the
ends which it secures, and in the spirit with
which it was endured. Love to the Sa-
viour, supreme regard to the glory of God,
and a habitual attachment to what is holy,
are its leading principles and motives.
Wherever these principles and motives
operate, they will produce "the fruits of
righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to
the praise and glory of God." These are
not the foundation of hope ; but they are
the ornaments, the effects, and, in a certain
sense, the guardians of it. They substan-
tiate faith ; they are the visible evidences
of that "life which is hid with Christ in
God ;" they recommend religion ; they
honour God, while they prepare for his
enjoyment. Amen.

THE NATURE OF FAITH AND THE PRIVILEGES OF BELIEVERS ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CASTLE-HILL CHURCH OF CAMPBELTOWN,
30TH NOVEMBER, 1834,

By the Rev. DANIEL KELLY, A.M.,

One of the Ministers of Campbeltown.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."—JOHN i. 12.

UNDUE expectations are often excited
previous to the appearance of any illustrious
character. Repeated intimations of his
approach raise curiosity to the highest pitch.
Every ear is open to the peal of his arrival ;
every lip is ardent to communicate the
agreeable intelligence. The crowd are
attracted to the spot—view with attention
the attire and countenance of the man. If
his features are not attractive, his demeanour
graceful, his raiment rich and splendid, dis-
appointment may be read in their looks.

Uncontent with the silent sentiment of dis-
approbation, they give vent to their feelings
in the most abusive terms. Is this not
Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's son ?
betrays at once the false conceptions of the
Jews with respect to the person, and the
poignancy of their disappointed hopes with
regard to the offices of Messiah. Emanci-
pation from the yoke of Rome was the
favourite and darling sentiment of a people,
who cherished with enthusiasm the memory
of the brilliant exploits of David, and the

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peaceful glories of Solomon's reign. Already had their imagination, fired with the sublime descriptions of the prophets, arrayed their Deliverer in the habiliments of war and the ensigns of majesty, beheld him lead forth the thousands of Judah to conquest and renown. What reception could the Son of man expect from such a combination of adverse and unfavourable circumstances? but that his person would be treated with disrespect, his pretensions with indignation and contempt, the hand of power outstretched to frustrate his intentions, and persecution arm herself against his life. So fared it with the meek, the amiable, the compassionate Jesus. "He came to his own," says the historian of his life, and to objects of his tenderest regard, "but his own received him not." A few, and but a few, of the descendants of Abraham admitted the claims, and followed the fortune of Jesus of Nazareth. Nor did it repent them to have abandoned houses, and lands, and relations, for the kingdom of heaven's sake; "for to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God"—a title of more solid grandeur, an honour of far more permanent benefits, than the most coveted distinctions of the king or the conqueror.

I. We shall make a few remarks on the nature of faith.

II. Its privileges.

III. Deduce a few inferences from the subject.

Faith, in the common acceptation of the term, is the assent which the mind gives to any proposition on the evidence of the speaker; faith is a natural principle of the human mind. Childhood places the most unbounded confidence in every tale that is told, and is unwilling to admit the idea of falsehood, till experience has discovered the ways of the world. Eve listening with ingenuous credulity to the suggestions of the serpent in Paradise, presents a faithful and a striking picture of infantine native innocence on the one hand, and matured deceit and malignity on the other. Faith is the cement of society. Without it social intercourse would be at an end, dark suspicion appear on every brow, and even language would be considered as the instrument of deceit. Every person endeavouring to counteract the designs, or divert the intentions of his brother, would occasion a second Babel of confusion and separation. Faith

is the great instructor of mankind; in youth we receive the rudiments of science from our instructors. In maturer years necessity compels us to depend in many things on the observation and experience of others. The limited nature of our faculties chain us to a particle of the globe. The number of our days are measured by the revolution of a few suns. If, therefore, we credited nothing but what we perceived through the medium of our senses, gray hairs would make their appearance when we had learned but the alphabet of knowledge, and death knock at the door for admission, when we had just traced a line of conduct along the map of life. If faith is essential in the concerns of the present, much more ought it to be cultivated in the concerns of a future world. If our imperfect faculties oblige us to be content with the information, and regulate our affairs on the evidence of our fellow-men, our natural capacity to understand heavenly things should induce us to rely with the most unqualified confidence on Him whose Word is truth. The Scriptures of inspiration are the only creed of the christian faith. In them he is taught that Jesus Christ, the eternal and only begotten Son of God, and equal with his heavenly Father, came on an errand of love to our globe; "that he became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, that he might expiate the offences done in the body; that he died for our sins, arose for our justification, ascended to the right hand of omnipotence to intercede for our transgressions; that he will come again with power and great glory to pass an irrevocable sentence on every son of Adam." Knowledge is the first requisite to these solemn articles of faith; you accept of Jesus as he is offered to you in the Gospel; but a faith that goes no farther than a simple assent is altogether vain. The devils believe and tremble, and have no hope. A faith that consists in speculation, entitles its possessor to none of the promises of the Gospel; it may be of advantage in supporting the faith of others; it may gain a name to him on earth, but the Judge of all finds it deficient. "Many shall come unto me at that day, and say, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" "Depart," says the Saviour, "I never knew you," may sound an alarm in the ears of those who name the name of Christ, and depart not from iniquity; who conform to the external observances of

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discover no spiritual change of
h, therefore, according to the
invariably exhibited by the
as productive of good works ;
hout works," to use the strong
of an Apostle, "is of the same
s a body is without the vital prin-
Faith is the source from which
s derive their origin and value. To
that the one exists, or can exist without
e other, is no less a contradiction than
at light emanates not from the sun, and
hat vegetation is not promoted by the
genial influence of the dew. "By their
fruit shall ye know them," says our blessed
Saviour ; a plain intimation that the quality
of the work discovers the artist from the
fictitious Christian. The same idea is con-
tinued in the beautiful, simple, figurative
expressions with which his discourses abound.
"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,
neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good
fruit." The style is changed. Man, the
idea intended, is brought forward and put
to the test : "A good man, from the treasure
of his heart, bringeth forth good things ;"
whereas the barren professor, though he
may wear the outward semblance, and make
great pretensions and professions of piety,
yet as he brings forth no fruit in his life and
conversation, he is but as sounding brass
and a tinkling symbol ; the root of the matter
is not in him ; the living principle of faith
infused by the Spirit, exists not in his heart ;
and when the great husbandman shall come,
how awful must be his condition ; and in
the fate of the barren fig-tree of old, he may
see an emblem of his own doom and punish-
ment. But in the heart of the Christian,
this heavenly principle of faith is productive
of the fruits of holiness and love ; and in
his daily walk and conversation, he gives
proof that there exists within him a divine
principle, which impels him forward to the
practice of all that is lovely, and virtuous,
and honourable, and of good report. He,
in deed and in truth, embraces as his rule
of life the whole plan of christian duty. His
piety to God is constant, fervent, and re-
fined ; his love to Jesus who redeemed him
from sin and misery, is pure, ardent, and
sincere ; his philanthropy embraces the
whole human race, while his particular affec-
tion is confined to the household of faith.
He hesitates not to obey in the strictest
interpretation the commands of his master,
though they may militate against his fa-

vourite inclinations, oppose the fame of his
reputation in the world, strip him of pro-
perty or deprive him of life. He receives
and rests upon Christ for eternal salvation,
as he is offered in the Gospel ; and conscious
of his utter unworthiness and helplessness,
he takes firm hold for eternity of the strength
and righteousness of the Redeemer. On
the rock of faith in his redeeming work, he
rises superior to the ills of life ; with undis-
turbed eye he beholds the turbulence of the
roaring element ; with a heart undismayed
by fear, and undaunted by terror's awful
form, receives the concussion of the moun-
tain wave ; for on its swelling bosom he is
borne, or, in other words, it is the friendly
bark that wafts him to the shores of never-
ending bliss.

II. The privileges of believers.

We find the expression, "sons of God,"
used both in a limited and in a very exten-
sive sense in the sacred writings. In its
primary acceptation, it is confined to the
first-born sons of light, the angels. "Where
wast thou," says the Almighty to Job,
"when I laid the foundations of the earth,
when the morning stars sang together, and
all the sons of God shouted for joy ?" Adam
was entitled to the appellation of the son of
God ; even the whole posterity of Adam, in
a certain sense, are also denoted the sons
of God. "Have we not one Father ? hath
not one God created us ?" is the language of
inspiration. God is, indeed, stamped on all
the works of his almighty hand. Man, if
we may so speak, the most ingenious, the
most exalted piece of terrestrial mechanism,
declares his high origin in the grandeur of
his step and the intelligence of his eye ; but
sin hath debased the nobility of his nature ;
his alienation from God hath forfeited his
hereditary claims ; his original inheritance
has been lost by rebellion ; his propensity
to evil debars him from the high title of son
according to the flesh. We are all outcasts
from God's holy and blessed family, unworthy
to be recognised, honoured and protected,
as his children. "We are by nature the
children of wrath, even as others ;" but there
is gracious restoration by regeneration and
adoption to all true believers in Jesus Christ,
and through his merciful interposition, the
Lord is the Father of all them that believe
the Gospel. "To as many as received him,
to them gave he power to become the sons
of God, even to them that believe on his
name." They submit to his instructions as

the great Prophet of the Church. However mysterious his doctrines are, it is enough for them, that he has published them for the edification and consolation of his people. In his atonement, obedience and intercession, as the high accepted Priest above, they repose their hope with eternal confidence; and to his government, as their exalted Sovereign, they yield a willing and delightful subjection. They welcome the Saviour with unutterable joy to the throne in their hearts, to reign there for ever, to subdue their enemies, to make them faithful and zealous servants—faithful to death, and zealous to eternity. It is, therefore, their high and exclusive privilege to approach him with the endearing title of Father, with filial love and in full confidence of his parental care and affection. And the nature of the connexion between God and his people is described in the next verse, “as not being born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of the Spirit of God.” “As many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God; and they receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father.” The Lord graciously acknowledges the connexion, and “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” These are the favoured people who receive the Redeemer in all his offices, as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and clothed with his mediatorial character, made unto them complete redemption; and this is the foundation of their confidence, that, through the Lord Jesus Christ, they have access by one Spirit to the Father. Well may we pause in admiration of this unparalleled condescension and grace: “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!” that he should take aliens and strangers near to himself, and adopt enemies into his family, register their names in the Book of Life, make them heirs of glory, and coheirs with his own eternal Son. This is both mercy and infinite wonder together. With what enlarged conceptions, then, may believers approach the throne of grace! Regarding God as your Father, what may you not look for at his hands. He will pity; he will relieve your wants, and supply them out of that inexhaustible fulness which is treasured up in the everlasting covenant of his love. How noble is this title, sons of God! What shall

be done to the man whom the King of kings delights to honour? Compared with the glory of our descent as christian believers, not once to be named, is the honour of being born of the most illustrious monarch that ever swayed a sceptre and ruled an empire on earth. They enjoy the unspeakable blessing of pardon of sin, access to God, full assurance of his protection and his “grace to help them in the time of need.” Their place of defence is the munition of rocks; their bread shall be given them, their water shall be sure; they have a title to the blessings of the perfections of God; his glorious attributes and excellencies are theirs; his infinity to be the extent of their inheritance, his eternity the date of their happiness, his unchangeableness the rock of their rest, his wisdom to be the direction of their conduct, his holiness their sanctification, his justice their justification and acquittal; his goodness their reward, not in the way of debt, but of grace; his truth the security for the accomplishment of all his promises. They are heirs of those eternal mansions of bliss and peace where joy for ever dwells. They “come to mount Zion, the city of the living God, an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven;” where, after this stage and period of their existence, his people shall to all eternity, “reign kings and priests to God.” With such boundless prospects before us, ought we not constantly to appear as on fire with heavenly zeal and ambition, and to be ever pressing farther into the kingdom of God; and earnestly cry for that spirit of wisdom and revelation, that you may clearly know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, “who were predestinated to be conformed to the image of Jesus the Son of God, and to be with him heirs of God, and partakers of all communicable divine fulness.” “If any man have not the Spirit of God, he is none of his.” The renovation of our fallen and depraved condition is the effectual result of the powerful influence of that blessed agent in the work of redemption. The corrupt and carnal inclinations of the heart, under his mighty operations, will be succeeded by pure and holy desires. The prejudices and stubborn opinions of the judgment are removed by the strong evidence of conviction; and the omnipotence of truth and the will,

under the guardianship of this spiritual director, avoids the paths of iniquity, and treads with pleasure the paths of righteousness; and, as the sons of God, they act in accordance with their noble origin and exalted prospects. The children of the Most High are removed by as broad a line from the men of the world, as opulence is from poverty. Their privileges, would we attempt fully to describe them, far exceed the bounds of a discourse; but who can even attempt to describe them? The theme is worthy the pen of an angel and the ardour of a seraph. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath daring excursions of the imagination penetrated to the sublimity of future bliss." Though the privileges of God's peculiar children point to a future state for completion, yet even in this world they enjoy peculiar advantages. Wherein consists their pleasure or their profit? it is asked by the men of the world. Doth the sun arise to light them only on their way? Doth the former and latter rain descend for them alone? Do the arrows of pestilence pay them respect, and the pale friend of fame not howl at their gate, and death step across the threshold? So doth the infidel, with a malignant sneer, alarm the apprehensions and shake the faith of the timid Christian. With triumph he sums up his arguments. Is there not one end to the evil and the good—the just and the unjust? His language shows his equal want of faith in God and knowledge of human kind. Blinded man! Eternity will be long enough to reward the people of God for their trials in a world which was intended to be a school of probation and discipline. "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." "What they know not now, they shall know hereafter."

It cannot be denied that many of the followers of Jesus are poor in this world's goods. Their station is often in the obscure corners of life. Silver and gold they have none. They can enumerate no long lines of illustrious personages in their race. Their names are not distinguished by capitals in the voluminous records of society. Poverty with its attendant train of evils, is their frequent portion; but they repine not at the dispensations of Providence. They enjoy peace and serenity of mind; they tread their way unseen through the sequestered scenes of life, escape the fury of the

tempest which hurls the votary of ambition from the top of the mountain. Can any one doubt that the favour of the Almighty is better than the smiles of the whole world? "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall ever offend them." "In the keeping of his commandments, there is a great reward;" in this world peace of mind, the testimony of a good conscience, the approbation of their heavenly Father, and a well-grounded hope of a blessed immortality. Affliction, indeed, is often the lot of the sons of God in this state of existence. It may appear to the carnal mind inconsistent with the goodness of Deity to inflict unnecessary punishments on any, much less on his chosen ones. With awful reverence it becomes us to behold the fulfilling of God's intentions, and blame not his procedure, since it can arise from no other cause but our own ignorance. This appeared inscrutable to the wisdom of ancient philosophers; they devised various expedients to extricate the mercy of God, and silence the mouth of the profane, who, from this article, denied his existence or his providence. "Whom he loveth he chasteneth," contains more secure solid comfort, and stronger conviction to the judgment than the ingenious conjectures of men. This comforts the Christian in affliction. He sees the bow of hope painted on the dark cloud of his sorrow. He sees affliction not administered by the agency of some evil spirit, or the hand of some malignant mortal. The Most High himself is presented to him administering the bitter, but salutary draught. Can he doubt of his kind and benevolent intention? Shall He who gave his own Son, not freely give him all things? This softens the iron bed of affliction. This imparts genuine comfort to the soul of the Christian, and enables him to bear with becoming fortitude the ills of life, and even the shock of the king of terrors, without alarm. This consolatory view of the goodness of God in Christ being always present to his mind, and impressed upon his heart by the operation of the Spirit, precedes the calamity as the dawn of morning is the herald of the sun. It is the conviction that all things are subject to the control of a wisdom that cannot err, and a rectitude that is unbending; it is this which supports the mind of the Christian believer amidst all the trials of life, and in the darkest night of adversity gilds his horizon with the irradiations of hope. "The floods have

lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, than the mighty waves of the seas. He stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumults of the people." Thus, though surrounded by numerous evils which it is not possible for us to avert or remedy, we may possess firmness and magnanimity of mind, being fully persuaded that he will either protect us from, or sustain us under, their afflicting pressure. "And we know that even if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Thus we have endeavoured to set before you some of the inestimable privileges we enjoy as children of God, and some of the glorious prospects of happiness infallibly secured to us. Let us now, in conclusion, consider shortly what are the duties to which this blessed relation of being sons of God necessarily binds us; and these are truly great and important.

1. We are bound to act in accordance with our celestial origin, and exalted hopes and prospects—to honour, fear, and love our Father which is in heaven. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts." Mal. i. 6. Our believing and acknowledging this relation will be vain and fruitless, if it have not a due influence upon our hearts and conduct. If we neglect to cultivate the dispositions of love and reverence for the sacred majesty of God, may not he expostulate with us as he did with his ancient people, who were once, what we are now by his special favour and kindness, the portion of the Lord and of his inheritance. Deut. xxxii. 6. "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?" The excellencies of the divine nature may justly require the sincerest honour, love, and reverence. His sovereign power, justice, holiness, and omniscience, ought naturally to fix and raise in our minds the most impressive sentiments of reverential fear and love; but his patience, benignity, and goodness, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, should particularly en-

gage our affections, and raise us to that heavenly-mindedness and spirituality of soul by which we will be assimilated to the likeness of the blessed Jesus. "Separate yourselves from an untoward generation; come out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." "For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirits, which are God's."

2. Let us learn to have our minds impressed with a due and becoming sense of the honour and dignity of our relation to God. Let us, as the children of the Most High, feel deeply interested in the honour of our heavenly Father's household, and support the dignity of members of his family by the purity of our faith, and the holiness of our lives; and avoid every thing that has the remotest tendency to reflect dishonour upon our profession, and that holy name by which we are called. "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." Though no sorrow enter these mansions of bliss and glory, yet can it be considered as improbable that the blessed inhabitants of the heavenly regions are affected by the backslidings and untender walk of professing Christians. Zechariah xiii. 6. "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." He is wounded in the house of his friends by the immoral conduct of his disciples, by their strifes and divisions, by the malignant feelings they cherish, and the unchristian language they apply to those from whom they have separated, and whom they ought to love, as brethren of the same family.

Let me exhort you to follow peace with all men, and by speaking the truth in love, and acting with uniform integrity and gentleness, you will be instrumental in diffusing that benevolence and evangelical love, whose influence will, according to ancient prophecy, unite the christian world; when that glorious day shall dawn upon the world, "when the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." "The watchmen of Jerusalem shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." "He that is born of God cannot

sin"—can have no favourite sin. Sensible that he carries about with him a body of sin and death, he longs ardently for deliverance. His grand sollicitude is to be continually under the impressions of heavenly grace; to be merciful, as his Father which is in heaven is merciful; pure as he is pure, and holy as he is holy. As then, my friends, we have been so highly valued in the sight of the Eternal, ransomed and saved by the precious blood of his beloved Son; and as we have now the near prospect of renewing our solemn vows, and devoting ourselves anew to the service of our God and Redeemer, let us esteem ourselves, so as to shrink from the indulgence of any unholy passion unworthy of our rank, unbecoming our profession, or unsuitable to our views and expectations. Let us duly value our relation to God, and walk as becometh the children of so much light and distinguished mercy, "having no communion with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them; which are most dishonourable to our rational nature, incompatible with our relation to God, and our expectations as heirs of glory, honour, and immortality." "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure."

Lastly. We are called upon to imitate our heavenly Father in his imitable perfections. Man, in a state of bliss and innocence, had the image of God stamped upon him. Jesus Christ came from heaven to earth, and assumed the human nature, in order to restore and renew this image, and make us again partakers of the divine nature. Earthly children frequently glory in their resemblance to their parents. As well, and with much greater force and propriety, ought we to cultivate and to study to improve in our souls as near a resemblance to our heavenly Father as possible; and let your whole soul magnify his name, who stripped off "the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and put on you the new man, which, after God, is

created in righteousness and true holiness.' It was a remarkable answer which the kings of Midian delivered to Gideon, when he inquired what manner of men they were whom they slew at Tabor? Judges viii. 18. "As thou art, so were they; each one resembled the children of a king." There was a majesty in their form and manner which shed lustre over the obscurity of their condition. And such is the testimony borne to the people of God even by the consciences of their enemies; for, unwilling as they are to admit their worth, they are compelled to acknowledge it by the force of their convictions, and to declare that God is in them. Though many of them are poor and despised in the world, they are characterized by a heavenly-mindedness of soul; and there is such a superiority and elevation in their spirit and views to the mean and sordid, as proves that they are born from above. Theirs is a noble mind, which poverty and affliction cannot crush, and oppression cannot awe, and which maintains the calm dignity of wisdom, integrity, and fortitude, in the most adverse and trying circumstances. Let us all be exhorted to grow in love and reverence to our heavenly Father. Listen to the voice of the Redeemer from the cross of Calvary. "O love the Lord, all ye his saints," and long for that blessed period when Christ shall fashion your bodies like to his own glorious body; when ye shall be fitted for the noble pursuits and sublime contemplations of the heaven of heavens; washed from all the stains of impurity, and arrayed in the spotless robes of Immanuel's righteousness, and surround that glorious throne, on which he sits at the right hand of the Father. This is the sum of your happiness: we shall be for ever with the Lord. This is the hope that rejoices the heart. And who is not ready to say, in the inspired language of the royal Psalmist? "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; and when I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." Amen.

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SERMON by the Rev. JOHN DOW, Largs.
LECTURE by the Rev. JOHN THOMSON, Shettleston.
SERMON by the Rev. MICHAEL WILLIS, Glasgow.

CHRIST KNOCKING AT THE DOOR OF THE HEART;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF LARGS, ON THE EVENING OF SABBATH,
THE 7TH DECEMBER, 1834,

By the Rev. JOHN DOW,
Minister of Largs.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock.”—REV. iii. 20.

IT were wasting time to detain you at present with the figurative expressions employed in the text. The meaning is evidently this: In various ways, our merciful Saviour is unceasingly requesting admission to the hearts of sinful men. He continues knocking to attract their attention, calling on sinners to hear him and open, that He may come into their hearts, and bless their souls. Be careful, however, on this to remark, that it is not for want of ability to do it, that Christ does not in an instant of time overcome every obstruction, and take absolute possession of the sinner's heart. By his mighty power, the Scripture assures us, he is able at any time, and in any case, to “subdue all things to himself.” But his peculiar delight is placed in the heart; and men are required to choose his service, not in the way of physical compulsion, but sweetly drawn into willing subjection by the attractive influences of his grace. To accomplish this in a consistent manner, Christ in various ways continues knocking to engage our attention, calling on sinners to hear and to open, that He may come into their hearts and bless their souls. Oft has He called, and long has He waited; He is calling now, and waiting still, till they open the door, and He enter and bless them with all the privileges of his children. To illustrate which remark,

I. He is knocking at the door of the sinner's heart by the warnings of conscience, Heaven's deputy in every breast. There is

placed in man, by his Maker himself, an ever-present witness, and when properly informed, an impartial judge, acquainted with all our actions now, and noting them down for the day of accounting to God. In performing his will, its approving testimony tells, “that with simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our lives and conversation in the world.” But in neglect of duty or commission of sin, it lifts its warning voice, enters its protest against our wickedness, and appeals to the righteous judgment of God. Its wonderful power, in impressing the heart, has been felt and acknowledged even by the most hardened of men. Witness this in the dismay which seized upon Saul's mind when he heard that the Lord had departed from him: “He fell all along upon the earth; he was sorely troubled in mind, and there was no strength remaining in him.” Witness this in the horror which possessed the mind of Babylon's impious king, when the sentence of heaven was written on the wall before him by a supernatural hand: “He was filled,” we read, “with trembling and amazement; his knees smote one against the other, and the cup of intoxication fell from his hand;” and the same it is still. In the time of prosperity and health, indeed, there may by an effort be an outward appearance of peace. But an effort it requires, and it is only outward after all. Follow to retirement, look into the heart, and in all his gaieties it is ever and anon interrupting the sinner, and whispering in his ear some awful

warning like this: "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Remark him especially when overtaken by sickness, with the immediate prospect of death and appearance before his God. Then conscience, though stifled a while, will faithfully execute the commission assigned it by Heaven. Looking back, he beholds opportunities lost, means and offers of mercy despised. Looking forward, he sees an offended Judge prepared to pronounce his eternal doom. Looking upward, he discerns the abodes of bliss, but to him the gates seem closely shut; and when he looks down, all hell seems moved for his coming, as a prey to the worm that never dies, and to inhabit the fire that shall never be quenched. And yet even then, at the eleventh hour, if the sinner would but hear the gospel-call, and open the door to receive the Lord, who has so long knocked, neglected within, the Saviour's blood would cleanse his soul, the Saviour himself would come into his heart, and enrich his otherwise destitute mind with all the blessings of the children of God. Be it known unto thee then, careless sinner, every time that conscience reminds thee of duty, of sin, of heaven, of hell, of death, or of judgment, warning to flee from the wrath to come, and now to take hold of the gospel hope, and live to the praise and glory of God, it is the voice of Christ directed to thee; beware of resisting or despising the same. It is thy merciful Saviour requesting admission to pardon thy sins and bless thy soul. Oft has He called, and long has He staid. He is calling now, and waiting still; He is knocking at the door of the sinner's heart, by the warnings of conscience, Heaven's deputy in every breast.

II. He is knocking at the door of the sinner's heart, by the calls and requirements of his Word. The Scriptures, my friends, are the words of Christ, delivered by him as Messenger of Heaven, to illuminate the world, to save their souls, and to guide their feet into the ways of peace. In that book, he hath clearly informed us what is good, and what is the duty required of us all: "To believe in himself, the Saviour of sinners, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God." The command of Heaven, thus published to men, they are bound to comply with, and are not at liberty at all to dispute. Whilst, with reference to such as have broken his laws, which, alas! our race have all of them done, his will to

them is plainly declared: "There is forgiveness with God." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon him; and to our God who will abundantly pardon." These calls to sinful men are attended by promises of the most encouraging kind, and dictated by himself; such as these, and others to a similar effect: "Though your sins were as scarlet, yet shall they be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than the snow." "My blood cleanseth from every description of sin." "I am able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by me." Solemn threatenings are recorded by Him to alarm the fears and quicken the diligence of every slumbering or procrastinating sinner: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "If ye believe not Christ, ye shall die in your sins." "The wrath of God abides on sinners now;" and in a little space, how soon we know not, "the Lord shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that obey not God, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." But these commands, and promises, and threatenings, being still inadequate to melt our hardened and obstinate hearts, he exhibits himself as dying for sinners, the just for the unjust, to bring them to God; as ascending to heaven, and pleading their cause; entreating them to look to him and be saved; to be free, to be prosperous, to be happy here, and to dwell for ever with himself in glory. Remember, then, O careless sinner, every time thou redest his Word, or hearest another doing the same, or callest to mind any particular part of its truth, all that he did, all that he taught, all that he suffered! what he commanded, what he promised, and what he has threatened! it is the call of Christ to thy guilty soul; beware of neglecting or despising the same. It is the counsel of God to instruct and to save thee; it is the merciful Saviour asking admission to pardon your sins and bless your souls. Oft has He called, and long has He staid; He is calling now, and waiting still. In the chapter we read, in the text we selected, in the passages quoted, he is knocking at the door of the sinner's heart by the calls and requirements of his word. But,

III. He is knocking at the door of the sinner's heart, by the appointed means and ordinances of his grace. Every time that a Christian Sabbath dawns on the world, it calls on sinners to remember Him who, this

day, rose victorious from the dead, having died for sin, and satisfied the law, and vanquished all his spiritual foes. A world that was marred and ruined by sin, restored by his work to order and hope, was adequate cause for changing the Sabbath; and every successive return of the same is a call upon sinners to believe in Christ, and consecrate the day to his glory and praise. When summoned by the bell to assemble together in the courts of his house, it is a call from Christ to dismiss the world, and worship the Lord in spirit and in truth; and when the preacher speaks to them there, as the accredited ambassador of heaven, in every remark, and in every discourse, he exhorts, and entreats, and encourages, and threatens them, in Christ's stead, that in this their day they renounce their sins, and be forthwith reconciled unto God. Every sacrament dispensed in their presence sets forth Christ as slain for their sins; every prayer that is offered up here to God through Him, is a petition for grace to melt their hearts; every song of praise that arises hence, in harmonious concert with the melodious choirs of the heavenly world, is, or should be, in gratitude to Christ for that almighty sovereign grace which subdues the sinner's obstinate heart, and brings him back in willing captivity to heaven itself. And all is done by command of Christ, in the presence of sinners, if haply his grace shall make it effectual "for opening their eyes, and softening their hearts, and turning their souls from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God." Be it known unto thee, then, careless sinner, (whether the truth shall impress thee or not,) every ordinance dispensed before thee, every religious exercise in which thou art permitted to engage is a call from Christ to thy guilty soul—another knock at the door of thy heart. Oft has He called, and long has He staid; He is calling now, and He is waiting still; or, in other words, the Head of the Church, and the Saviour of men, is knocking at the door of the sinner's heart by the appointed means and ordinances of his grace. We remark,

IV. He is knocking at the door of the sinner's heart by the continual strivings of his Spirit. His office, you know, in the gospel scheme, is to abide with us always, leading sinners to the knowledge of the truth, edifying saints, and building them up; bringing all things seasonably to their minds, for convincing and converting the one, and perfecting that which concerns the others' souls. Innumerable are the plans adopted by Him for recalling sinners from

misery to happiness; from sin to the service and favour of God. In one, the seed that was sown in early life by pious parents or teacher's care, but has long lain dormant within him, is quickened, promoted, and cherished by the Spirit, till it spring up and bud, and bring forth fruit, in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some an hundred fold. Another is brought by conviction of sin, sharp and long continued in the soul, to peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Afflicting providence is blessed to a third, and rendered the means of bringing the sinner from the delusion, and bondage, and darkness of sin, to the truth, to the light, and to the glorious liberty of the children of God. Another is allured by the grace of Christ, who, though he was rich, became so poor for wretched man, and feels constrained to follow his Lord, and live to his praise, to love and to honour him with all his heart, and bring forth fruit to his honour and glory. But whatever be the instrument employed by the Spirit in opening the door of the sinner's heart, it is always his own exclusive work. There never was a man who renounced the world and submitted to Christ, but did it by the power of the Holy Ghost; and there never was one who refused the call, but in doing it resisted the strivings of Him who enlightens the mind, renews the heart, draws our wills, decides our choice, bestows on us faith, enables it to act, and joins us to Christ in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten. Every time, then, careless sinner, (whether this truth shall impress thee or not,) every time that a good thought springs up in thy mind prompting to duty, warning of sin, or pointing to Christ, we charge, we exhort, we command, we entreat thee listen to the calls of his Holy Spirit; beware of resisting or despising the same. It is the merciful Saviour, by means of his Spirit, asking admission to pardon thy sins and bless thy soul. Oft has He called, and long has He staid; He is calling now, and waiting still; He is knocking at the door of the sinner's heart by the continual strivings of his Spirit. But remark, in fine, and

V. He is knocking at the door of the sinner's heart, by the dispensations of his providence in which we are exercised. Every renewed expression of Heaven's bounty to sinners, every prosperous event that befalls them, is a call addressed to their insensible hearts to awake from sleep, and acknowledge the source from which their blessings flow; to receive his gifts with gratitude and praise, and employ them all to

promote his glory. And soon as the bounty and mercy of Heaven, bestowed upon men, and continued through Christ, shall melt the impenitent and obstinate heart, such gratitude will be felt and expressed in terms like these: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget his benefits. O that men would be silent no more, but praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." Be it known unto thee, then, careless sinner, insensible now to all the goodness and to all the grace in which we are daily allowed to share, (whether the truth shall impress thee or not,) every additional day thou art permitted to live, every daily blessing continued or bestowed, every fresh benefit descending from Heaven upon thy guilty head, is a call from Christ directed to thee—is another knock at the door of thy hardened, insensible heart; beware of resisting or neglecting the same. It is the merciful Saviour winning you with goodness, and drawing you with love, asking admission to pardon your sins and bless your souls. "Let them alone for a space," is the strain of his discipline; "let them alone for a space, till I try them with benefits; and if they improve my offered grace and opportunities, well. But continuing impenitent, and deaf to my call, thou shalt afterwards cut them down as cumberers of the ground, and cast them into the fire that shall never be quenched." But if once subdued by the gospel grace, they will open the door of their hearts to receive him. He will enter and bless them with all that promotes their happiness here, and with everlasting glory and happiness in heaven. But when blessings fail of the end proposed, he frequently sends afflictive appointments to knock at the door of the human heart, to arrest the attention, to arouse the careless, and to declare to the sinner the message of Heaven. Why does he often dry up the springs of earthly comfort, in which our souls are disposed to rest, recalling the gifts himself bestowed? Why does he visit us with so many personal and family bereavements, taking away the desire of our eyes with his stroke, in which we placed our fondest hopes, leaving us poor, and wretched, and helpless, to drag out our life in solitude and grief, and go down in sorrow and tears to the grave? It is the Saviour knocking at the door of the heart, to teach the sinner, if he will give attention, that sin is an evil and bitter thing; that iniquity separates between him and God, causing him to hide his face and trouble our souls; that we are seeking enjoyment where it never can

be found; that our only safe and happy course is to forsake the vanities of this world, open our hearts, comply with his gospel, humble ourselves in the presence of Heaven, diligently search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. And why is a pestilence, of deadly description, hitherto a stranger in this land, why is it proceeding from town to town, and from district to district, preceded by terror, and followed by mourning, and marking its path by sweeping its thousands of miserable victims away from the face of the earth? These are the dismal effects of sin, and are appointed to teach us the bitter thing of which we and our land are guilty, in having departed from the living God. Long had He knocked with gentler stroke, requesting admission to restore and to bless. But we, alas! undervalued his goodness, abused his gifts, despised his threats, rejected his counsel, and made him depart, because we disliked to know his ways. To prevent our ruin, therefore, he comes and knocks with a stroke which starts the slumbering inhabitant within, and violently shakes the tenement itself, till it threatens to fall and bury its inmate under the ruins. What meanest thou, then, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God. And now that his judgments are abroad upon earth, and almost come to the door of your house, or, perhaps, are already within the same, inquire why the Lord has smitten us. Learn righteousness; return to Him from whom we have revolted, saying, "Remove thy stroke in mercy from us; surely it is meet that we have borne correction; we will not offend against thee more." The judgments sent, undoubtedly great, have been appointed in love, to prevent the infliction of greater still. It is thus that he speaks: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent;" or, in other words, "Stir up yourselves, and make solemn inquiry into your sins and your punishment." "Be deeply affected with the guilt and the danger of your sinful condition." "Open your hearts, submit to the rod, and apply to Christ for mercy to pardon, and grace to help in time of need." "Though you have long despised my counsels, and would none of my reproofs, shut your ears against my knocking, and abused the gifts with which you were blessed; if you will now but surrender your souls to me, the uplifted sword shall never descend; I am ready to enter to pardon your sins, and bless yourselves with deliverance, and peace, and happiness here, and with everlasting glory and happiness in heaven."

Such is the voice of the Redeemer to sinners, expressed by his various doings to men. Beware of resisting or despising the same. Oft has He called, and long has He staid; He is calling now, and waiting still; He is knocking at the door of the sinner's heart, by the dispensations of his providence in which we are exercised.

And now, infatuated, perishing sinners, in review of the subject, what are you willing or determined to do? Will you shut your ears at the Saviour's knocking, and refuse to comply with his heavenly call? Will you continue to be deaf to the warnings of conscience, Heaven's deputy in every breast; to the calls and requirements of his Word, to the appointed means and ordinances of his grace, to the continual strivings of his Spirit, and to the dispensations of his pro-

vidence in which we are exercised? Each of these by itself, and all of them united, are so many calls directed to you, are so many knocks at the door of your hearts, requesting an entrance for Christ. Delay not a moment, lest the Redeemer depart and leave you to perish; and his calls neglected will witness against you in the day of judgment. Behold, He stands at the door and knocks. Respond to him thus: Come in thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou so long without? And do it to-night; for to-morrow, provoked, he may address you thus: "Because I called, and ye refused; ye would none of my counsel, and despised my reproof; ye hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord; therefore shall ye find according to your ways, and according to the fruit of your doings."

N. B. Very lately Cholera prevailed in some neighbouring parishes to an alarming extent. About 100 deaths occurred in one village. This is alluded to in the last particular of the foregoing discourse.

LAY NOT UP TREASURES UPON EARTH, BUT IN HEAVEN;

A LECTURE

By the Rev. JOHN THOMSON,

Minister of Shettleston.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."—
MATT. vi. 19—21.

VAIN glory and covetousness were the most prominent features in the character of the Scribes and Pharisees. While they loved to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men; and when they did their alms sounded a trumpet before them, that they might have glory of men; they also at the same time regarded the wealth of this world as the highest possible good, and scrupled not, therefore, to employ every means, whether legal or illegal, for its acquisition. In the language of our Saviour himself, "they devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers." Such hateful qualities could not, of course, escape the notice and the severe reprobation of our blessed Lord. Accordingly, we find him not only, on many different occasions, directly exposing their prevalence in the hearts, and expressly censuring their manifestation in the lives of this particular class of his countrymen, but taking every

opportunity of indirectly accomplishing the same object, by warning his disciples against cherishing among themselves the like odious passions, or conforming in their personal deportment to the like injurious and unworthy conduct. Of this, we have an example in the passage before us, together with the immediately preceding context. In the 16th and two following verses, our Lord calls upon his disciples to avoid every thing like that ostentation in their religious services, for which the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees were so remarkable. "Moreover," says he, "when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." And then, having thus

directed them to seek after not the praise of men but the honour that cometh from God only, he next proceeds, in the verses to which our attention is now to be directed, to exhort them against the gratification of the spirit of avarice: "Lay not up for yourselves," says he, "treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal."

It is here very evident, that our Saviour does not by any means prohibit his disciples from making such a provision for future exigencies, as may be placed by an all-wise, over-ruling Providence within their reach. Not only is a competent portion of earthly gain absolutely necessary for our subsistence and our happiness, as connected with the present world; but there is nothing in the good things of the life that now is, however varied in kind, or however abundant in possession, which is not subservient, or at least may not in some way or other be rendered more or less subservient, to the great end for which this life itself, the most precious of all our blessings, has been bestowed, seeing that without it nothing else can be of any value to us. Nay, indeed, it is unquestionably for the very purpose of enabling us more effectually to glorify the Lord in our bodies and in our spirits, which are his, as well as to enjoy him for ever, that every temporal possession is designed by its great Author, even the Father of lights, from whom alone cometh down every good and every perfect gift. It follows, therefore, that worldly wealth, so long as it is not abused or perverted to the accomplishment of some object contrary to, or incompatible with, its original intention as bestowed by the Almighty, is not, and cannot, be an unlawful object of pursuit. And seeing that in the present state of things, when we know not what an hour may bring forth, riches which abound to-day may even to-morrow take unto themselves wings and fly away from us; surely it cannot be at all inconsistent with our duty, as the creatures of Jehovah and as citizens of this lower world, though indeed placed here in preparation for another and a better state of existence, to guard, as far as we can, against any such emergency, by laying up in store that portion of our earthly gain which, after our present necessities, in subordination to our immortal destiny, have been rightly attended to, may yet be either necessary for the successful prosecution of our lawful industry, or useful for meeting the trials of adversity, and keeping at a distance the difficulties and the temptations of poverty.

When, therefore it is said by our Lord,

in the passage before us, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," he cannot with any degree of consistency be regarded as forbidding, without the least qualification, the acquisition or the retention of earthly gains—that being tantamount, as we have thus seen, to opposing the very design for promoting which such gains are brought by the Almighty within our reach, or suffered by him to continue in our possession. It must, consequently, we apprehend, be very evident even to the commonest understanding, that our Saviour here refers not so much to the act of accumulating wealth considered in itself, as to the spirit in which, and the extent to which, any such accumulation is carried on. His language is manifestly pointed against the inordinate desire after earthly possessions, and the insatiable pursuit of them, or the undue estimation whether of their inherent or of their relative value. If, therefore, in seeking after the acquisition or the increase of worldly substance, our thoughts and affections be chiefly, if not wholly engrossed by the view of, or the love for, such worldly substance—if, discontented with such a portion of earthly gains as Providence may be pleased to bestow upon us, we be continually grasping at every chance of adding to the abundance already obtained, and never happy except when our exertions for this end are in some good measure successful—if riches be heaped together as our chief good, our chosen portion, the best ground of hope, the most cherished source of happiness, intrinsically excellent in themselves, and alone capable of affording us any pleasure that is really substantial, or permanent, or desirable—if all this be the case, then certainly we are disobeying the true spirit of the injunction here put forth by our Saviour. It is just in opposition to all such worldly-mindedness, that, in the verse before us, he says to his disciples, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."

While our blessed Lord thus expressly prohibits every thing like the gratification of the spirit of covetousness, he adds, at the same time, a very substantial reason for compliance with his direction or precept regarding it—reminding his disciples of the destructible and perishable nature of all earthly possessions: "Lay not up for yourselves," says he, "treasures upon earth, *where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.*"

Whatever may be the kind of worldly riches in which our happiness may be centred, or to which our desires may be

directed, we have not, and cannot possibly have, any such security that we shall continue to retain possession of them, or to reap the fruits of them, as can rationally entitle them to be regarded as the chief objects of concern, the ultimate objects of pursuit. Either in their own nature they are subject to decay, and literally, in the language of Scripture, "perish with the using;" or they are exposed to violence without, and may be taken away from us even when most carefully looked to and most richly enjoyed. Are we valuing supremely, and consequently striving to amass (as was the custom in ancient times among the Jews, and still continues to be a prevailing object of desire in the nations of the east) the abundance of superb and costly raiment? Such treasures, however beautiful, or however precious, are continually liable, as our Saviour here very plainly intimates, to be consumed and destroyed, or at least rendered utterly useless by the depredations of the moth. Or are we heaping together the fruits of the earth, seeking with inordinate anxiety that our crops may be great, and our barns filled with grain? Then granting that this our desire may be at length fully accomplished, still, as our Lord here also suggests to our notice, the corn we are thus laying up in store may (according to the signification of the word here translated *rust*) be blasted, or smutted, or tainted with mildew. Or, again, are we hoarding up for ourselves treasures of gold and of silver? In regard to these, also, we are not less distinctly reminded, in the verse before us, of the possibility that we may be deprived of them even when we most rejoice in their abundance; and that, too, suddenly, by the dexterity of the thief, or the assault of the robber, to whose lawless rapacity they present a natural and powerful temptation. Seeing, then, that we are thus continually in danger of losing the wealth of this world, in whatever form it may be amassed, the folly of making such wealth in any degree the source of engrossing anxiety, or the object of supreme regard, cannot but be obvious to every one who considers with seriousness either its intrinsic nature, or its relative design. Surely, therefore, we cannot fail to perceive that the disciple of Jesus must never regard the fleeting possessions of the life that now is, as in any sense, or to any extent, his chosen portion, his valued treasure; but that, on the contrary, while using the world, indeed, as not abusing it—while taking that use of his lawful gains which may be consistent with the glory of the good Giver, all

his thoughts, and desires, and affections, should be supremely fixed upon, and ultimately directed towards, those spiritual riches which are far more exalted in their nature, and far more blissful in their fruits. And, accordingly, it is just to this that our blessed Lord next proceeds, in the passage before us, to direct the attention of his disciples: "Lay up for yourselves," says he, "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

The question here naturally presents itself, What are the treasures to which our Saviour thus refers as the legitimate object of the Christian's pursuit? And the answer to this all-important question cannot but be very obvious to every one who is in the slightest degree acquainted with the declarations of divine truth, concerning the inheritance of the saints in light. Towards this celestial inheritance, the views and the hopes of every genuine disciple are continually directed. It is just the expectation of being at length advanced to the fulness of its blessings, that forms the substance of the believer's peace in respect to the present, and the centre of his confidence in regard to the future. No one, however, who is really sensible, as every believer must necessarily be, of his present moral and spiritual degradation, can fail to know and to feel that in this, his natural condition, he must be altogether unfit for the employments and the pleasures of the celestial state; and that, consequently, until a great, nay, a thorough, a radical change shall have been effected in his mind and heart, it is absolutely impossible, in the nature of things, that heaven can be to any extent a place of happiness for him. The accomplishment of this change, then, being thus quite indispensable to his future progress, must of course be to him, of all conceivable objects of pursuit, the most valuable and important. Such necessary preparation, therefore, or meetness for the heavenly inheritance, very evidently embraces all that can be implied in the treasures which our Saviour, in the passage before us, exhorts his disciples to lay up for themselves.

Nor are we either in any degree left destitute of the means requisite for bringing about this precious renewal of our present corrupted state, or at all uninformed as to the nature, the legitimate tendency, or the right use of them. Indeed it is just for the very purpose of bringing them fully before us, that the whole of that divine revelation, with which we are at this moment so highly favoured, has been vouchsafed to us.

Accordingly, when we turn to the grand inspired record of this revelation, we find certain great truths, regarding them, there very clearly and forcibly brought under our view. We are told, for example, that being guilty by nature, and by wicked works, and consequently lying under the merited curse of God's broken law, we require, in order that we may be admitted to the divine presence and favour in heaven, to be freely and fully justified, or, in other words, delivered from the sentence of death incurred by our disobedience—that such justification is to be obtained only in virtue of that everlasting righteousness, which the Saviour brought in by his perfect obedience and atoning death—and that this everlasting righteousness can be imputed to us, or reckoned as if it were our own, and thus made really available unto us, only through the exercise of a living faith on our part in the blood of the cross. And it is there also very distinctly made known to us, that being naturally darkened in mind, and polluted in heart, and consequently incapable of discerning or of relishing any thing that is spiritual or divine, we require, in order that we may be fitted for engaging in the pursuits, and enjoying the glories, of the blessed in heaven, to be fully enlightened and completely purified—that, for thus illuminating our understandings, and sanctifying our affections, the gift of the Holy Spirit's renewing influences has been purchased and secured for every genuine disciple, through the fulfilment by the Lord Jesus, on behalf of his people, of all the conditions to which, as their surety, he bound himself—and that these divine influences, thus procured, are now ready to be exerted, through the medium of the Word of God and the ordinances of the Gospel, upon every individual, without exception, who gives himself diligently, and in the appointed way, to the required examination of that precious Word, and the commanded use of these holy ordinances.

In directing us, then, to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, our Lord is here obviously to be regarded as calling upon us to seek after the enjoyment of the various benefits of his redemption thus purchased for us, and brought within our reach. Compliance with the spirit of the exhortation before us, involves the attainment of an interest in that all-perfect imputed righteousness of Christ, through which alone, as received by the instrumentality of saving faith, we can ever make good our title to the celestial inheritance; together with the possession of those fruits of the Spirit, which

alone, as produced and nourished by the careful use of our different means of grace, and opportunities of spiritual improvement, can make us meet for the joys or the services of the heavenly hosts. And as, on the one hand, in regard to the treasures of this world, our Lord exhibits the folly of the inordinate desire after them, by reminding his disciples of their destructible and transitory nature; so also, on the other hand, in regard to these treasures of heaven, their value, and consequently the wisdom of labouring after the acquisition of them, is here very forcibly illustrated by their durability and their security. To use his own expressive language, "Neither moth nor rust doth corrupt them, and thieves do not break through nor steal them." Once brought into our possession, they are, they cannot but be ours for ever. While in their own nature they are altogether incapable of decay, it is also, at the same time, their inherent tendency to increase, with respect both to their abundance and to their efficiency. Nor is it possible for any created being ever to pluck them out of our hands. For having been purchased by the meritorious obedience and efficacious death of the Son of God himself, and made over to us in virtue of our union, through faith, with him as our spiritual Head, every perfection of Deity is now pledged for their continuance with us in all their fulness, and with all their blissful experience. Seeing, then, that their stability is thus made to rest upon the very firmest of all possible foundations—even the glory of the divine nature itself, surely they cannot fail to present themselves to every serious observer as of the last, nay, of infinite importance to beings constituted as we are in respect both to our present situation and to our immortal destiny. Truly there is nothing to be found upon earth, however excellent, or however desirable, which can be brought for a moment into competition with such precious and incorruptible heavenly treasures. Nay, all the wealth and all the possessions which this fleeting world contains, though heaped together, and placed at once under our disposal, could not, in any the least degree, compensate for the loss even of a single one of them. How forcibly, then, does not the exhortation of our Saviour call for our immediate attention and diligent persevering compliance, when he says to us, in the verse before us? "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal."

Having thus impressed upon his disciples

the folly, on the one hand, of making temporal possessions the chief object of pursuit, and the wisdom, on the other, of preferring and seeking after the blessings of the heavenly inheritance, our Lord, for the farther enforcement of his exhortations as to these particulars, here sets forth the danger likewise of neglecting to comply with such exhortations: "For where your treasure is," says he, "there will your heart be also."

Towards that which we most highly value, and chiefly desire to obtain, all our thoughts and affections are naturally ever directed. Every thing connected with it acquires a peculiar interest; and the pursuit of it forming the moving-spring, if not the substance, of all our projects, almost necessarily gives a corresponding tone to our conversation and our deportment. If, therefore, we thus supremely mind earthly things, our whole character cannot but be assimilated to their nature, and brought under the power of their debasing influence. Our views cannot fail to be completely engrossed by the anticipation of the enjoyment of them. Nor can our desires be less fully occupied by the actual possession. So that becoming, both as to principle and as to conduct, unceasingly devoted to this world with its fleeting concerns, every thing else, however excellent in itself, or however valuable in its fruits, must, by natural consequence, be left entirely unheeded and unsought for. Whereas, on the other hand, if we prefer the all-important realities of the celestial state, spiritual-mindedness will make its appearance in all that we do, or think, or say. The pursuits and avocations connected with our immortal destiny will be more or less heartily relished by us: so that having all our dispositions and all our feelings brought under the powers of the world to come, the various duties involved in our relation to God as our Creator, to Christ as our Redeemer, and to the Holy

Ghost as our Sanctifier, will be rightly attended to and faithfully performed. It follows, therefore, that to lay up for ourselves treasures upon earth, (in the sense in which, as we have already seen, our Saviour here refers to them,) while, at the same time, we neglect to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, cannot but be, to no ordinary extent, hurtful and dangerous to our precious immortal souls. We cannot serve God and Mammon. The love of the world is totally incompatible (according to the express declaration of an inspired Apostle) with the love of the Father. Either we must renounce entirely the things of earth as our portion, or else we cannot possibly have the smallest interest in the concerns of heaven. So long as our thoughts and affections are centred in the wealth or the possessions of the present transitory scene, that incorruptible and never-fading inheritance, which the Saviour has purchased for his people with his own precious blood, can never be obtained by us; and even though it were ours at this moment, could not, in any sense, be really enjoyed by us. Seeing, then, that the pursuit of riches, as the chief good, must of necessity thus exclude us from the glory and the happiness of the saints in light, surely we must be blind and perverse indeed, if we do not give all diligence to comply with the true spirit of the exhortation in the passage before us. Surely our case must, for the present at least, be sad and desperate in no ordinary degree, if we cannot now be prevailed upon to shake ourselves free from the spirit of covetousness; and, instead of seeking to amass the perishable possessions and uncertain riches of time, "to lay up for ourselves," as our Lord here expresses it, "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

THE CHRISTIAN'S COMMUNION WITH THE DEATH AND LIFE OF CHRIST;

A SERMON PREACHED ON 23RD OCTOBER, 1831,

By the Rev. MICHAEL WILLIS.

"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."—GALATIANS ii. 20.

THE Apostle of the Gentiles is equally earnest and decided in his statements, when, on the one hand, he asserts the freeness of

divine grace in our justification, in opposition to all schemes of self-righteousness; and when, on the other, he vindicates that doc-

trine against those licentious and antinomian consequences which the enemies of the Gospel have charged upon it.

That we are saved by grace, and not by works, was the great theme of this servant of Christ. He never minces this doctrine—never compromises it. He had learned to find rest to his own soul in the faith of the work and the sacrifice of Jesus, and had unlearned those self-righteous hopes which, as a Jew and a Pharisee, he had once cherished as strongly as it was possible for any man to do. He had in former days opposed the Gospel, but he had done it ignorantly in unbelief; and now that it had pleased God to reveal his Son in him, he conferred not with flesh and blood. Once he knew Christ alter the flesh, but now he knew him thus no more. The pride of his natural reason had been schooled down; and what things were gain to him, he counted loss for Christ. With this experience, and with these feelings, he stands up now for the doctrines of Christ with the same earnestness with which he had opposed them. He gloried in the cross; and he knew no higher delight than to commend that cross to others as the means of their peace, but no less the means of their purification.

The text and the immediate context strikingly exhibit these his feelings. You find him asserting the doctrine of justification by faith and not by works, in all its purity and integrity, in opposition to the compromising conduct of his fellow Apostle: "But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." But keeping in view the natural objections which many would raise, and which, in reality, were taken advantage of by the Judaizing teachers of the day, in their holding forth a gospel which consisted partly in an acknowledgment of the doctrines of Christ, and partly in a submission to the ceremonies of the law of Moses, he, in some following verses, repels with indignation the false charge of antinomianism, and affirms the sufficiency of the Gospel to sanctify the life,

as well as to purify the conscience "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live."

The peculiarity of the Apostle's language here at once strikes us. He seems to delight in speaking the truth in the form of riddles, as it were, one clause in a sort contradicting another. But yet there is no real contradiction; nay, his language is strikingly suitable and appropriate to express the mysteries of faith—for mysteries they are—respecting the union of Christ and his people, and their consequent participation of the benefits of his sufferings and death. This will appear more fully by considering,

I. The believer's crucifixion with Christ, or his communion with him in his death.

II. The believer's life in Christ, or communion with him in his life.

III. The influence of faith in maintaining this life.

I. "*I am crucified with Christ.*" We might understand this more largely of communion with Christ in all the benefits of his cross; and so it might include even the spiritual life afterwards spoken of. But being here stated in distinction from that life, "*I am crucified: nevertheless I live;*" we are rather to understand it in its limited sense, of the mortification of sin, as the Apostle also explains elsewhere, by saying, "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." It describes the *negative* part of our salvation by Christ—that which consists in our deliverance from the evils and miseries of our condition; as the *life* again is our positive holiness and happiness: just as elsewhere the Apostle distinguishes between our fellowship with Christ's sufferings, and our experience of the power of his resurrection.

Crucified with Christ? Does not he elsewhere ask, Was Paul crucified for you, when he would declare, that Christ alone was the author of their salvation? Yet here he says, "*I am crucified with Christ.*" Yes, and he speaks even in name of all believers. The meaning is, the ends of Christ's crucifixion are accomplished in *me*. And if it be asked, Why did not Paul say so in plain terms, instead of using this mysterious expression? I would answer, that he thus brings before us the more clearly and emphatically, the manner in which the benefits of his cross are conveyed to believers, and derived by them, and especially that intimate union subsisting between Christ as the Head, and believers as the members of one mystical body, on which the sacred writers delight to

dwelt; and which, being kept in view, finally accounts for the phraseology they have employed both in the present and many other instances.

1. Believers are crucified with Christ, in virtue of their legal union to him as their head of righteousness.

Their deliverance from the law as a covenant of works, their deliverance from the guilt of sin and from the reign of death, is as real and complete as if they had fulfilled that law, and made expiation of their sins in their own persons. So much is the Surety of the better covenant one with those whom he represented; so really was all that he did and suffered, done and endured in a public and representative character, that the full benefit and effect are transferred to them, as if they had done and borne the whole will of God *in him* and with him. Such is the union constituted between Christ and his people by God himself; and therefore such, by his full grant, is the communion, in point of benefit, which they have with him: "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21.

Christ and his people are as one body, one mass; He the Sanctifier, and they the sanctified, are all one; for which cause they were in a sense crucified when he was crucified; they died when he died. The act of expiation was, indeed, all his own; none divides the merit with him; when he trod the wine-press of the wrath of God, "of the people there was none with him." But if he (the Messiah) was cut off, it was not for himself. If he was made under the law, it was to the effect of redeeming them who were under the law: "All the griefs he felt were ours; ours were the woes he bore;" and hence whatever was accomplished and won by his cross, was accomplished and won for us. Was the offended justice of God satisfied by Christ? It has no more claim on his people. Was the law magnified by him? They are delivered from the law, and dead to it by the body of Christ. Was sin condemned in his flesh? It has been virtually condemned in theirs, so as not only to have lost its power to damn them, but its right to reign over them. Blessed fruit of the cross of Christ! Blessed fruit of his people's union with him!

2. They have not only been virtually crucified with Christ in this sense, in union with him as their Head of righteousness; but they are really and spiritually crucified with him, *through union to him as their Head of living and quickening influence.*

This is what, for distinction's sake, we term the vital union, as we call the other the legal union; though the full effect and benefit of the other is never experienced till the vital union by faith, and in the spirit, is happily formed. Once in Christ, in this sense, the believer has not only interest in the benefits of his cross, through communion with him in his righteousness, but is made to feel that he is a partaker of the benefits, through the communion of the Holy Ghost. He experiences a real, internal change, affecting the dispositions and principles of his soul, as well as a relative change happily affecting his legal state; so that it may be justly said, he is crucified with Christ, in a *conformity* to the cross of Christ as a pattern and example, as well as through its influence as a meritorious cause.

The Apostle frequently introduces this idea in his writings, and expatiates on it. He delights to speak of the change accomplished in believers, by their participation of the Spirit of Christ, as well as by the imputation of his righteousness. He delights to represent believers as members of Christ—members of his very body, his flesh, and his bones; and as such, having all that has been acted and suffered in the Head, acted and suffered again in a spiritual sense in them. They are baptized with his baptism; they are circumcised with him; they are transfigured with him; they die with him; they are buried with him; they are risen with him; nay, they *sit with him* in heavenly places. Especially, they die or are crucified with him, in their dying to sin; they are planted together with him in the likeness of his death.

As their Head of influence, he effectually destroys their confidence in the law, and delivers them from its terrors; as he has already, in the character of their surety, purchased their deliverance. By his Spirit he subdues the power of their sins, and brings them to taste the sweets of this greatest liberty, as by his cross he expiated sins. Hence their experience, as described by the Apostle: "I am through the law dead to the law, that I may live unto God;" not only *virtually dead*, entitled to exemption from its demands and penalties as a covenant, but in spirit dead to it, ceasing to expect aught from it, ceasing to dread it, "through the law;" because an enlightened and spiritual perception of its high demands, is the very thing which effectually convinces the believer of the hopelessness of salvation by it, and drives him from confidence in his own fancied merits, to reliance on the glo-

rious Surety who has fulfilled its terms to the uttermost, and who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. "I was alive without the law once," says he elsewhere, to the same effect; "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Hence, too, he describes the death to sin as well as to the law accomplished in every Christian: "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." "They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts."

Ah! how true the description! How painful as death, how lingering as the death by crucifixion, the believer's work of mortification, whether of his self-righteousness, or of the affections and lusts of the flesh! It is so agreeable to our nature to trust in our own doings, that it is no easy thing to be effectually weaned from our legal tendencies; nor does the Christian cease to detect these in himself, and to feel the necessity of a conflict with them, even when far advanced in his sanctification. His death, in this respect, is not complete as yet, though he has died, indeed, to the law, compared with the life of his self-righteous confidence previously. And as to the flesh, what painful watching and striving to subdue and overcome it, and how imperfectly subdued at the longest! How painful to pluck out the right eye! to cut off the right hand! "to tear," as one has well expressed it, "the old man of sin asunder, limb from limb! to feel the wounding pains and agonies of a thorough conversion and continued mortification! like so many spears piercing the old man of sin to the heart, and drawing as it were the life-blood of every beloved lust! It is no easy thing for a man to pursue his sins, as it were, to the cross! to nail them there, and to let them bleed till they expire! But however painful this work is, it is necessary, and the Christian endures it." Now

his strength for this work, where lies it but in his union with Jesus, and his communion with him in his death, and no doubt in his resurrection also? It is difficult at best to die to sin; but it would be hopeless, but for this communion with his divine and almighty Head. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh;" "our old man is crucified with him." He has ceased from sin as their surety. Once crucified, once dead, because of sin imputed to him, he dieth no more; but in them, as his body, he is still dying, still being crucified; and by the effectual operation of his Holy Spirit, he is weakening, mortifying, subduing the remains of sin in all his members. Behold, then, a painful work, a painful part of the Christian's conformity to Christ! But, let me add, a pain not without high and peculiar pleasure, which even, meanwhile, compensates for all the difficulty and all the effort. Jesus rejoiced in spirit even while enduring the cross: his seasons of deep sorrow were not without their intervals of heavenly and rapturous delight in God. In this respect, too, the Christian is conformed to his Head "Dying, yet behold he lives;" "sorrowful, behold he is always rejoicing." The worst death is the death of him who feels not the dangers and the miseries of his state, who enjoys at large, and unrestrained, the pleasures of sin! The true life is his who learns thus to die! What peculiar joys are attendant on the Christian's victories in self-mortification, the Christian only knows. Assuredly, wisdom's ways are pleasantness. In proportion as sin is expelled from the soul, the Spirit fills it with his comforts. The Scripture is express on it: "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." This we shall see still better when we go on to consider,

II. The Christian's life, and his communion with the life as well as the death of Christ.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

LECTURE by the Rev. JOHN G. LORIMER, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. JOHN M'GREGOR, Stranraer.

RELIGIOUS PATRIOTISM EXEMPLIFIED IN THE HISTORY OF
NEHEMIAH ;

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN ST. DAVID'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE FORENOON OF
THE 25TH JANUARY, 1835,

By the Rev. JOHN G. LORIMER,
Minister of St. David's Church and Parish.

“ Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire : come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me ; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do ? will ye rebel against the king ? Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us ; therefore we his servants will arise and build : but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.”—NEH. ii. 17—20.

I HAVE lately taken occasion to direct your attention to various important characters and events in the Old Testament history, and we have found them to be not unfruitful in spiritual instruction. We have contemplated together the overthrow of the proud walls of Jericho, and the destruction of the enemies of the Lord. We have now to contemplate the exertions and success of the servants of the true God in building up the walls of Jerusalem, and establishing the cause of the Lord, which had been thrown down ; and in a dependence on the divine presence and blessing, we shall find that this portion of history abounds in important suggestions of duty to men of all ranks and relations of life.

In punishment of prevailing and obstinate ungodliness, the people of Judah had been sent captive to Babylon, and their city and country utterly desolated. After a punishment of seventy years' duration, a remnant of them was unexpectedly restored. In the face of various difficulties and opposition, their temple was rebuilt. Still much remained to be done. The fortified wall of the city, its gates, and not a few of the streets continued in ruins. The sur-

rounding enemies were many and powerful. After all the labours of Ezra, it might justly be said, that though the cause of God had been set up and lived again, it could boast of no prosperity ; it was liable to easy and speedy overthrow. Surveyed as a whole, the circumstances of the restored Jews, a hundred years after their return, were sad and afflictive. God often tries the patience of his servants with long delay, even when rearing the spiritual temple which is to show forth his glory. Thus it was in the present case. But the time to favour Zion has now arrived, and so Nehemiah is called into the field.

This admirable man was one of the Jews who had remained with some fragments of his nation at Babylon. His character was high ; and probably under the auspices of Queen Esther, he had become one of the cup-bearers of Artaxerxes, the king of Persia. The office was one of great wealth and responsibility. Enjoying the confidence of his royal master, he faithfully discharged its duties. One would be ready to say, He needs nothing more to make him happy. He has reached the summit of ambition which multitudes envy. Whoever may be distressed

he may well be at ease. But Nehemiah is a man of piety and faith, and more is necessary to his happiness, than outward peace and preferment. Hearing of the affliction of his brethren at Jerusalem, and that the walls and gates of the city were still in desolation, he is deeply concerned, and prepares to forego all the honour and affluence of his confidential office in the court of Persia, that he may lend his assistance in comforting the one and rebuilding the other. How many in similar circumstance would have said, "Let the Jews shift for themselves. It is no business of mine, at so remote a distance, to trouble myself with their ease. They have been already restored, let them complete their re-establishment themselves." Thus mere men of the world would have thought and spoken. But the patriotism of Nehemiah was based on religion; and hence the interest which he discovered in his far distant but afflicted countrymen, and the sacrifices which he made for their welfare.

The love of country, because it is the country of our birth, and of countrymen, because they are born in the same country with ourselves, is no narrow-minded bigotry, as some shallow infidels in their pretended love of universal mankind have imagined. It is a principle of human nature implanted in our hearts for the wisest purposes, is repeatedly recognised and approved in the Scriptures of truth, and is more conducive to the real and universal love of man, (as facts amply show,) than any fine-spun theoretical philanthropy which men have attempted to substitute in its place. Nehemiah had a peculiar love for his own countrymen, and so had Paul, and so had our blessed Lord. But then their patriotism was religious.

There is a patriotism which is quite selfish in its nature. They who lay claim to it have no real love to man; they care truly nothing for his body or his soul, and do little or nothing for either. Their own aggrandizement, or that of their friends and partisans, is the sum and substance of their patriotism. True patriotism, like every other great virtue, must be founded in true religion. No one can really love his countrymen, and respect their rights, and make sacrifices for their welfare, unless he has been first taught himself to love God, and so has been taught the importance of man, and the obligation of the golden rule, "to do to others, as we would that others should do to us." Had not Nehemiah been a pious

man, and loved the God of his fathers with all his heart, and loved his countrymen because they bore the image of God, he never would have relinquished his high advantages in the palace of Artaxerxes, and sacrificed so largely for their benefit. The true way to love man is to begin by loving God. Indeed, till we set out in this way we shall never love man in a degree which deserves the name.

On hearing of the affliction of his countrymen, whom he might have expected by this time would have been in prosperous circumstances, Nehemiah betakes himself to prayer. This seems to have been his favourite exercise. No book of Scripture abounds so much in ejaculatory prayer as Nehemiah, and knowing that the grand cause of the forlorn and desolate condition of his brethren was not the power of their enemies, but their own sins, the supplications which he pours forth breathe much humiliation and abasement; nay, he mingles the fastings of days with his confessions of sin. This is the true spirit in which we must surround the throne of God, if we would prosper in our suits, whether for ourselves or others. God must be exalted by our abasement. The cloud of our sins must be removed before He can hear us. But while Nehemiah makes confession of sin he prays for mercy. He discovers exalted views of the character of God; recalls God's doings in behalf of Israel of old; pleads the divine promises, and asks the divine direction and blessing on his intended application to his royal master.

All this shows Nehemiah's acquaintance with his Bible, and also the warmth of his piety. We might have expected that living at a heathen court, remote from the means of grace, with few to strengthen or encourage him, he, though a good man, would have discovered in his piety the disadvantage of the circumstances in which he had been placed. But no:—God can and often does compensate in richer effusions of his grace, for an adverse outward situation. He raises up servants in the most unlikely quarters, and carries on the divine life in circumstances which we would imagine would stifle and destroy it. Nehemiah shows us minute an acquaintance with the Scriptures, and with the proper method of engaging in a great undertaking, as if, instead of dwelling at Babylon, he had all his life been a resident at Jerusalem.

And here let us mark the course which he pursued in seeking to relieve and restore

his afflicted countrymen. He did not say, as many would have done, in a proud vaunting spirit, "I am the king's cupbearer. Backed by his authority, and armed besides with wealth and power, I will soon reduce Jerusalem and its people to a right condition; I will soon quell all opposition, rebuild the wall, and set up the gates, and make the city glorious as of old." This had been the spirit of man flushed with the pride of power; but he had been taught of God, and so begins with humility and prayer. High as was his station, and great his resources, the poorest and the weakest officer could not express himself with greater meekness and dependence on God. Instead of beginning with king Artaxerxes, and seeking to prevail upon him, he, knowing that all men's hearts, all thoughts, and actions, and events are in a higher hand, betakes himself to God. He beseeches God to influence the mind of the king, and incline him to the proposal which was about to be made.

Let us, and let all follow his example. All are occasionally in the providence of God required to discharge great duties. Important undertakings, involving the glory of God and the good of others, ever and anon call for our services. How should we engage in them? In a spirit of pride and self-confidence? No. But in a spirit of prayer and penitence. We should with earnestness and perseverance call upon the name of God, and beseech him to remove obstacles and influence minds which are inaccessible to us, and prosper the work of our hands. Unless we thus implore the counsel of Heaven at all times, and especially in difficult duties, we have no reason to expect any success, or we have reason to fear that the success in the end will prove a curse instead of a blessing. We are apt to despair of an undertaking when it is suspended on the will of man, and he is high above us, and we have ground to apprehend his hostility. Who can turn the mind of an Eastern monarch? The cause seems hopeless. Any ordinary difficulties may be overcome; but who can change an inaccessible will? God can—to whom all minds are equally accessible, and who turns hearts as easily as he turns the rivers of water. Let this encourage us to be much in prayer for a good cause, even where it seems to hang upon the will of man, and that will appear hopelessly opposed.

Nehemiah having thus prepared himself by prayer, is not slow in setting out in his

work. In the course of a few months, as soon as a favourable opportunity occurred, he presents himself to the king. While discharging the ordinary duties of his office, the monarch marked the sadness of his countenance; and, perhaps, apprehending that a sinister design was entertained against his life—that the cupbearer meant to mingle poison with his wine, which was no uncommon event in the East, he asked him why he was sad, and if remorse had seized his mind? Nehemiah does not seem to have been aware that his anxious concern about his countrymen had affected his outward visage (and this is to us a proof how very deep that concern was,) hence he is alarmed at the question of the king; and, to allay his suspicions, exclaims, "Let the king live for ever." He then states the reason of his deep sadness—that the place of his fathers' sepulchres lay waste, and its gates were consumed with fire; and on being further questioned as to his wishes, he requests that he may be sent to restore the desolations of Judah. The monarch was pleased to grant the request; and such was the estimation in which he held his cupbearer, that instead of being willing to part with his services for ever, he appoints a time when he desires and expects he shall return. Having gained so much, and seeing how favourable was the state of the monarch's mind, Nehemiah proceeds a step farther and prays for authority—a royal commission, to receive every facility from the tributary governors on the other side of the Euphrates, on his way to Jerusalem; and also the necessary materials from Asaph, the keeper of the royal forest, for his important work.

Here we may notice the prudence and piety of this excellent Jew. He showed prudence in addressing a motive to the mind of the king for his journey, which the monarch could understand and appreciate. He did not ask leave to go to Jerusalem for the sake of his religion, but for the sake of his fathers' sepulchres. This was an argument to which even a heathen would defer; and then he did not ask the exercise of the royal authority as to the governors of provinces and Asaph, until he found that the royal mind was well affected towards him. Had he made so many requests at first, or at once, his imprudence might have marred his success. With regard, again, to his piety, he did not only pray to God for counsel before making his request, but he strengthened and emboldened himself by prayer at the very time he stood in the presence of Artaxerxes

He remembered the King of Heaven at the hour he was making his suit to his earthly master. And then, after he had been successful in the petition, he did not refer the success to his own wisdom, or to his services as a faithful servant, but to the good hand of God upon him. He arrogated nothing to himself; he ascribed all to God; he would rather look upon his success as the answer of prayer, than as the result of his own excellence. How much piety is here, and how beautiful is the union between piety and prudence! Considering the difficulties with which Christians have to struggle, well may the Saviour exhort his followers to be wise as serpents, at the same time that they are harmless as doves.

It is worthy of notice, that deeply prayerful and dependent on God as Nehemiah was, he was not unmindful of the duty of using all legitimate means to secure the important object which he had in view. Prayer rightly understood, does not destroy the use of means; it only strengthens and regulates its application. Prayer without means, and means without prayer, are equally presumptuous. Duty lies in employing both, but keeping both in their right place. This was Nehemiah's attainment, and hence his success. It may be noticed, too, in passing, that this excellent man had none of the scruples which some have now-a-days, as to the State rendering countenance or assistance to the Church of God. His mission to Judah was a religious one; his motives were religious, and his enemies are denounced as the enemies of religion; and yet he applied to a Gentile—to a heathen king to aid him on his errand. He asked the benefit of royal authority with the governors on the way, to carry him to Jerusalem free of expense; and he begged permission to cut timber from the royal forests to build the city of the true God. Had he held the opinion which some entertain, he would have considered it sinful to ask any assistance from the State, and much more a heathen State, to help the cause of the true religion. He would have denounced it as dishonouring to the truth and as savouring of persecution; and yet Nehemiah did both; and instead of his conduct being condemned, it is commended, and we of course are warranted and required to go and do likewise.

This excellent man now set out on his journey, received the aid of the heathen governors upon the way, and soon reached Jerusalem in safety. After spending three

days to recruit himself and prepare his plans, doubtless not without much prayer to God, he arose by night, probably there was moonlight, and taking a few guides, proceeded to survey the desolate city of Jerusalem. With his usual prudence he did not, in the first instance, inform any one—priests, nobles, or rulers, what his intentions were. He wished to see the city with his own eyes, and draw his own conclusions, before acquainting them with the object of his mission. This enabled him to speak from personal observation, and so to speak with greater effect; and it served, at the same time, to prevent that discord and division of sentiment which might have arisen and marred his plans before they were fully matured, had he stated his at first.

But what a fine spectacle is presented to view, when this patriotic man, after a long travel, mounts his horse in the silence of night, to explore the ruins of that holy city whose desolations had affected him to deepest sadness when far distant in the rejoicing palace of Persia. Could they have known his errand, how would the pious Jews have been moved to see one of the highest officers of Artaxerxes, forgetting all the grandeur of a court, set out by the pale light of the moon to visit for the first time the city of the dead—the city of his fathers' sepulchres, and that to restore it. What mingled emotions must have filled their hearts and his! What tears of sadness and of joy must have fallen from their eyes! History has recorded the deep emotions with which patriots have visited the ruins of their country; but no emotions could have been finer than Nehemiah's, because no patriotism could have been more truly religious than his. We shall not attempt to conceive or describe what must have been his feelings, when one and another of the guides pointed out the most striking objects of this far-famed city—the ruins which, at every other step, reminded him of the kings, and priests, and prophets, and holy men, the great events in peace and war, the triumphs and the festivals, the captivities, and the overthrow of successive generations, of which he had so often read in the Book of God.

Leaving these things, we pass on to his interview with the rulers, and priests, and nobles, and people of the afflicted Jews. He had now completed his melancholy circuit of the city, probably at a great expense of personal feeling; but he is not discouraged by the desolations which he saw spread around him. He does not, as many would

have done, sink into hopeless despondency ; he collects his brethren around him, and immediately proceeds to unfold his plans of a restoration. He first appeals to their own observation and experience : " Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire." It is not necessary to appeal to any argument ; these ruins form the most impressive of all arguments. Can we think of allowing the city thus to remain for ever ? No. " Come, let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." And then to encourage in this good work, he tells them how favourably the providence of God smiled upon the undertaking, and how the king, from whom little could have been expected, had given him every facility and the most pleasing countenance. The people are so much struck with these things, that, in holy joy and decision, they exclaimed, " Let us rise up and build ; and immediately they strengthened their hands for the good work."

One would have imagined that so praiseworthy and excellent an undertaking would have met with no opposition. It was to do injury to none. It was to bless and rejoice the poor afflicted people of Judah. But such is the hatred of the Wicked one to the progress of the cause of God in all its forms, that he stirs up enemies to the work. Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, seem to have been lieutenants and governors of some of the neighbouring districts—to have retained their heathenism in spite of all the judgments of God on the land, and to have hated the Jews, and all that promised to promote their welfare, with peculiar hatred. It is said of them, that they were grieved exceedingly when they heard that a man had come to seek the weal of the children of Israel, and that they laughed to scorn and despised the proposal to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, accusing those who had undertaken it with rebellion against the king.

This may seem to us extraordinary malice and perversity, where far other feelings might have been expected, and so it was ; but thus it has been in every age of the world, and thus it will be to the end. There is no cause truly good, pointing to the glory of God and the welfare of man, which does not meet with stout opposition in this fallen world. It would augur ill for a cause if it pleased all parties. It would seem that it was so poor and insignificant that it was not worth the trouble of opposing. But while, from the nature of things, there must be hos-

tility to the end between the progeny of the woman and the progeny of the serpent, while all who would do good must meet with serious difficulties, and difficulties the more serious, just according to the amount of good which they would render, it is to be remembered, that this warfare and these difficulties are not without their moral uses ; that God designs them to try the faith, and patience, and disinterestedness, and sincerity of his people, and to endear his cause more warmly to their hearts ; and that after having attained these ends, it is not unlikely he may smooth their path and lighten their burdens.

Let us all then, whatever our circumstances, and whatever the cause, whether it be one of patriotism or of religion, lay our account with serious opposing difficulties ; let us remember, that this is nothing new ; that Babel may be built successfully without one deed of hostility, but that the Church of Christ and the cause of man have never been thus upbuilt in any land. Let us not wonder that the hostility is very keen, and the charges alleged against us very hateful. Let us rather interpret these, as an indirect proof that the good work which we have at heart is very formidable to Satan's power, otherwise he would not use such violent means to discourage us.

Nor let us be moved by the scorn and despal of enemies. Let us remember, that though to a natural mind the disproportion between the means and the end may, as in Nehemiah's case, excite contempt, divine power is involved in every cause which is truly good, and God will make that power more glorious from the very discrepancy between the end and the means of execution. Nay, more ; instead of being frightened from the path of duty, let us, like this patriot Jew, improve the peace and freedom from active hostility which scorn and despal usually afford, to advance the cause in which we are engaged so decidedly, that we shall be better able to meet the opposition when it becomes more serious than contempt.

The answer which good Nehemiah made to his spiteful enemies is, " The God of heaven, he will prosper us ; we his servants will arise and build : but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem." It is as if he had said, " It is strange that you should oppose us. You have nothing to do in the matter. Jerusalem is not your city. You have no portion or memorial there. Our rebuilding it will not injure you,

Why should you oppose? Be it known, however, we will not be discouraged by your hostility. We have taken our ground. We are quite decided. We are determined to go forward in this work; and whatever you may do to hinder, we are persuaded that the God of heaven will prosper us. It is his own cause, and though he may suffer us to be tried for a season, he will give success. In the faith of this we labour, and we shall not labour in vain."

Here, again, we remark the piety of Nehemiah. He does not, after coming so far on so disinterested an errand, sink in dejection when strange and unnatural opposition appeared. Nor did he, holding a high office in the palace of the Persian king, and enjoying more of his confidence than probably all the governors of the provinces put together, resent the scorn and the insult with which he was assailed when he was accused of rebellion. He did not repay the contempt of his enemies with anger, or menace, or scorn, in return; far less did he in offended pride take up arms and arm his people against their common accusers. He met all the opposition with firmness and decision, but at the same time with meekness and composure. He remonstrated, but it was the remonstrance of patriotism and piety. It was God whom he acknowledged throughout, and in his strength, not in his own, he was persuaded he would be successful. What a beautiful character is the character which true religion creates in all circumstances and relations of life! What a fine union of virtues! what a noble blending of apparently opposite properties does it secure! Men may think lightly of religion, or imagine that it is only suited for the closet or the church; but the truth is, that it is the very life of the soul, the glory of our nature, the foundation of all that is great and good in character, public as well as private; that without it there is no security that the best talents, and the finest taste, and the most vigorous labours shall not prove mischievous, instead of beneficial.

Undeterred by all the opposition of enemies, Nehemiah and his friends began the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem; and that the work might be executed more speedily and effectually, and so as to maintain a general interest, the different families took different parts of the wall, and those parts which were opposite to their own dwellings. Thus the whole building arose at once and with great success. In less than two months the work was completed.

1st. Here let us notice one or two circumstances from which important practical instruction may be drawn. The building of the wall was begun by the priests. The ministers of religion took the lead. The work was religious, and it was proper that they should act a prominent part. The city and temple had been rebuilt more than sixty years before, and some might imagine that the priests were stepping beyond their province when they intermeddled with the wall. But the whole city was God's city; every part of it was consecrated by the presence of his sanctuary; and hence in rebuilding the wall, the priests followed the dictates of piety, as well as of patriotism. Frequently these objects are so closely connected, that it is impossible to separate them. From this, the ministers of religion may gather that it is their duty to take the lead in important, patriotic, and religious objects. Such conduct becomes their character and situation, and is highly conducive to the success of the work. For the most part, congregations will be found ready to follow their pastors, to take their counsel, and be encouraged by their example. Where that counsel and example are wanting, we need not wonder that important enterprises languish. Had the High Priest and his brother priests not set to, to build the wall in the first instance, many who were thereby induced to sacrifice time, and strength, and resources in the same cause, would have been disheartened, and might have pleaded apologies for idleness or inadequate exertion.

2d. Another remark is the importance of combined efforts in doing good. The wall of Jerusalem was speedily built, not by the labours, however vigorous, of a single individual, but by the simultaneous and combined exertions of all. Though each had a separate part of the work assigned him, none had a separate interest. All laboured for one common object. The importance of this division of labour is proclaimed in nature, and is well known in the business of the world, and is equally applicable and useful in great religious undertakings. It creates union, and emulation, and encouragement, and combines all the great ranks and classes of the christian community into one important whole. Let every one feel that he can, and that he ought, to do something for Christ—that it becomes him to arise and build—that if he do nothing for His cause, he has great reason to fear he has no interest and no share in its blessings. Had any one of the Jews refused to build the broken wall of Jerusa-

lem—had he, while others were busy, stood by in idleness, who would not have justly concluded that he had no right and no memorial in Jerusalem, and that he belonged to the hostile party of Sanballat and Tobiah? Let no one be discouraged from building, by thinking of the slenderness of his individual services. Let each remember, that it is not by his single exertion that the result is gained, but by the combined exertions of all; that if he declines the little which he can do, many more may and will decline the little that they can do from the force of his example; that much less as a whole will be done, and that, did all act upon the same principle on which he acts, nothing would be done at all.

3d. The historical narrative suggests another remark, and that is, the consistency of private with public interest in the service of God. We are not only informed that all the Jewish families built part of the wall, but that they built opposite to their own chambers and dwellings. It might have been that they built indiscriminately, and still the general result would have been gained; but it was specially appointed that they should build close by their own houses; and why? Because this secured the important advantages of a smaller loss of time, and a greater zeal and animation in working. Thus was the consistency of public and private interests in religion strikingly taught, and the same truth remains in force now. There is no opposition between a man's caring for his own soul and caring for the souls of others. Some imagine that there is such an opposition, and say, if we concern ourselves much about our own salvation, we must overlook the claims of the salvation of others, and if we attend to others, we must neglect ourselves. But there is no such inconsistency or opposition. We may build the general wall, which shall surround and benefit the whole church of Christ, and while we do so opposite our own dwelling,

have a special eye to our own salvation, and the salvation of our families, and connexions, and countrymen. In fact, so far from the one interest opposing the other, the union is highly conducive to the prosperity of both. The Jews built the wall so much the more speedily and cheerfully, that they at the same time built at their own doors, and in defence of their own dwellings. And so it is now. Concern for our own salvation, and for the salvation of those who are connected with us by the various ties of life, will naturally expand our hearts to concern for the spiritual welfare of the whole family of man, while this concern will exert a reflex influence upon our care for our own salvation, and for that of those who are more immediately related to us. Let us not stumble, then, at any part of religious duty, or imagine that one part is at war with another. On the contrary, let us be well persuaded that there is a beautiful harmony in all, and let us make it our care practically to realize and proclaim that harmony.

4th. In fine, from the whole Scripture history which we have been considering, and from similar Scripture histories, let all ranks of society learn one great lesson, and that is, to combine together in their exertions to promote the moral and religious interests of their country. Let those like Nchemiah, in stations of influence and authority, be like him men of piety and patriotism, deeply concerned for the welfare of the people—active, firm, disinterested in their exertions to repair the moral desolations of the land, and let all the people combine with them, with one accord, in the same grand object of raising the walls of our common country and common religion against the assaults of ignorance and error, infidelity and vice. Let both remember their high responsibility to God and to each other, the blessedness and success of patriotic and religious union, the danger of a demoralized country, and privileges abused, of ramparts broken down, and “the gates of the city burnt with fire.”

CHRIST IS THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR;

A SERMON PREACHED IN CAMPBELL STREET RELIEF CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON THE AFTERNOON OF SABBATH, 21ST DECEMBER, 1834.

By the Rev. JOHN M'GREGOR,
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‘*The bright and morning star.*’—REV. xxii. 16.

MEN profess to admire and love the beauty and the wonders of nature; and, in general, the profession is sincere and unaffected. There are few who are

captivated by the freshness of spring, the bloom of summer, or the richness of autumn. There are few who are not awed and enraptured by the sublimity of a thunder storm, the majesty of a mountain torrent, or the grandeur of a tempest-tossed ocean. There are few who cannot gaze for hours with inexpressible delight on the soft sweep of a green hill, the bubbling of a clear fountain, or the windings of a peaceful stream. But, ah! how few, in contemplating the works of creation, are led "from nature up to nature's God." How few regard the things which are around them devotionally, and as Christians!—how few, even of those whose minds have been refined by education, have spiritual discernment enough to read the pages of the book of nature, so as to enable them to say, Here we find Christ, the Son of the living God!

It is not with the believer, as it is with men in general. He walks abroad among the works of nature, not merely as a philosopher, to examine; nor as a sentimentalist, to admire; but as a Christian, called by divine grace, to live a life of close and constant communion with his God. In this frame of mind, he finds the material world full of types and resemblances, which shadow forth his Lord and Redeemer. He beholds the luminary of day coming forth in its strength, like a bridegroom issuing from his tent, and he is reminded of the Sun of righteousness arising with healing in his wings, and bidding the clouds of sin, and the mists of misery, to depart before the splendour of his beams. He strolls into his garden, and the rose which blossoms at his foot, and which delights him by its fragrance, suggests to his mind "the rose of Sharon," the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. The lily too, in its spotless loveliness, reminds him of "the lily of the valley," the pure and perfect Jesus. He goes forth into the fields, and the flowing spring leads him to think on "the fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness," or the bleak and barren rock fixes his thoughts on "the Rock of Ages," on Him "who is as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." He opens his easement to inhale the first breath of morn, and the sparkling Venus lingering in the firmament, brings to his recollection "the bright and morning star," that "light of the world, in whom there is no darkness at all."

It is thus that every thing above, and below, and around the Christian, suggests to his mind Him whom his soul loves. And

he has high authority for making such an application of the beauties and wonders of nature. Our Lord himself repeatedly, during the days of his flesh, had recourse to the works of creation, in order to describe himself to his disciples; and here, from amid the heavenly glory, and at the close of his revelation to the church, he describes himself by a figure from nature, the most beautiful and expressive,—*I Jesus—I am the bright and morning star*. Now, the office of yonder bright and beauteous planet, which we designate the morning star, is not merely to give light, as do "the other watchers of the sky;" it has (if we may be allowed the expression) another duty to perform—it has to usher in the day. It is with a view to this particular property of the figure before us, that we propose to consider it as illustrative of our Saviour's character and work.

Christ is the bright and morning star,

I. Because, by his coming in the flesh, he introduced into our world the light of gospel day.

What was the state of the world when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men? In the emphatic language of holy writ, "darkness covered the earth, and thick darkness the people." Survey the state of the *heathen* at this eventful crisis of the world's history. It is true, the more refined nations had the schools of philosophy, in which a few attained to a distinction and renown, which will hand down their memories to generations yet unborn. We might, in proof of this, appeal to many Greek and Roman names, which are not more venerable for their antiquity, than they are famous for their deep sagacity and extensive learning; names which will ever be associated with all that is great in scientific discovery or philosophical improvement. But as to spiritual things, the things connected with eternity, they were, says the apostle Paul, vain in their imaginations; their foolish hearts were darkened, and professing themselves to be wise, they showed themselves to be fools. How dark, and how confused were the notions of Deity entertained by the shrewdest of their philosophers! Even those whose perceptions were the clearest, held views of God and of religion, which were unreasonable and absurd, and of no solid use to mankind; whilst the great man worshipped beings whom they designated gods, but to whom they ascribed characters and qualities,

which would be disgraceful in the very lowest and vilest of the human race. Their religious rites were full of lust and cruelty, and were so far from having a tendency to promote virtue, that they excited them to every species of crime and wickedness. Truly they sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death. Such were the heathen at the time when Mary brought forth a child in Bethlehem, and called his name Jesus.

And what was the state of the *Jews* at this eventful period? Theirs, doubtless, was a less deplorable condition. They had the oracles of God, and some faint glimmerings of light, by means of figures, and prophecies, and sacrifices; still theirs was a dispensation of types and of shadows. When we read the writings of the Old Testament, we are filled with delight and wonder at the clearness and accuracy with which they testify of the Messiah. But were the writings of Moses, and the Prophets, as clear and as easy of comprehension, before the coming of the Son of Man? I wish to say nothing derogatory to the honour of that dispensation, which the Almighty for a time, and for a wise purpose, sanctioned and blessed; but this I would say, that even in its best state, the Mosaic Economy was characterized by obscurity and darkness, when compared with the glorious gospel of the blessed God. And at the time when God was manifested in the flesh, the scribes and the Pharisees had spread a mist over the clearest of its observances; the elders, by their vain traditions, had rendered its shadows tenfold more obscure, and the whole Jewish system was enveloped in gloom and darkness.

But the fulness of time arrived when the bright and morning star appeared above the earth's horizon, scattering the shadows of the Jewish Economy, and pouring a flood of light upon the darkness of Pagan delusions. This light of the world came, and gave to mankind a clear and a full revelation of the nature and perfections of the Deity, made known the way of reconciliation with an offended God, taught man his duty, and unfolded to him the bliss and the glory of heaven. This star, as had been predicted of old, came out of Jacob; and guided by its rays, a few fishermen and tax-gatherers of Judea went forth proclaiming the forgiveness of sins, by the sacrifice of Christ's death, and the restoration of man's nature, by the gift of his spirit. Forth they went, and although they had no weapon but God's word, and no wealth but

his love shed abroad in their hearts, their success was great—great indeed, without a parallel. Forth they went, and at their preaching, the idols of the heathen were prostrated, their temples deserted, and their creeds overthrown; and there was added to their church daily such as should be saved, till the whole Roman Empire crowded around the banner which was marked with the cross of our Lord and Master. Nay, their influence extended farther—it reached even to Britain—to Britain, then accounted beyond the bounds of the habitable world—to Britain, then stained with the blood of thousands of human victims, and prostrated before the lowest of idols—even she was gladdened by the light of that gospel day which the coming of Christ introduced to our benighted world. Surely He who ushered in so glorious, so heavenly a day, may well claim to himself the appellation of *the bright and morning star*.

Christ is the bright and morning star,

II. *Because, by his rising in the heart, he introduces the day of salvation into the soul of the sinner.*

The soul of man, in its native and unrenewed state, is full of disorder and darkness. On account of sin, the posterity of Adam have been stripped of the image of God; their understandings have been darkened in the things of God; their affections have been alienated from the love of God; their wills have been opposed to the will of God, and their hearts have been rendered deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Hence over the soul of every unconverted man, there broods a spiritual darkness, deep and dismal as that which rests upon the grave. The traveller, in a starless night, cannot discern the beauties of the rich and variegated landscape by which he is surrounded. He passes the verdant lawn, the silver stream, and the wooded hill, which, seen in the light of day, would arrest his eye, and affect his mind; but the clouds and darkness of midnight rest upon them, and hide them from his sight. Precisely so is it with an unrenewed man in reference to spiritual things. He perceiveth not the things of the spirit of God; though they are placed before him, he perceives them not, for the clouds and darkness of natural depravity rest upon his soul. He cannot see himself, or God, or Christ, or the way to heaven, in their true light. He may, indeed, give his assent to statements which he hears made upon these

subjects, but he cannot have an experimental or abiding sense, even of the most obvious spiritual truths, till his mind is enlightened by the grace of God's Son; till then, even the light that is in him, is darkness.

But when the morning star arises in the heart of a sinful being, it produces a change at once great and glorious. Before its rays, the darkness of the mind is dispelled, the understanding is illumined, and the whole soul is renewed in knowledge, as well as in righteousness and true holiness. How vast, for instance, was the change from darkness to light in the case of Saul of Tarsus. So blinded and perverted was the judgment of the youthful persecutor, that he fancied he was doing God a service, when he consented to the death of his Saints, and breathed forth threatenings against them. But when the dayspring from on high visited him; when the morning star shone upon him, a mighty transformation was effected. The scales which fell from his bodily eyes, were but an emblem of the scales which fell from the eyes of his mind. The lion became a lamb, the persecutor an Apostle, and the blasphemer a suppliant at the throne of grace. And what Christian does not remember a similar period of his life, a period when the scales of spiritual darkness fell from his eyes, and he saw, for the first time, a great light, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ? It is because the bright and morning star has shone into his heart, that the Christian is thus distinguished, and that he is enabled to say, "Whereas I was once blind, now I see." Blessed are they who are in such a state, they may well look back with gratitude and delight to this dawning of the day of salvation in their souls. How joyous to the inhabitants of the stern and sterile regions of the Pole, must be the day which introduces to them the cheering rays of the sun, when for months they have been secluded from his glorious beams, and enveloped in the gloom of their dreary winter night! but infinitely more joyous to the long benighted sinner, must that period be in which the morning star ushers in a day of salvation to his soul! What converted Christian has not felt the force, and admired the beauty of the lines, in which the amiable Kirke White describes true conversion?—

"Once on the raging seas I rode;
The storm was loud, the night was dark,
The ocean yaw'n'd, and rudely blow'd
The wind that toss'd my found'ring bark.

"Deep horror then my vitals froze;
Death-struck, I ceased the tide to stem,
When suddenly a star arose—
It was the Star of Bethlehem!

"It was my light, my guide, my all;
It bade my dark forebodings cease;
And, through the storm and danger's thrall
It led me to the port of peace.

"Now safely moor'd, my perils o'er,
I'll sing—first in night's diadem—
For ever and for evermore,
'The Star—the Star of Bethlehem!"

Surely he who, by his rising in the heart, thus introduces the light of day into the soul, may well claim for himself the appellation of *the bright and morning star*.

Christ is the bright and morning star,

III. *Because, by his rising at the time appointed in prophecy, he will introduce into our world the glory of Millennial day.*

The many fanciful opinions in reference to the Millennium, in which men of speculative minds have of late indulged, and the presumptuous dogmatism with which many of the more extravagant amongst them have defended their erudite theories and wild interpretations of prophecy, have led some well-disposed persons to avoid all reflection on Christ's blissful reign of a thousand years. Now, certainly it is our duty to shun all rash and unwarrantable inquiry into this, and indeed into every other subject; but surely it is not our duty, because some have sought to be wise above what is written, to shut ourselves out from a field of such pleasing and profitable meditation as that which is afforded us by this triumphant period in the Church's prospects.

The dayspring from on high, as we have already endeavoured to show, hath visited our world, and our eyes have seen a light which kings and prophets of old desired to see, and saw not. But a more glorious day than the present is yet to shine upon our race. At present, when we look abroad upon our world, our eyes are pained by sights of sorrow and desolation, and our hearts are grieved by the errors, the flagrant acts of injustice, and the crimes with which almost every spot of our earth's surface is polluted. Even in these christian lands, we live in the midst of adversity, and calumny, and malice; and there are other climes which have seen no light, where millions of our fellow-men are living in darkness, and in the habitations of horrid cruelty. But the finger of prophecy points to a period when the bright and morning star shall again arise, and usher in another day—a day in which Satan, the seducer of souls, shall

be enained, and cast into the bottomless pit—a day when vice, infidelity, and despotism shall be consumed before the brightness of his appearing—a day when holy love and undefiled religion shall be found prevailing in every palace, hall, and cottage, from the east unto the west, and from the north unto the south of the world's boundaries—a day when every corner of our habitable globe shall bloom, and blossom, and fructify as the paradise of God.

And is it too much to say that this greatly-to-be-desired period is fast approaching? He must be possessed of a gloomy and foreboding spirit, who sees nothing in the signs of the times but what is dark and ominous. On the contrary, we think they present us with much that is fair and hopeful—much that is bright and promising. To say nothing of the great political events which are at present, and which are opening up a door for the entrance of civilization, and morals, and religion, into the plains of Egypt and Syria, and the other regions over which the crescent of the false prophet has for so long a period shed its pale and baneful light; to say nothing of those distant nations, which have of late years sprung up into a state of christian existence, as if by the spell of a magician's wand; to say nothing of the spread of the Bible, and of education, and of the arts of domestic life, from the icy mountains of Greenland to the burning sands of Africa—from the snowy hills of Lapland to the coral strands of India: to say nothing of all this, there is much, we think, that is cheering in the prospects of our own favoured country. In the midst of all our cruises, and of all our distresses, there has been of late years a spread of evangelical religion in these realms—an advancement in moral character and happiness, and an exertion of christian benevolence altogether unparalleled in our former history as a people. In spite, then, of the present senseless outcry against the irreligion of the people, the ungodliness of the Churches, and the liberalism of the times, raised by men of mortified ambition, who find their own hopes sinking in an age of general improvement, we hesitate not to say, that the progress of vital godliness, and the practice of true piety, is greater now than it has been at any other period of our country's history. What age of our national history could boast of such fidelity and diligence in the work of the ministry, as is now exhibited by the servants of the Lord, of every denomination? What age but the

present could boast of so many free-will offerings cast into the treasury of the Lord, and annually spent in the diffusion of pure religion at home and abroad? It is true, infidelity and licentiousness are at this moment making a bold and vigorous struggle for the extension and perpetuity of their influence. They are unmasking their countenances, and ranging themselves under hostile banners against the defenders of the truth. But this we hail as a happy feature in the aspect of the times. The truth has more, far more, to fear from its pretended friends and nominal adherents than from its open and avowed enemies. The line of separation can never be too strongly marked between the world and the Church—between the slaves of sin and Satan and the servants of holiness and God. Taking such a view as this of the eventful times in which we live, am I not warranted in saying they indicate the near approach of that period which has been the subject of the faith and of the prayers of the Church in every age. Yes, yes! it is coming, it is coming. The bright and morning star will ere long shine; the latter-day glory will ere long approach. Do you ask me, Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night? My reply is, The night is far spent, the day is at hand. The first rays of Millennial light will soon fall on our dark earth; and then every intervening cloud shall be removed, and the light of day shall shine on every region under heaven.

Let us pray for the speedy arrival of this blissful period. Let us enter the holiest of all, and plead, aye, and wrestle with the Almighty, crying, "O God! send forth thy light and thy truth, that thy way may be known upon the earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. Amen, amen. Let the house of Levi say, Amen; let all the people say, Amen." Oh, if we were to cry thus with unwearied and intense desire, we would urge on the triumphs of the Redeemer, and would ere long listen to the thunders of Heaven proclaiming, Halleluia, halleluia! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; the whole earth is full of his glory! Now, he who is to usher in the blessed Millennial day into this present evil world may surely claim to himself the appellation of *the bright and morning star*.

Christ is the bright and morning star,
IV. *Because, by his rising at the end of*

time, he will usher in the bliss and the light of eternal day.

Upon this part of the subject, interesting although it be, your time will not permit me to enter at any length. I would only remark, that great and glorious as is the day of Millennial bliss which is yet to shine upon the Church, it is not for a single moment to be compared with the brightness and the blessedness of that day which will dawn upon the saints, when the morning star rises upon our world for the last time. The glory of the Millennium, even when viewed in its clearest and most cloudless majesty, is not worthy to be compared with the glory which is yet to be revealed. When Christ comes again in his own glory, and in the brightness of the majesty of the Godhead, the last shadows of darkness shall disappear before him. A day of knowledge and of bliss shall then commence, which shall never be brought to a close—a day in which the ransomed of the Lord shall no longer see darkly as through a glass, but face to face—a day in which that veil shall be removed from their eyes, which at present often renders the ways of God's providence, and the dealings of his grace, obscure and mysterious. Then every perplexing difficulty shall be solved, and all that now seems evil shall be acknowledged to be good. Well may the Scriptures call the New Jerusalem the inheritance of the saints in light. *There* light is sown for the righteous; *there* there is no night—no night of darkness, nor of doubt, nor of perplexity, nor of death. Its inhabitants need not the light of a candle, nor the light of the moon, nor the light of the sun; for

“ God is their sun, whose cheerful beams
Diffuse eternal day.”

Can we think of this blissful day, to be ushered in by Christ's final coming, without holy desire and fervent prayer? Come quickly; even so come, Lord Jesus!

We have thus endeavoured to illustrate the text. May our meditations upon it be blessed to those of you, my brethren, who are still in darkness, and in the shadow of

death! Yours is an inexcusable condition. Light has arisen upon our benighted world; it shines around you; it beams upon you from the Bible, and from the ordinances of the Gospel. But this is your condemnation. You love the darkness, and prefer it to the light, your deeds being evil. Yours is a most deplorable condition. You are under the guidance of the god of this world, who is hurrying you blindfolded on the path which terminates in utter darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Oh! pray, I beseech you, that God, who at first caused the light to shine out of darkness, may shine into your hearts, to give you the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. Plead like the blind man who came to our Saviour with the prayer, “ Lord, that I might receive my sight!” No one can really enlighten your understandings, or communicate a saving light unto your souls, but Jesus, the bright and morning star. He is the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The speculations of philosophy, the researches of literature, can convey to your hearts no spiritual light. The most learned idol and the most untutored savage are equally dark in reference to the things of the Spirit of God. Betake yourselves, then, to Jesus; and you will experience the truth of his own blessed declaration, “ He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

To conclude: let me call on all present, on whose hearts the light of this bright star has shone, to give evidence of their state. Ye are the children of light and of the day. Ye are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, sleep not, as do others, but watch and be sober: for they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken, are drunken in the night. But you who are of the day, be sober; putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation; for God hath not appointed you to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus. Let your path be like that of the sun, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. EDWARD CRAIG, Edinburgh.
SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT BRYDON, Dunscore.

COME OVER INTO MACEDONIA, AND HELP US;

A SERMON PREACHED ON OCCASION OF A COLLECTION IN AID OF EDUCATION
IN GREECE,

By the Rev. EDWARD CRAIG, A.M.,
Minister of St. James's Episcopal Chapel, Broughton Place, Edinburgh.

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them.”—ACTS xvi. 9, 10.

THE labours of St. Paul in the cause of his blessed Master were almost incredible. Look at the incidental notice of them in the Book of the Acts, &c., and take his own statement of them in 2 Cor. 11: “In journeyings often, in trials by almost every possible means of danger; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; besides,” he says, “those things which come upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” It was, however, in the height of such labours, when Paul was compassing the various states of Asia Minor, and preaching the Word from city to city, when he had recently gone throughout Phrygia, and Galatia, and Mysia, that another door was opened to him for usefulness of wider extent, and labour of greater difficulty. He had reached the little seaport of Troas, on the Ægean sea, and probably after one of those days of weariness of which he speaks, had laid him down to rest, “when a vision appeared to him in the night, There stood a man of Macedonia,” a country on the opposite shore of Greece, “and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.” Greece was a land full of idolatry, and a land where the grossness of that idolatry and its attendant vices was

glossed over and varnished, and made more alluring and destructive, by the elegant arts of life, and the false polish of a refined civilization. It was a land where unquestionably vice reigned as triumphantly as in any portion of the globe; and yet such has been the fascination which that luxurious nation threw around it, that even now its abominable idolatries and its unholy poems are the theme—the preferred theme of men who call themselves Christians, and the impure, but sanctioned source from which the mind of our christian youth is defiled in the days of their education, and trained to practical infidelity, with the form of a true religion in their right hand.

It was to this scene of new difficulties, in which new trials and sufferings awaited him, that Paul was now called. He gathered assuredly from the vision that the Lord had called him to preach the Gospel there, and he shrunk not from the task. Around him, and within him, he had evidence of the divine power and agency of his risen Master. He lived as in his sight, and in communion with him. Wherever he had hitherto been, he had the witness of God's Holy Spirit to the word of grace, converting the heathen, and establishing them in the faith; and though the bold shores of idolatrous

Greece frowned upon him across the sea, and threatened him with the keener opposition of a learned and supercilious contempt, covering a life of vice more debased than that of the barbarians, he hesitated not; but, in compliance with the intimation of God's providence, he immediately took measures for his departure: "And loosing from Troas, he came in a strait course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia." So speedily does a man of upright mind, and clear convictions of his duty, enter upon the path which God in his providence has opened. And let us notice also by the way how ready the good and gracious Lord is to anticipate his faithful servants by such encouragement as is meet; for scarcely had Paul crossed the Ægean, and entered on his labour, when one of the most affecting instances of conversion recorded in Scripture occurred: "The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, so that she attended to the things spoken by Paul," and she became faithful to the Lord as the first fruits of the Macedonians.

Now there is a case here on which we may meditate with profit, during our appointed hour of instruction, and at the same time apply it to the special object for which our charity has been this day solicited. It teaches us three lessons:

I. The nature of real help to a people.

II. That God in his providence calls his servants to administer that help.

III. That they who have the ability should be ready to give it.

1. The nature of real help to a people. At this period of the world, there was no nation so advanced in education, civilization, and refinement, as Greece. Their country teemed with natural beauties, comforts, and blessings. Their polity had in it more of rational liberty than others; their dwellings and their temples were patterns of architectural beauty and symmetry; their philosophers stood on a height from which the attainments of others looked contemptible; their poets sung with a charm that could not elsewhere be heard; they were a nation alike renowned for the valour of the one sex, and the matchless elegance and beauty of the other; in fact, their land was rich in all that classic erudition delights to dwell on, as the standard of an ideal perfection, so often sighed after, but never realized in active life. Ancient Greece still presents to the warm imagination of opening youth

a dream of enjoyment, in which the fancy riots to the soul's undoing. It still wakes and revivifies the old and fading impressions of the veteran pedant who makes the habitual deep ingrained thought of it his retrospective heaven; and in the vain fiction of what it was supposed to be, the infidel poet, as the lamp of life expires in premature decay, feels the old fire kindle within him as he sings the Isles of Greece.

But what is the estimate which divine and unerring truth forms of this country? Macedonia with all the remnant glory of an Alexander's power and that of his successors, Corinth with all its fascinating luxury, Athens with all the intellectual pride of its sages and their philosophy—all are in need. They need the gracious interference of divine mercy; they need that mercy in a form the least adapted to uphold their then present self-sufficiency; they need the aid of the wandering Jew whom they would despise. And when that God, who teaches in dreams and visions of the night, sees fit, in communion with his faithful delegate, to write the true character of their position upon the tablet of his conscience, he presents that haughty, but debased country in the form of one of its inhabitants suppliant before the minister of the Gospel—before the defamed, the reviled, the persecuted Paul, who was as the sun and the offscouring of all things, and saying to him, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." And how was this? Why was it that learned, and civilized, and philosophic Greece must bow at the foot of a stranger, and ask for help? Why is it that the divine testimony is thus borne to this necessity? Because in him was the merciful and saving word of the living God, which none of the nations and none of the princes of this world knew. Because, in the fulfilment of his own eternal purpose of grace, this despised itinerant was a chosen vessel to an incarnate God and Redeemer, to bear his name before the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Because to him God had revealed the things which he had prepared for them that love him by his Spirit; so that he might declare them not with the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. Because God would make foolish the conceited and inflated wisdom of their word, and confound the wise, and the scribe, and the disputer; and when "the world by wisdom

knew not God, it pleased him by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Because whatever the contempts with which the vain pedants of Mars-hill treated the Apostle, he "preached Christ crucified, unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Because whatever might be the lofty bearing of this people, by whom all the rest of the world were accounted barbarians, "they were," as St. Paul tells the Ephesians, "without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world," as but the ignorant worshippers of an unknown God. Because for them, aliens as they were from all that was good, and just, and holy, there was in the breast of Paul a message of mighty power for the pulling down the strongest holds of Satan amongst them, for cleansing the deep-seated impurities of their idolatrous heart, and making it the pure and sanctified temple of the living God.

This was the help which the great Father of spirits had sent down as a good and perfect gift to his evil creatures; and this was the healing message which he was pleased should now be made known in that land where Satan's seat was, and where his reign, with all their boasted light, was a reign of unmitigated darkness. And trace the progress of saving light as it followed the Apostle's steps. Trace the commencement of that work and labour of love, which ultimately evangelized the whole land, threw down the idol's temples, erected in their stead the pure and simple fanes of christian worship, and filled the land with faithful bishops and a devoted clergy, with martyrs and confessors to the truth as it is in Jesus. Read their necessity in the blessing they received.

Brethren, there is no other help for our lost and debased spirits but this; there is no other name. And it is possible to look away from this; it is possible to bury for a time, in vanity, excitement, and dissipation, the consciousness of guilty and ireful alienation from God. It is possible to fly for a time to false resources; and, in the tinsel of the world, and the lies of superstition, or the impious pretences of ungodly society, to drown the deep-voiced testimony of conscience to the impending wrath; but whenever we look at truth as it is; whenever we go down into the chamber of conscience, and ask its honest testimony; whenever we look at death and judgment, we shall find that there is no help but in the

Gospel of Christ; there is no real friend, saviour, or comforter, but the blessed Jesus. There is a wound deep-seated and rankling, which nothing can heal but the Balm of Gilead—the true physician—the blood of the everlasting covenant of promise and of peace. My brother, you need not be an idolatrous Greek to need this, or to feel your need. You are a wanderer; you are a defiled, guilty, ruined sinner. The curse of a holy God is on you for your countless transgressions; and more can you know; bear, till to that same system of grace which waited on the pair of Troas the summons into Macedonia, you also from the depth of a humble and contrite heart cry, "Come and help us."

But, brethren, in the lapse of centuries, a woful change has been wrought for Greece. Notwithstanding all her privileges in the apostolic founders of her christian churches, she declined from the faith, she shrunk from the help which rescued her, she has almost denied the Lord that bought her, and her last state is almost worse than her first. Error of every kind rapidly grew up in the midst of her, and at length God brought upon her the most fearful of all corrections to a professedly christian people—a careless, superstitious, and licentious clergy, utterly negligent of the real interests of the flock, and laid her prostrate under the ceaseless lash, the fierce and barbarous tyranny of an infidel conqueror. For centuries the history of Greece has been one unvaried page of misery and misrule. The vitality of religion has all but departed. It is scarcely to be realized amidst their idle superstitions. The spirit of the people has been broken by perpetual, unvarying, iron-handed and iron-hearted oppression; and, in the 19th century, the hope of Greece is little brighter than it was in the days of Paul. The national mind is degraded; the moral habits of the people are low; their view of Christianity is ignorant and superstitious; and among the few who begin to feel the humiliation of their state, there is only now a cry rising, as they look imploringly to the shores of Britain, "Come over and help us."

Brethren, do you know what it is to be in need? Have you ever felt that you have neglected your religious privileges and opportunities? that you have become cold and heartless towards those truths which once you valued, the power of which you once felt and delighted in? Are you like

unhappy Greece, fallen from a steadfast profession of christian truth, and mourning over the mere semblance of a hope, and the dry withered remnant of a love that once burned bright in your soul? Are you a stranger to peace, because you are comparatively a stranger to prayer? And do you know the feeling? Oh! that it were with me as in the days that are past, when the candle of the Lord burned bright in my tabernacle. Oh! that some mighty renewing power would come and help me, renew my steadfastness, revive my dying graces, and wake again my languid heart to prayer and praise. Then you can feel for Greece. You can look with sympathy upon her low estate—without a faithful ministry, without an enlightened education, long the wretched bond-slaves of Mohammedan oppressors, and now only beginning to breathe in the fostering atmosphere of British liberty, stretching out their hands to the Christians of European communities, and crying, “Come over and help us.” For you, and for them, there is one remedy: it is to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord; it is to hear, to comprehend, to believe the pardoning mercy of the great Jehovah to his sinful creatures; it is to know that where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded; it is to perceive in the blood of the incarnate surety streaming from the cross—the gratuitous atonement for human guilt, and to feel encouraged, by the sure announcement of the compassion of the open, and extended, and inviting arms of eternal love, to rise and shake yourself from the dust of your defilements, and to rejoice in your entire restoration through mercy to the divine favour. This is the help for you. This is the help for Greece. This is God’s provision of help for a dying world. Would that his own free Spirit would pour that conviction into every heart here, to be their own assured hope and consolation, and make them eagerly desirous to send the blessed tidings to their suffering fellow-men.

But, secondly, observe that God in his providence calls his servants to administer this help. Paul had already extended his labours beyond those of the other Apostles. His activity was in accordance with the manifest energy of his character; yet, with all his personal labours and wide-spread wanderings he must not rest, the vision assures him that he must go forth to preach the Gospel in Greece also.

We little know, in these days of listless

rest, what were the labours of the olden time. And what is the consequence? We see little of the fruits of those days. “Even unto this present day,” says St. Paul, “we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labour working with our own hands.” What should we think of wandering over the cities of a wide continent to preach the Gospel daily, with no other support but the labours of our hands. Yet on such a one, with all his multiplied labours, the Lord calls to go yet farther afield, to leave the Asiatic habits to which he had been through life assimilated, and among whom even a Jew had some respect, and to go among a people to whom he was an abomination, and his religion foolishness. We see then, in some degree, the measure of God’s call to duty; and by this we must determine what our own duty is.

You are not called upon to enter upon the ministry of the Word in foreign lands, to sacrifice the comforts of your native land, and go forth to some missionary station, where you would be separated from the few friends that had become endeared to you in life, and never to see them more, but instead of this to find your earthly solace in the rising graces of Hottentots and negroes, and to have none of the endeared refinements of society but in the slow process of elevation and improvement which revealed truth works on the savage mind. To you whose homes are fixed, and whose relative duties in life, in all these undertakings, are now permanently marked out, such calls come not to labour in the distant wilds of earth, and among a strange people. You are not called to sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and to go and follow Christ, even in your own land, in simple dependence for your daily bread, and to be content with the promise that your bread and water is sure. You are not called, with your hands already burdened with duty of every varied kind to the Church of God, still to extend your exertions farther to fields of untried labour, of wasting labour which can only be expected to close with the ebbing pulse of exhausted life. The Messenger of Heaven does not break in with stirring vision upon your slumbers, and call you without delay or parley to hasten to the shore, to commit yourself to the ocean, and to depart a voluntary exile from your father-land.

No. You are surrounded with comforts

and they are continued to you; you have relatives and friends whom you fondly love, and these ties of near and dear association are not severed. Providence pours into your lap the decent necessaries, if not the luxuries of life, and you are not asked to alienate them from you. Still there is a call on you. When God in his providence places before you the claim of any portion of your fellow-men for christian instruction—instruction which may be imparted by means of a slight pecuniary sacrifice, imperceptible amidst the multitude of your enjoyments, it is a call to you, "Come and help us."

Look at the restless but unwearied life of the Apostle, "constantly," as he says, "delivered unto death for the sake of his fellow-men;" look at his willing and instant labours for heathen Greece. And when we see her christian churches fallen and prostrate in the dust; when we see the parents looking eagerly to us for the means of education, and the prospect opening of a revival under the influence of our messengers of evangelical truth amongst them, shall not we regard it as a call of God, and address ourselves thankfully to the light and easy duty placed before us of supporting these educational institutions?

We gather from the letters of the Rev. Mr. Lowndes, with whom the Ladies' Committee here have been in communication, that in the island of Corfu there are three girls' schools, which have been mainly supported by this institution. At the last examination of the school in the town of Corfu, the attendance was 140. The number reading the New Testament was 30. The united school of Potamo and Mandecchio had an attendance of 130 girls; and at a third place, where a more recent examination has taken place, the attendance out of a list of 81 was 77, the class reading in the Scriptures being 29. Here, then, is an object of real interest. Nearly 300 Greek girls under christian instruction, and from among these already six have gone forth to act as teachers of schools elsewhere; and yet this cause is languishing for want of funds. Mr. Lowndes has found it necessary, after a silence on your part of many months, to draw upon the Committee for a sum of £40, not knowing that it will be forthcoming; and shall this cause be permitted to decline? It is a limited object, we grant. It is confined to a small spot, one little island of the sea; and it is easy, in the elevation of spirit arising from

the contemplation of more extended and magnificent institutions, to lose sight of this, and feel but little interest in it; yet where could we find a mission which, if rightly carried on, would hold out the promise of greater fruits. If, from one island only in the Ionian sea, a multitude of well-trained native teachers could go forth to meet the rising demand for education, how great might the result be in a few years! how steadily and surely progressive the improvement on a nation so miserably fallen!

One of the most rapid and certain means, under the divine blessing, of improving a people, is by elevating the female mind through the instrumentality of sound religious and moral instruction; when that mighty influence which woman yields directly over home and its associations, and indirectly over all the doings of man, is for good and not for evil; when husbands and brothers hear reiterated from the lip of tenderness and kindness the patient and judicious remonstrance, or the salutary lesson of divine truth gently instilled amid the quiet sweets of home, then they go forth from home, as from a sacred sanctuary, better prepared to resist the temptations or to endure the ills of life. The daily habitual influence of such a mind is as the oil upon the waves. It calms the tumult of rising passion; it administers in smiles the kind reward for manly and christian consistency, and it breathes over the daily experience of home and its common-place routine a hallowed light that gilds and consecrates every thing on which it rests. It is for this, then, that your help is entreated. Go and raise the women of Greece from the dust of that degradation to which the tyranny of the false prophet's followers has reduced them. Give them that power in society to which they are entitled; let it be for good and not for evil. Teach them to love their God and Saviour. Give them all that softness which is the genuine offspring of contrition—the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price, and you have bestowed a boon on them and on their country, the value of which will never be fully known, till they bloom as trees of the right-hand planting of the Lord in the immortal paradise of our God.

But a third lesson we learn from the text, viz., that they who have the ability to give aid should do it readily. Paul rose from his slumber, and immediately departed for Macedonia. He was assuredly persuaded

of the call of duty, and he delayed not a moment. This was invariably the spirit of the man. He says, in another place, "when it pleased God to reveal his Son in me, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood;" and again it is said, "straitway he preached Christ;" and this is the way to do the will of God, to obey the direct injunctions of our heavenly Father. It is by parleying with our evil and corrupt affections, it is by tampering with the false and sophistical opinions of the world that men get into error. This is the cause of so much inconsistency among seemingly good men. God has placed in the heart a monitor, which is faithful to the degree of light received, and bears testimony to the plain course of duty; and if that witness be implicitly followed, it will generally lead us to a simple, sincere, and holy consistency of conduct with our principles. It had been easy for Paul to call up reasons against entering on new fields of labour, easy to have suggested to himself his many and strong obligations to the churches already established; but he acted implicitly on the intimation of the divine will.

Let us learn from this, the impulse of liberal and generous feeling is good, as long as it flows from the influence of scriptural truth. The gift to which genuine benevolence prompts us in the cause of God, is not to be withheld by the freezing calculations which gradually creep in upon the mind. In this way evil regains its ground. Had the Apostle conferred with flesh and blood, Greece would have remained unevangelized; and often is it the case, that the man of wealth, prompted for a moment to dedicate a part of it to the cause of God, delays, looks for a moment aside, allows the serious and warning moment to pass away, sinks again under the fetters of an idolatrous covetousness, and slumbers again into selfish apathy, on the cankered heap of his unblest treasures. And, alas! how often is it with the Christian, that the lesson of providential warning which presses powerfully upon his own defects or besetting sins—the lesson which in a moment wakes contrition, and prompts to repentance and amendment, is turned aside by some intrusive and extraneous thought; the moment of impression passes away, and the soul which might have been brought back to earnest and influential devotion, still lies lifeless and inactive on the earth!

Brethren, our wisdom lies, in all these

matters, in ready, instant, unhesitating obedience to the call of God. This world is all vanity and delusion. There is nothing in it to give a moment's gratification worthy of the name, but in drawing near to God in Christ, the real and unfailing friend of sinners. You may try every thing else successively. It will flatter you for an hour, only to wound you the more deeply, with a more miserable disappointment. The intoxicating cup of its pleasures will only leave you at last the palsied, trembling, heartless wreck of its poisoned excitements. Listen, then, to that gracious Being who loves you with a Father's love, notwithstanding all your prodigal and reckless wanderings; listen to the personal call to turn heartily and savingly to him. The call of God is made to you from the cross of Christ, from the bright halo of hope for dying man, which brightened round the thorn-embow'd temples of the dying Saviour. It is a call to fly from sin and from the world, to him who is able to save, and to the hope of an eternal and holy heaven; it is the call of the Spirit of God in the chamber of conscience. Hear it, brethren, ere it be too late. Turn from the follies with which the world busily labours to seduce you; and turn not to the mere name, and form, and outward profession of religion, but so that heart-work which breaks down and humbles the spirit before God, and to that cleaving to the Lord in godly sincerity, which can alone give peace.

And, then, listen to the providential call to assist in the work of the Gospel. The salvation of human souls is the special work of the Triune Jehovah. Wherever immortal beings are lying in debasing ignorance and sin, it is the will of our God and Saviour, that they should hear from their fellow-men the glad tidings of a free salvation through our Redeemer's blood. It was for this that the Son of God came down from heaven and endured the cross, despising the shame; for this he gave his back to the smiter, and his cheek to him that plucked off the hair, and hid not his face from shame and spitting; it was to break for man the fetters of sin and Satan, and to set the wretched slave of corrupt passion free to serve him in newness of life; and to aid them in this work he condescends graciously to call on us by providential intimations, "Come over and help us." It is easy to disregard that call; it is easy to find false and fleeting pleasures on which, under vain pretences,

your time and your means may be lavished ; it is easy to foster and flatter a growing selfishness in your expenditure and habits of life.

But, brethren, there is a day coming, when we shall stand before the Son of man ; and the secrets of all hearts, and the responsibilities of every soul will be examined. Then it shall appear how we have answered the call, how we have regarded the injunctions of our God, how we have used the various

talents committed to our care. Think of this ; look past a perishing world and its delusions, to the bed of death, to the throne of judgment, to the unchanging eternity ; count these the great absorbing realities, and let them regulate your course. It is to you as believers in the salvation of the cross ; it is to you, as believing that your fellow-men are perishing for lack of knowledge, that the invitation is pressed on you to help, in the name of the Lord. Amen.

THE MORAL TENDENCY OF THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE ;

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE INTRODUCTION OF A MINISTER TO HIS PARISH,

By the Rev. ROBERT BRYDON,

Of Dunscore, in the Presbytery of Dumfries.

" This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."—TITUS iii. 8.

IN order to perceive the proper meaning and force of these words, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the connexion in which they stand. The whole of this epistle is what may be termed an inspired charge, or letter of directions to ministers of the Gospel, being addressed to Titus in that character. And both the doctrines to be taught, and the manner in which they ought to be exhibited, as well as the important ends they are designed to produce, are clearly pointed out. It is highly necessary, therefore, that all who are invested with the sacred and responsible office of the Gospel ministry, should deeply study this inspired epistle, in order to learn well, both the nature of the duties required of them, and the personal character which they ought to maintain. But it is no less necessary that the inspired instructions given to us who minister, should also be investigated and considered by our hearers, in order that they may know the very truth revealed for their salvation ; and be fortified against all errors or mistakes of man, in a matter of such awful and eternal moment. May the Spirit of all truth, then, vouchsafe his enlightening influence, while we consider the import of the passage before us.

The text naturally divides itself into two branches. In the *first* place, it contains a reference to the *doctrines* which ministers

ought to preach ; and, *secondly*, it alludes to the *moral effect* which the preaching of these doctrines is fitted to produce.

Our attention, then, must be first directed to the doctrines to be preached—which, it will be found on examination, are the doctrines of grace. It must be sufficiently obvious to every attentive and unprejudiced reader of the text, that the inspired Apostle—when he says, " This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly"—must be alluding to statements which he had previously made. And it is important to observe this, lest we should mistake and pervert the meaning of the passage, by supposing that Paul is here exhorting Titus, and through Titus, every other minister of the Gospel of Christ, to be constantly preaching upon good works. This is not the purport of the Apostle's exhortation, although a cursory view of the passage might suggest it to be so. But, in order to find out the things to which he refers as being necessary to be constantly affirmed, it is evident that we must turn back to the preceding context. And although the great end for which they are to be affirmed, is to render believers zealous of good works, yet good works themselves are not the subjects alluded to. But on carefully examining the passages, we find that the exhortation of the text stands connected with the follow-

ing luminous and emphatic statement of Gospel doctrine, by which it is preceded, and on which it is founded: "For we ourselves also"—alluding to the natural state even of those who now believed, as being that in which the Gospel finds men, but out of which it is the blessed means of delivering them—"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 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; in order that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." And it is immediately after this clear and comprehensive statement of Gospel truth, that the Apostle, as if first taking in the whole at one glance, exclaims, "This is a faithful saying"—a doctrine true in itself, and worthy of universal credit; and then, as if viewing separately the various important particulars comprised in it, he adds, "and *these things* (every one of them in their several bearings and connexions) I will that thou affirm constantly." And why? "*To the end that,*" says he, (for such is the true scope of the original expression,) "*to the end that* they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."

We thus clearly perceive, then, when we view the text in its true and legitimate connexion, that the things to be affirmed, and to be continually dwelt upon in the preaching of the Gospel, are, *first* of all, the deep moral corruption of human nature through the fall—that degraded, guilty, deluded, sensual, malicious, and hateful condition to which the world has been reduced by sin, and in which all men before conversion are involved; *secondly*, the marvellous love of God our Saviour in taking compassion upon us in this dark and evil state; and by his own wonderful incarnation, awful sufferings, and ignominious death, undertaking our cause, expiating our guilt, and engaging to redeem us out of all our misery; *thirdly*, the glorious theme of the divine mercy, as the source and spring out of which all the blessings of salvation flow, and that in opposition to man's own righteousness, which could never have saved him either from

sin's punishment or from sin's power, because in reality he was himself destitute of all righteousness, and to render him righteous, or spiritually and truly holy, was just the very salvation that he needed; *fourthly*, the great doctrine of regeneration by the cleansing and renovating influences of the Holy Ghost, by which the dark and dead soul of the fallen sinner is quickened to a new and spiritual life, even to a life of faith and holiness; by which all the evil dispositions and vile affections of the carnal mind are gradually but effectually subdued, and the genuine love of God, with every right principle and spiritual desire implanted, cherished, and carried to maturity within us; and by which, through the fostering influence of the appointed means of grace, the soul is gradually assimilated to the moral likeness of God, and trained to a meetness for the inheritance of heaven; and, *fifthly*, that wonderful method of a sinner's justification by grace, through faith in the divine Redeemer's righteousness, which is the door of his introduction into all the blessings of the new covenant, and by which he becomes reconciled to God, receives the earnest gift of the Spirit, the seal of adoption, obtains a title to eternal life as an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ, and has the assured, blessed, and joyful hope of future glory begotten in his heart.

Such, we say, are the topics on which the ministers of Christ are exhorted in the text continually to insist. And although we cannot attempt any illustration at present of this lucid and emphatic summary of revealed truth, it is important just to notice the method of salvation by grace, which is so concisely, yet so comprehensively declared: "Not," says the Apostle, "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." Surely nothing could be more explicit than this statement, in which the divine mercy is opposed to human righteousness, and salvation ascribed to the *former* to the exclusion of the *latter*. Not by *works*, it is said, but by *mercy* are we saved. And this carries us directly to the source and spring of the blessing. It takes its rise in the divine mercy alone—in the free and sovereign grace of Jehovah. Man had no hand in the providing of his own salvation, and none of the glory of it can at all belong

to him. We, indeed, are the subjects of salvation; it was provided for our benefit, and to our souls it is to be applied. But God alone is the author of it. In the very nature of things, it was impossible that the pardon of sin, and restoration to a holy nature, and a title to eternal life, could ever have been merited or procured by our works of righteousness. For, in order to have yielded any acceptable obedience to God, we must previously have been in that very condition which salvation implies. Before we could have *done* righteous works, we must have *been* righteous or holy in our nature. But had this been the case, we should not have needed to be saved—for salvation has respect to man considered as a sinner; and to be saved, is to be *made* righteous as well as to be *accounted* righteous. If we are by nature morally depraved, then the ability to work righteousness, must be the result of being saved; and cannot, therefore, be the procuring cause of salvation. But if we are not morally depraved by nature, then have we no need of being saved at all. So that unless we could change our own nature, or new-create our souls, *salvation* must necessarily come to us in some other way than by our own works of righteousness. And, accordingly, the inspired Apostle tells you, that it comes “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which is shed upon us abundantly through Jesus Christ, according to the mercy of God.” As a sinner man labours under a twofold evil—a sentence of condemnation pronounced against him, and a spiritual disease operating within him. And to deliver him only from the one of these evils, and leave him exposed to the other, would be like rescuing him from death by the sword, and leaving him to perish by the pestilence. But the salvation of the Gospel is complete, providing both pardon through the blood of Christ, and sanctification by his Spirit. To imagine that salvation is confined to the pardon of sin, is to imagine that a sinner may be saved without being restored to holiness of nature; without having his spiritual diseases healed; without having the reigning power of iniquity subdued in his soul; without having his heart made right with God; or without being made spiritually alive. But the Word of God assures us, that we can be saved no otherwise than by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; and that it is through the merits of our Sa-

viour Jesus Christ, that the influences of the Holy Ghost are abundantly shed upon us. It is the doctrine of salvation by grace, then, through the imputed righteousness of the Saviour, and the sanctification of the Spirit—in all the branches of it, and viewed in connexion with that moral depravation of our nature on which it proceeds, and of which it provides the cure—it is this faithful saying, and these things relating to it, which are to form the grand topics of the Gospel ministry, and to be constantly exhibited in all their aspects, in all their wonderful adaptation to the sinful condition of man, in all their divine worth, and in all their unspeakable and everlasting importance. And it is by the clear, and faithful, and reiterated exposition and enforcement of these distinguishing and fundamental principles of revealed religion, that men are to be converted from sin unto God; that the careless are to be roused, and the ungodly appalled, and the sleeping conscience of the sinner awakened to spiritual concern, and the impenitent melted to godly sorrow and repentance; as well as they who have already believed in God built up in their holy faith, and fitted and furnished for every good work. And this brings us,

II. To consider the moral effect which these doctrines are calculated to produce.

The text is not an exhortation to preach good works in the abstract, without relation to the principles from which they must proceed. It is, on the contrary, an exhortation to preach those doctrines of grace, and principles of implanted holiness, from a right apprehension, and true experience of which alone men become capable of performing good works, and careful to maintain them. By nature the hearts of all men are totally depraved; they are alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, by reason of the blindness of their minds. As the Apostle speaks in the context, “They are foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, hateful, and hating one another.” And these vile affections of the carnal mind must all be eradicated, and others of an opposite nature implanted and cherished in their room, before the fruits of righteousness and true holiness can be produced and exhibited in the life. But these great objects will never be effected, by merely enjoining men to be temperate, and honest, and devout. Such injunctions given to beings of a corrupt nature, who love, and delight to cherish

their sinful propensities, will prove of no avail. They will neither change their hearts, nor dispose them to change their habits. And the only true way to bring about such important and blessed changes, is to bring forth into full and vivid exhibition, that kindness and love of God our Saviour which has been manifested towards man, in all its richness, and tenderness, and freeness; and to explain how God saves us from all the dreadful and eternal consequences of sin, not by works of righteousness which we have done, (for, alas! what works of righteousness could be done by creatures so depraved?) but according to his own infinite, holy, and sovereign mercy, in a way totally different from works, even by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he sheds on us abundantly in all his blessed influences through Jesus Christ our only and all-sufficient Saviour—to the end, that being justified by his grace, that being reconciled to Himself through the death of his own Son, and emancipated from all the evils of guilt and condemnation, we might be made heirs of his glory, according to the hope of the Gospel. It is by explaining, enforcing, and applying such truths as these, that, under the promised and effectual blessing of the divine Spirit, men shall be converted to the love, and incited to the practice of all good works. And, to the very same purpose, the Apostle also declares in the preceding chapter, that “the grace of God which bringeth salvation, teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” He does not merely command us to depart from sin and to follow righteousness, but he says, that if the grace of God bring salvation to our souls, it will teach us to do so; and, therefore, he urges the exhibition of that grace for the purpose of securing so desirable an effect. For well did he know, that merely to desire sinners to be sober, and righteous, and godly, would be of small avail; but well did he know also, that if the grace of God reached their hearts in its saving efficacy and power, temperance, and righteousness, and godliness, would all grow up and flourish in their lives.

But let not these observations be misunderstood. We do not affirm that the Apostle meant to dissuade Titus from preaching good works; for his object was just the reverse. But there may be various ways of

accomplishing the same end; and what we have alleged is, that Titus is instructed by the inspired Apostle in the text to preach good works, not in a direct, but in such an indirect manner as would prove much more effectual. To insist upon them merely in the abstract would never, in the present depraved state of human nature, answer the desired end. New principles need to be implanted in the heart before new fruits can appear in the life; for no reformation will be genuine or permanent which is destitute of a firm root within; and, therefore, to bring the heart under the influence of those holy principles from which good works will spring, is the only true and hopeful way to produce them. And this is the very course recommended in the text; for, under the divine blessing, the faithful preaching of man’s moral depravity, and of the Saviour’s wonderful love, and of the Holy Spirit’s regenerating and renovating power, and of the great doctrine of justification by grace, through faith, a hatred of sin, and a zeal for holiness, will be naturally excited. It is impossible that these truths can be rightly discerned and cordially received, that men can believe in God who revealed and testified them, without a direct and powerful influence being exerted on their conduct. Let the Gospel only reach a man’s conscience in power, and let him be made to pass over in all his feelings and perceptions from the side of the careless and ungodly to the state and experience of the converted, and the whole history of his subsequent life will be a purer and nobler illustration of good works, not only than the world actually exhibits, but than the corrupt world will tolerate; for it will be, as the lives of all godly men are, one continued sentence of reproof and condemnation on the children of disobedience.

So far, then, was the Apostle Paul from conceiving that the doctrines of grace led to licentiousness of practice, or had any tendency to make men indifferent about the interests of morality, that he inculcated the preaching of them as the best and only hopeful way of promoting the opposite effect. And hence we may infer, that if gospel preaching does not uniformly lead to holy living, it is just because the doctrine preached has not been believed and embraced. It is not the *preaching* alone, but especially the *receiving* of the Gospel, which produces the fruits of genuine righteousness; and we cannot justly blame the Gospel for not re-

moving an evil which only remains because the Gospel is rejected. The Gospel may be preached with all fidelity and clearness, but if not received with cordial faith and self-application, no good effects can be expected to result. But, then, the fault here obviously lies with the *hearing*, and not with the preaching. The doctrine in itself is calculated to produce the most excellent and salutary ends. But how can it produce the ends where it does not take effect? Unless the seed sown take root, the good grain cannot spring up. Did the Gospel fail to render those holy who really and rightly believed it, then indeed might its beneficial tendency be called in question; but surely no blame can attach to the Gospel, because it fails to produce a salutary effect on those who believe it not. If, to those who *improve* it, it becomes the savour of life unto life, it is not unreasonable to suppose, that it should prove the savour of death unto death to those who abuse or reject it. Men, indeed, may profess to believe the Gospel, but a mere verbal or formal profession will be of no avail; for it is a thing demonstrable, that a genuine belief of the doctrines of grace directly tends both to the purification of the heart and the reformation of the life. And if these effects do not result, it is a thing equally demonstrable, that whatever pretensions there may be to it, true faith is wanting. But they are not, you will observe, unbelievers whom the Apostle supposes the preaching of the Gospel is fitted to render zealous of good works; but they are they who *have believed in God*. For men must first be brought to the belief of the doctrine, and then, as a natural consequence, their faith will produce holiness.

It is the clear doctrine of the text, then, that the Gospel of the grace of God has a moral tendency, and that one of the great ends of its publication is to lead men to the love and to the practice of righteousness. But this doctrine, we fear, is too much overlooked by many professing Christians. Because by our own works we cannot be justified in the sight of God, many seem to think that holiness of life is not requisite at all; just as if salvation consisted *only* in the pardon of sin, and not *also* in the renewing of the soul into the moral image of the divine nature. But this is to fall into a fearful and fatal error, to pervert the grace of God, to mutilate the system of revealed truth, and to reject many plain passages of Scripture. Yet it is an error which prevails practically,

we fear, to a very alarming extent; for, when we consider the sad laxity of principle and even immorality of conduct which are visible, and, alas! sometimes glaring among those who profess to have believed in God; when we consider how little either tenderness of conscience or strictness of integrity are manifested in their ordinary transactions with one another, by multitudes who bear the christian name; when we consider the lurking dishonesty, injustice, and deceit—the avarice, intemperance, impurity, and profaneness—the envy, malice, hatred, and evil speaking, which are so prevalent in society, it is too evident that the obligation to maintain good works is but little felt; and that however orthodox men may be in their notions, a vast deal of practical antinomianism abounds in their lives. But we would hope better things, brethren, of many of you, although we thus speak; we would charitably hope that you have not so learned Christ; for our religion is altogether spurious, if we suppose that it relaxes, in the least degree, our obligations to observe the moral law. It is only by its holy fruits that the truth of our Christianity can be established. They who have believed in God, must be careful not only to perform, but habitually to maintain good works. They must not rest satisfied with doing them occasionally, which is all the aim of the unregenerate formalist, nor with doing them from selfish or vain-glorious motives. Nor must they be content with a mere outward conformity of the life to the letter of the law; but it must be their object to yield a constant, spiritual, and universal obedience to the holy commandments of God, in thought, word, and deed. They must not be *partial* in their righteousness, making conscience only of some duties, and neglecting others; for this shows a want of sincerity, or a wish to accommodate the law of Heaven to our own taste or practice. But they must strive against all sin, and aim at universal holiness; and neither must they relax or grow weary in well-doing; but they must ever cherish a holy concern and an earnest desire to do the will of their Father in heaven, to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, to follow the motions of the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts, and to embrace every opportunity of doing good to their fellow-men. It is true, that in pursuing this course of spiritual obedience, believers will every day feel their own weakness and short-coming, and will never be

able in this life to realize the perfection at which they aim ; but still they will aim at being perfect. Forgetting the things that are behind, they will reach unto those that are before ; and their sense of their own weakness will at once keep them humble, and excite them to renewed exertion and persevering prayer.

You see then, brethren, and let me entreat you to bear in mind, that the end of all preaching is *holy practice* : “ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, in order that the man of God may be *perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” I beseech you, then, to keep this grand design of the Gospel in view, in order that you may be profited by a gospel ministry, which it is your high privilege to enjoy. *We* preach, and *you* hear, to the end that both of us may be built up in holiness, and fitted for eternal life. And if we do not preach morality in a dry and didactic form, it is not because we do not aim at making men moral, but because we aim at this end in a more excellent way ; for we aim at producing a far purer and higher-toned morality than that of the world—a morality which emanates from the heart, and embraces the universe. We aim at more than morality, as the word is generally applied ; we aim at godliness. We aim at more than making men virtuous on earth ; we aim at making them holy and meet for heaven. And it is just because our aim is so great and so elevated, that we preach those *doctrines of*

grace, on which all true morality, as well as true piety, must be reared. To rear this glorious superstructure is our object, and we wish to apply the most efficient means for promoting it. Only tell us, therefore, how to effect this grand result—this final aim of all our labours and our prayers ; only tell us how to extirpate evil passions from the heart, and how to banish vicious habits from society ; only tell us how to work a thorough and a beautiful reformation among all ranks and descriptions of our hearers ; how to render them universally honest, and temperate, and devout, and benevolent ; how to lead them effectually, and for ever, to lay aside all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil speaking with all malice ; only tell us how to inspire them with the love, and incite them to the practice of whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, and we shall not be slow to adopt the necessary means ; for to purify men’s hearts and reform their lives, to turn them from sin to righteousness, from idolatry to God, is the noble and exalted aim of the ministerial office. But we know already, that no means are so admirably adapted to this end as the Gospel of the grace of God. And who does not see, that were this Gospel sincerely and universally received, and did its principles take root in every heart, a mighty and glorious transformation would be wrought upon the world ! But who does not see also, that no principles whatever, without taking root in the heart, can ever effect any salutary change upon the conduct ?

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. GEORGE HASTIE, Kirkpatrick Fleming.
SERMON by the Rev. NATHANIEL MORREN, Greenock.

THE OFFERED GRACE OF THE GOSPEL, AND THE DANGER OF
RECEIVING IT IN VAIN;

A SERMON PREACHED ON THE SABBATH AFTER HIS ORDINATION

By the Rev. GEORGE HASTIE,
Of Kirkpatrick Fleming, Presbytery of Annan.

"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."—2 Cor. vi. 1.

It is impossible, brethren, for the ministers of the Gospel to be too ardent in pressing upon the hearts and consciences of their hearers the absolute necessity of an entire devotedness of soul to God; and the more faithfully they discharge that duty, the more zealously they preach to you, the more constantly they watch for you, the more affectionately they warn you, the more tenderly they love you, the more fervently they pray for you, the greater will be your guilt and condemnation, if they spend their strength for nought and in vain.

This, my friends, is a very solemn consideration, and if duly attended to, can hardly fail to have a powerful influence on every well-disposed mind.

We know that God's word shall not return unto him void; no, it must accomplish the end for which it was sent. "For we are unto God," says the Apostle, "a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life; and who is sufficient for these things?"

We know that the Gospel message is continually heard by multitudes with indif-

ference and apathy of heart, but we know that there are some who through grace do believe; and we know, moreover, "that it is ours only to sow, and plant, and water; it is God's to give the increase." We would resolve, therefore, with God's help, to preach the Gospel of Christ more boldly, more fully, more unceasingly than ever; and as it is our duty and our privilege to do all this, so we are honoured with the title of being workers together with God. In this character, then, we would now and ever beseech you, in the most earnest manner, "not to receive the grace of God in vain."

In discoursing from these words, we propose, through divine assistance, to direct your attention, in the first place, to the nature of the ministerial office, as it is here described by the Apostle. And we shall then, secondly, consider the import of his exhortation, and the danger of not complying with the Gospel message of salvation.

And may the Lord enable me to deliver the message, and you to receive it in such a manner as it becometh the oracles of the living God to be spoken and to be heard.

First, then, we are to direct your attention

to the nature of the ministerial office, as it is here described by the Apostle.

The ministry, brethren, is an institution of Jesus Christ; he ordained it for his people's good, for their conversion, for their edification and comfort. While he himself ministered among men, he twice selected for this office a number of his disciples; and when he ascended on high, we are told, "that he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and some teachers, for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ."

Such is the origin of that sacred office which is still exercised among you. It is no doubt true, that several circumstances which originally attended it are now considerably changed. The Saviour, for example, when he had called unto him the twelve apostles, conferred upon them the power of working miracles, with a view to confirm the doctrines they were appointed to preach, and personally delivered to them such instructions as he thought necessary to enable them to discharge the duties of this important commission. All these extraordinary powers and personal communications, however, have now ceased. Ministers, in these latter ages, are neither possessed of the immediate inspiration, nor of the power of working miracles, enjoyed by the Apostles. They are now men in all respects like yourselves, to whom God hath conveyed, by the hands of their brethren, authority to preach the Gospel, to dispense the sacraments, and to preside over the congregations in which his providence may place them.

Here, then, is a very manifest difference, and an evident inferiority on our side; still the mandate is one and the same to all Christ's faithful servants in this employment. "Go," says he, "into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned." And blessed be God, the Saviour's promise is unalterable: "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." And what can afford greater comfort to the ministers of the Gospel under the many trials and discouragements they may meet with in the course of their ministry, than the assurance that the Master whom they serve is with them to guide and direct them, to uphold and strengthen them, while standing as it were between God and

his people, as his authorized ambassadors, to treat of reconciliation and peace. And the fact, brethren, that such assistance has been granted through every age since the times of the Apostles, and that abundance of consolation is still in store for us in our own times, is a remarkable exemplification of the past faithfulness of Jehovah to his promises, and a pledge and earnest of his future purposes of grace towards his Church, and the world at large. "All things are of God," says the Apostle, "who hath reconciled us to himself, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "Now then," he adds, "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." And in our text he styles us workers together with God, that is, as subordinate instruments, working by him; and he tells you that the burden of our message is to beseech our fellow-sinners not to receive the grace of God in vain.

In this character, then, we ought to be received amongst you; nor let any one suppose, that while after the example of the apostle Paul we magnify our office, we are seeking in any manner to recommend or applaud ourselves. No, brethren, we boast not of an exemption from imperfection; we feel, indeed, and are not ashamed to confess, our own personal unworthiness to be intrusted with such an honourable office. And when we reflect on our own inexperience, and our own insufficiency to discharge its great and important duties, our souls would faint within us but for our trust, that we shall not be forgotten in your prayers, that we may be strengthened with might from on high to labour with fidelity and with success among you.

We do not ask of you implicit faith; but we pray and beseech you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, to cherish that divine principle towards us, which suffereth long and is kind, which is not easily provoked, which thinketh no evil, and which hopeth all things, and endureth all things. And as we desire to place our trust and confidence in Him who hath called us to serve him in the ministry of the Gospel, and to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; so in the discharge of our duty, we would resolve, through the

strength of the Lord God, to suffer no considerations of self-interest, no desire of popular applause, no fear of human censure to interfere with the glory of God, and the welfare of immortal souls. At the same time, it will be our aim to give no unnecessary offence, that our ministry be not blamed. On the contrary, we will become all things to all men, that we may by all means save some; but this will be only in the manner, not in the matter of our ministrations. We will keep back no part of the truth; we will preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and propose him as the only foundation of a sinner's hope, the only object of faith, the way, the truth and the life. We will endeavour to convince you of your need of mercy, and then direct your thoughts to the atonement which the Redeemer made for sin, by his sufferings and death on the cross. We will not shrink from telling the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the mere formalist as well as the scandalous offender, and the open despiser of Gospel ordinances, that they need a change of heart before they can be made meet for the kingdom of Heaven.

It will be our business, moreover, from time to time, to explain the nature of the duties incumbent on you, and to delineate the various graces which constitute the christian character, teaching our hearers, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." In a word, we will not shun to declare unto you the whole counsel of God, and to beseech you, as you value your immortal souls, "not to receive the grace of God in vain." And this leads us,

In the second place, to point out the import of the Apostle's exhortation, and the danger of not complying with the Gospel message of salvation.

Many arguments, one would suppose, were unnecessary to persuade you to comply with our entreaties, when we beseech you not to receive in vain the grace of God, or the message which, as ministers of the Gospel, we are commissioned to bring unto you.

But what, brethren, is that message with which we are intrusted?

The Apostle, in the preceding context, has alluded to the glad tidings of peace and good will, which are proclaimed in the Gospel dispensation from God to man. For

he tells us, as we before observed, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. And this grace which is manifested on the part of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, he aptly terms the ministry and the word of reconciliation. From this declaration, then, it is obviously to be inferred, that the Gospel, as a system of mercy and redeeming grace, presupposes the guilt and moral depravity of man.

To know, therefore, the fulness and the freeness of this grace to a world of guilty transgressors, to comprehend its greatness and its blessing, we must consider the state in which we are placed by nature, and are found by God.

Our primeval dignity is in the dust; the crown is fallen from our heads; our nature is depraved, and our righteousness lost. In consequence of this, we have forfeited all title to the favour of our Creator, who might justly have left us to perish, and to suffer the just desert of our sins. But His thoughts were thoughts of peace; he beheld with pity and kind compassion our lost condition; his bowels of tender mercies yearned over his rebellious children.

When He saw there was no man to repair the ruin of our fallen state, and wondered that there was no intercessor, his love prevailed to accomplish the work of redemption; mercy rejoiced while justice was satisfied, and grace triumphed in the recovery of a world of sinners from ruin and from death.

Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever. He made himself responsible for whatever law and justice demanded of the sinner; he took the whole debt upon himself, and paid the whole by doing and by suffering the will of Heaven as our surety; he magnified the law, and made it honourable by his perfect obedience, and took the curse of it upon himself. In every branch of his glorious work, the all-sufficiency of the Saviour is eminently displayed; and what is there that is at all necessary to our reconciliation with an offended God, that we may not derive from the complete redemption of the Prince of Peace?

The Gospel then, you see, tells men that they are ungodly; it tells them that God is just, infinitely and undeviatingly just; it brings these two truths plainly before the mind, and then calls upon it to admire and adore the wisdom and goodness which could

reunite them, and make them harmonize together; it tells, in short, of Jesus Christ, of him who came to preach good tidings unto the meek, who was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison door to them that are bound. Such is the Gospel plan of salvation which God has revealed to the world in the Son of his love. May not the minister of the Gospel, then, say to all, even as the angels said unto the shepherds, "Behold we bring you good tidings."

Here are the sure mercies of God in Christ, offered to every one who will only accept of them. The wine and milk of the Gospel are to be had without money and without price.

But, alas! there is a mighty obstacle on the part of man, even a total want of spiritual capacity to appreciate the blessings of the Gospel, and a total want of willingness to receive them. For do we not see multitudes who have long heard the joyful sound, and yet have never complied with its requirements—have never made an unconditional surrender of themselves to God to be saved in his appointed way; in a word, have never come to Christ as the true atonement for sin, as the true Mediator between God and the helpless sinner? And what is the reason of all this? "It is just because they love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil; and they will not come unto the light lest their deeds should be reproved." There is, my friends, by nature an evil heart of unbelief in every one of us, which leads us to slight and neglect the mercy so freely offered in the Gospel; and not until this belief be overcome, not until this love of darkness be removed, not until this enmity of the carnal mind be taken away, not until all this takes place, will a single individual of the human race ever be persuaded to embrace the glad tidings of salvation.

But how, it may be asked, is this to be effected? It is not to be done by human power, but by the agency of the Holy Spirit; for it is the Spirit alone who can sanctify what is impure, control what is rebellious, illumine what is obscure, and elevate the affections to things divine.

Seeing, then, that it has pleased God in his wisdom and goodness to set forth his beloved Son a propitiation for your sins, His Holy Spirit a remedy against your uncleanness, and a preached Gospel which

invites you to come and be made whole, be made saints of the Most High, children of grace, and heirs of glory; it behoves you truly, (such exceeding great and precious offers being made you); it behoves you, indeed, to search whether you have embraced them, whether you have come to Christ for pardon, and peace and purity, and have found experimentally that though you cannot control the virulence of the moral plague which defiles and debases you, the great Physician can rebuke the disease, and say, Be clean.

O may it be yours, my fellow-sinners, to have clear views of your own incapacity, and to think, that although you be utterly unworthy, yet Christ is worthy, who is made unto all who believe wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption!

But if you still continue to receive the grace of God in vain; if you will not comply with the gospel message of salvation, be assured, that in the day of reckoning, "it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, yea, for Sodom and Gomorrah, than for you."

Consider how many are destitute of those means of grace so largely offered to you, how many have never heard the name of a Saviour, nor have any idea of the Gospel of the grace of God which is preached unto you.

Surely one would think it enough barely to announce to you the happy tidings, that the wrath of Heaven is turned away, that the path of access to the divine favour is cleared of every obstruction, and that God in Christ is extending the sceptre of His mercy to every approaching rebel. But no, my friends, this is not enough. You live in the midst of an ensnaring and evil world, where all the powers of hell are combined against you, and your own inbred corruptions, the love of sin and unbelief, your enmity, your deep-rooted enmity to the purity of the divine nature and the strictness of the divine law, with a host of inward foes, make the most powerful resistance, so that in these several ways every child of Adam is sorely let and hindered in embracing the salvation offered in the Gospel. It is true, indeed, that no want either of power or faithfulness can be supposed on the part of God. Though we believe not, He remaineth faithful; He cannot deny himself.

The great obstacle, therefore, must o-

necessity be on the part of man. How solemn, then, the alternative! how awfully solemn the conclusion to which we are driven, that the blood of those who perish is upon their own heads; for the condemnation of those who are finally condemned is attributable to themselves alone! Their portion is the portion of their own choice; and the wrath which they are doomed for ever to endure, is wrath which they have treasured up unto themselves against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds. Yes, God is a righteous Judge; and at the great day of account the equity of His government, and the righteousness of His judgment, shall be made fully manifest before an assembled universe. In that day how vain, how unavailing, will be the most specious excuses of the sinner! It will then be found that he is in very deed the author of his own ruin, that he has destroyed himself by preferring darkness to light, and deliberately choosing the ways of death. Why, then, should any now, in the vain imaginations of their corrupt hearts, like the first transgressors, virtually charge their destruction, and the circumstances which lead to it, upon God himself, as many hardened sinners do? Alas! that such a blasphemous idea should ever have place for a moment in the mind of any human being. But it is the very property of an evil heart of unbelief to harbour hard thoughts of God. His Word, however, the record of his grace, leaves no shadow of ground for such suspicions. It declares, that the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live." "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel." But God, brethren, will not always forbear; for it is written, "Because I have called, and ye 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 they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

But let me not be misunderstood here. God *can*, and most assuredly *will*, by his

Word and by his Spirit, subdue the enmity of the carnal mind, and pull down the strongholds of sin and Satan in the heart of every individual whom, in His infinite mercy He has appointed to be an heir of eternal blessedness and glory. At the same time, let it be as distinctly understood, that He uses means in the economy of his grace, as well as in the operations of his providence; and that if you neglect these means, you must not wonder that nothing is done for your salvation.

You have it in your power to be instructed in the sacred truths which the Saviour himself taught; you might be led in the path of righteousness which He pointed out; the Gospel of the grace of God, offering peace and proclaiming pardon to a guilty world, that grace which bringeth salvation, and which proposes to raise our fallen nature to all its forfeited dignity, and to make us heirs of an unfading and incorruptible inheritance, is now published to you. But as the help of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to give you right views and sincere desires after salvation, you must pray earnestly for His sacred influences, and rest assured you shall obtain them. And oh! do not, my brethren, as you value your immortal souls, turn a deaf ear unto our message, but pray that you may be enabled to receive it with gratitude, and to welcome it with joy; and remember, that while we use all earnest entreaties to prevail upon you not to receive the grace of God in vain, it is not we who are thus importuning; it is God himself, as the Apostle declares, who is beseeching you by our means. Yes, my friends, it is that very Being whom you have so grievously offended, and whose wrath you have so greatly incurred. It is that very God whose law you have broken, and whose authority you have despised; it is He who is now entreating you, by the mouth of his ambassadors, not to receive his grace in vain. Why is it, then, that you will not come to the Saviour, that you will not surrender your hearts to His influence, and your souls to His keeping? It is just because you obstinately *will* not. The light of Heaven, I am sure, is not more free than is the promise of life to all who will come, who are content to find deliverance in God's appointed way.

I am aware, indeed, that you are not ignorant, or at least ought not to be ignorant,

of the Gospel method of salvation. You have been instructed by your fathers in the principles of the christian religion. You have the book of revelation in your hands, and you have enjoyed from your infancy the means of grace. Your late minister laboured to impart to you the Gospel of God. His discourses were both doctrinal and practical, plain and striking, enforcing evangelical obedience upon evangelical principles. Thus you have had your day of grace, in which the things that belong unto your peace have been set before you. I indulge the pleasing reflection, therefore, that many of you have already been enabled effectually to hear and obey the voice of God, beseeching you *not* to receive His grace in vain, and that you are now evincing the reality of your faith in Christ, by a walk and conversation becoming the Gospel. Such it must be my humble endeavours, by the grace of God, to bind up more and more in their holy faith; and from such I anticipate both sympathy, and assistance, and counsel, in my labours among you.

Would to God that I could thus indulge the same pleasing hopes of you all. Some of you, I fear, are still living in a state of enmity and rebellion against the Majesty of heaven and earth. Others of you, I fear, are seeking happiness, while you have been regardless of the Gospel, living in a prayerless, careless, unconverted state, "without God and without hope in the world;" while many more, it may be, are satisfied with a cold and barren approbation of the truths which they are accustomed to hear, without any delight in the service of God, or any zeal for his glory. It must be my endeavour, therefore, under God, to warn such of their danger, and to exhort and to beseech them not to receive His grace in vain. I must try to excite their fears by unfolding the terrors of the law. I must attempt to interest their hopes by dwelling upon the infinite mercy of the divine character, gloriously represented to us in the scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ the Saviour.

Above all, God forbid, my beloved brethren, that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. If my own heart be right before God, the very opposition and discouragements, the very neglect and contempt I may meet with, will give energy to my supplications; and while I thus pray for you, and thus urge

upon your attention every motive with which the Word of God furnishes me, and which the Spirit of God may be pleased to suggest, I must remember that no instructions and no prayers of mine can avail, which are not offered through the blood of the everlasting covenant, and which are not called forth by the inward working of the Spirit of power.

But, in following this divine impulse, I am commissioned as your minister to preach to you the Gospel of peace; and wo be to me if, through indolence or neglect, through confidence in myself, or distrust in God, I neglect the duties, both public and private, which belong to my office.

And while engaged in these arduous labours, as your minister in Christ Jesus, I again entreat your countenance, your encouragement, and your prayers.

It is now, my friends, three years this very day since I first had the pleasure of addressing you in this sacred place.* I call it a pleasure, because it is a pleasure to dwell upon all the grand, and exalted, and subduing truths which belong to God and eternity; and I trust I shall ever be enabled to consider it not only a pleasure, but a privilege to spend, and to be spent, among you, in preaching to you the blessedness of the Gospel of reconciliation and peace.

I have great reason to be peculiarly happy, and thankfully to acknowledge a kind Providence in having called me to the ministry by your means, and I hope I shall ever feel grateful for all the friendship and attention which you have been pleased to manifest towards me.

The connexion, brethren, which is now forming betwixt us ought, no doubt, to be a most intimate and endearing connexion; but let both you and me recollect its very peculiar, its very interesting, and its very responsible nature.

I am now commanded, as an ordained minister of Christ Jesus, to announce to you the glad tidings of salvation through a once crucified, but now risen and exalted Redeemer; and to beseech you, while His grace is offered to your acceptance, to take heed that ye receive it not in vain.

Now this, my friends, is the accepted time; this is the day of salvation. But let both you and me remember, that there is a

* Mr. Hastie had been sometime Assistant in the parish to the late Rev. Alexander Menilaws.

great and a solemn day approaching, in which God will judge the world, and then shall all the secrets of time be made manifest, and ministers and people shall stand together before the judgment-seat of Heaven, and an account shall be required of us how we delivered the message, and of you how you received it. Oh! then, brethren, let this day of reckoning be continually present to our minds, and happy will it be if the same sentence of the Judge shall

acquit us both: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Well done good and faithful servants. enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, world without end. Amen.

THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. NATHANIEL MORREN, A.M.,

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"*Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.*"—Acts xvii. 2.

IN these words we perceive the fundamental principle of Protestantism, distinctly recognised by the Apostle, during his successive interviews with the synagogue of Thessalonica; for you will observe, he makes no reference to the oral traditions of the Jewish elders, nor to the boasted authority of the Jewish councils, nor to the fancied infallibility of the Jewish Church. He does not appeal to *reason* alone as a rule, for it was insufficient; nor does he even appeal to the *Scriptures* as authoritatively interpreted by himself, an inspired Apostle, or by the voice of the united Christian Church. But he appeals to *reason* and *Scripture* combined; he endeavours to excite them to the legitimate employment of their own reason, in order to the true explanation of the meaning of Scripture; *he reasons with them out of the Scriptures*. The rule of faith which he proposes is the Bible, and the Bible only. And he seeks to call forth the exercise of the individual judgment as to its import, being well assured, that unless the judgment be satisfied, there can neither be rational conviction nor enlightened faith.

Now this is precisely the grand principle which as Protestants we profess to hold, with regard to the proper method of interpreting the Word of God. We do not admit, (as we are sometimes represented to do,) that contradictory and inconsistent

meanings may be put by different persons upon the same passage of Scripture, and that every man is left at liberty to affix any meaning that his own fancy or feelings may suggest. But we do maintain, that if the Bible be worth any thing as a guide to religious truth, its real meaning (respecting at least things necessary to salvation) may be discovered by every individual, possessed of common understanding, provided only he can bring himself to peruse it in the spirit which itself inculcates; namely, with an earnest, humble, prayerful heart. We are very far from dispensing with the use of helps in the study of the Bible, when they are within our reach; and among those helps, we assign a high place to the opinions of the wise and good of past ages, and to the living ministry of the Gospel. But still it is one thing to use helps to enable us to form our judgment, and another thing to surrender tamely and blindly our judgment to others. There is a vast difference between asking the way when we are at a loss, and putting out our eyes or letting ourselves be blindfolded and led by others. To exercise our reason in the freest and most unfettered manner, without any control or restraint of man, is the highest and noblest prerogative of our nature as moral and accountable beings. It is a liberty which of right belongs equally to the laity and the clergy—to the peasant and the

philosopher—to the beggar and the king; and can, indeed, be denied to no human being without the grossest injustice. But at the same time, we hold every one to be deeply responsible for the proper use of this gift, to God the gracious giver and righteous Judge. If we resign it up to any man or set of men, if we neglect it through indifference, or abuse it through pride of intellect, or corruption of heart, we shall assuredly be answerable to God at the great day of account. And, therefore, while we say it is the *privilege* of every *reasonable* being, we also say it is the bounden *duty* of every *responsible* being to study the Scriptures *for himself* in the way which the Scriptures prescribe, under the solemn impression of the truth, that for this and every other talent intrusted to us, “every one of us shall render account to God for himself.”

Such is the foundation of Protestantism—not the right of private interpretation without accountability to God, but the right of private judgment, God being the final Judge. And what now is the scheme of the Church of Rome against which we *protest*? First of all, she esteems the Bible altogether insufficient as a rule of faith, and adds to it a variety of things supposed to have been handed down through eighteen hundred years, pure and uncorrupted, by the very uncertain and unsafe channel of oral tradition. And what is more: while we hear nothing of the defects or the obscurities of that *unwritten word, tradition*, we are told that the *written word* (though confessedly proceeding from the same all-wise and perfect God) is so very dark and mystical, as to be almost unintelligible; and that it requires not only tradition to make up for its imperfections, but likewise an authoritative interpretation to clear up its difficulties. It is, indeed, admitted to be a *rule of faith*; but then, with strange inconsistency, it is declared to be so obscure and mysterious, as only to make darkness visible, and be in point of fact no rule or guide at all, and in itself quite useless and nugatory for any of the great purposes for which its Author has given it. And, hence, every Roman Catholic, taking this degrading view of God's clear and perfect word, surrendering his birth-right as a free man, and his character as a reasonable creature, yields up his judgment as to the meaning of Scripture to others. In the language of his creed, he binds himself over “to admit the Sacred Scriptures only

according to the sense which holy mother church has held and holds, whose business it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the same.” But if we can succeed in showing, that it never was the design of the Author of the Bible, that we should blindly and implicitly receive the interpretation of it from any body of men, not even from the members of the true Church, far less from the Church of Rome, it will follow that the claim which that Church sets up to interpret Scripture authoritatively and infallibly, and to compel all to embrace her views of it under pain of present excommunication and future eternal damnation, is a tyrannical and most unrighteous usurpation over the souls and consciences of men.

In order, then, to make good our assertion, that it never was the design of the Author of the Bible that we should receive the interpretation of it, even from the members of the true Church, we would observe,

I. *The scheme is impracticable.* As things have been constituted by God, if we set out in our first inquiries, with an endeavour to ascertain the real sense of Scripture, not by our own study of it, but by the opinions of the true Church in all ages, we shall find the plan to be utterly impracticable. I do believe that Christ has always had in the world a spiritual invisible Church, consisting of all who were Christians, not merely in name and profession, but in sincerity and truth. I farther believe, that with regard to all points essential to salvation, they had correct views of the meaning of Scripture, and, if you will, were on these points *infallible*, the Spirit of Truth guiding them into all needful truth. And if I had but the means of ascertaining, without consulting the Bible, what are the views which such persons have entertained of its contents, and in what grand truths they have all agreed, it might then be a very easy and tolerably safe plan (had God so allowed it) simply to adopt their unanimous interpretation as my own. But, as matters really stand, the great difficulty still remains; how am I to know for certain, in the first instance, and without consulting the Scriptures, who were and who were not true Christians? God has no where but in the Bible, revealed to me the opinions of those who belong to the Church of the First-born, enrolled in heaven; so that, even though I were to attempt the plan of obtaining my interpretations of Scripture from the members

the true Church, it would just send me back to the Scripture itself, to learn by its careful perusal what will always be the creed and the character of God's own people. And before I could certainly know what their distinctive features are, I would have been compelled to find out the meaning of Scripture for myself, precisely in the manner I ought to have done at the first, with the view of drawing from it my own creed, and forming from it my own character.

But it may be asked, Is it not to be presumed that the views of Scripture entertained by a great majority of the *outward visible* Church, represent faithfully the views of it held by the spiritual and invisible Church? I answer in the language of Chrysostom, an eminent father of the Greek Church, but one whose authority is acknowledged by the Church of Rome, "All Christians ought to have recourse to the Scriptures; for now, since heresy has infected the churches, the divine Scriptures alone can afford a proof of genuine Christianity, and a refuge to those who are desirous of arriving at the true faith. Formerly (meaning in apostolical times) it might have been ascertained by various means where was the true Church. But at present, there is no other method left for those who are willing to discover the true Church of Christ, but *by the Scriptures alone*. And why? Because heresy has all outward observances in common with her. If a man, therefore, be desirous of knowing the true Church, how will he be able to do it, amidst so great a resemblance, but by the Scriptures alone? Wherefore our Lord, foreseeing that so great a confusion of things would take place in the latter days, ordered the Christians to have recourse to nothing but the Scriptures." Again, he says, "Let us not attend to the opinions of the many, but let us inquire into the things themselves. For it is absurd, while we will not trust other people in money-matters, but choose to reckon and calculate for ourselves, that in matters of far greater consequence, we should implicitly follow the opinions of others, especially as we possess the most excellent and perfect rule and standard by which to regulate our several inquiries—I mean the regulations of the divine law." It thus appears, that this ancient father, so far from wishing others to adopt slavishly his views of Scripture, labours with all earnestness to send them to study it for themselves.

And, indeed, the notion of our being bound to interpret Scripture, as the Romish Church expresses it, according to the imaginary unanimous consent of the fathers, is by none more severely reprobated than by the fathers themselves.

But to return. A mere presumption that the opinions of nominal Christians who are the many, have always been in accordance with the sentiments of real Christians who are the few, will not do here. We must have absolute certainty, and our doubts can no where be solved but in the Bible. Where the true faith is, says another ancient father, there the true Church is; but where can the true faith be found except in the record of faith, the Bible? So early as the days of the Apostles, many false teachers had gone out into the world, and therefore the Christians are commanded to believe not every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they be of God. Now, the tests by which we are to try them are given in the Apostolic writings, which, for that purpose, we must consult for ourselves. Among other marks of true and false doctrine, the following is mentioned: "He who knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." It is no uncommon thing for the Romish clergy to assume that very language, as if authority, no less than apostolic, had descended to them. But even their own church dares not to sanction the impious usurpation, seeing that no single priest, no single bishop, no single pope, (at least in this country,) is held to be infallible, as were the holy Apostles of our Lord. But the passage obviously implies, that if we would ascertain whether we are of God and the truth, or of Satan and error, we must hear the Apostles; and how can we hear them now, unless by reading and studying their writings?

But it is still urged by the enemies of free inquiry, May we not obtain the true meaning of Scripture in the decrees of the general councils of the Church? To this I would reply, that if we possessed certain evidence that the great and influential majority of those present at such councils were not merely nominal, but real Christians, under the immediate guidance of the Spirit of Truth, undoubtedly very great weight would attach to their opinions. But how are we to ascertain the fact of the personal religion of the majority of those councils? Sup-

posing it to have existed, it is impossible to have it proved; and with regard to some of the more recent of those assemblies, it would be far easier to prove, that the majority of those composing them were any thing but devout and consistent Christians. But even were it otherwise, while I do find in the New Testament many promises that the people of God shall be led into all truth, I look in vain for any assurance given, that the sentiments of the invisible church on earth shall be infallibly ascertained and faithfully promulgated by any assembly of the church visible—an assembly which can be merely representative, and representative chiefly of the superior clergy, and consequently exhibiting, but partially and imperfectly, the sentiments of a fractional portion of Christendom. Such has been, and such, from the nature of the case, must ever be the character of every council, however general, of the christian church; and, therefore, if we would ascertain whether such a body speaks the sentiments of real Christians or not, we must go back as before, and compare their decisions with the only infallible standard of truth, the Word of the living God.

And as the method referred to, of endeavouring to obtain correct views of scripture doctrine from the true Church, is in the present state of things impracticable, so we remark,

II. *The scheme is unnecessary.* Why drink at the streams which have always been, and from the earthen channels through which they flow, must always be more or less muddy and polluted, instead of repairing directly and immediately to the pure, the unadulterated, the overflowing fountain, to which we have free and unrestrained access. To have recourse for our interpretation of the Bible to the opinions of any uninspired man, or council of men, or even to the true christian church, we hold to be unnecessary, for two reasons; 1st, On account of the clearness and sufficiency of Scripture on all necessary points; and, 2dly, The express promises of the Holy Ghost to every sincere inquirer into its meaning. As to the former, *viz.*, the clearness and sufficiency of Scripture upon all points necessary to salvation, the question may naturally be put, Why was the Bible given at all? It was given *as a revelation*, and the very name of *revelation* implies the making something manifest that was before unknown.

Much respecting the character of God and the duty of man may be gathered, says the Apostle, from the works of creation and the light of natural conscience, so that the heathen are without excuse. Now, it certainly was the design of God in sending men the Gospel, to impart to them an increase of religious knowledge and moral truth; and, therefore, we cannot conceive a greater libel on the Gospel, or a more impious reflection on the wisdom of its author, than to insinuate that his object has failed, that his purpose has been defeated, and that instead of a revelation of light, he has given nothing but a mass of misty obscurity or palpable darkness. Suppose the case of a heathen man convinced that the Bible is inspired of God, and graciously sent as a guide to heaven. He eagerly begins its perusal, that he may enjoy the blessed guidance which it undertakes to give. But judge of his astonishment, if one tells him that it is indeed a revelation, but only wants clearness. It may be said to be a guide, but a guide which, without the assistance of certain uninspired men, will surely lead astray. But from this degrading estimate of the Sacred Volume by men, we turn to the testimony of Him who is truth: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge; and though they have no audible speech nor language, their voice not being heard, yet their sound goeth throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." But intelligible and impressive as that voice is, it is not to be compared with "the law of Jehovah, which is perfect, converting the soul; with the testimony of Jehovah, which is sure, making wise the simple; with the precepts of Jehovah, which are right, gladdening the heart; with the commandment of Jehovah, which is clear, enlightening the eyes; with the judgments of Jehovah, which are true and righteous altogether." The hundred and nineteenth psalm is one continued eulogy of the excellencies of God's law, as an unerring and perfect rule: "The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple. I through thy precepts do get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." Of the high and holy way to Zion, it is said that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. All this, it may be alleged, refers to the

Old Testament Scriptures, (which proves, that they at least are addressed to the understandings of all); and shall we expect less clearness or less certainty under that ministration of the Spirit which excelleth in glory, where there is so much plainness of speech, and where we all with unveiled countenance can behold the glorious and immortal life brought to light by the Gospel.

Where is there a writing more perspicuous or intelligible than the life of Christ in the gospels? Is it in the mystic and often self-contradictory lucubrations of the fathers, or in the barbarous jargon of schoolmen and casuists? What can be conceived more inimitably simple than the holy lessons of Christ, many of which were addressed to the poor, and which the common people heard gladly. To whom were the apostolic epistles first sent? For the most part to simple, untutored laymen; for even at wealthy and luxurious Corinth not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble were called, but persons who were esteemed by the world to be weak and foolish. A large portion of the Bible consists not in abstract truth, but in attractive narrative, and when put into the hands of children, even they can understand and relish its touching simplicity. Requires it profound depth of intellect to comprehend the faithful saying, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief?" Or must a man have studied in schools and colleges before he can take in those short points of duty, "Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal?"

It is not denied that there are certain parts of Scripture which men have unhappily wrested to their own destruction; but St. Peter informs us that it is only because they are culpably ignorant and unstable, indocile and untractable, that they thus torture the plain words of Scripture to a sense which they will not bear; and the Apostle, moreover, instead of using this as any argument for our giving up the reading of Paul's epistles, or any other part of the Scriptures, enjoins us immediately thereafter to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But how could they grow in that knowledge, unless by practising what he had before inculcated, viz., desiring the pure, unadulterated milk of the Word, that we might grow thereby? True, indeed, as might have been expected, there are in the Word of God, as in his works both of crea-

tion and providence, mysteries which we cannot penetrate, intricacies which we cannot unravel, depths which we cannot explore. But, as one of the fathers has said, if there be in it places where an elephant would be drowned, there are also places so shallow that an infant may pass through them. And upon every point of necessary duty, upon all doctrines essential to salvation, all the words of wisdom are plain to him that understandeth, and right to them who find knowledge. In the path of faith and holiness no honest, attentive, prayerful inquirer shall ever be allowed to stray far, or shall ever finally be lost.

While we maintain, however, that all things necessary to christian belief and moral conduct are revealed in the Bible as with a sunbeam, otherwise it would not deserve the name of a rule of faith and practice, we at the same time admit, that there is about the mind of man by nature much blindness of vision, much sluggishness of conception, which would prevent him from perceiving with clearness, or contemplating with interest, truths most fully manifested in the Bible. But in order to meet this, we observe, secondly, that there are many express promises of the aid of the Holy Ghost to every sincere inquirer. Sometimes, indeed, we hear it asserted, that these promises of the Spirit were made not to every individual, but to pastors only. But what saith the Scripture? Christ, addressing the multitude, says, "Ask, ask for the way, and information shall be given you; seek, seek the house, and ye shall find it; knock, knock at the door, and it shall be opened to you. What man is there among you, who, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" To the same purpose writes the Apostle James: "If any man (be he who he may) lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally without upbraiding, and it shall be given him." Hear also the prayer of St. Paul, not merely for the ministers of the Church, but for all the saints at Ephesus, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." And how often, indeed, throughout the New Testament, do we read

of believers being enlightened, comforted, strengthened, sanctified, sealed by the Spirit of promise, who resides in them as his chosen temple, and who is as often to be found in humble cottages as in halls of learning. Hence these remarkable words of the Saviour, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because having hid these things from the wise and prudent, (from sophists and sages,) thou hast revealed them unto babes!" And yet, in the face of these explicit declarations, the Romish Clergy have sometimes the assurance to tell

their lay-brethren, who have souls to be saved as well as themselves, that they have no right to the promise of the Holy Ghost; that to pastors belongs the monopoly not only of private judgment, but of spiritual illumination, and that they enjoy exclusively the glorious privilege of old imparted to *all* God's children—the privilege of being "taught of God," thus robbing them of the Almighty's best gift to the world after the gift of his Son—the blessing of his Holy Spirit.*

* In a second discourse, (which will be given in a future Number,) the scheme of the Romish Church is shown to be *unscriptural and irrational*, as well as *impracticable and unnecessary*, and the subject is applied.

THE MIND OF MAN.

Nor to infinitude of space confined
 Are the far flights of man's excursive mind.
 Oh! who has never felt the mystic tie
 That binds our int'rests to eternity?
 Brief though the longest life, we can explore
 All time behind us, and all time before.
 Not as the flush of leaves, from year to year,
 That teem in spring,—in winter disappear,
 Man's generations with each other twine,
 And form through ages a continued line.
 To scenes occurring, and to actions done,
 Long ere our infant eyes beheld the sun;
 To what great grandsires and their sires have left,
 Proving they lived, though now of life bereft;
 To monuments of still more ancient time,
 That stand in grey antiquity sublime;
 To what in the historic page alone,
 Remains in memory of ages gone;
 Till, through the distance of six thousand years,
 The world emerging from the void appears;
 To these, and even beyond time's earliest goal,
 A secret impulse points the curious soul;
 And a like impulse makes our thoughts extend
 Forwards, through ages that shall never end.
 Oh! while the mind traverses this profound,
 No past discov'ring, and no future bound,
 Where,—where is pride, that this will not abase,
 Beholding here Jehovah's dwelling-place?

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

DISCOURSE by the Rev. GRAHAM MITCHELL, A.M.,
Whitburn.

THE CHRISTIAN PASSOVER, A CONSOLATORY AND IMPERISH-
ABLE MEMORIAL TO ALL THE TRUE ISRAEL ;

A DISCOURSE PREACHED IN WHITBURN CHURCH, ON 2^D SABBATH OF DECEMBER, 1834,
THE DAY OF THE DISPENSATION OF THE SACRAMENT IN THAT PLACE,

By the Rev. GRAHAM MITCHELL, A.M.,
Minister of Whitburn.

“ And this day shall be unto you for a memorial.”—EXODUS xii. 14.

He who knows what man is, his origin and end, aware how apt we are to lose sight of objects the most important, especially of a spiritual and eternal nature, in the pursuit of things seen and temporal, has made ample provision against such weaknesses and shortcomings on the part of humanity. In the most condescending manner, the Majesty of Heaven has appointed memorials to be kept of transactions of a momentous nature, with a view both to impress the mind, and to make them known to subsequent generations. Thus the ordinance of circumcision was appointed to be a memorial of the covenant with Abraham, “The father of the faithful, and the friend of God.” The twelve stones taken out of the river Jordan were reared like so many pillars, as a memorial of Jehovah’s love in enabling his people to pass across that river as on dry land. It was even customary to inscribe any very memorable transaction upon the palms of the hands, and to place it before the eyes as a frontlet, which was done on the first day of unleavened bread, to keep up the remembrance of lasting obligations to love and fear the Lord for Israel’s departure out of Egypt. Plates of brass were also, by the divine command, placed as a covering over the altar, after the two hundred and fifty men were destroyed for their presumption in offering unhallowed fire, to teach the solemn lesson that God will be sanctified of them that draw nigh unto him, and that no stranger who was not of

the seed of Aaron should dare to come near to offer incense before so holy a Lord God, lest they be visited with the punishment of Korah and his company. The Passover was likewise to be a perpetual ordinance among the Jews of their deliverance, and to be typical of the Lamb of God, who stipulated with the Father to purchase us with his blood, by being offered up at the termination of the ancient economy, without blemish and without spot. Such memorials of important transactions are not, however, peculiar to God’s people only of old. They are recommended and enforced by the high authority of the New Testament. Doubtless all of you must be familiar with that most beautiful instance recorded by the express mandate of the Saviour, of one grateful for the favour, by the restoration of a beloved brother from the grave, took a box of costly and fragrant ointment and poured it on his head, upon whom nothing however precious could be wasted. Singular as this act might at first sight appear, certain it is, that it was conformable to the custom of ancient times at festivities, not only in Asia, but in the more polished parts of Europe.* There was, however, a far higher end served by such an affusion of ointment.

* Several classic authors state, that chaplets of flowers and odoriferous unguents were used at festive entertainments in Greece and Rome. Among the Jews, it was on these occasions a practice to anoint the head with a rich affusion of ointment.

You know it was by that ceremony that kings, priests, and prophets were consecrated to their respective offices; and for this reason it was that our great Redeemer, who united in his own person the threefold characters of king, priest, and prophet, was distinguished by the name of the *Messiah*, which signifies *Anointed*. Whether Mary was conscious of this discriminating mark of respect, the coincidence at least is remarkable, or whether she regarded the act in the single view of anointing a little beforehand his body for that burial it was soon to undergo, we know at least that it was an acceptable service to be reported as a memorial of her faith and love in all future ages of the Church. "Verily, I say unto you, wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, this shall also that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her;" and which Scripture is this day fulfilled in your ears. Hence it appears, to preserve and keep up in remembrance, by some public act, any great event, is a wise and salutary appointment, sanctioned by the highest of all authority. Nor can it be doubted, that were it otherwise left to our own option, we would be too ready to lose sight of the kindness of our divine Benefactor, Upholder, and Saviour. Were it not, then, for the weekly return of the christian Sabbath, which commemorates Christ's triumph over death and the grave, even within their own territories, we would be too apt to forget an event the most important to the universe, which occupied the counsels of the Eternal ere time began, and was the top-stone of all the designs and purposes of Heaven. And upon the same principle, were it not for the observance of the Sacrament of the Supper, we should be in danger in losing sight of, or at least of not being sufficiently impressed, with a sense of that love which death could neither weaken nor destroy—which surpassing the comprehension of every mind, save the Infinite Mind, the devout believer at such a solemnity often feels such adoring views of divine grace and glory reflected with ineffable splendour and beauty in "the face of Jesus Christ," that the soul delightfully loses itself in the contemplation of the infinite grandeur and benevolence of the theme in which "all fulness dwells." Now, the words of the text, though originally applied to the Jewish passover, is no less applicable to the christian passover, seeing that the inspired penmen of the New Testament have shown that the deliverance commemorated by Israel of old is still more worthy of being now shown forth by all who

are the true Israel of God; and as the passover was the shadow of which the ordinance of the Supper is the substance, in either instance the text may be fitly applied: "This day shall be unto you for a memorial."

Relying on the divine teaching and blessing, we invite your attention to a consideration of the circumstances to which the text primarily refers, and in what respects it may be said, "this day shall be unto you for a memorial."

1st. Your attention is solicited to a consideration of the circumstances to which the text primarily refers. Obvious it is to all who look at the passage under consideration, that it is recorded in reference to one of the greatest and most solemn festivals observed among Jehovah's ancient people, kept up in remembrance of an event unparalleled from the birth of time, (Deuteronomy xxvi. 8,) and the knowledge of which was commanded to be transmitted from one generation to another. (Deut. iv. 34.) The ordinance of the passover referred to in the context, is to be contemplated then in a twofold point of view, *as commemorative*, and *as typical*.

Undoubtedly it was strikingly commemorative of a most signal deliverance from the bondage of Egypt on behalf of the people of Israel, long and severely oppressed. It called up to the view of all succeeding generations what had been done for their fathers of old, and to their highly favoured nation through the clemency of Heaven. It was calculated to awaken the most grateful and holy feelings, by imprinting on their minds the marvellous interposition of Jehovah in the deliverance of the families of Israel from the sword of the destroying angel, when he put to death the first-born of the Egyptians, whilst he passed over the houses of the Israelites marked by the blood of the Lamb slain in every Hebrew house the preceding evening, and which was therefore appropriately termed the *Paschal Lamb*. Indeed the whole of the circumstances connected with that eventful scene were alike impressive and instructive to all succeeding times; but awfully striking especially to the view of those who were the immediate objects of the *deliverance*. Even the very *hour* of this solemn awakening judgment was fitted the more deeply to impress the human feelings, especially when these had been previously excited, as in the present case, by a most affecting visitation from Heaven. Every circumstance seems to contribute to enhance the surprise, and aggravate the consternation of the scene. The voice of mourning, lamentation and woe, for the sudden bereave-

ment of the first-born of each family over all the dwellings of Egypt, was heard not amid the light, and sunshine, and bustle of day, when man "goeth forth to his work," or when the mind is all engrossed with the cares and occupations of life, but at the still and solemn hour of MIDNIGHT. It was at that hour when all is silence, and the shadows of a long evening stretched out, when darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people, superinduced upon their hearts; for just preceding the awful catastrophe caused by the destroying angel, we are told by Moses, that there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days; that the people saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in *their dwellings*. Universal consternation spread among the enemies of Jehovah, who had slain the children of the Israelites. No man moved from his *home*; all were silent in darkness; and the fog which was instrumental in this affecting judgment had extinguished, it would appear, all the lamps of the Egyptians, leaving them to grope in total darkness, as intimations of that darker visitation now about to come upon them, and as premonitions of the very blackness of darkness for ever. Enveloped amid such an unusual scene of horror by that sable veil spread over the face of nature, which obliterates the variety of colours which owe their existence to the light, how must it have aggravated the solemnity of that hour when Heaven's announcement was carried into execution: "There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more." Throughout the kingdom of Egypt, what consternation and weeping would instantaneously fill every house, the pride, and solace, and future stay of which smitten to death under the restless and withering power of an invisible arm! Deep was the cloud of night; but deeper far must have been the cloud of mind when encompassed so long and fearfully amid supernatural obscurity. The Lord bowed the heavens and came down, and darkness was under his feet. He rode on a cherub and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his pavilion, round about Him were dark waters, and thick clouds of the sky. "At midnight, the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; so that Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, 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." Well might his people of old, impressed with a sense of these things, commemorate so great a deliverance, and keep it as a sacred anniversary throughout their generations. And saved from the destroyer of souls, can we forget this day what a great and everlasting salvation has been wrought out for us by Him who has redeemed Israel; how, amid supernatural darkness, he endured the hidings of the divine countenance that we might be saved in the laver of his precious and atoning blood!

This leads us to remark, then, that there is another and far more important light in which the ordinance of the passover is to be recorded, as prefiguring a more glorious deliverance than that experienced by the Jews of old; for, from the announcements of the New Testament writers, there can be no doubt that it was designed to be typical of the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." There is an analogy in some respects, kept up in the divine records between the Paschal Lamb and the Lamb of God. Independently of the remarkable circumstance of our Saviour being crucified, and our deliverance from the bondage of the wicked one being completed on the same month, and on the same day of the month, that the Israelites were delivered from the bondage of Egypt, by their departure from that land,* you will bear in mind that the Paschal Lamb was to be unblemished, to represent the Lamb of God, who was without spot and without blemish; that the people were to be saved by the blood sprinkled, as we are by the application of the blood which, as an efficacious and healing balsam, cleanseth from all sin; that when the evening was come, Jesus sat down with the twelve to eat the passover; and as they were eating, he took bread and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, as a representation of his body, which was to be broken for sinners, and which they were to do in *remembrance* of him; and that when having just suffered on the cross, it was literally fulfilled as typified in the Paschal Lamb: "Not a bone of him was broken,"† even although the soldiers came to his dead body for the express purpose, which they had effected to the two sufferers with him on the tree. Thus the ordinance

* It is a remarkable enough circumstance, that the Israelites went out of Egypt, and the Redeemer of the world was put to death, on the fifteenth day of the month Nisan (March).

† Compare John xix. 36, with Exodus xii. 46

of the passover was typical of our Redeemer, as well as commemorative of the great deliverance which was wrought out for Israel.

Let us then now proceed, as we proposed, to point out in what respects this day of sacred communion may be said to be unto you for a Memorial. Be it remarked, then, that this day is fitted to prove a memorial, by recalling to your view what, by his sacrificial offering, the most dignified of Sufferers accomplished for your deliverance from Sin, when in the depths of his Love, he submitted to be led as a lamb to the slaughter. How aptly does the celebration of our christian passover represent to the eye of faith the deliverance which was achieved for us by a Great one and Saviour in Israel, and is in all respects fitted to keep up through all periods of time the memory of his bleeding and dying love to mortals. The enlightened and genuine believer can never look to that great event without remembering the *design* of his sufferings, and that as in the Old Testament Scriptures the passover is termed "the sacrifice of the Lord's passover," (Exodus. xii. 27); so there is in the New, an analogous announcement, that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." Hence, in the solemn ordinance of the Supper, you are called on devoutly to remember Jesus your atoning Deliverer—Him who is emphatically styled "*our Passover*," inasmuch as by his meritorious death and passion our sins have been *passed over*; just as, by the sprinkled blood of the Paschal Lamb, the children of Israel were delivered from the destroyer on a night never to be forgotten. But there was an efficacy in his blood peculiar to itself. So whilst the Eternal spared, passed over without injury, all without exception on whose door-posts the blood of the sacrificed Lamb was sprinkled, let none from thence infer that its blood had any natural or inherent efficacy, whereby the home sprinkled might be preserved from that sweeping destruction which overtook the land of Egypt. Neither ought any one to conclude, as some have imagined, that Jehovah, in passing, needed any such thing as a signal to discriminate between his people and his foes—the Israelites and the Egyptians. Far be it from us to entertain for a moment, such unworthy and erroneous notions. For the blood of the lamb slain in Israel was just a sensible sign of deliverance to the people of God, and emblematic of our spiritual and perpetual deliverance from the inflictions of divine justice through the atoning blood of our immaculate Redeemer; and seeing that we have thereby been *passed over* and

saved, it cannot be unappropriately termed "the blood of sprinkling." Hail, then, O believer, this day of communion as a sweet memorial of the sufferings of the Lamb of God, whose blood cleanseth thy soul from all sin! Repose on that completed sacrifice wherein justice appears in its utmost splendour in passing over merited punishment, and in delivering all his ransomed, from more than mortal death. Now was it by faith the Israelites kept the passover? (Heb. xi. 28.) Then, in the exercise of the like precious faith, let us keep the feast in a humble, implicit reliance on the potency of the blood of the Lamb of God offered up without *spot*, to bear away the sin of the world; who, in his state of exaltation, was even recognised under the emblem of a Lamb with the marks of recent slaughter. With these scars he was beheld standing before the throne, upon which the several orders of being in the celestial temple "fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung," in reference to the divine counsels, "a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy *blood*, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

But in order thus to keep up in sacred and indelible remembrance this spiritual and eternal deliverance, we must look to the sacrifice as deriving all its efficacy and value from the pre-eminent dignity and grandeur of the Sufferer. We must look to that elevation he possesses, the basis of which was, that "he was in the form of God." "The Prince of Life, who assumed our nature into a personal union with himself, "we should remember, was "God manifested in the flesh." Yet He who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery or usurpation of the divine rights to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, or literally "*he emptied himself*" of somewhat which he heretofore possessed," when arrayed in the refulgent and essential glory which he had with the Father ere the world was, as uncreated, possessed of "a glory equal, of a majesty co-eternal." Even among men it is the moral worth, the real dignity and distinguished usefulness of a character that makes his death an object of greater or less moment to society or to the world. The death of a Prince who had gone forth on behalf of his subjects to turn the battle from the gates,

to rescue them from slavery or ruin, is an event of far deeper magnitude and interest in public estimation, than the death of an obscure private individual. Thus when Abner, Saul's general, was carried to his grave, king David said, "Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?" Of how much greater consequence to the universe, and worthy of being engraven on the tablet of every human heart, is the expiatory death of the Holy One and Saviour of Israel—the wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Captain of our salvation, who hath at his command legions of angels, and quickeneth whom he will! Contemplate with the most devout emotions, the superior dignity and worth of your divine Deliverer. How much does it enhance his satisfaction to the law, the circumstance that he was not necessitated to become our substitute; that his sacrificial sufferings, which so illustrate the divine character, vindicate his moral government, demonstrate the evil of sin, and secure to every returning sinner a welcome reception, were altogether disinterested on his part, and most unmerited on ours, when for the transgressions of his people he was stricken! With the sufferings of your Saviour, do not forget, then, to associate his original and essential dignity as imparting to them all their worth. When you think of his humiliation and abasement, think of Him also who has upon his head many crowns, whose countenance is as the sun shining in his strength. When you think of Him as despised and rejected of men, think of Him also as one fairer than the sons of men, whose name is as the ointment poured forth, and all whose garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces. And when you think of Him as smitten and forsaken of God, and afflicted, think of Him as the Sun of Righteousness, who hath arisen on our world with healing in his beams; as the day-star which arises in the hearts of his people; like the light of the morning, a morning without clouds; as the dew on the grass, and the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Eternity will never fully unfold the grandeur of his nature or of his redemption. Bright though be the beams which may dart hereafter on each enraptured soul, arrayed though it be with a flood of glory and splendour illumined by Him who is *light*, and in whom is no darkness at all, still, whatever be the expansion of the powers, accessions of knowledge, attain-

ments in perfection of finite spirits, it will be impossible fully to explore or comprehend the nature of the *infinite* Redeemer as Immanuel; for, as one has well said,* the soul considered in relation to its Saviour and Creator, "is like one of those mathematical lines which may draw nearer to another for all eternity, without a possibility of touching it."

Consider then, beloved in the Lord, what must be the dimensions of that love which thus led your Sponsor, altogether immaculate, to such an arduous interposition on behalf of adversaries, who in effect, had made a covenant with death and hell. Surely it must have been a love no sufferings could drown, no pencil can draw, no rhetoric express, no created mind conceive. It is all ocean—it has no line or plummet to measure or fathom it. It is all immensity—it has no bounds or shore. O the depth and the length, the breadth and the height of the love of God manifested in Christ Jesus! It transcends the understandings of immortals. It draws forth the attention of innumerable orders of cherubim and seraphim to *pry* into its mysterious glories. Astonished alike at the preference to man, and the mode of his recovery, there is hereby made known to principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God. "Behold, then, what love the Father hath bestowed on you in sending his Son to become a *propitiation*."

Besides, this sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour, presented in depths of love by this most dignified of sufferers, was to secure for you deliverance from Sin. So over the memorials of his love, in the remembrance of his death, we must also associate the remembrance of our sins; for the judge who sat on his trial, and the soldier who plunged into him his spear, had no power except it had been given them from above. It was our sins which brought him to the cross. It is our sins which are chargeable with his death, and which were the procuring cause. These planted the wounds in his flesh. They struck the nails into his hands and feet; and with a deeper than Egyptian darkness, caused the hidings of his Father's countenance, and the pillars of nature to tremble in "that hour and power of darkness." Hate then, "with a perfect hatred," your sins which produced such sufferings. And should their delusive pleasures and profits yet tempt you to forget Him to whom you owe ten thousand talents, and who loved you with an

* Addison.

everlasting love, consider the wounds you will inflict on the most generous and disinterested of friends—the wormwood and the gall, the humiliating traces and sad remembrances which it will leave on your souls, and the incurable dishonour it will bring on his cause; “for what are these wounds,” says the Prophet, “in thy hands and thy feet? These are they with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.” This day then should be a memorial to you that your deliverance from sin was achieved by the most loving and dignified of sufferers, who carried our Sins up with him to the cross, and bore them in his own body on the tree.

Let us now proceed to remark, that this day shall prove a memorial not for, but *against* all those who presumptuously and deliberately trample under foot that blood which thus saves from the destroyer—against those who are still unawakened and hardened, perishing in the face of the sweet overtures of mercy, and in possession of the means of grace. Affecting is the consideration, and great must be the aggravation of guilt and condemnation that men have an all-sufficient remedy presented for their acceptance, and that that remedy they cast away from them, as inefficacious or a thing of nought. Such a line of conduct cannot be palliated, or satisfactorily accounted for upon any principles of sound reasoning, nor bears any resemblance to the way in which people ordinarily *conduct* themselves in reference to the concerns of this life. Just say what rational being, labouring under some malignant disease, would refuse making a trial, at least by the recommendation of a most skilful physician, of a prescription which, in the experience of thousands, had been found a sovereign and efficacious medicine. What criminal would inconsiderately cast away from him the offer from his king of pardon and life? or what man of the world, reject a proposal which would secure an earthly inheritance, and a competent portion of the good things of this life? Sad infatuation, then, to reject a heavenly physician, a guarantee from the wrath to come, an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. And does the value of any inheritance rise in proportion to its duration, how much more preposterous, then, does such a rejection appear; for no man will surely prefer the possession of an estate, however valuable and delightful, only for a few weeks and months, or any limited time, to one still distant, but of undoubted certainty, calculated

to impart the most unmingled satisfaction, and which he shall continue to possess through every period of his earthly existence. Why not all act upon this same principle, in reference to matters of the greatest moment—the absolute, unchanging, self-satisfying good, instead of “preferring the things which are seen and temporal to the things unseen and eternal.” Is the blood of the everlasting covenant to be treated as an unholy thing? “If they escaped not who despised Moses’ law, but died without mercy under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment shall he be counted worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God.” Consider this, all ye that forget God, “lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver you.” Consider this, ye who are rejecting the counsel of God against yourselves, and judging yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, by contemning an intercessor, an atonement, an inheritance, provided for you:—ye who from day to day violate the eternal and immutable laws of heaven, who neglect Christ’s last and dying command, or who venture to come to his table without any previous preparation, heedless of self-examination, of secret prayer, of watchfulness, and of resolutions formed in reliance on divine grace, of renewed and persevering devotedness. “Kiss ye the Son, then, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way. For if they escaped not who turned away from Him who spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,” “who is this day set forth as crucified amongst you.”

The words of the text may be viewed as a memorial also of a most solemn and binding *transaction* between his people and the Saviour of souls, by which they vow to Him eternal allegiance over the memorials of dying and redeeming love. In a covenant never to be forgotten, you publicly and decidedly declare an unreserved surrender of yourselves to Him whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light. You give to Him what is most justly due. You consecrate to Him your time, your talents, your property, your affections. You consign over by an irrevocable deed every thing that you deem dear and valuable, for the high purposes of his honour and glory, both as to this world and the next, rejoicing that any thing, whether great or small, will be accepted of, to be devoted to such a cause, and to such a Master. Far from considering such a surrender inimical to the spirit of christian liberty, you will view it as a most exalted privilege of the sons and

daughters of the Lord Almighty, whose service is the most *perfect freedom*. Henceforth then, you are to consider yourselves no longer your own, but the Lord's, having willingly given up ALL to him for ever. There is a striking incident recorded in the annals of history, which may help to furnish some idea of the full liberty and entireness with which our surrender must be made to Him who came on the high errand of an embassy of reconciliation. When the enemies of the Romans came to negotiate about an unconditional capitulation, the Ambassador, on the part of the Roman people, inquired as to the extent of the surrender their adversaries were willing to make. He asked, Do you deliver up yourselves—the people—your city—your fields—your waters—your boundaries—your temples, your utensils, all your property divine and human into my power? *We surrender all*, and so, said he, I accept you.* The surrender of ourselves to our glorious Redeemer and God must be no less *entire*; we, too, must *surrender to him all*. Nevertheless, it is a surrender as to its results, materially different, for you are aware, that you are not called on by the great Plenipotentiary from the court of heaven, to subject yourselves by your surrender to be like vassals or slaves, to bend to the cruel yoke of oppression, and of a still more cruel and unrelenting master. It is a surrender to a Sovereign and Saviour who is all brightness and beauty, whose sceptre is righteousness, and whose reign is grace; it is a surrender of the powers and affections of the inward man to the Spirit of all goodness, who draws us not by the despotic arm of violence or compulsion, but “by the cords of love and the bands of a man.” He sends the rod of his strength out of Zion, to win us over by every touching consideration, by awakening the finer and more tender chords of the human heart, towards him who formed it and sustains it. Hence, though a *conquered*, he makes a *willing people* in the day of his power. Yield yourselves to him this day, then, as they who are alive from the dead. Do it not grudgingly or as of necessity, but of a ready mind; not in a spirit of self-righteousness, but in a dependence on the Lord your righteousness. Consign every thing to him, and he will impart every thing to you; for all things will be yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. If such be your surrender, if you turn the stream of your affections from lying vanities to the living and

immortal spring, you shall be filled as with all the fulness of God, of which every object, however beautiful or exalted, is but an efflux from his fulness—but a reflection from his glory, by which *all* other objects are eclipsed and overborne by the brightness of his majesty.

Now, let those who are in the “morn and dew of youth,” be encouraged to make such a surrender to the best of all beings, to give their first and most valuable days to him who will hedge up your way as with thorns from temptation and evil, that you may be safe through life, and your last end may be peace. And let those whose day is far spent, and whose night may be just at hand, give yourselves over to the Friend of sinners, and engage your whole hearts and lives in his work, which is most glorious, and honourable, and pure, that when heart and flesh faint and fail, God may be the strength of your hearts, and your portion for ever. If such a surrender all of us make, this day will be a blessed memorial throughout our whole existence, as one of the days of the Son of man.

Whoever in this covenant transaction remembers Christ, will also find this day to prove a memorial by its services, strengthening the bond of *affection* towards the *friends* of the Lamb of God. This is a necessary result: for we are expressly required “to love one another, as Christ hath loved us.” Here is the *motive* or groundwork of our regard to his followers, and the grand model which we must keep in our eye, to perform aright so essential and imperative a requirement. To equal his affection in its utmost extent, indeed, is an attainment too high for creatures who are the inhabitants of a fallen and apostate world. The precept, then, must surely be understood with some *limitation*; just as when we are exhorted to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect, we cannot suppose it is expected we can reach such a height in this imperfect state of being, but merely that we must seek, as far as our nature is capable of, after a conformity to the pure and divine original. Now, what is the inference which the sacred writers draw from a consideration of the love manifested by the great and all-compassionate Friend of man: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another; hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” “By this,” says Jesus, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another.” Seeing that it

* Livy, liber 1.

is by waiting on the Lord in the way of his ordinances our strength in his work is renewed, there can be no doubt that the *commemoration* of the death of Jesus is calculated to strengthen our feelings of respect and attachment to his devoted and consistent followers; for in that ordinance we are impressively reminded by those who sit at the same table, drink from the same spring, and are expectants of the same glorious hopes, that they are fellow-workers together with God, and like us the recipients of his grace, by the aid of which, after the termination of this fleeting scene, we shall participate of the fruit of the living and immortal vine ever new in our Father's kingdom.

This holy affection is one grand and decisive criterion, by which you are to determine whether you are partakers of that eternal salvation accomplished by Him who was our great passover, by the blood which he shed to deliver us from the destroyer. "We know," says the apostle John, "that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the *brethren*," viz., the disciples of that great Master whom we profess to revere; and, again, "he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." 1 John iii. 14. Be careful, however, against hastily concluding that we have undergone a change from death to life, merely because we can enumerate a long catalogue of *persons* whom we think the genuine followers of the Lamb whom we highly esteem. We may have many of our nearest relatives, with whom we spent our earliest days, to whom we lie under innumerable obligations, for which we can render no other return but the manifestation of feelings of gratitude, who are the sincere and active disciples of Jesus. Whence does this affection for our friends and acquaintances proceed, if we have no other evidence of our discipleship to adduce but simply our love for these? Does it not spring from mere natural feeling which has very little connexion with religion at all? for if you love them only which love you, what do you more than others? To this it may be answered, indeed, we not only esteem their persons but their characters—their benevolence, their disinterestedness, their amiability and their anxiety for our welfare in both worlds. But, then, is it not quite conceivable that the very same feelings of affection might be experienced even by a man who is an almost total stranger to the christian character? Undoubtedly. That man must be far lost to all sense of christian morality, who can entertain no sentiments of respect for a man who gives attestation of the most perfect

sincerity and willingness to do good to the unthankful and the evil. He can hardly be said to be possessed of the common feelings of human nature, fallen as it is, who does not feel his heart warm towards the humble and retiring Christian, who comes as a messenger of peace to his dwelling, and pours the glad tidings of everlasting comfort into the hearts of the inmates, overwhelmed by some sudden and unexpected disaster. And if, in addition to the hopes which the christian visitant endeavours to raise, and the agonies to allay, he finds that to this personal or domestic trial, there be superadded that of poverty, by which all lies foundered that was dear of an earthly nature, that he does all in his power to rescue them from so calamitous a situation, and succeeds in his kindly efforts; cold, nay, worse than cold, depraved must that heart be, which has no feeling of respect or regard, for one who gives so substantial and beautiful a proof of his piety. Admitting, then, all this to be fact, that we may respect and esteem some of the followers of the Lamb, and yet this be no decisive evidence that we are genuine disciples, what, then, are we to regard as real and undoubted proofs? You must consider what are the *principles* upon which your attachment is based. Unquestionably it must be, because they are our *brethren in Christ*. It must proceed from the circumstance of the relation they bear to their Saviour, and their resemblance to him, in discovering traces of his image and dispositions, proving that they have something of that mind in them which was in him; "for if we love him that begat, we love him also that is begotten of him." If we love Christ, we must necessarily love those who resemble him, who are not of the world, even as their Master was not of the world. If we be sincere then, in our attachment which we profess at the Lord's table, towards the Redeemer of our souls, our fortress, deliverer, and Rock of our salvation, we shall love those whom he loves. His friends will be deemed our friends; all who stand towards him in an intimate and endearing relationship, as members of his mystical body, as the purchase of his blood, as partakers of the divine nature. Such affection is not a selfish, unthinking, blind impulse in our nature. It is founded on the sure basis of love to God, and a regard to his honour and interests in the world; not on mere local or incidental circumstances, or partialities. Real and unequivocal are the proofs of our attachment to him, when we desire above all things that God may be glori-

fied, that he be held in sacred and everlasting remembrance. This day will prove to us, then, a memorial, reminding us in all time coming, that if we really love our Saviour we shall love his members. And let this not be in word only, but in deed. Say not, in reference to any of his poor and neglected followers, "Be ye warmed, and be ye clothed," whilst you give not those things which are needful to the body; affording no aid to the needy, protection to the oppressed, instruction to the ignorant, comfort to the sorrowful and broken in spirit, consolation to the dying. Engage in acts of substantial kindness to the souls and bodies of men, doing good to all, and especially to them who are of the household of faith. Then shall you know that ye are the children of your Father; and then, your Saviour, be assured, will regard all which you thus perform from christian principle, as if you had conferred it upon him, a personal favour, "when he shall sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."

Let us now proceed to remark, that this day is fitted to prove a memorial of consolation and hope to those suffering under *trials*, whether of a spiritual nature, or those which flow from a heart crushed under the sorrows of life. Many are the troubles of the righteous. These spring from several sources. Spiritual trials generally arise from entertaining higher impressions of the divine purity and justice, and consequent deeper convictions than others of the evil and malignity of any want of conformity to the law of God. Often is the believer disquieted, when he thinks how few comparatively are living for heaven; what a vast throng is crowding the broad way which leadeth to destruction. In the words of inspiration, he is ready to exclaim, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." No words can portray his emotions, when he thinks what shall be the consequences, to transgressors, of sin when it is *finished*; when he contrasts the disparity between the profession and the practice of many who, notwithstanding having a name to live, walk as the enemies of the cross of Christ—to the disparagement of the cause they pretend to espouse; when he thinks of the small attainments he himself has made in the spiritual life, notwithstanding his advantages, how low his practical estimate has been of the worth of souls, having made such few and feeble efforts to rescue them

as brands from the fire; what deep solicitude ought to have been felt for the welfare of his relatives and family. He remembers what coldness and apathy have often mingled with his devotions in the chamber and the temple; and how unfit in all respects he is to render up a faithful account of his stewardship. He feels how deserving he is to be visited with hidings of the divine countenance and withdrawal of his favour. Under such harassing apprehensions, the believer must still encourage himself to confide in a reconciled God, who has the hearts of all men in his power, saying, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." "O send forth thy light and truth." "My soul shall be yet joyful in the Lord: it shall rejoice in his salvation." "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

Under the *trials of life*, there are also consolations to the believer which are neither few nor small. What these trials are each one knows best, in his own experience. Every heart knoweth its own bitterness. Each one hath his own peculiar burden to bear. Whatever these be, personal or relative, we must never lose hold of the arm of everlasting strength, we must never let go the anchor of our confidence and hope, which hath great recompense of reward. For so long as we stay ourselves with implicit reliance on this bulwark of strength, know ye, sons and daughters of affliction, that we shall see our way through all the mazes and vicissitudes of this trying world; move within view of the haven of perfect rest. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. To the good man light doth arise even in the midst of darkness. Far from being under the reign of anarchy and chance, God bringeth order out of confusion; he maketh even the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he doth restrain. Through the eye of faith, then, his people are enabled to view disastrous dispensations in a light far different from that of others, somewhat like the telescope to the eye of the astronomer, who sees clearly those celestial orbs which to others are altogether invisible, or shine remote, with a dim and feeble ray. Fret not thyself, because for a season the wicked are prosperous amid their crooked ways. Under the reign of eternal justice it shall not always be so. Though ye seek them ere long, they shall not be found. They

shall not stand in the judgment. Or if it be the fate of the righteous to pass through a valley of tears, let them remember that the time is not far distant when they who now sow in tears shall reap in joy. If your afflictions be not only most trying and severe, but long and protracted, if the tempest still be high, recollect that this may not yet be the fit time for deliverance consistently with your spiritual welfare; that patience is now completing in you its *perfect work*, and then though sorrow may endure for a night, joy shall come in the morning; and you who now go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, hearing your sheaves with you. Surely well fitted are the services of this day to prove to you a memorial of everlasting consolation and good hope through grace; for that divine Leader who suffered more than mortals can suffer, will strike through the waters of affliction and enable you to pass through them unhurt by their waves. "When you go through the waters he will go with you." He will allow no affliction to befall you but such as is common to men. He will not permit you to be tried beyond what you shall be able to bear. Every ingredient of the bitter cup shall ultimately be found to have been fraught with mercy, and could not have been spared in securing your salvation. If he sees it meet to render the world bitterness to his people, it is just to make them weary of his rival, and to look to him as the Supreme Object, and to make you partakers of his holiness in a land where no water is. He who hath given his Son to the death for you, will, with him also, freely give you all things. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth. Whatever be your trials, then, O believer, whether of a temporal or a spiritual kind, or both, be persuaded, that placed under the safeguard and seal of the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier of affliction, you shall be brought from the furnace purified as gold, and the place of your defence shall be the munition of rocks. "Yet a little while and the days of thy mourning shall be ended, thy sun shall no more go down, the night shall be past, and the shadows flee away; the Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and your God your glory."

The stupendous events which we this day commemorate, will be a memorial of the love of the "ancient of days," to his people at all times, even to generations yet unborn; just as they have sounded in the ears, impressed the senses, and rejoiced the hearts

of the generations of pilgrims which have preceded us. These events call up at all times to mind a benevolence the most varied and unparalleled, and the efficacy of a healing fountain opened in the house of Judah, which cleanseth all sin; whilst, at the same time, they remind us of those magnificent purposes for which we have appeared on the stage of this mortal existence. Like the passover, in the room of which the sacrament of the supper has come, "it is an ordinance for ever." The fashion of this world is continually changing, and will soon pass away. The minds of men are also in a state of continual fluctuation. Nothing is altogether stationary. But the great events shown forth on every communion solemnity, shall be perpetuated from age to age. For it is expressly declared, in reference to our celestial King, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever." (Ps. xlv. 17.) When we, therefore, shall have reached the promised land, and joined the innumerable travellers who have gone before us, who now minister before the throne of God and the Lamb; when all who were identified as the most prominent and useful characters in their day, and in the places where they dwelt, shall be sleeping in the forgetfulness of the tomb, "the clods of the valley being sweet around them;" when every hearer now listening in the house of prayer, whether entering on life or withdrawing from it, shall have impressed on his now animated countenance the pale image of decay, his present healthy frame becoming decomposed into its original elements; "when the wind shall pass over us, and the place which now knows us shall know us no more" in that last and cold receptacle of mortality, still these ever memorable and heart-reviving sounds shall be heard in all their renewed freshness, and in all their living interest, in the ears of the men of coming times, "This day shall be unto you for a memorial; this do in remembrance of me; for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death until he come;" just as these words have sounded in the ears, touched the hearts, invigorated the faith, enlivened the hopes, perfected the strength of the worthy among the generations already gone, where all the travellers of Zion meet. But the solemn tragical scene which shall this day be represented to us in what we see, taste, and handle, of the good word of life, will prove, to all who communicate with the requisite preparation and

right dispositions of mind, a most glorious and imperishable memorial, coeval not only with future times, but with *eternity itself*. To commemorate any thing, though merely of a temporal nature, which has proved to us or to our friends most joyous or remarkable, is not deemed beneath our regard. We can look back to it with pleasing and heartfelt remembrance; and if it has been an *event* which has relieved them or us from indigence and sorrow, or put us in possession of that which might afford us happiness throughout our future lives, we hail with delight every thing connected with so bright and enlivening an era of our existence. But no emotions experienced by the grateful heart are so strong, as when called on to commemorate the memory and the worth of some generous and disinterested benefactor, who has proved a tried friend in every season of difficulty and need; who, instead of deserting us like others, only heaped on us more of his generosity and love, and who testified by his every look, and word, and deed, how much, in every exigency, his mind was in harmony with our own, and how ready he was to make the greatest and most trying personal sacrifice for our sake. Every memorial of such a Deliverer is sacred, and the whole man becomes hallowed for ever in our fondest remembrances; and there is nothing that could inflict on us a deeper pang, than the thought of losing any memorial or testimony of his affection which he had bequeathed to us in his dying moments. Can we forget that Friend who remembered us even in death?—whose love was stronger than death.—Whilst memory doth last, shall what he did be obliterated or forgotten? Can we forget a favour which shall secure to us benefits millions of ages to come? Shall we ever cease to prize a redemption which presents the perfections of the Most High in a light unknown before, to the astonishment of an admiring creation, a just God, and yet a Saviour and Justifier of sinners; which holds up to the universe a new spectacle, Godhead and Manhood joined, and which, without any diminution of real dignity or disparagement of his wisdom, shows us how that he who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty, might be made rich. Well may the remembrance of such a benevolent Friend be kept up by his followers, until he shall come again. What else is so worthy of being remembered and perpetuated? Beyond all question, it is the sublimest and by far the most wonderful of all the efforts and performances of the *divine Workman*,

at least, that we are acquainted with in any part of his handiwork. On this pillar of sacred remembrance is engraven in indelible letters, "This is the stone which was rejected of the builders, which is now become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." On this day of fellowship with the Saviour, then, you show forth an event in which all future generations shall engage, which shall rise up and call him blessed, which shall yet be published to the ends of the earth, and which shall be chanted with unceasing and unsatiating melody, as the great basis of that theme of adoration which is ever new in the celestial temple. Surely the most wonderful epoch of human events, the most splendid of human deeds are eclipsed and overborne, when brought into contrast with that great salvation, by means of death, which we are invited to keep in remembrance. Only call to mind those things which have produced the greatest excitement in the minds of men, and the greatest changes in human affairs, which after a little season lost much of their interest, and in the still farther revolution of time, were numbered among ordinary events. Such is the case, and must be with every thing here which bears the stamp of mortality and change. But this day shall be unto you for a memorial, of an object of unclouded serenity and beauty. Immensity can produce none of a corresponding magnitude and value. It is a theme which eternity itself shall not exhaust. "His name shall endure for ever." The lapse of eighteen centuries has neither tarnished its lustre, nor diminished the interest it presents to a lost world. Thousands of names, too, which were once great in their day, and bade fair to be transmitted to the last posterity, are now lost for ever amid the obscurity of forgotten time. But in regard to Christ, your Passover, who was laid on the altar as a sacrifice for you, "God hath given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth; and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Here is a name that shall never be forgotten. The loftiest fabrics reared by human hands—all the productions of art, however durable,—must at length yield to the wasting hand of time. Even those far-famed monuments of Egypt, which have hitherto defied the storms and waste of ages,* shall at length crumble into ruins. Where are now those lofty monuments,

* The Pyramids.

of which in history we know only the fact, which have been set up from age to age, to perpetuate the remembrance of greatness and of goodness—of valour or disinterestedness—remembrances of human talents and genius, of all that has been achieved by the warrior, the statesman, the philosopher, or even the saint who bled in the cause of civil and religious liberty. Every such memorial, in the course of ages, passes away as if it had never been, though it had been reared to embalm the memory of the greatest of human characters, and the most magnificent of human deeds. In fact, every circumstance or event which once excited the deepest and most intense interest among the children of men, shall share one common fate. Even the most sublime and useful discoveries which have aided in a nation's civilization and improvement, or which have been a preventive or cure for some of the most virulent diseases which have invaded the human frame; or, the high fortitude and skill of the navigator, who, to extend the march of science, ventures into the most dangerous seas, and on shores before untrodden and unknown, shall sink into oblivion amid the wreck of time; whereas the glorious event you this day show forth, which affords a new discovery of the divine character and perfections, will be exhibited to innumerable orders of beings with all its freshness and interest, with undecaying brightness, through the ages of a happy immortality.

The event, then, brethren, which you are called on to contemplate in faith's calm and holy light, is one of transcendent grandeur. It has no parallel in the history of the past; it shall have none, in the future destinies of the world. With overpowering brightness and majesty, it eclipses every event in the annals of the universe, and sinks into comparative insignificance all the splendours of the firmament. Behold, then, with the

most admiring affection and gratitude, an eternal Monument, inscribed with the love of God. Come and witness a memorial given by "*the image of the invisible God,*" not, indeed, in awful symbols of cloud and fire, of darkness and splendour, as to his people of old, but of Grace in all its dimensions and loveliness, reigning triumphant over sinners under a sentence of condemnation, and securing for each of you by his blood, an exceeding and an eternal weight of glory, too great to be sustained in your present mortal and feeble condition. Engage now your whole souls on a subject infinite and inexhaustible; for it is one which affords the most perfect development of the benignity of the divine character and government. It shall even supply the most satisfying and ample occupation for innumerable minds throughout a ceaseless duration; for the Godhead is an infinite fountain-head of blessedness and delight, so that finite vessels, though ever expanding and ever filling, shall never exhaust that reservoir of all-sufficiency and bliss. Whatever be the degrees of resemblance and nearness to him, we may hereafter attain in knowledge and holiness, still there will be an immeasurable distance and inferiority between us and him "who dwells in the secret place of thunder, in light, inaccessible and full of glory." "Happy art thou then, O Israel, a people saved by the Lord! Happy the people who are in such a case; yea, blessed is the people whose God is the Lord." Happy each devout soul, lighted up with the fire of divine love, kindled from the altar of the cross, who shall be able, at the close of the services of this day, to exclaim, "Having seen the King in his beauty!" "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste: he brought me to his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ROBERT MONTGOMERY,
Airdrie.

REDEMPTION BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN MEETING-HOUSE, DUNDEE,
ON SABBATH, 21ST SEPTEMBER, 1834,

By the Rev. ROBERT MONTGOMERY,
Airdrie.

“ In whom we have redemption through his blood.”—EPHESIANS i. 7.

Thus beautiful and expressive passage comprchends all that pertains to the happiness of the life that now is, and to the holiness of the life that is to come. It presents us, at one view, with the means of grace, and with the hopes of glory, through Christ Jesus, by whom we are predestinated unto the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will. Christ is the Son of the Father and so shall we also be called the sons of God, and shall be joint heirs with Jesus. He is the Son to do the will of God, in executing all the purposes of eternity concerning time, in the inbringing of many souls into glory. He is at once the Father's fellow and the sinner's surety. But although the fact be abundantly proved, the nature of the relation far transcends the mightiest in human power, and the most enlightened in intellect. Nor does it become the children of a day to scrutinize the councils of eternity, or to seek to comprehend the height or the depth, the length or the breadth of that which is not to be comprehended, even by the longest line of created measurement. And the more so should we be deterred from every presumptuous attempt, that the Scripture is abundantly plain in pointing out our duty to adore the wisdom of Him who has revealed all that in the eternal power and Godhead pertains unto the salvation of our souls, and who at the same time hath sealed down, with an anathema of thunder, whatever is not profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. Let every one of us, therefore, search

the Scriptures, that we may have eternal life. But let no one follow the dictates of a vain curiosity, lest he should be found seeking to be wise above what is written, and consequently be left to walk in the light of those sparks which himself hath kindled : “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved : in whom we have redemption through his blood.”

As I mean to treat this subject throughout in an explicative manner, the only term of the text to which I now call your attention is the word “ we.” The persons designed by this little word are the chosen of God—those whom he elected according to the purpose of his grace, and gave to Christ to be redeemed from wrath. In the ordinary use of language, the particule *we* comprehends the person speaking, and the persons spoken of, or to. And in this same signification is it used by the Apostle, as is proved by referring to the 1st verse of this chapter. Paul from the very date of his conversion planted the Church. It was his business to do so, and he gloried in that department of the gospel mystery that had fallen to him. 1 Cor. i. 14, “ I thank God

that I baptized none of you, save Crispus and Gaius." Verse 17, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." As planting the Church, he necessarily went from place to place, and to whatsoever city or country he came, there he set up the worship of the true God, confounding Jews and Gentiles, alike "proving that this is very Christ." But, although he was accompanied with able workmen who watered the churches of his planting, he continued to exercise a father's care over his spiritual children. At the inworking of the spiritual relation, his language was, "My little children of whom I travail as in birth till Christ be formed in you;" and ever after it continued to be, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Christ Jesus." So part of his labours had been expended in planting a church at Ephesus, and, in the discharge of his paternal duty, he wrote this Epistle to strengthen the hands of the Ephesian brethren in their tribulations, to establish them in the faith, to make known to them his labour in bonds, and withal to excite them to holy wrestlings in his behalf, that he and they together might be enabled to discharge their duties in the presence of Almighty God, and in the face of wicked men. Thus in the holy emotions of his mind he makes common cause with the saints of the living God. when, in the inspired language of this epistle, he proceeds: "Paul to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus, in whom we have redemption through his blood," evidently classing himself with the Ephesians. Nor is the sense of the word restricted to those who believed in the Apostle's day. But the Epistle was first to be read by those to whom it was directed; then it was to be generalized in the Church of Christ, there to be kept, and to be perused, to the end of time, as the dictates of divine inspiration; for even to this long period of duration are the followers of the Lamb taken into account under the general title of "the faithful in Christ Jesus."

But it would be as grossly to pervert the meaning of words, as it would be directly to oppose the bearing of the Apostle's reasoning, for the gospel minister in his public avocations to give an indiscriminate currency to the term "we." And it would argue no small proficiency in the practice of arrogation for the gospel auditory, generally speaking, to make a personal application of Scripture promises; for if the Word of God be true, "many are called, but few are

chosen." And the Apostle having himself limited the expression, his followers must at all times abide by that limitation, and explain the term as pointing out those who are found faithful in Christ Jesus, working out their salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure the work of faith with power.

In the farther illustration of this subject, I shall,

I. Make a few remarks illustrative of the certainty with which Christ has, in point of fact, redeemed his people.

II. Mention some of the properties of that redemption.

III. Conclude with a few remarks.

1. On the first of these divisions we shall show how "we" came to need redemption.

To redeem, signifies to purchase back, or to repurchase, if we could bear the expression. And this implies that we were sold, or had legally passed into the power of another. For that which is free, or in the first hand, may be bought; but it cannot, in strict propriety of language, be said to be re-bought, even though it should pass at a valuation from one to another. Now when man was originally created, and stood forth fair from his Almighty Father's hand, he was in a state of primeval innocence; and, as a necessary consequence of this, he was in the enjoyment of perfect happiness. He was the Lord's solely, and was himself lord of the lower world by his rank in creation, and in heaven he knew no superior but God alone. This remark must be self-evident to every one who has passed but a thought on the subject; for to this day, fallen though man be, he is forbidden to give adoration even to the brightest seraph that burns in glory.

But he had not long retained his integrity; he had not long proved loyal to Heaven's high behests, when Satan, who had himself fallen from heaven and from happiness, yet persisting in his dire rebellion against the Eternal Ruler of the universe, came from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it, to dissuade from their due allegiance all whom he should find abiding in their first estate, and proving faithful to the God who had made them. And to the bane of every descendant of Adam, the insinuations of the tempter proved fatal to man. This arch impostor, who was seeking abettors to his own cause, not because it was good, but because he was himself interested, attracted the attention of our first parents; they listened to him so as to

believe and obey his suggestions. But their obedience to this enemy of all righteousness was disobedience to the Lord of life; and there was previously a covenant agreement between man and his Maker, but that stipulation was broken in the rebellion of man. He deserted his Lord in the day of trial, the very time which was to have decided the contest, and to have endeared him for ever in the eyes of his Lord, he went over to the enemy's side. He became the bound servant of Satan, by being attached to his cause, and by obeying all his commands.

And not merely had he sold himself to the destroyer by actual service, but Satan had gained him also by the law of equity. He had himself been driven out of heaven, because he had broken Heaven's laws; and there was no reason why man should not be doomed to the same destruction, and reckoned under the same desperate condemnation, when he was found in a similar transgression.

But, in addition to all the claims of equity which the accuser could put forth, man by rebellion was legally sold under sin. The devil gained a legal right to him under the authority of Heaven. Jehovah was pledged, if man sinned, to drive him out from his presence. And there was no other way of it; either man must continue in the favour of God, or fall under the influence of Satan. The agreement was, that man should enjoy the presence of the Lord, in the paradise of Eden, so long as he remained firm to his trust and faithful to his cause. But whenever he proved unfaithful, by breaking the test of his trial, he became subject to the penalty of the whole law—dying thou shalt surely die. So while God remained true to himself, he could not but in justice deliver man over to the full consequences of his demerit; and Satan having succeeded in seducing him, claimed him as his lawful captive; he imprinted his deadly image on the first Adam, and in the federal head he gained the ascendancy over all his lineal descendants.

God, as the Creator and moral Governor of the universe, was bound by an eternal law to deal with all his creatures according to their works. When one had sinned, then, and was put under condemnation for that iniquity, if that being could discover another in a like transgression, it was but justice to claim that one also to be put under the curse. But, independently of the just law bearing equally against every transgressor, God always does the best, and from the very fact of his being the Eternal, holy,

just, and good, must necessarily for ever continue to do the best for all his creatures. But if one could sin, and yet get free from the lethal effects of sin, so also might another. This, however, from the very nature of things, is impossible; and there is no injustice with God: "He is of one mind, and who can turn him?"

2d. Christ Jesus as Mediator, at a certain period of this world's history, gave himself a ransom for his people. Eph. v. 2, "Christ hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."

"Pilate delivered Jesus to their will, and they led him away; and when they were come to a place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him." The external credibility of the event thus stated, depends on the veracity of testimony; and our internal conviction that Christ suffered at a certain period of this world's history, must be strong or weak, according as the evidence laid before us is calculated to make an overwhelming or but a slight impression upon our minds. Now, we are quite easy on the matter of testimony. The historical fact is mentioned by Josephus, and by various other antichristian writers, who flourished at, or near the time when Christ suffered. But in a particular manner it is stated in the Book of God, where it stands, "line upon line," recorded for the information of all God's people. And while Christ was in fulfilling what God the Father had given him to do in behalf of men, all his words and all his actions were so followed up with demonstrations of divine power, as impressed irresistibly upon the minds of beholders that he was the Son of God. Luke xxiii. 47. "Now, when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man." Nor is it possible to give a history of Jesus so as to keep out of view that he wrought the works of God—he is ever appearing divine, his words were oracles, his works were miracles; and he declares, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not."

So far as Bible testimony goes, then Christ has, in point of fact, redeemed his people. But the Bible is the public records of the Church. It contains a brief but satisfactory account of all that was done in her primitive ages, with directions distinct and concise for all that ought to be done in continuation by all her members. The scene of action where the Bible was revealed and written to men, was the world at large,

where confessedly the greater part are the enemies of all righteousness. Light and darkness are directly opposed to each other, and just in proportion as the one prevails, the other is driven away. But not less opposed is the Spirit of Truth to all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The powers of this world were in arms against the benignity of Heaven; and had it been possible to contradict the sayings of the saints, or to counteract the doings of the Just One and the perfect, it had been done; but "no weapon formed against Zion shall ever prosper." John vii. 46. "The officers answered, Never man spake like this man." Bribery and bloodshed were the arguments by which the Jews opposed the convictions of truth; for when they saw the miracles, and those on whom the miracles of healing were wrought, they could say nothing against them.

Thus so far as the external credibility of testimony goes, as sure as ever there was a Philip of Macedon, or an Alexander the Great, for whose expanded grasp the then known world formed but too narrow a boundary, or a Julius Cæsar whose conquering arms struck terror to the places even where we now are; or to come to more modern events, as there are some men to whom the lapse of time almost obliterates the reality of the scene; as sure as ever there was a hero of civilized Europe, against whom the allied kings concentrated their forces in battle, the bloody plains of Waterloo, or a decisive 18th of June, to which our fathers, our brothers, or perhaps some now before me may have borne more noble record; so sure was there a Jesus of Nazareth, according to the flesh, made one with the eternal power and Godhead, so sure did he traverse this sinful world, exposed to the buffetings of men, the rage of fiends, and the justice of his Father. And if ever he did appear in the flesh, that the sufferings of his person were not for the sin of his own soul, is also certain: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." As God absolute, he could neither sin nor suffer; as man, his generation was altogether supernatural; he was that holy thing which should be born of a virgin, and should be called Emmanuel God with us. So that, in his complete personal character, he was altogether free from sin, and as a necessary consequence claimed exemption from suffering; for who ever suffered being innocent, or where were the righteous cut off? But

Christ, in point of fact, did suffer, consequently he must necessarily have had sin, but it was by imputation. His soul was exceeding sorrowful, but it was for the sin of his people. He gave himself up to the death, but it was that the lawful captive should be delivered, that he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, "and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

But were this not the true description of the Lord's Christ, there is no principle upon which at once to account for his plenty and his poverty, for his power and his imbecility. He rebuked the malignancy of fever, and immediately it left the person of the patient. The withered arm he restored whole as the other; and at his command the ankle bones received strength, and the lame leaped and walked. When a tumult was made, and they were about to lead him to the brow of the hill to cast him down headlong, all at once he concealed himself, and passed unperceived through the midst of the multitude, because his hour was not yet come. He fed a great multitude of men, besides women and children, with five barley loaves and two fishes; yet he was himself tired, and hungry, and thirsty, and sat upon Joseph's well. He raised the dead to life again, and restored them to their family and their friends; yet he was himself destitute and alone, save that his heavenly Father was with him. He manifested power which far exceeded every human effort in procuring the tribute money; yet he was himself so poor, that he had not where to lay his head. He had power to do all things; He rebuked the tempest and the winds, and they obeyed him. He commanded the foul spirits, and they were submissive to his will; yet he was himself tempted of the devil. He delegated his power to his disciples, and sent them forth through all the world to do cures and to work miracles in his name. Yea, it was his prerogative to pray to the Father, and he would instantly give him twelve legions of angels; yet he suffered himself to be pierced with the accursed spear, and, for his apparent imbecility, to be reproached with this proverb, "Physician, heal thyself." But when the traitorous band came forth with swords and with staves, as against a thief, to take him, at the opening of his mouth they all went backward, and fell confounded to the earth. And it was not till he had set his followers free, and given commission to the powers of darkness, that they led him bound to Caiaphas; and though he had all

power given to him in heaven and in earth, so that without him no one could lift himself up, yet he submitted to the curse of the world and to the cross of the Jews. But not before he had cried, "It is finished!" and had yielded up his spirit to the care of his heavenly Father, could the grim messenger do his work.

In these traits of the Mediator's character, there is a power which baffles all the boasted pride of man; and, at the same time, a submission which can be accounted for only upon the principle of allowing Scripture to be its own interpreter; and by permitting to be poured into our hearts the salutary strains of the great truth contained in the declaration of the Father, that God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all, that he might with him also freely give us all things; and though while blessed by the bounty of Heaven, the infidel, in the deceitfulness of his heart, may scoff at life and immortality, and may reject the redemption of Jesus; yet there is a time coming, when the wicked shall be caught in his own craftiness, and when his violent dealings shall be returned with awful acceleration upon his own head. Then shall he know, in all its extent, that the Atheist's laugh is but a poor exchange for that everlasting righteousness which Jesus has wrought out and brought in for his people.

II. I come now to mention some of the properties of that redemption with which Christ redeems his people.

1. It is free or unmerited on the part of man: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his merey he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." Man in primeval innocence possessed the image of God, in being holy as he is holy, and happy as he is happy; but he lost that image by original apostasy; imputed guilt made him law condemned, and his connexion with Adam made him prone to actual transgression. He became fiend-like in his actions and in his designs; but where there is no purity, there is no acceptance in the sight of God. Man has sinned, and, viewed as a sinner, there is neither rectitude by which he can stand before God, as an act of justice, nor does he possess value by which he can purchase the love of Jehovah. As men come into the world, "they have all sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God;" and though in life they should be reclaimed to the Lord, there is no merit in their after services wherefore they should be saved; for all the actings of a sinful creature are still

but sinful actings; if not, this contradiction would be involved that a clean thing would be produced from an unclean. Nor did God, for want of man's services, need to stoop from the straight line of eternal rectitude; from unbeginning ages he had reigned in all the beatific glory of divine fulness and of self-complacency; He is the all and in all. Ere ever the terrestrial creation had been spoken into existence, the morning stars had sung together, or the sons of God had shouted aloud for joy, the brighter creation of Seraphim and Teraphim surrounded the throne in one continued burst of Alleluia, power, and honour, and dominion to him that liveth for ever and for ever; yea, all his ministering spirits ceased not to fulfil his holy commands. So that his greatness was sufficiently made known, and his praises would have been cordially celebrated, though man, on his breach of covenant, had been made to bear the fullest extent of the threatened punishment. Man alone would have been the sufferer. But God was subject to no control; his resources were alike unlimited and illimitable. Though man and the terrestrial world had even been blotted from the book of existence, the Almighty could have created other worlds, and other rational beings, after the nature of man, in his primeval innocence, willingly to have praised him on the earth; or a brighter order of beings might have succeeded to the privileges of extinguished Adam, and the race and the order of man might have been for ever secluded from mentioning the praises of the Eternal. Nay, the justice of God might have been made as glorious in the damnation of the sinner, as his grace is distinguished in the salvation of his elect, by the destruction of their sin. The wicked themselves shall finally acquiesce in the justice of their punishment; and their mouths must be stopped, because they shall have nothing to answer when their account is required. In the day of consummation, the wicked shall bow the knee in awful submission to the God of heaven; for though it be not his will that any sinner should perish, but that all would come to him and live, yet he will reap his glory from the overthrow of his enemies, in condemning them to those adamantine chains which their own ungodly deeds have forged, to bind their necks in the regions of darkness and wo.

But God's essential glory is incapable of being either enhanced or diminished, He needed not his creatures to praise him; for he was altogether independent of their services, and he never does complain unto the

children of men for need. But it was out of pure love to mankind that his mercy was extended unto them, and they alone were the persons benefited. His praises would have accrued to him from an infinite variety of ways, while there was no tarnish to his glory from their utter destruction. But there was not another way the sinner could be saved, but by an extension of his mercy, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. So when he passed by and saw man in his blood, helpless as an infant abandoned in the open field, he said unto him, Live; yea, he said unto him, live. His own compassion was the cause of his pity, and his own arm was the strength of his salvation. If we take the sense of the whole Book of God, we find that the creature is to be profited, but never the Creator. Man is entreated to leave the iniquitous courses of his life, and to be promptly wise, that he may be freed from the calamities which sin indulged in shall unavoidably bring. Indeed it is demonstrable, upon the most undeniable evidence, that fallen man can never merit salvation. He is created and dependent: God is the Creator and independent. There is not a breath which man draws, there is not a latitude of freedom which he enjoys, nor yet a comfort which he possesses, but all come forth from the Lord omnipotent; and this being the case, I would ask the most sceptical and fancied self-dependent of men, What is more reasonable than that he should live to him by whom he does live? God, as the moral Governor of the universe, by virtue of his property in all things, requires that every reasonable being be at all times, and with all its power, actively engaged in his service. But it is impossible that a being, who owes his every act to God, could ever so completely overdo his duty as to have an accumulation to the good with which to purchase up former transgression. And to shut up the argument, the Spirit of Truth hath said, He who comprehends time and eternity at one infinite view, hath said, And let God be true, but every man a liar; and let us say so too, lest our latter end should be worse than the beginning—that we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

2 The redemption of Jesus is a full redemption.

“Until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” Christ is to every believer a whole Saviour, else that man hath neither part nor

lot in him. For he hath finished transgression; he hath made an end of sin; he hath triumphed gloriously; and all, even as many as shall attempt to climb to heaven by some other way, shall be accounted thieves and robbers, and shall never be able to gain the celestial city. And like to this shall be the end of the more showy, yet not less mistaken professors who think to go a certain length in the inbringing of their souls to glory; who think to forsake sin, and to cleanse their hearts so far as to bring themselves within the verge of the new covenant, and to piece out the redemption of Jesus so much as to be able to merit the mercy of the Father. They have not yet learned to be the followers of the meek and lowly Saviour; nor have they entered in by the strait gate of the everlasting Gospel; nor do they pave the narrow path of mortification to the lusts of the flesh, which leads to “the life of God in the soul of man.” For Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by him. And all that do come through him, the Father will in nowise cast out.

There is no enormity of crime too great for this redemption to embrace; there is no stain too foul for the blood of Jesus to wash out; and there neither is, nor ever shall be, a sinner in time so far removed from the presence of God as to be beyond the reach of his mercy, if we reckon by legal value. For all the acts of men must necessarily be finite; but the redemption effected by Jesus is an infinite work. It is true there is a sin which never shall be forgiven, and for which we are not to pray, but it lies in the will of man—it is final impenitence. Now all those who come before God with brokenness of spirit, and who confess their sins by turning from them, have not been guilty of this transgression. For the gospel offer is made to gospel hearers, and not to this man or to that man as foreordained of God. But “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.” No doubt the eternal God knoweth, it is impossible for him who comprehends eternity unto eternity, not to have known, ere ever the foundations of the earth were laid, all that ever have been, are, or shall be saved. But the redemption of Jesus is full, and it shall be found in the end that all who do not inherit the celestial paradise shall have themselves to blame that they were not partakers of this redemption. Even the heathen are left “without excuse.”

And the Saviour, in the days of his flesh, wept over Jerusalem, saying, "O thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee with stones. How often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not." Nay, the whole language of the Bible is dictated to deceive, and the voice of the preachers of the Gospel is calculated to mislead, if he that hath an ear to hear may not come and put his trust under the shadow of the Redeemer's wings, for a little moment, until the sad calamity do wholly overpass. In the day of final consummation, too, the sentence of the Judge shall go forth against the wicked, not on account of the election of God, but because they saw Jesus naked, and clothed him not; sick, and in prison, and came not unto him; yea, there may be a putting from us the Holy Spirit of promise, which could never be done were he not brought within our reach; but there shall be no putting away the convictions of an awakening, and at the same time, self-condemned conscience. These shall prey upon our vitals, and all the agonizing throes of remorse shall be aggravated by a knowledge, as distinct as it is real, that there was room to receive us, but we would not enter in.

3. This redemption takes effect in time.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame, before him in love." It is not enough that we should be saved from suffering in eternity, but we must also be saved from sinning in time. Every act of sin is a debasement of the human character. It sinks its subject below his primeval rank in creation, and the circle in which he was intended to move. While under the dominion of sin, man goes on from one degree of vice unto another, digressing from evil to worse, until he is completely enslaved by the senses, and falls victim to his passions. But from this moral pollution, those who find the Lord early are redeemed, by the washing of the water of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. They are made alive and holy unto God; and in pursuance of the Gospel scheme, they are taken into friendship and alliance with the Lord of life. Whosoever speaketh against them speaketh against Heaven, Jehovah himself will avenge their quarrel. And he that keeps Israel slumbers not, neither doth he sleep.

But there is a pestilential atheism in the

human breast, deeply rooted in principle, and widely extended in practice. This prevents the blessing of God from having its full effect in the holy, harmless and undefiled nature of the believer. It is, indeed, congenial to the very constitution of man to desire happiness, not only for the present hour, but also for it to be permanent, as his existence may be perpetuated. And thus, through a natural dread of punishment, he wishes to escape hell. And through the workings of the same natural craving for comfort, he wishes to gain Heaven. But this empty wishing has its origin in a base and criminal state of mind, for it never rises so much into desire as would stimulate to that action, which would put into the smallest probability of ever reaching the wished for felicity. But what is even worse, men thus enslaved by the delusion of sin, dare impiously to arraign the wisdom of God, who has described a renewed life to be the only way in which they can arrive at happiness. And they put far from them the day of grace, and the offers of mercy, which infinite wisdom has declared to be "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." They wish to legislate for themselves, and to put far from them the offers of salvation, until they shall have acquired a given portion of this world's wealth, or till they shall have arrived at a certain period of life, when they shall be able to serve the Lord more conveniently, and to repent in opulence.

But every such feeling of mind is delusive, and dangerous in the extreme. It is trying the wisdom of God at the tribunal of depraved nature, and finding it wanting. It is mistrusting him who has said, "That out of Christ there is no safety; and that in the path of sin there is an adder which shall bite to the devouring of both soul and body. Now, whatever these men may be in profession, they are Atheists in practice; for they act upon the principle, that their dearest interests lie in direct opposition to the holy will of God. And if they expect ever to enjoy his presence, it is a hope which maketh ashamed, because it is built upon a false foundation. For they fall not under the description of those for whom Christ died, by being holy and without blame before him in love; but they are in a situation which is of all others the most desperate and dangerous; they resemble, in description, the characters whom our Lord himself called hypocrites, and of whom there is no instance upon record, that they ever repented unto eternal life. But concerning

whom it is said, that the harlots and the openly profane entered into the kingdom of heaven before them. They are also self-condemned, they know the truth, and they approve of it, yet they do it not, but put it off as a matter of will that may be realized at pleasure, and made a subject of profit. Thus themselves being judges, they are not now in the way which God has pointed out as leading to the realms of celestial glory. But by giving a preference to their own designs, are exalting the foolishness of man superior to the wisdom of God, while, at the same time, they flatter themselves that they shall gain the heavenly Jerusalem, and that, too, upon their own terms. But these surmises are nothing other than the delusions of Satan, and the deceitfulness of the corrupt human heart. For the language of inspiration is to them, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish."

But Jesus redeems his people from the evils of the world, while they remain there. When ancient Israel were but few in number, and journeyed from land to land, he suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reprov'd, for their sakes, kings who were great and mighty. It is the peculiar punishment of the wicked to flee when no man pursueth; while it is the privilege of the righteous to show mercy, and to be bold as a lion. The saints are redeemed in time, they are living after the will of their heavenly Father. Their hopes and their desires lie before them in the kingdom of Heaven. They live here only by the grant of their Lord, that they may grow in grace, and show forth his glory till he come. And if there be wisdom at all in this valley of tears and shadow of death, it is to be found among the redeemed. They are those who are bold in adversity, and moderate in prosperity. They are altogether willing, nay, desirous to live, but by no means afraid to die. Nor is there any reason why they should, they are under the same Lord, their dependence upon him is habitual and real. It is for his pleasure that they are now in the lower world, and it shall be to his praise that they go to the upper house, which Jesus has prepared for them. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," saith the Lord. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Nor is it the saint's privilege merely to be freed from positive pain, but they shall also be put in possession of real pleasure. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Though Jesus for a time submitted to privation and death, now he is ascended to his Father and our Father, to my God and your God; "whom the heaven must receive, until the times of restitution of all things." And when he shall appear to judge angels and men, it shall be in power and great glory. He is watching with the most vigilant care over his Church, and keeping them as the apple of his eye, lest any hurt them; he keeps them night and day. Yea, the whole world is governed and directed for the increase and preservation of the redeemed. And sooner shall the heavens and the earth be rolled away, sooner far shall the whole mass of creation be dwindled into annihilation, than shall one elect soul be destroyed. For the Lord is their defence, they are built up in him; they are his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; they are under the covert of the Almighty, and ere ever the internal can be come at, the external must be destroyed. But this from the very nature of things, is not possible in the case supposed; else there must be such a gross perversion of cause and effect, that things which are finite and dependent shall become stronger and much more powerful than that which is infinite and independent. But such a conclusion can have no place in the rational faculties of men. It has never been found to operate in existence that is past; and it shall never be discovered while the world standeth. Wherefore, to the Redeemed, all are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

4. This redemption is for eternity.

Heb. ix. 12. "Christ entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Verse 15, "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testa-

ment, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first Testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Time is preparatory to eternity, but there is an extended veil which intercepts the vast ocean of futurity from the human view; and, until this veil which is mortality be drawn aside, we cannot speak particularly of things to come. But Jesus hath thrown light on life and immortality by the Gospel. He hath told us that all the inhabitants of the world to come are divided into two classes—the happy and the miserable. The happy are in heaven, which is a state of felicity. And to this felicity Christ calls in time, but it is for eternity. He redeems in time, but it is at once and for ever. And when we are taken hence we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. There is the strictest intimacy between time and eternity, though the departure from the one and the entrance to the other pass through the low lying valley of the shadow of death, yet the identity of the person is the same. His countenance is changed, but it is the same individual self that is sent away, and his works do follow him. Without the realization of bliss in the abodes of glory, all the believer's happiness would but little deserve the name; his respite from misery could be suspended only by the brittle tread of human existence which is liable to be snapped asunder every moment, and himself by being drowned in perdition to be awfully aroused from his dreams of security.

But glory be to God in the highest, that he hath made future existence known in the revelation of his grace, there is peace on earth, and in heaven good will towards men. The joyful welcome shall resound in the ears of the redeemed, as soon as they shall enter the realms of never-ending day, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord." Now all the proof that I know of life beyond death and the grave, of angel and of spirit, is contained in the volume of inspiration. And we envy not the feelings of that man who does not take the arguments of the Scriptures of truth for ample evidence that there is a God, that there is an eternity, and that the redeemed of the Lord shall rule and reign with the Lamb for ever and ever. Neither would we wish to be possessed of faculties so atheistically discriminative in reason, nor so foolishly refined in judgment. Man is fettered by the manacles of sin, and

led captive by a chain of wilful perversion, or he could never come to any such conclusion. But sin is a state of delusion, it is the remains of insanity which our nature contracted in Adam's transgression, and which is kept up by the glitter of the world, and by the glow of lust. But as soon as we shall be denuded of time delusion shall flee away, and we shall be connected with reality. Then shall we see every object in its true colours, and hold in esteem only those things which are valuable. But in this life we love things which are so worthless, and do things which are so base, that nothing other than the delusions of Satan, and the desperate wickedness of the human heart could induce man to think and act as he does. As soon, however, as these delusions are shaken off he flees from sin as a deadly venom, which is ready to destroy him. The godly exercised mind feels pain at every offence, and is horrified at every transgression; the saint will not touch the accursed thing. So it follows as a necessary consequence, that the innocent mind shall have peace, while the fool, for his sin and his offence, shall bear sore affliction. Sin and suffering go together; the one follows the other as naturally and necessarily, as light and heat accompany the natural sun in his rising; he who has sin within him, carries hell along with him. It is very different, however, with every one who has obtained redemption through the blood of Christ; God giveth him consolation. And his judges in this world, who maintain a name and a place, who have authority to condemn, and a power to execute, shall themselves be destroyed of the second death. But over the godly it shall have no power, for against such there is no law, neither in the life that now is, nor in that which is to come.

5. Redemption by Jesus implies that we could not redeem ourselves.

Psalm xlix. 6—8. "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever." Acts xiii. 39, "They that believe in Christ are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." It is a law in nature that like produces like; and if it be once settled that our progenitors were corrupted and depraved, and at the same time granted that we are descended from them, the contrary of which is self-contradictory; then as sure

as the corrupted fountain sends forth a polluted stream, so sure are we backward to that which is good, and forward to that which is evil. And sooner may the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots—which would be nature inverting nature's course, for it is natural for them to be as they are—than can man who is born of a woman cease to do evil, and learn to do well. Adam was created in a state of perfect holiness, and enjoyed a corresponding degree of positive happiness. But then he was invested with no power by which he could rise higher in the scale of creation. He was merely empowered to retain his integrity, and had certain prescribed rules beyond which he should never go, and so long as he adhered to them he was in perfect safety. But these being broken, the law made no provision by which he could regain his former position. The letter of the law was express, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

But if it be possible that fallen man, by his own power, could have risen to his former perfection, then the infinite wisdom of God would stand impeached. The Almighty far surpasses the most enlightened created intelligence. Wisdom was with him when he laid the foundations of the deep; she rejoiced always before him in the habitable parts of this earth. But if it could be found that he lavished an infinite treasure on what could have been accomplished by a finite speculation, then with reverence he it spoken, God would stand convicted of folly; and could no longer be that eternal Jehovah who is past finding out. But his wisdom cannot thus be arraigned, for "he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness it sustained him." And redemption never could have come from another source. Who among the angels of glory could have discovered the nature of offended justice? And there was none among all the sons of men who could possibly have told that the holy one would accept of a Saviour. But allow, for a moment, that a glimpse had shot athwart created intelligence that a Saviour would be accepted, and who could have discovered the ransom? Lebanon was not sufficient to burn, nor were the beasts of the field enough for a burnt-offering. And for men to have sacrificed their sons and their daughters for the sin of their souls, would only have been to have added actual transgression to original guilt. Besides, it must be borne in remembrance, that the

children, too, have their own sins for which to atone. What, then, in this fruitless research, was to be the object of their pursuit? Were they like Manasseh of old to gird on sackcloth and ashes, and to walk softly all their days? were they to render complete obedience to all God's farther commandments? or were they to come before him with faith in exercise, and to burst forth in one rapture of holy adoration to the King eternal? No; for these exercises there was found no place. In the one case, although all that is here supposed could have been done, it could avail nothing; it was now for ever too late, because the period of its requirement was over and gone. But all that human obedience in innocency was capable of doing, was only to keep, but never to procure the divine favour. Nor were there any farther commandments to obey. The broken law provided nothing for the sinner but death and destruction.

And in the second place, there was no faith in exercise, every particle of the divine image had been eradicated from the human breast. Faith had no object; it is but a relative term, and to be in exercise it must have something to be exercised upon, but this human ingenuity could never devise, nor could the united prowess of man ever procure. And to burst forth in holy adoration, was from the nature of the case impossible. Every holy principle had been destroyed, and before holiness be again called into action, it must first be created. But this set every creature effort at defiance, for nothing short of infinite power can create; and redemption thus followed on, resolves itself into a creative power, and a creative power is nowhere found except in a divine person. This at once takes every argument from the created agent, and wafts it aloft to the great uncreated first cause. Nor does it stop here, it was necessary that the nature of the person offending should atone for the offence. This required a Mediator combining in one person the nature of God and the nature of man, which leads us back to that divine and inexplicable mystery, the Son of God made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them who are under the law; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

I shall now conclude this discourse with a few remarks, by way of improvement.

1. From this subject learn the high privilege of the children of men to be redeemed by the blood of Christ. 1 John iii. 1, "Behold what manner of love the Father

hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." When man was in primeval innocence, he was taken into the nearest alliance with God that the circumstances of the case would admit. He was beautiful and erect in his outward form, his walk was upright, and he beheld the face of the natural heavens. The moral image of God was imprinted on his mind. Wisdom was in the meditations of his heart, and equity in all his counsels. He was fitted to enjoy all the pleasures of the earth, and to rise to the profits of heaven. And though there might be creatures superior to him in rank, none had more exquisite enjoyment; he was completely happy, and as perfectly holy, as the highest angel in heaven. And the continued smiles of his Father's countenance were new excitements to obedience.

But when all this felicity and well-being was lost, then the Eternal deigned, by the greatest of all possible ransoms, to make us heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus. Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these high privileges lay us under obligations to render gratitude to the God of heaven. Redemption is doubly endeared to man by the love of God, and by the sufferings of Jesus. He has done all to elevate him to his former felicity, and to restore him to his original rank, by removing sin and its effects. He has brought heaven within our reach, and is entreating us to lay hold on eternal life. Nor is man's exertion to be great, for divine strength is made perfect in human weakness. If there be a duty incumbent on man, it is to do that which is right, if he has any interest, it is heaven-ward. Yea, the bright side of the question lies towards the duty of the Christian, for in the keeping of God's commandments there is a great reward. Life lieth so much in the divine favour, that the stones of the field shall be in league with the believer, and he shall not stumble. He shall trample on the adder, and play upon the hole of the asp, yet he shall not be hurt. The lion shall lie down with the lamb, and the infant of days shall lead them, for the Lord of Hosts hath spoken it.

2. From this subject learn the duty of christian diligence.

2 Pet. iii. 14, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Was the offence of man so great, and the justice of God so strict, that Jesus must lay down his life for the sin of his elect? And is Satan going about continually, not only as a roaring lion,

but even transformed into an angel of the light, in all the sophistry of dissimulation, seeking whom he may devour? Then how ought we to quit ourselves like men, and fight for the cause of our God, and of our souls? Having our loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace: above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And having done all to stand—to stand fast, for every failure of Christ's people is a denial of the Lord who bought them, and a putting him to an open shame. It is a giving power to the enemy of souls, for every act of wickedness is so much of his service; and this he will not fail to represent to God against you, when you are making supplications before the throne of divine grace. There he will oppose you most powerfully, for your evil actions shall be works bearing witness, and by them he will plead his interest in you. And you are all aware that it is impossible, at the same time, to serve God and Mammon. Wherefore, choose ye this day whom ye will serve; if the world be to you an object of sufficient value for the loss of your dear immortal soul, then follow the world with your whole heart, give loose reins to every vile affection, restrain no craving of lust, refrain from no object of desire, but break the bands of the godly asunder, and cast away their cords and give the lie to every dictate of divine revelation, for the ways of God are directly opposed to the works of men. And there is nothing more dangerously delusive than to be halting between two opinions. But if the Lord be God, then follow him, and he must have the whole soul: whosoever nameth the name of the Lord, must depart from all iniquity. But he bids none of the seed of Jacob seek his face in vain, neither does he send any a warfare upon their own charges.

3d. Learn from what has been said, that the end of refusing this redemption is eternal death. Isaiah xxx. 33, "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared: he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." And what an agonizing thought shall it be when your doom is irretrievably fixed, that salvation was brought within your reach, and yet you put it away from you with your own consent. That the means of attaining heaven were once cordially recommended to you, but now you have gone down to hell! There the torments with

which you shall be exercised are exquisite and eternal. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, is the language of inspiration. It may be figurative; it must be so, for we have not been able to learn the spiritual language. But what idea does the lesson convey? it is surely that of awful destruction! The idea is borrowed from the valley of Hinnom, which was to the eastward of Jerusalem, a place for every cast and unclean thing, where a fire was kept continually burning to consume the carrion and the putrid masses carried thither, lest they should infect the air, and prove fatal to the plain, and where were heard the shrieks of the murdered children made to pass through the fire to Moloch. And the figure is farther followed up by the destruction which overtook Sodom and Gomorrah, when the cry of their wickedness had reached to heaven, and the Lord himself descended to see whether or not their wickedness was altogether according to the cry of it. In his presence they proved their guilt to their own confusion. When pressing on in their heinous transgressions, they assailed the house of the just Lot, to break through every law of hospitality, and to abuse the bodies of the strangers that had come in unto him. But in this very act they were broken, and snared, and taken; they were struck with blindness, which at once deprived them of the capability of finding the door, and retained them in the place of perpetration, till flaming brimstone was visibly rained from heaven, which destroyed them and their possessions.

Now this is certainly expressive enough. It describes habitations of horrid cruelty where is confined all violence, with every unclean and abominable thing; and where there shall neither be confidence, nor kindness, nor mercy, but the wicked shall be their own tormentors. And what a gnawing of remorse shall it be to those who are reserved in chains under darkness, to behold all the glories of heaven; and who possess

the means of ascertaining that the saints are in the enjoyment of the fullest felicity, while they themselves have been the authors of their own destruction. If such be the reward of the wicked, my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.

Lastly. From this subject, learn blessedness of the redeemed.

1 Cor. ii. 19, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." They are taken within the gates of the new Jerusalem whence they shall go no more out. There they shall be made as happy as their natures can bear. Every desire shall be gratified, because their souls are saved. They shall behold the Lamb, and they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is. The pure river of the water of life, proceeding from the throne of God, shall reach their souls. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters; 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 brightness of the Father's countenance shall be the light of the city, and there shall be no night there. And if any thing can give a bond of felicity to the whole it shall be this, that all the glories of the redeemed are as perpetual as they are perfect; yea, the tide of time may cease to flow, the orb of day grow dim with age, and universal nature sink in years. But yet amid the wreck of time, and the crash of worlds, the saints shall redden in their bloom, and flourish in immortal youth. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. JAMES SMITH, Campbeltown.
SERMON by the Rev. DAVID KING, Glasgow.

THE CHIEF END OF MAN IS TO GLORIFY GOD ;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE RELIEF CHURCH, CAMPBELLTOWN, ON SUNDAY THE
9TH NOV., 1834, BEING THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF SERMONS ON THE CATECHISM,

By the Rev. JAMES SMITH.

"Glorify God in your body, and in your spirits, which are God's."—1 Cor. vi. 20.

PROCEEDING upon the acknowledged fact that all mankind are the offspring of one great parent—the result of the creative energy of the almighty One, the question which attracts the earliest and largest share of every reflection is, what end was designed to be served by man's existence? Every thing which we behold and can comprehend, exhibits to us in the various uses which it serves, the object intended by its first formation. When we look up to the sky, as the orb of day is gilding the whole horizon, we at once discover that the great Father of the universe designed it to diffuse light and heat; when we look again to the same expanse, as it is studded with countless millions of stars, we think of the lonely mariner far out on the ocean, whose eye is scanning the sky, that his course may be certain; when we look to the hills and the mountains of our romantic land, we think that they were placed there to attract the humid clouds that float through the atmosphere, that fructifying streams might descend upon the earth. In short, when we turn our attention to the various parts of the inanimate creation, we discover almost at once the objects designed to be accomplished by their being. And we cannot for

a moment suppose, that man, the noblest and fairest part of this lower creation—possessing a body with powers capable of developing and aiding the faculties of his mind—possessing a soul endowed with rational powers, and on which the image of the Deity was at one time impressed—a soul which is destined to be durable and deathless as eternity itself; which shall live amid the struggles of expiring nature, and when the world has ceased to be: we cannot for a moment suppose, that in the mighty plans of the infinite mind; that of the stupendous plans at present in process, he alone stands an idle and unconcerned spectator, served by all, yet himself serving none.

If it be true, that every thing in this vast creation was designed for some useful purpose, it will follow that there must be some important purpose which man was designed to accomplish as the end of his being. And it is to be remarked, that this object must be in exact proportion to the natural worth of the being concerned. It is sufficient that the sun, in his diurnal course, pour round the world refreshing light and invigorating heat; it is an object worthy enough of that which must soon sink into

eternal night ; it is sufficient that the little twinkling star should point to the hardy seaman the course he should pursue ; it is an object worthy enough of that which must soon drop from the firmament for ever ; it is sufficient that the hills draw to them the passing cloud, and pour down upon the valley the fertilizing stream ; it is an object worthy enough of that which must soon melt and be consumed with fervent heat. But a higher and a nobler purpose must be proposed as the chief end of man. Were he like the beasts that perish, but the creature of time, whose dust, when it mingles with its kindred dust, would never again be animated, if he served the purpose of the passing day, he would have done all that was required of him. But when I reflect that each of us is possessed of a spirit which connects us with the higher portions of creation ; when I think that we are made but a little lower than the angels, and form the connecting link between the material and immaterial universe ; when I think that we are such that our actions are not to be dictated by brute instinct, but by the high and ennobling hopes, or the deep and horrifying fears which alone can operate on intellectual beings ; when, in a word, I reflect that there throbs within every bosom in this audience, a soul to whose duration no limits can be assigned, I would propose a far higher object as the purpose of our creation, and one which at once will be worthy of God and worthy of man.

Regarding yourselves, then, as rational and accountable creatures, I can conceive of no question which will more prominently have occupied your attention, or which, did the decorum of this meeting permit, you would be readier to propose to me, than this—What is the chief end of man? What is the great design to be accomplished by his creation, and which he was destined to fulfil by his dwelling in the world? To this question a sufficiently expressive and comprehensive answer is given in the Shorter Catechism: “Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.” Connecting this, then, with the precept of the text, let me be favoured with your serious and reflective attention, while in the sequel I attempt to show you what is the object designed by our admission into the world. May it be a blessed and instructive exercise to us all!

The text distinctly asserts, that it is the

duty of every man, or in other words, the chief end of his existence, to *glorify God!*

It is distinctly to be understood here, that in asserting it to be the principal design of a man’s being in the world, to glorify God, we are far from intending to say that he ever can increase the glory of the Deity. If the ideas which we have conceived of him, according to the revelation of Scripture, be correct, that glory, like every thing else attributable to him, is perfect, admitting of no diminution or increase, but in every thing pertaining to it, absolutely and infinitely complete. It depends not for its increase, or durability, or perfection, upon human conduct, any more than does the sun depend for its light, and heat, and splendour, upon the feeble glimmer of the taper. In speaking of a man’s glorifying God, then, we are simply to understand his showing it forth—his lifting up before the world such a testimony in its favour, as shall compel even the most unwilling to acknowledge that there is none in the universe that may once be compared to him.

When God was first moved with the design of creating the world, and furnishing and peopling it as it is, there must have been some great object he had in view, and one of such magnitude as to be worthy of himself. It cannot be imagined that it was the result of some reckless and regardless exercise of power, in which he proposed not to himself some end that would justify and glorify him in the eyes of those intelligences who long ere the beginning of time had hymned his praise, and been devoted to his service. Every thing which we have learned of him and of ourselves, shows that such must have been the case. Hence we find it stated in Scripture, that he made man that he might draw from out his heart and life a rich harvest of pleasure and praise: that when from his throne on high he looked down into every bosom he might behold his own all-glorious image, as from a mirror, reflected back again; and when his eye wandered over the habitations of man, it might rest with pleasure on one universal paradise, on which no stone had fallen, and over which no cloud had gathered, to make him withdraw it in displeasure; and that when men on earth, and angels in heaven beheld this general personification of the principles of holiness, an eternal song of praise might be uplifted to the honour and glory of the wise and the good One, who

made and governs all. Such designs were marred by the introduction of moral evil, not without the knowledge of the Creator, nor beyond the reach of remedy; for if our ideas of himself and his character be correct, (and correct they must be, for they are derived from the volume where he is graciously revealed), his omniscient eye discovered the event long ere it occurred, and his benevolent mind found out a cure. But it is not for us to say whether or not the glory of God has been manifested even more in the present than in the former circumstances of men; whether or not a richer revenue of praise has not been gathered in to him by the death of Jesus, than if no Saviour had been needed, and no Saviour had been given. Had sin never entered, and atonement never been made, we might have adored him as great, and wise, and good; but our souls would never have experienced the delight that thrills through our bosoms, when we behold his justice and his mercy reconciled in their operations; when we see them meeting and harmonizing around the cross of Calvary; when we see *love* holding a conspicuous place in the character and conduct of the Deity; when, in short, we see the whole attributes of the godhead uniting together to save souls from death.

I. God's design in creating man, being to manifest his glory, and he having for that purpose furnished us with spotless souls created in his own image; but it being so that that image has been lost, we remark that we certainly do fulfil the ends of our creation by endeavouring, in the appointed way, to recover that purity of heart of which sin has deprived us. This you will observe, includes the whole work of human redemption; beginning with the first operations of grace, an alarming care for the well-being of our souls; going on to hate that which causes their destruction, and closing our career by loving and trusting him who died for us. And there is something in all this eminently calculated to show forth the glory of God to the world, it is the recovery of the child that was lost, the resuscitating of the son that was dead; it is the return of the wicked and wayward prodigal who had abandoned his father and his father's house; it is the setting right of the traveller to eternity who had wandered from his path, and in the midst of more than midnight darkness was stumbling on the brink of a

precipice; it is the rescuing of the man who had made shipwreck of his soul, and was fast driving onward to destruction. And though it cannot be denied that still God would have been glorious, and the angels in heaven would have celebrated his praises, and the devils in hell would have believed and trembled before him, even although the lost child had never been recovered, and the dead son had never been raised: although the prodigal had revelled in sin till ruin overtook him, and the traveller had persevered till he finally perished; yet we think that all things considered, the fact is unquestionable, that in the salvation of the sinner the glory of God is made most conspicuous to the world. The stern but strict integrity of the father who has cast out and away his profligate son, even at the expense of his own paternal feelings, must in a certain sense be admired; there is something so heroic and virtuous in this righteous ebullition of his wrath, that it must command our approbation; but he appears to us in another and a far more amiable character, when, with a breaking heart and streaming eyes, he kneels in the solitude of his closet, and implores the Deity in his behalf. David, when he assembled his armies and sent them to combat with the rebel son that strove to dethrone him, appears to us as the virtuous and the valorous prince, resolved to defend the rights and liberties of the throne, the altar, and the commonwealth—resolved in righteousness to discharge the duties of his station; but when we go from the battle-field to the upper chamber in his palace, and hear him lamenting and saying, "Absalom! my son, my son! would to God I had died for thee!" there is something in this display of natural affection, so feeling and unsophisticated, that it awakens with powerful efficacy the sympathies of every heart. And so, though it be true, that God would still have been great, and glorious, and happy, far beyond the reach of our present conceptions, though every child of Adam had suffered to the very utmost the fearful doom his iniquities deserved, and in the midst of the fierce flames of his wrath had endured for ever, and though even then we could not have lifted up one accusatory word against his holiness; yet, oh! does he not assume a far more lovely appearance in our sight, when the frown on his countenance is mingled with the expressions of grief; when the sternness in his eye is

mellowed with the tears of pity; when his righteous abhorrence of sin is mingled with sentiments of the deepest and dearest compassion? Does not his glory become more conspicuous, and are not his praises more widely and heartily celebrated, when he is regarded as our Father in Christ, reconciling unto himself a world of sinners?

This truth will be made more obvious when the relative difficulties of the works he has performed are brought before you. We employ such a phraseology as this even while we know that with God nothing is impossible, nor may be said to be difficult, because language has no other more appropriate term with which to express the idea. With a being such as he is, the work of creation must have been easily accomplished; the mighty God whose dwelling-place is the universe, who pervades every thing, of whom it cannot be said, there is a place where he is not, had only to speak and it was done; there was no impediment in his way, there were no principles of truth, or justice, or holiness, set in opposition against it. But, so to speak it, it was more easy to create than to redeem a soul; the work of redemption could only be effected by some mighty effort being made to satisfy the demands of justice, and prepare a way whereby the ungodly might be justified, and yet he remain a just God who hates sin and punishes transgressors. There was, you observe, in the way of our redemption, every attribute of perfection of which the Deity is possessed: how could pardon be extended to us consistently with those laws which he had declared could only be violated under pain of his displeasure? So far as human wisdom went, the thing appeared an impossibility. And when over all this darkness the intelligence of God sheds a cheering and a refreshing light; when our apprehensions are dispelled, and every obstacle and difficulty is removed; and the love of God to our perishing race appears of such a magnitude as to be adequate to the sacrifice of his Son—great and glorious as he formerly appeared to us to be, his character is still more elevated in our view, and feelings are awakened in our bosoms somewhat akin to those which animated the angels when they chanted their doxology above the plains of Bethlehem.

Now, brethren, it is ever to be borne in mind by us, that while the glory of God is manifested in the design and execution of

the plan of redemption, it is equally conspicuous in the return of every individual sinner. If God took pleasure in us when he looked down into our hearts and beheld his own image reflected back, equally so must he be delighted when he beholds that image reimpresed upon our souls. And it is to be remembered, that those only will be received by the Redeemer who *apply* to him; that those only will taste of the water of life who *come* to the fountain; that those only will be saved who *seek* after Jesus. While we limit not the freeness, or sovereignty, or extent of the grace of God, while we say not that it is impossible for it to reach to the man who is revelling and rejoicing in the midst of his iniquity; yet surely if the Bible scheme be rightly understood by us, man himself is not to be idle, but is to *come* to and *believe* in Jesus. And if there be one listening to me this day who has not gone to Christ; if there be one still in his sin, and still resolving to continue so; if there be one individual who will retire from this house, without crying out, "What shall I do that I may be saved?" I tell that person he is not fulfilling the design of his creation; he is not seeking to glorify God; the Almighty is deriving no more praise and no more pleasure from him than does he from the very beasts of the field. Oh! it matters not much that you are fulfilling the various duties of life; it matters not much that for six whole days, even from Sabbath to Sabbath, you ply with unceasing diligence your worldly avocation, making honest provision for your family and dependants; if yet you have not been seeking the salvation of your souls, if you have not been striving to regain the image you have lost, and the inheritance you have forfeited, you are not fulfilling the end of your being; you have forgotten, or not forgetting, you have neglected to act upon the idea that "the chief end of man is to glorify God."

II. As the glory of God is manifested when his image is restored to the soul, it is so too, we remark in the second place, when that image is reflected not to the world, exhibiting the beauty of holiness, and reflecting a lustre and a loveliness around the whole conduct of the man. This, my christian brethren, is a portion of the duty of man more peculiarly applicable to your case than what has already been advanced—it being presumed that all who may be addressed by the title of a brother in Christ

have already had God's image reïmpressed upon their hearts. Now I would cherish with delight the idea that there are not a few here in these circumstances anxiously waiting to hear how they may best glorify God with their bodies and their spirits, which are his. Every one who is sincerely penitent for his sin, and who has turned unto God with full purpose of new obedience, will be as sincerely desirous to be told how a Christian may best fulfil the great ends of his creation. If the image of God has already been reconferred upon you, so far have the designs of your existence been accomplished. But there is more than this required of every believer. Light was not given that it might be hidden, but that it might shine out before men, that others seeing your good works may be led to glorify your heavenly Father; for it is to be remembered, that we can only glorify God by compelling others to confess that he is the greatest, and the wisest, and the best of beings.

It is the command of Scripture that we are to imitate God in all his imitable perfections; and in this single injunction there is ample direction given as to how you may best fulfil the designs of your existence. The man who is sincerely desirous to glorify God, has only to consider what is the conduct of the Almighty, and strive to imitate it. Now, of all the perfections and attributes which recommend his character to our esteem and approbation, there is none which holds a more conspicuous place than *love*. It is this which makes him amiable in our sight, and causes us to look up to him as our Father. And if the image of God be begotten within our hearts, that part of it which will shine out to the world with most transcendent excellence will be a similar feeling of universal affection. Like the love of the Almighty, it will extend to every child of Adam. The effect of *his* love is to beget love in return; for when the love of Christ is shed abroad in the soul, every other feeling and sentiment is put in subordination to it. And an effect somewhat similar to this will result from the exhibition of the love of the christian heart—we cannot conceive of any thing that could resist its progress or influence. If there be a man whose heart, filled with bigoted attachment to party or to creed, is disposed to regard us with aversion or disdain; if there be a man who, from mistaken views

of our feelings and character, is disposed to stand aloof from us and our society, as if the plague-spot of leprosy were visible on our brow; when the genial influence of christian love, implanted first within our own bosoms, extends itself to that man, like the sun rising above the wintry scene, his icy heart will melt and relent. If you would disarm bigotry, and opposition, and prejudice, it can only be effectually done by christian love. We remember here a fable with which all must be familiar from their infancy, but which from its aptitude we cannot refrain from introducing. There was, it is said, a contest between the sun and the wind, which would soonest make the traveller lay aside his cloak; and the wind raged with its utmost violence, and blew as if it would have blown its last, but the traveller grasped his cloak more firmly and closely around him; and when the wind had done its utmost, the sun shone forth with his warmest rays, sending them down with peculiar energy on his head, and the man whom the storm could not stagger soon laid aside his covering. So if there be one whom you regard as wandering from the truth, you may make the storm of your wrath to rage around him if you will, but he will eling more wildly and closely to his opinions; but when the sun of christian love has shone upon him, reflected out from the heart in which the image of God has been begotten, he will relax his grasp, and resign himself at last to bask in its rays and its warmth.

I am proceeding upon the supposition that christian principle has already been implanted in your hearts, and that as the natural effect of this you are led to love all mankind, and to be solicitous for their welfare. But besides regarding them as your brethren, there is one other way in which it will manifest itself, and in doing which glory must redound to the Deity, and that is by the practising of benevolence. The love which the Deity bore to our race prompted him to pity our circumstances, to sympathize with our sorrows, and to seek by the sacrifice of his own dear Son to achieve our deliverance. And if the same mind be in you which is in Him, that love which you bear to the children of men will make you strive by your utmost efforts to alleviate their miseries. Have ye gone to the humble and the lowly cottage, where the poor, and the aged, and the infirm were laid? have ye stood by the bedside of the dying, and

spoken to them the language of christian consolation? have ye met with the poor old beggar man shivering as the wintry storm was shaking his tatters, and extended a liberal hand to supply his wants? Ye were not glorifying yourselves, but Him who implanted his grace in your hearts. Opportunities such as these, brethren, cannot be wanting, by which to manifest the glory of God; they are furnished to us in every hour that we live, and every step that we take.

There are still, besides all this, other means by which ye may fulfil the ends of your existence. Not only are we to take Christ for our example, but those also who stand purified and accepted in his sight. We are to be followers of those who through faith and perseverance are now inheriting the promises. Now, it is told us in revelation, that they serve God day and night in his temple, plainly intimating to us, that if we are really in earnest, there are few methods by which we can extend or exhibit his glory to the world more effectually than by the rigid and regular observance of his worship. If we hope to mingle in the shining throng above who are now before his throne, can there be more natural conduct than to prepare ourselves for the meeting and the work. Nor do I know of one exercise more likely to extend the influence of our holy Christianity. I am not speaking of your coming to God's house on the Sabbath, and seeming to worship him there. I am speaking of that household altar, where yourselves must be the priests, and your families your auditors; and I do not know of one exercise more calculated or more capable of extending the influence of religion than this. Were I to lead you to that sweetest of all scenes, the scene of family devotion; were I to lead you to the house of the Christian at even-tide, when the toils and the cares of the day are terminated; were I to let you see the father of that family kneeling in the midst of his friends, and pouring forth his prayer—a prayer not mellowed by the finer pathos of a sister country, but spoken in the homely dialect of our own old Scotland, not on that account more unacceptable to the ear of the Almighty—I would have presented to you a scene, than which nothing could be better calculated to extend the influence of our faith, or bring home to the Deity a richer harvest of praise. Is there one then now

listening to me professing himself to be a friend of Christ—professing to regard it as his chief end to glorify God, and has that man no household altar on which to offer his sacrifice? Then I bid him, if he be really anxious to accomplish the grandest and noblest design of his being, I bid him away home this very night and take down the Bible he has too much neglected, and amidst the amazement of some, and the sneers of others, sing his first household hymn, and pray his first family prayer. Is it extending God's glory to permit our families to be godless and religionless? Let the question be answered by the conscience, and let the dictates of the conscience be the practice of the life.

To encourage you, my hearers, thus to fulfil the great object of your existence in the world, we would remind you, in conclusion, that not only is it your chief end to glorify God, but also to enjoy him for ever. Man was made not so much for time as for eternity, and it is God's design relative to you that you should be eternally happy. "He takes no delight in the death of the wicked, but would rather they would turn to him and live." And is not the prospect of living for ever with the Lord reason sufficient why every Christian should strive with his utmost effort to glorify him here? Independently of those claims which the Almighty has upon you, as your Creator, your Preserver, and your Benefactor, he has placed before you a rich and a noble reward to stimulate your struggles and exertions in his cause. To urge a man to strenuous exertion, we set before him some prize to be obtained: we speak to the merchant of wealth to be acquired; we speak to the mariner of the home that waits for him; we speak to the soldier of honours to be won. And so, my christian friends, when calling upon you to strive to promote God's glory in the world, I would point your eye and your hopes to the rich and exhaustless reward that is provided: "Ye will enjoy him for ever." And, trust me, that in that one short promise is comprehended all you can either wish for or require. It implies the absence of sin, the absence of sorrow, and the presence of pleasures that eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and heart has not conceived of. To obtain all this, what will ye not endeavour and endure? Shall the student sit solitary by his midnight lamp and waste away the energies of life? Shall the states-

man submit to days and nights of anxiety and activity? Shall the warrior endure the extremes of cold, and hunger, and fatigue? Shall the mariner go down to the mighty waters, exposed to a thousand nameless dangers, and all to acquire some object which must soon perish and fade? And shall we, the possessors of immortal spirits, be idle and indifferent as to the duties that devolve upon us, when a reward is offered, compared to which the acquisition of worlds were as nothing? No, brethren, let us be animated by the hope that is set before us; let us be bold and dauntless in the service of our Master; let us go on from one degree of grace to another; let us press forward to the prize set before us. Let no difficulty deter us, no danger appal us, no obstacle terrify us; but, as the soldiers of Christ, let us fear no foe. As his servants, let us shrink from no labour; as his children, let us omit no duty. And let this be our encouragement, that he will be with us to assist and protect, and has graciously promised that our labour shall not be in vain.

THE DUTY OF EXTENDING RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE;

A SERMON PREACHED IN BEHALF OF THE GLASGOW TRACT DISTRIBUTION SOCIETY;

By the Rev. DAVID KING,

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“And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.”—JEREMIAH xxxi. 34.

THE history of Jeremiah calls forth alike our admiration and sympathy. His faithfulness was most distinguished amid circumstances the most trying. He was commissioned to address the Jews when they were about to be carried captive to Babylon, and fulfilled with unresting diligence his commission under all the discouragement of abounding iniquity, general calamity, personal suffering, and fruitless exertion. To console him for these tribulations, we find him favoured, in this chapter, with a prophetic foresight of the glory of the latter days: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord,” verses 31—33, “that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.” To these joyous predictions, that of the text is subjoined as a natural and interesting sequel. The passage is cited with some verbal differences in the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, and is there adduced as proving the great superiority of New Testament to Old Testament privilege. God interposed graciously for the Jews, when he brought them out of Egypt, for he “took them by the hand,” and made a “covenant” with them, and “was a husband unto them.” But for us better things were reserved. We are here promised a covenant of surer as well as superior blessings. The former was engraved on tables of stone, and was readily broken; the latter, it is here predicted, would be inscribed on the inward parts, and the hearts, and consequently observed. God visited the violation of the former with displeasure and desertion; he pledges himself to countenance the observance of the latter with his abiding favour. Happily this delineation has been in part fulfilled. The Gospel economy has been proclaimed, and multitudes have received its tidings to the saving of their souls. But when we look at the present aspect of the world, and compare it with the representation of these promises, we cannot fail to perceive that much of the glorious things here spoken of

Zion, remains to be accomplished. The success of the Gospel as yet is neither so signal nor so extensive as fully to verify the portraiture presented. In the following remarks, therefore, we are constrained to speak of this blissful consummation as still to a great extent prospective. Let us consider,

I. The existing ignorance supposed.

II. The duty incumbent on us while this ignorance lasts. And,

III. The ultimate prevalence of knowledge by which such obligations shall be superseded.

I. We are to consider the existing ignorance supposed. It is said they *shall* all know me; and this allusion to the future embodies a distinct though tacit contrast with the present. There were many then, and there are many still, ignorant of God. The impression that there is a God is seldom obliterated from the human mind. But this persuasion subsisting alone, or in connexion with the grossest error, comes far short of making wise unto salvation. By a knowledge of God the Scriptures intend a just estimate of his character, especially in relation to our own condition and prospects, as transgressors of his law. We never know him in truth, till we know him as the only wise God our Saviour. Now in this view, the great majority of our race are utter strangers to his nature and pleasure. The heathen have perverted even the teaching of creation; and being destitute of those Scriptures which are given by inspiration of God, are sunk in utter midnight darkness. Oh! how lost is the immortal mind to all true apprehensions of Deity, when it can stoop to the worship of stocks and stones, the works of men's hands. Yet the heathen, comprehensive as that appellation is, including not only thousands and tens of thousands, but millions and tens of millions, are not alone ignorant of God. It would be some relief if the eye, after surveying pagan lands, and compassionating these dark places of the earth filled with the habitations of horrid cruelty, could retreat securely to the nations of Christendom, and there soothingly repose on pervading spiritual intelligency. But, alas! there are multitudes in these favoured countries whose religious tuition has yet to be commenced, who have all the ignorance of heathens, wanting only its palliations. Nor does this remark apply only to the illiterate. A vast pro-

portion of the learned themselves have still to acquire the veriest rudiments of this heavenly science. Hearing of their profound and varied researches, we are apt to attach some importance to their opinions in this province as in others, and to feel stumbled when they impugn the wisdom or evidence of the Gospel of Christ. But in the great majority of instances, these evils are thrown out at random. The system has never been examined, its doctrines have never been ascertained, its arguments have never been weighed; and yet the seoffer, with a rashness which in any other case of inquiry he himself would be the first to denounce, presumes in these circumstances to avail himself of his learned reputation, to cast discredit on God and his word, not knowing what he says, nor whereof he affirms. Hence many have been unsettled, and even absolutely ensnared by reckless jeers which they would more wisely have regarded with pity or contempt.

The list of the ignorant is not yet completed. To attain its completion, we must go to christian sanctuaries. Yes, even of those who attend in the house of God, numbers seem as little instructed by their attendance as if they were frequenting heathen or Mohammedan temples. Their ears are inured to the sound of the Gospel, and this familiarity with its accents they are apt to mistake for acquaintance with its import. They think it impossible that words of daily usage—words in which they first lisped their mother tongue, can be veiled, and sealed to them as a foreign language. But ask them what this and that meaneth; bid them explain the sense of daily repeated sounds; and then all is hesitancy, and confusion, and apology. Memory is treacherous, though it remember well to plead its treachery; and expression is deficient, though it have plenty of terms in which to plead its deficiency. We have no wish to judge harshly of excuses; in the case of some they may be valid, but when recollection and utterance fail, often in religion and rarely in commerce we cannot help regarding their failure as empty pretence, and concluding that by the time such apologists might have been teachers of others, they have need that some one teach them what be the first principles of the oracles of God. Thus wide are the realms of ignorance, and I need not tell you that its sway is most destructive. Without knowledge there can be no faith, for

now can we believe what we do not know? And without faith, we are divinely assured, it is impossible to please God. "He that believeth on the Son hath life; he that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Wilful ignorance of God, therefore, is just as dismal as that eternal perdition which it inevitably incurs, for all who are its subjects are perishing for lack of knowledge. Yet in another view the statement of the evil suggests consolation. That misery which ignorance induces knowledge would dispel. Perhaps you hate God, but if you only knew his goodness, your hatred would be converted into love; perhaps you discredit God, but did you know his faithfulness your distrust would surrender to reliance; perhaps you oppose God, but did you know the graciousness of his purposes, oh! you would cast away in utter shame your weapons of rebellion, exchanging resistance for submission, hostility for alliance. Your disapproval of others may be well founded, but all your controversy with God is based on pure fiction and delusion. While you pronounce him implacable, he is setting forth his bleeding Son, the propitiation for your sins, through faith in his blood; while you declare his grace restricted, he is issuing the unfettered proclamation, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely;" while you flee him as a foe, he is following with all the pity of a Father, and saying, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings."

In order to love God, then, and enjoy his love, you have only to know him. Believe him to be what he is, and immediately he becomes your God and you his people; and the redemption of Christ, and the influences of the Spirit, and the glories of heaven, are all secured to you by an everlasting covenant ordered in all things, and sure. Such is your opportunity now, but such it shall not be always. If you trifle a little longer with mercy, its gifts will be shortly intercepted by barriers which no knowledge can remove. "I know thee who thou art (said the unclean spirit), Jesus the Son of God." This he knew and confessed, and yet remained in torment. And if we procrastinate till we are involved in the same condemnation as the devil and his angels, to us knowledge and confession will prove equally unavailing. Hence the duty of which I have now to speak.

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II. As incumbent on us while ignorance lasts, the duty of teaching every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord.

You will readily admit the propriety of teaching every man his brother. You will own at once that Andrew, finding his brother Simon, did right in bringing him to Jesus and that all christian members of families would do well to imitate this commendable example. But, alas! the interval is often wide between a verbal acknowledgment of duty and its vigorous performance. And is it not so here? Are not Christians themselves too sparing in expostulation with careless, unawakened relatives? I fear that after some fruitless debating the parties in a lamentable proportion of cases enter into a compromise, by which the saint surrenders every thing, and the sinner nothing; for the result is, that Christ and his redemption are sentenced to exclusion, and the world, and the things of the world, alone admitted into discourse. Oh! deal not so unkindly with beloved kindred. You would stand between them and temporal destruction, and the more they were bent on such ruin, the more you would remonstrate. And will ye give place to them, then, and facilitate their progress when they are madly encountering eternal destruction, and hastening to the gates of the second death? All your influence would be engaged to dissuade them from rejecting in gross misapprehension a valued earthly inheritance, and will ye permit them, without engaging every effort of dissuasion, to reject as worthless the love of God and the hope of glory? No; after all repulses and disappointments, still teach every man his brother, still press the exhortation, know thou the Lord; for, it may be, the Lord, through your instrumentality, will grant him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and, oh! the trouble will appear small when thou hast gained thy brother. You observe, however, that you are required, moreover, to teach every man his neighbour. Here many will at once understand us to speak of missionary agents, not deeming themselves at all qualified for personally instructing a benighted neighbourhood. But this conclusion we cannot reach so hastily. It is often adopted as self-evident when it has no evidence, when it is on the contrary most erroneous and criminal. There are now Tract Societies and Christian Instruction Societies, which employ many members

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of our churches in diffusing through the streets and lanes of our city the knowledge of the only true God. Why may not others join their number? Perhaps some are too respectable; it would involve too much condescension to apply their own hands, and open their own lips in a benevolent undertaking. Be it so. The elevation is not to be coveted that exalts above well-doing. These philanthropists prefer a higher walk than Christ's, for he went about continually doing good. This know, however, that he who exalteth himself shall be abased, while he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Some again are too much engaged. They are immersed in business the whole day, and have no leisure and no reflection to spare from its turmoils. And is it safe to be so engrossed with the world? Can you devote yourselves thus exclusively to secular pursuits, and yet escape secularity of spirit? Oh! remember that the inquiry is important; for "to be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." But, perhaps, you have no alternative. All your time is bound over to the world by a dire necessity. Review that assertion, and subject it to renewed scrutiny. That you might lose some fraction of gain by complying with the text, we allow. But is it necessary that every attainable moiety should be secured, though you have enough otherwise, and though the work of God is meanwhile suspended, and souls around you are meanwhile perishing?

The case is shortly this. Superfluous mannan has to be won, and immortal spirits have to be won: which is the more necessary? Oh! answer the question now, as ye would desire to answer it before the judgment-seat of Christ. But, perhaps, time is not at your own disposal. You are, it may be, the servants of others, and must be subject to their arrangements. The situation of many in this respect, and especially many of our youth to whom some time for mental improvement is so precious, truly demands compassionate sympathy. Were we addressing their employers, we would urge them, in so far as the competition of traffic at all allows, and even though some sacrifice should be entailed, to lighten the burdens of this sore bondage. But addressing these overtoiled labourers themselves, we would admonish them, that a small season allotted to benevolent engagements would rather relieve than aggravate their

oppressions. Change of labour is sometimes rest; and if the maxim ever apply, it must surely hold good, when we pass from anxious wasting tasks to those scenes and subjects which prove all affliction to be light and momentary, and elevate the soul to a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. One hour a-week, where more cannot be conceded, may be space enough for great usefulness. Yea, it were presumptuous to limit the happy effect of a single visit, for a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

It must be allowed, however, that all have not equal facilities for the personal prosecution of such works and labours of love; and even though they had, it would still be their duty to engage others in this service as well as themselves. Some are willing to devote their lives to the extension of Christ's kingdom, if you will devote a portion of substance to their support. The proposal is most reasonable surely, and assigns you the easier department of the treaty. By adopting it, and reducing it to energetic practice, you may teach your neighbour and brother in the largest and noblest acceptance of the terms. You may include in your neighbourhood the suffering Jew, who brands you as a Samaritan; you may extend the hand of brotherhood to the remotest and most savage tribes, remembering that one God hath made us, and that we are all his offspring. It is much more pleasing to praise than to blame; but I must in faithfulness express it as my painful conviction, that these solemn obligations have been awfully and inexplicably trifled with—that thousands have died ignorant of the Saviour, for whose ignorance, possessing as we did the means of instructing them, we shall find it hard to account at the judgment of the great day. It is common to say, that much is now done for extending the Gospel; but when we speak of much or little, we have reference to some standard. And what is the standard of measurement? Our own former apathy? There is little honour in escaping by that test. When a person seemed dead, a movement of the eyelids is thought wonderful activity; and so contrasted with absolute torpor, we are surprised at any symptom of spiritual animation. But take some juster criterion.

Look at the example, or at the commands, or at the promises of our Lord. Survey the price at which he has bought (oh! how

dearly) your souls, and bodies, and substance, for the service of his glory. Ponder the exigencies of the case, the value of immortal spirits, the numbers perishing, the shortness of time allowed for their rescue! Compute by these or any just rules, and they cover with guilt and shame the paltriness of our endeavours. Some may think these hard sayings. They may suppose that we would speak more kindly, by urging less strongly. But let me admonish them, that though they would wish us to spare them the trouble of sowing in tears, they will change their minds when the day of harvest comes; "when they who have sown in tears are reaping in joy;" when this and that faithful labourer is bringing his sheaves rejoicing, and presenting to an approving Lord the fruits which have been gathered unto eternal life. Then you will esteem those ministers to have been the kindest who urged you the most strenuously to sow bountifully, that you might reap also bountifully. And shall these labours never cease? Yes, the work shall by and by be completed, and then saints shall rest, and their rest shall be glorious.

This brings us to consider,

III. The ultimate prevalence of knowledge by which such obligations shall be superseded. They shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother; for "they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." This is a prospect beyond the farthest flight of either poetry or science. Genius and godliness have been often regarded as opposed and incompatible. The idea is too absurd to merit refutation, and yet many have supported their pretensions to the former, by showing how pleasantly they could sport with the sacredness of the latter. It were to err possibly in the opposite extreme to depict genius and godliness as commonly allied. That they can be severed, we have proof abundant, as it is melancholy. Yet their features are certainly analogous, and exhibit something of family likeness. Is the one conversant with great objects, so is the other. Does the one loosen the cords of contracted prejudice, so does the other. And to notice, finally, that element of resemblance which has led us into this digression—Is it characteristic of genius to outrun its age, much more may godliness claim this distinction. The sage elicits and demonstrates impor-

tant principles; he sees them overlooked and thwarted by the multitude around him; but he anticipates a period when they shall obtain the consent and regulate the practice of general society. So the saint receives and appreciates the excellent knowledge of Christ Jesus. He sees it contemned by a thoughtless world, but he knows that it shall ultimately triumph and rear its trophies on the ruins of infidelity, idolatry and crime. The only difference is, that the saint looks for a more certain and more glorious conquest. He is warranted to say not simply that it probably may, but that it certainly shall come, and that all, from the least to the greatest, shall then know, not merely the laws of nature and their various operations, but the God of nature and his great salvation. The phrase, "from the least of them unto the greatest of them," may be differently understood, but in every view it is delightfully significant. Does it refer to age, how beautiful on the one hand to see little children entering the kingdom, to see God, out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, perfecting praise; and to witness on the other hand maturity of years and grace identified, to see the gray hairs a crown of glory being found in the way of righteousness. How affecting to see these extremes of life united in devotion, the infant and the ancient joining the tender and the wrinkled hand to approach in fellowship the Father of mercies! Again, does the language refer to station? How attractive to see the degraded rising in character, and comfort, and piety, and the exalted humbly stooping from their loftiness to acknowledge and embrace the lowliest followers of the Lamb! to see all envy on the one hand, and all disdain on the other utterly lost and swallowed up in fraternal endearment. And these shall not be verdant spots in the desert as infrequent as lovely; the whole earth shall be such a paradise, for righteousness and peace shall spring forth before all the nations. And how shall this consummation be attained? Doubtless by God fulfilling his promise of putting his law in men's inward parts, and writing it on their hearts. But will he do so directly and independently of his revealed Word? No; we as the instruments in his hand must disseminate that Word, and then he will open men's understanding to understand the Scriptures. How honouring to be employed by such an agent in such a work and for such ends! Who would not

delight to introduce millennial glory? Yes, some will say, or think without saying, this were an elevating distinction if the time were come, but we suspect the era is far off. This objection is not new. In the prophecies of Haggai we find these words: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." And what is the divine response to this cavil? "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cotted houses, and this house lie waste?" The reproof is just as appropriate now as then. All think it high time to secure their own interest. On that point they have no dubiety, and they doubt only whether the season has come for building the temple and city of God. But reflect that our position in this respect, as contrasted with Jeremiah's, is eminently happy. He saw the day of which we are speaking afar off, at the distance of very many centuries,

and was glad, hastening towards it in exulting anticipation. And how much more do these expectant emotions become in whom the ends of the world have come? But though our services should not be the last engaged, it will be enough that they have any place in the series which guides to this result. He who first draws the sword in the battles of freedom is not less honoured though he fall than he who survives the final victory, and triumphantly restores the sword to its scabbard. And so is it here. When the latter glory shall shine, its beams shall revert even to Jeremiah's labours. Every effort, every petition in its behalf, of whatever class and whatever clime, shall be divinely acknowledged. Those now resting from their labours shall be even then followed by their works, and the day of the Lord Jesus shall alone perfect their recompense. "Be not weary then in well-doing; for in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not."

* * * From a notice of that valuable work, the "Brief Historical Account of the most eminent Scots Worthies," with Notes, by Mr. M'Gavin, author of the Protestant, we beg to make the following short extract:—

"The characters introduced to our notice in the 'Scots Worthies,' are those of the most eminent noblemen, gentlemen, ministers, and others of the day—men of true piety, who feared God and eschewed evil. Many of them, and among these some of the most noble of the land, the two Argyles for example, sealed their testimony with their blood. The history of the Scots Presbyterians is also full of the most noble acts of munificence and generosity. They were not sparing, even of their lives, when called to put them in jeopardy in the service of God, or for the benefit of their fellow-creatures. Witness the conduct of the two noble ladies in London Castle, who, at the risk of their own lives, carried food in the skirts of their cloaks to a persecuted boy, in a place of concealment. In the persecution to which the Scots Presbyterians were subjected, they exhibited the utmost zeal for the honour of God and the noblest examples of fortitude and magnanimity. They suffered, as we learn from Defoe, extremes that tongue cannot describe, and which heart can hardly conceive of, from the dismal circumstances of hunger, nakedness, and the severity of the climate;

lying in damp caves and in hollow clefts of the rocks without shelter, covering, fire, or wood, none durst harbour, entertain, relieve, or speak to them, upon pain of death. Fathers were persecuted for supplying their children with food, and children for nourishing their parents; husbands for harbouring their wives, and wives for cherishing their husbands. The ties and obligations of nature were no defence, and many suffered death for acts even of pity and charity. Nor can we give an account of the murders committed under the cloak of justice; the inhuman tortures to which the accused were subjected, to constrain them to bear witness against themselves, their relatives, and their brethren; and the barbarity of sounding drums on the scaffold to drown their voices, and of apprehending and punishing those who expressed sympathy for them. The number of prisoners was often so great, that the government could not bring them all to trial. Such of them as escaped execution were transported, or rather sold as slaves, to populate desolate and barbarous colonies. The history of characters such as these cannot be read, in the language of the author without the deepest interest."

THE SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. ALEXANDER TURNER, Gorbals.
SERMON by the Rev. GEORGE JOHNSTON, Edinburgh.

THE DANGER OF BEING UNDECIDED IN RELIGION;

A SERMON,

By the Rev. ALEXANDER TURNER,
Gorbals.

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him."—
1 KINGS xviii. 21.

THE effect upon the mind of king Agrippa, produced by the pleading of St. Paul, is described in these words of Agrippa himself: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." A train of reasoning had been produced, and facts had been stated upon the authority of a man who had been an eyewitness, and himself the subject of many of them, and who in evidence of his own thorough conviction had abandoned his native and long-cherished habits, entered upon that very course which formerly he had sought by all means to overturn, and submitted to toils, and privations, and imprisonments, and persecutions of all kinds. Reference had been made to the fulfilment of prophecies also, the authority of which was established in Agrippa's mind; and while the truth of all these flashed upon him, the effect was a momentary conviction that Christianity might be true. The prejudices which warped themselves around his understanding and his feelings were shaken for the while, and he declared himself almost persuaded to become a Christian. To a state of somewhat similar indecision, with reference to the worship of the true God, the people of Israel under Ahab appear to have been reduced. Tyranny had almost suppressed the profession of the true religion, and in the land even of God's choice, the hand of charity had been exercised in preserving the few remains of the prophets of Jehovah, by hiding them by fifties in a cave. At this time, the prophet Elijah, alone, as he thought,

surviving, of all the prophets that had been raised up in Israel, stood forth in the sight of the tyrant and of the nation to vindicate the insulted honours of his God; and by the spirit of inspiration which was upon him, knowing the miracle which was to attest the truth of his commission, and put to shame the pretensions of his adversaries, he addressed to his countrymen the solemn question before us: "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Now, although in this christian assembly there probably may not be even one individual to whom this question, in its literal acceptation, could with any propriety be proposed; though each one of us may be so firmly persuaded of the truth of our religion, that when we consider the strength of its various evidence, we rather wonder at the extreme credulity of that mind which, in the face of such evidence, could believe the religion untrue; yet is there a sense with which in strict propriety, without any infringement on the virtue of charity, it may be put to many in almost every christian assembly. Of course we do not allude to the open and habitual breakers of God's holy law. These, whatever may be the amount of their christian profession; how deep soever the occasional display of apparently religious emotions, excited by the casual contemplation of the love or awfulness of God's character; how quick soever the feeling of transitory remorse, bursting forth at times amidst the languor of a spirit exhausted by the efforts

of its own wickedness; these, instead of halting between two opinions, have resolutely made up their minds to one side of the solemn alternative, and, for the present at least, have declared by their actions, a language which cannot be misunderstood, that they will not have God to be ruler over them. It may be, indeed, and very probably is the case, that they are looking forward to a future, more convenient season, when, after the enjoyment of a few more earthly pleasures, they hope to relinquish ways which their own hearts can tell them are not the ways of wisdom, and to dedicate to God the old age of a life whose youth and manhood have been devoted to his enemy. These, however, are not they to whom the question before us is addressed. But between the two points of high and active Christianity on the one hand, and the state of these unholy livers on the other, there is a series of gradations of character and profession—those descending and these ascending, until at length they meet on common ground, diversified indeed by all the various exhibitions of different minds engaged in different pursuits, but distinguished neither by any lofty christian attainment nor any very flagrant outrage. This is probably the common level of professing Christianity, ground at least which many occupy, and adorned, it must be confessed, with many an amiable production. For here it is that the indirect moralizing effects of Christianity may be seen, and this ground is illumined by many reflected beams of the Sun of Righteousness. And to the eye of the mere moralist this may seem the most beautiful of all the gradations of human character; for here the outrageous passions are repressed; benevolence may be actively employed; the laws of the land, and of honour, and of external morality, may be steadily observed; and this the moralist may pronounce the very perfection of a virtuous life, as far as human frailty will permit, as being equally removed from the extravagances of enthusiasm and the outrages of vice. Now, though we be not blind to the beauty which the virtue of this class may exhibit, though we would wish to appreciate every appearance of virtue wherever it may be found, yet is this the very class amiable and honourable, and dignified though they may seem, to whom we would propose the solemn words of our text: "If the Lord be God, then follow him." We do not deny the reality of that affection which is then interchanged between friend and friend—the power of that sympathy which distress ever

calls forth—the honour which pervades every transaction. We do not deny, we may not even suspect the reality, and power, and purity of all these. Nay, so firmly do we confide in the characters of some of these, that on the affection of some we could repose with all the security which earthly friendship can inspire, and we could go to them in distress with all the confidence of unfeigned sympathy, and to their honour we could intrust the pledge even of our lives. But, notwithstanding all these admissions, to them we would propose the solemn consideration of our text; for unless, in addition to all these virtues, or rather at the root and spring of them all, there be other and still higher principles at work, then they are but earthly in their origin, and shall be earthly in their end. Their objects are but short-lived, and with their objects they will perish. They have no principle of endurance whereby they can survive the destruction of this earth—no ties whereby they are linked to the objects of heaven, and on all this tottering earth can there be found nothing of permanent duration, unless for stability it be bound to the eternal throne of God.

If, then, amidst these virtues (supposing them as real and vigorous as we have said) there be no bond of union with the things of heaven, then assuredly even they, whose characters they most adorn, have no security for its enjoyment; and however they may appear in the sight of their fellow-men, yet to beings of purer minds and nobler perceptions, who could distinguish earthly from heavenly relations, and who knew the line which alone could unite them to the world above, their conduct, pure and amiable in many respects, would seem the result of a halting between two opinions, as if the vices of earth were hated and despised, but yet the virtues of heaven unappreciated; and assuredly to men in such a state they would have ample reason to exclaim, "If the Lord be God, then follow him!"

In order to illustrate the view which we have thus briefly stated, it will be necessary for us to endeavour to expose the insecurity of that foundation, on which this class of professing Christians build their hopes; and if this be done, we shall be prepared to illustrate the exhortation of our text, "If the Lord be God, follow him," by showing, as suggested by the foregoing part of the verse, that the two things necessary for this pursuit are decision, and the paramount attention of the mind.

Now, the only conceivable foundation of

these hopes must be the belief that, according to the appointment of God, the conscientious discharge of the relative duties of life, is through the mediation of Christ, to be followed at last by the happiness of heaven; that as a river of itself conducts you to the ocean, if only you will guard your bark against the rocks and quicksands, and other obstacles which might retard its progress as it floats along the stream, so will human life conduct you to the haven of eternal rest and glory, if you shall but guard against the vices which surround it, and practise the virtues which its various earthly relations imply. This has in fact been proposed as the true scriptural view of the matter, and it is undeniably the opinion, whether expressed or not, which thousands of us entertain. It is true that human life was once the stream whose course led of itself to heaven, so that man had but to follow the holy dictates of his own pure mind, and he would have reached the dwelling-place of God. But its course has now been changed. It flows in the opposite direction; it leads to hell. Even to the highest efforts of human virtue there must be something superadded, although it were only to prepare for the enjoyment of heaven. The efforts of virtue, when unattended by higher than earthly principles, have their own reward in this life, but they have no claim to, and no connexion with, the life that is to come. True religion is such, that its objects rise infinitely above all the concerns of this present earth; and though to these also it descends, embracing all the duties resulting from every human relation, diffusing over them all the radiance of a heavenly lustre, yet is heaven its proper sphere; heaven is its birthplace, and to heaven all its aspirations must arise. Now, if this be the case, what reasonableness is there in connecting the discharge of merely earthly duties (supposing that both conscientious and sincere) with that state of glory which is to be revealed? This is to mistake the whole character, and constitution, and circumstances, and prospects of man. It is to confound interests which God has taught us distinctly to separate; it is to attempt to build a tower upon the surface of this earth, whose top shall reach up to heaven. It is a mere prejudice of the fallen mind, however general its diffusion, contradicted, as we shall endeavour briefly to show, both by the analogy of earthly things and by the unerring word of God.

The happiness of the future state of believers in Christ is represented as depending

chiefly upon its holiness. Doubtless there shall be in heaven the joyful recognition of earthly friends, and the interchange of all pure affections and offices of love; but holiness is that which is the chief element, the very essence as it were of their enjoyment. They worship God night and day in his temple; they contemplate his unhidden character; they delight themselves in God. They enjoy intimate communion with Him who redeemed them, and their high felicity is to celebrate the praises of Him who by his death has gained all power, and dominion, and glory. Now, let any one of the class whom we are describing put it to his own conscience whether, with his present feelings, he could enjoy an eternity of such exercises as these. Let him for a moment transfer his thoughts from the kind of objects with which in general they are occupied, to that kind to which we have alluded, as forming the exercise of heaven; and is he not conscious of a sudden and wide transition? Were heaven to be formed according to the model of his own choice, is he not conscious that it would be something very different from what Scripture has described to be? Were the utmost wishes of his soul this instant to meet their full accomplishment, would he be found engaged in high communion with the God of heaven, delighting in the manifestations of his glorious attributes, adoring with delight unspeakable the condescension, and love, and sufferings, and work of his Redeemer? No, else such themes would be the subjects of his present contemplation and his present happiness. The heaven of his choice would just be the unsatisfying objects which he at present pursues, lengthened out into eternity; or if, as it may be, he has begun to feel the emptiness of these, then he knows not which his mind would choose, and he indolently rests in a vague undefined anticipation of happiness unknown.

Even in this view, then, we may perceive the insecurity of that foundation on which this class rest their hopes. If heaven be such a state as Scripture represents it, then however virtuous they may think themselves, it would be no heaven to them. They are not prepared for its enjoyment. Their minds are fixed on different kinds of objects; and before they could have capacity for its enjoyment, a total change must be produced upon the bent of their affections and upon their whole souls. That change, however, must be produced here; it cannot be produced hereafter. As the tree falls, so it lies. This earth must be

the preparation for heaven, else no preparation can be made. The seeds must be sown here, which are to ripen into maturity hereafter. Were it otherwise, a sudden and violent transition must be undergone, contrary to the method of God's procedure, in all his ways and works within the range of man's observation. The river (*e. g.*) gradually expands from its source to the place of its discharge. The seed unfolds its complicated germ, and gradually increases to the stature of a mighty tree. Animated nature proceeds with steps not less progressive, from imperfection and weakness to maturity and strength, each preceding stage in all preparing for that which is to follow; and even in unorganized nature the same law may be detected, for in all God's wondrous works, a harmonious uniformity may be found. This then may teach those whose state we are describing, that their condition is not that which leads to heaven. The objects which they pursue are utterly dissimilar to the objects which it presents. They are not in a state to enjoy them, though acquired. Their present state bears no marks of preparation for the future; and, therefore, if in their present state they still anticipate the rewards of future glory, then are they chargeable with what probably they most of all abhor; they are chargeable with entertaining a fanatical hope, that in their case God will depart from what is distinctly his usual method of operation, and suddenly translate them from the mere pursuits of earth to the felicity of heaven, giving them all at once capacity and taste for the enjoyment of those things which hitherto they either neglected or despised.

But it is unnecessary to dwell longer on the unreasonableness of this opinion, for Scripture has pre-emptorily determined the question. It tells us that the love of God the Father and of Christ must be shed abroad in our hearts; that we must set our affections on things above, and have our conversation in heaven, and hold communion with the Father of our spirits; that as lively stones we must be built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices; that we must be fervent in spirit, worshipping God in spirit and in truth. Such then being the case, and it being obvious that true religion does not consist in the discharge of merely earthly duties, we proceed to enforce the exhortation in our text, especially in reference to the class to which already we have so often directed, for to all of us, but especially to them, as having never yet even begun the exercise of

true spiritual life, the words before us apply; and to all also who are asleep in Zion, resting themselves in ease after the fatigue of but a partial victory, the words before us should be full of meaning and reproof: "If the Lord be God, follow him." These words appear in their full force, when put in connexion with the declaration of our Saviour, "that no man can serve two masters, for either he will despise the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and neglect the other." This tells us that the true and hearty service of the Lord is utterly incompatible with the supreme love and homage of any other object; that true religion, whatever that implies, for we do not now intend to explain at length its import, must be the chief and ruling passion of the soul, that to which all other interests must give way; that if, in fact, there be in religion any truth at all, then it must be the all-pervading and absorbing spirit that must animate us; that if, beyond the confines of this earth, there be another world to which this earth is but the door of entrance, then must the eternal world be the object of all our fondest anticipations; that if, in short, we have immortal souls, destined for ever to misery or to happiness, then it were utter madness to devote all, or even most of our attention, to objects stamped with the impress of mortality; that if God be the Lord, then we must devote to his love and service all our soul, and strength, and mind.

First of all, if God be the Lord, if there be truth in his word, if our religion be not only a cunningly devised fable, then we must follow that Lord with decision of mind. In reference even to the affairs of the present life, decision of character is indispensable to the performance of every manly enterprise. "Without it," as a profound and eloquent living author observes, "a human being, with powers at best but feeble, and surrounded by innumerable things tending to perplex, to divert or to oppress their operations, is indeed a pitiable atom, the sport of diverse and casual impulses. Without it a man can never be said to belong to himself: since, if he dared to assert that he did, the pmy force of some cause, about as powerful you would have supposed as a spider, may make a capture of the hapless boaster the very next moment, and triumphantly exhibit the futility of the determinations by which he was to have proved the independence of his understanding and his will. He belongs to whatever can seize him; and innumerable things do actually verify their

claim on him, and arrest him as he tries to go along; as twigs and chips floating near the edge of a river are intercepted by every weed, and whirled in any little eddy." Each one of us may have seen this often exemplified in the man irresolute of purpose, whose feeble mind, the sport of every idle feeling, could, in matters perhaps of utter insignificance, bring itself to no determined resolution. Its narrow powers could make no general survey of the thousand irregular circumstances which crowded tumultuously around them; but occupied now with one, then with another successively, resolved and re-resolved, fluctuating in a whirlwind of contending thoughts. Or, if a resolution once was formed, its execution was still a matter of no less hazard. One hour may conjure up some hitherto unthought of circumstance, and the firm resolve, the fruit of many an hour's laborious reasoning may, in an instant, vanish into air. Every one sees that such a character as this is fitted for no lofty enterprise, not even for the management of common affairs in ordinary life. He must submit to be guided by others, or retire altogether from the view. And yet, pitiable as this character is, it is by no means unfrequently exhibited in that very position, where, of all others, it is most to be deplored. It were pitiable to see it destroying, by its feebleness, the temporary interests of a dependent family—more so, far, if, invested with the unseemly honours of sovereign authority, it were permitting the wealth, and power, and virtue, and glory of a nation to crumble into ruins. But what words shall describe the infinitely more pitiable sight of this same feebleness and folly, suffering to perish the interests of a soul inheriting a duration lasting as the life of God, whose chances of salvation each successive moment is diminishing, to whom but threescore years were given to prepare for an unchangeable eternity, and whose moments, as they pass, the destroying angel is reckoning up, till the cup of iniquities be full, and the time of mercy exhausted, and he be let loose to devour his wretched prey! This is both the most common, and beyond all comparison the most fatal effects of indecision. You see the man with conscience, it may be, convinced this day of sin and danger, and resolved that something must be done; but look at him to-morrow, and he is just as before. The wretched man is the very slave both of Satan and of circumstances. He feels that all is not right; he sees that interests of overwhelming importance are at stake; he must retrace his

steps; but this is not the time. He is resolved, and he is just watching a more favourable time, when his opportunities will be greater, his temptations less, his exposure to the ridicule of fools not so hazardous. Or he has determined that now he shall commence; but some new scheme presents itself; some boisterous passion presents its claim; some one of the thousand circumstances which human life unceasingly affords, has offered itself to his attention, and has won his feeble mind; and unless some mighty effort shall be made, that man's perdition is certain as the day of death. For not in all this earth can circumstances be found where such a man shall have room for an unshaken resolution; for not in objects without, but in the soul within, is the error to be detected. "The mind is its own place," and whether in the bustle of public life, or the retirement of domestic peacefulness—the exercise of family duties, or the calm of monastic solitude—the perils of affliction or the seductions of ease; the man of christian decision shall bend and fashion all to the accomplishment of his righteous purpose; and the man of indecision shall find at all times enough to keep his spirit in ceaseless oscillation, and the tide of circumstances shall hurry him to ruin like an insect on the stream. "If God be the Lord, then let him be followed with decision." How long halt ye between two opinions? This instant, in God's strength, let the resolution be adopted. You look in vain for a more favourable time. The arguments on either side are as strong now as they shall be then. Judgment and eternity are as certain now as they shall be then. God's invitations are as free now as they can be then. Your heart is less steeled, and your sins less numerous than they should be then; and to look for mere favourable outward circumstances, is to look for a shadow of the air; for if the awful arguments of God's word are ineffectual in any circumstance, they may be so in any other circumstances which can even be conceived. The failing is not in the circumstances, but the error is within; and unless you bring decision not only to the first great step, but to every step in the christian life, you may resolve and re-resolve, and die the same.

But, secondly, we remark, that to follow the Lord not only requires decision of character, but also implies that true religion (whatever that includes) must occupy the paramount attention of the soul. It must form the great business of our lives, the exercise of our understanding, and supply the objects of our

warmest affections. Here too, as before, it will be found that the conduct of many professing Christians might well suggest the question—How long halt ye between two opinions? For considering what vital godliness requires, and the motives which true religion presents, the languor, and indifference, and want of spirit exhibited by many in the work of God, might suggest a suspicion that the truth of these things was seldom realized in our minds; that we almost doubted whether or not the Lord were God. Without the sustained attention of the mind no valuable acquirement can be attained; nothing, in short, can be done beyond the exercise of a few innate instincts. If you would gain reputation in the walks of literature or science, you must accustom your mind to laborious and painful investigations. Nay, were any one without previous attention, and study, and practice, to usurp the place of a workman even in the least ingenious of our common arts, the rude productions of his untutored hand would tell him that he was beyond his sphere. The meanest object that gratifies our taste, the veriest trifle that sparkles in the eye of vanity, required for its production the attention of an immortal mind; and if so, what attention shall the interests of eternity demand! The amount of attention bestowed in any case, should be proportioned to the difficulty of the acquirement and the value of the result. But if religion be, as we have seen, something very different from the mere pursuit of earthly things, and the mere discharge of social virtues, we need not here remark, how difficult the acquirement of opposite habits—of spiritual knowledge, of taming the wild passions of the soul, of substituting heavenly for earthly objects of contemplation, of realizing at all times amidst the objects of sense the presence and perfections of the unseen God, of raising the affections to things seen only by the eye of faith. Nor need we now dwell on the value of the result—salvation, and immortality, and glory for ever—a state of endless felicity not to be described by the language of this earth. And yet what one of us devotes such attention to heaven as to earth, to eternity as to time? And have not many of us devoted more sustained and more laborious study to acquire perfection in some art whereby, by fashioning some one or other of the materials of this earth for temporary use or ornament, we might acquire our scanty share of this earth's bounty, than we have ever done in the pursuit of those riches which endure unto eternal life? "Labour not for the meat

that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life." "Lay up riches in heaven." "What is a man profited, if he gain the world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "Take no thought for the body." "Delight thyself in God." "Have your conversation in heaven." And yet if these be the dictates of unerring wisdom, does not our own heart tell us that our conduct has too often been, as if we halted between two opinions, scarcely believing that the Lord is God? As if to justify themselves and terrify weak minds from heartily engaging in that very work for which they were created, and endowed with hearts susceptible of religious knowledge and emotion, these halting professors have abused a term and misapplied it, branding the profession and practice of true Christianity as enthusiasm. In every other sense save that of religion, this word is expressive of praise, not of censure. It is an essential element in every noble mind destined to excel in any of the higher arts—that, in short, without which no earthly glory in any department was ever yet acquired. Have enthusiasm in poetry, or painting, or sculpture, and men will do you homage. Have enthusiasm in religion and they shall pity or despise you. Be an enthusiastic warrior and wade through human blood to the object of your ambition, and men will forget the groans of the widow and the orphan whom your hand cursed, and the sacrifices of human life which you have made, and your name shall be to them the sign of all that is great and honourable. But engage vigorously in the spiritual warfare against all ungodliness, and the powers and principalities of darkness, and then you are a pitiful enthusiast. There is no doubt a species of false religious enthusiasm, a fanaticism deserving assuredly of pity more than of censure, where the affections of the soul are regulated not by the reason but by fancy; but that is no more to be confounded with true religion, than the fury of the maniac or the midnight assassin is to be confounded with the work of the patriot. They differ not in degree but in kind. And let but the guide be reason, enlightened by the Word of God, and then man cannot be too zealous in the work of God; for till he has discovered that which shall arrest the hand of death, and diffuse into his body the principle of immortality; till he has removed the curse from off this earth, and again transformed it into paradise, and reversed the sentence which has gone forth, that it be baptized with the devouring fire; that man

is the enthusiast in its worst sense, obeying his passions and despising reason, who has set his affections upon aught so frail and unsatisfying as the things of time afford; and if so, then to all who are not active, and

affectionate, and cordial, and abounding in the work of the Lord, we may well address the words before us, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him." Amen.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD PREACHING TO MEN, AND HIS LONG-SUFFERING;

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH, NICHOLSON STREET, EDINBURGH, ON SABBATH EVENING, JANUARY 13TH, 1835,

By the Rev. GEORGE JOHNSTON.

"By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noe, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water."—1 PETER iii. 19, 20.

It is elsewhere affirmed by Peter, that there are some things in the Epistles of Paul "hard to be understood;" and I have no doubt that those who have read the verses before us with any degree of attention, have already felt that such an affirmation is but too applicable to them. The difficulties in this passage are numerous and great. To what spirits does the Apostle refer? what is the prison-house in which they were confined? who preached to these spirits? what was the nature and object of the preaching? and what connexion has this paragraph with the manifest scope and design of the Apostle in the preceding verses? are questions much more easily asked than satisfactorily answered. As might have been expected, these inquiries, all naturally arising out of these words, have arrested the attention of expositors in almost every age, and in many instances very singular have been the answers given to them. The Roman Catholics, as is often the practice of that apostate church, solve all the difficulties in the passage by an imagination of their own. The spirits referred to, say they, are the souls of saints who departed this life previously to the crucifixion of our Lord. These, they affirm, were not, at their departure, admitted into heaven, but were all congregated into a vast, gloomy, inhospitable region which they denominated, "The Limbo of the Fathers." Enclosed within an impassible fence, secured by gates of brass, barricaded with massive iron bars, the souls of these saints continued in a state of doubt and anxiety, till the hour when the Lord Jesus expired on Calvary, and made atonement for his people's sins. This, however,

say they, was the hour of their victory: for no sooner was his *soul* separated from his body, than it winged its way to this vast limbo; and having arrived at the barriers, struck down the brazen gates, entered among the enchained souls, proclaimed his victory and their triumph, and putting himself at the head of the great army, ascended with them to the paradise of God. Such is the fanciful interpretation given of these verses by the Church of Rome. I will not insult the understanding of my audience by stopping to refute so wild an imagination. But equally absurd are some of the expositions given by Protestant divines. Bishop Horsely, one of the most talented, though not the most judicious of interpreters, says that the "spirits" here are the souls of some of the antediluvian saints who were confined in a place not quite so dreary as the limbo of the Catholics, and that when Christ was crucified his soul went and preached to them: this, however, not for the purpose of delivering them from their confinement, but of cheering them in their solitude, by proclaiming to them the glad tidings that he had actually offered the sacrifice of their redemption, and was about to appear before the Father as their Intercessor in the merit of his own blood. "And this," he gravely adds, "was a preaching fit to be addressed to departed souls, and would give a new animation and assurance to their hope of the consummation in due season of their bliss." Now all this, brethren, is really nothing less than solemn trifling with the Word of God. For we ask, Where is the shadow of a proof in all the Scriptures for such extraordinary statements? Are not the whole the mere imaginations of the writer's own mind, great

and learned as he was? And the lesson to be learned by us from such expositions is, that we beware of trusting to our own talents and attainments, however great, and that in interpreting either this, or any other passage of Scripture, we be ever careful, lest we substitute our own crude fancies for the design and meaning of the Spirit of God.

Leaving, then, all human helps, let us now endeavour to discover if the sacred Scriptures do not afford us light enough to find our way to the true sense of this seemingly dark passage. And I would begin with remarking, that verse 19th evidently stands in close connexion with that which precedes it. The relative *which* has its antecedent in the foregoing sentence, and it is at once seen to be the term "*spirit*;" "By which spirit he went," &c. Now, what is the spirit here referred to? Is it Christ's soul as opposed to his body? or is it the Holy Spirit of God, the third person of the eternal Godhead? This point is easily determined. It was not by his human soul that the body of Christ was quickened, and raised from the dead on the third day after his crucifixion. This was not, and could not be, the agent that exerted that omnipotent power which overturned the throne of the pale tyrant in the tomb of Joseph, snapt his chain asunder, and set the prisoner free. No; it was the Eternal Spirit who at the beginning brooded over the shapeless chaos, and evoked the smiling world from its darkness and disorder, that brought again from the dead the Captain of our salvation, and gave to him the power of an endless life. "But if the spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal body by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." We have then gained *one firm step* in our way. He who went to preach was not Christ, either in the body or by his soul, but the Spirit of God. It was not by himself personally, but by this divine agent that he preached "*to the spirits in prison.*"

Now, in the explanation of this clause, I must request your undivided attention, for upon the meaning which we attach to this phrase depend our views of the whole passage. The usual interpretation put upon these words is, that the Apostle here speaks of the souls of those persons who lived in impenitence immediately before the flood, and that he means to affirm they were then in the prison-house of hell—not meaning, however, that the Spirit of God went to the place of the damned, and preached to these

souls there, but that these spirits in hell, at the time he was writing, were the *souls of the persons to whom the Spirit of God, by the instrumentality of Noah, preached before the flood.*

Now, with this interpretation, I am constrained wholly to disagree, and for this conclusive reason: the language of the Apostle will not warrant such an exposition. He plainly affirms, that it was to these spirits, *during the time that they were in prison*, that Christ went and preached unto them by the Holy Ghost. Whatever those spirits be, whatever was the prison-house in which they were confined, *it was when under that confinement, when in that prison, and not before they were shut up in it, that the Spirit preached to them.* This is the plain grammatical construction of the words. Even to the mere English reader this must be evident; for what would you understand me to mean were I to say, "I went and preached to the soldiers in the Castle, or I went and preached to the prisoners in the Calton Jail?" Would you not instantly conclude, that I had gone to the Castle and preached to the soldiers there; or to the Calton Jail and had preached to the prisoners confined in that place. But this construction is still more evident from the original words, and will be seen at one glance by all who will consult it for themselves. There it is: "by which also to the spirits in prison he went and preached." The Apostle's meaning, therefore, is not that, at some period past, Christ went and preached to those persons whose souls were, at the time he wrote, in hell; but his meaning is, that Christ by his Spirit went to their prison-house, wherever it was, whatever it was, and *there* preached to the beings here denominated "spirits."

Being therefore shut up to this view of the words, we must now attempt to show who these "spirits" were, and what was the prison-house in which they were confined when they had the Gospel preached to them; and, by turning to the next verse, and comparing its statements with others in the sacred record, I hope to be able, with considerable certainty, to show what both these were. In verse 20, the Apostle says, "Which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noe, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water." Now, the *which* in the beginning of this verse refers to "the spirits in prison;" and of them he says, that they were disobedient in the days of Noe, par-

ticularly during the period of time when that patriarch was employed in building the ark, and during which the long-suffering and patience of God was especially manifested toward the inhabitants of the earth. Here, then, we gain one important point, viz., the period of time at which the beings referred to in the preceding verse lived, and during which Christ preached to them by his Spirit. They lived immediately before the flood, and it was at this period that the Spirit preached to them. This seems to be beyond dispute. They were preached to "when once," or at the time when Noah was building the ark, and when the long-suffering of God was exercised towards the earth. The question, then, now is, Who were these spirits? And to this I answer, that they were the wicked inhabitants of the earth, who cursed it, and cursed it by their deeds of gigantic impiety and daring rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven: the worthless generation of *men* that existed in the world at the time when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the contaminated and accursed earth was converted into an ocean without a shore. But it will be said, that, according to this interpretation, I put an uncommon meaning on the term "*spirits*," which signifies either the soul of man apart from his body, or an *immaterial being*; whereas the inhabitants of the world before the flood were persons like ourselves, composed of both body and soul. All this I admit, but think I am prepared with the answer, and that is, the term "*spirit*" in a *bad sense* is employed in the Sacred Scriptures to denote *very wicked men*—men, as it were, prompted to their deeds of high rebellion against Heaven's eternal Majesty, by that foul spirit who led the armies of Heaven into sin, and carried them along with him into bottomless perdition. That the word is so employed, take the following proofs:—Matt. xii. 43—45. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first." Now, in these verses the unclean spirit is so identified with the man, that the actions competent only to the former are spoken of as done by the man, and the term employed

is the same as that in the passage before us. A passage exactly similar you will find in Luke xi. 24—26. Take as another, and still more evident proof, Mark iii. 11. "And unclean spirits when they saw him, fell down before him and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God." Now, in these words it is said the spirits fell down, most plainly referring to the man. See also Acts xvi. 18, and xix. 15, where we have examples of a similar application of the term "*spirits*." These passages make it evident that this word in a *bad sense* is applied to men; and it is so applied in the verse before us, not for the purpose of giving us information regarding the *nature*, but of pointing out in most emphatic language the *character* of the antediluvian inhabitants. Their wickedness was inconceivable. They were giants in iniquity. They filled the earth with violence. They broke through all restraints, and converted this world into a theatre, in which crimes so fearful were committed by them, that when the Lord looked down from heaven and beheld the wickedness, *it repented him that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at his heart*. What an awful description of the state of the world! how appalling must have been the iniquity! how black the guilt that could make Jehovah abhor the work of his own hands, and justify the language, "*it grieved him at his heart!*" The earth must have been converted into a striking type of hell, and its inhabitants, like incarnate fiends, filling its plains with blasphemy and its cities with crime. Most appropriately, therefore, are they in the verse before us denominated "*spirits of wickedness*."

But having settled this point, you are ready with another inquiry. If by spirits here are meant the living inhabitants of the earth immediately before the flood, in what sense are they affirmed to be in prison? To this question also I hope to be able to give a satisfactory answer. But you must now turn with me to the 6th chapter of Genesis, which contains the account of the state of the world, and God's dealings with the inhabitants immediately before the deluge. There we read, "And it came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet HIS DAYS SHALL BE AN HUN-

HUNDRED AND TWENTY YEARS. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, they became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air: for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. The earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them: and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

Now, in these verses we have the sentence of destruction passed upon man, upon beast, the creeping things, and the fowls of the air. But there is a respite of one hundred and twenty years. At the beginning of this period, Noah received the intimation of the impending deluge, and, at the command of God, began to build the ark, which was to save himself and his family. During these one hundred and twenty years, the Spirit of God, who is also the Spirit of Christ, strove with man; that is, he warned them of their danger, pointed out to them the way of escape, and entreated them to turn from the evil of their doings. This he did especially through the instrumentality of the preaching of Noah, in whom he put his Spirit, and commissioned for this very purpose, and who hence, in allusion to this very circumstance, is by the Apostle Paul denominated a preacher of righteousness. During these years, the inhabitants of the earth were shut up to the flood. The decree of God enclosed the whole of the guilty population, and, like an impassible fence, completely hemmed them in. Now, putting all these things together, is it a stretch of fancy, or is it not rather a sound conclusion when we affirm, that during these *one hundred and twenty years* the earth was converted into one vast prison-house, in which its wretched and apostate inhabitants were shut up, by being consigned over to a destruction from which they could not escape,

but by listening to the preaching of Noah, giving way to the strivings of the Spirit, observing the signs and portents of the coming catastrophe, and securing their deliverance by faith and repentance?

This earth was thus made, by the fiat of Jehovah, a place of confinement to the miserable and God-defying race, who cumbered it and steeped it still deeper in crime for one hundred and twenty years. The design of their being so shut up, it is at once admitted, was a merciful one. But if they abused that mercy, which they certainly did, then their confinement became a curse, and what was intended for their good, by their abuse of it, only sunk them deeper in guilt, and consigned them over the more certainly to the tempestuous flood, when the bars of their prison-house were thrown open, and in rushed the devouring waters to swallow up at once and for ever the whole of that ungodly and devoted population.

Now, it is to this fact the Apostle refers in the words before us. The prison-house of which he speaks was this earth converted by a decree of the Eternal into a place of confinement to all its inhabitants, whom he determined to sweep from it in his righteous indignation.

If we collect, then, all the steps of the argument which we have thus hastily gone over, we find the meaning of verse 19th to be: By which Spirit, viz., the divine Spirit, he went to the inhabitants of the earth, before the flood, and preached to them the glad tidings of salvation by the instrumentality of Noah, whom he inspired for that very purpose—which inhabitants, on account of their awful wickedness, are appropriately denominated wicked spirits, and spirits in a state of confinement; because God had shut them up to destruction, at the close of one hundred and twenty years, if they did not repent of their transgressions and turn to the Lord.

Having thus endeavoured to fix the sense of this part of the paragraph, our way is now encumbered with no difficulty; and many of the remarks now to be made will tend to show the soundness of the interpretation just given of verse 19th.

The first clause of the 20th verse describes the character of the antediluvian inhabitants of the earth: "Which sometimes were disobedient." The term *sometimes* has plainly the sense of a fore-time, referring to the time when Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison, and which the Apostle fixes in the words which fel-

low. At that time they were "disobedient;" and with what fearful fidelity is this statement confirmed by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the 6th chapter of Genesis, already referred to. The inhabitants of the earth had perverted their ways. Their wickedness was appalling. They were giants in crime, and were renowned for their deeds of daring iniquity. The actions of the ungodly race are not particularized. But we may readily conclude, that every vice which has at any time polluted and cursed our guilty earth, was then practised and carried to a height immeasurably more fearful than it has ever since been, inasmuch as the prolonged life of the antediluvian inhabitants afforded them opportunities of perfecting their schemes of iniquity, and of spreading to an inconceivably wider extent the contagious influence of their wicked example. The earth was thus, to a greater extent than it is now, converted into a den of wickedness and crime, and its population into wild beasts, who mercilessly abused and destroyed each other; or what is perhaps more awful still, it was changed into one vast brothel-house, where murder, rapine, blasphemy, and profligacy of every kind grew and increased till they reached the heavens, at length silenced the pleadings of mercy, exhausted the long-suffering of the Lord, and compelled divine vengeance to decree their utter extirpation. But when were men thus disobedient? They were disobedient, "when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing."

Here the period of time, referred to by the Apostle in the preceding verse, is distinctly fixed. It was while God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, viz., the one hundred and twenty years of respite which Jehovah gave to the worthless and abandoned race. During that period did the long-suffering of God hold back the threatened judgments, and strove with them to bring them to repentance. What a wonderful manifestation of the divine forbearance! God often bears long with individuals, even with those who reject his word, and with presumptuous impiety deny his being, reject his overtures of mercy, and every day accumulate guilt upon their heads. But here we are presented with the astonishing spectacle of the eternally holy God extending his long-suffering to a whole world's population, after it is affirmed that it had repented him that he had made them, and had doomed them to destruction. What a comment on the words, "God wil-

leth not the death of the sinner, but willeth that the sinner would turn to him and live!" Judgment is his strange work. We are here presented, as it were, with a struggle between the attributes of the Eternal Rule, of all. Justice demands that the earth be swept with the besom of destruction, and its inhabitants exterminated. Mercy cries, Delay the desolation; and succeeds in holding back the threatened judgment for one hundred and twenty years. During that period, she strives with the devoted race, sends her spirit, commissions Noah to preach, shows signs of the coming desolation in the heavens above, and on the earth beneath. But the objects of her solicitude disregard her messages, insult her preacher, laugh her signs to scorn, and thus irrevocably seal their doom. At the close of the years, even mercy gives them up. Justice takes his course. The flood came and swept them all away. My brethren, not all away. The Lord will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. Noah found grace in the sight of the Lord; and he and his wife, his three sons and their wives, that is, "eight souls were saved by water"—I need not stop to show how. The water which proved the destruction of the world of the ungodly, was made the instrument of their salvation. The ark, amid the mighty waters, was the place of their refuge; and it was directed over the foaming billows by the angel of the covenant, and preserved in perfect safety on the surface of the stormy, watery waste, by Him who said, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark, for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."

The remaining portion of these verses must be left for consideration in our next lecture; and I would conclude, by soliciting your attention to two observations suggested obviously by the passage as now explained, and the first of these is,

In what an interesting and impressive point of view is the long-suffering of God here presented to our minds! For the long period of one hundred and twenty years, did the long-suffering of God abound to the abandoned inhabitants of the antediluvian world. But even this is too narrow a view; for long, long before that period did wickedness abound to a tremendous extent in the earth—to an extent, indeed, of which I am persuaded we can form no adequate conception. If we could conceive the length and the breadth, the depth and the height of the iniquity that overspread and polluted

the earth, we would stand still more amazed at the patience and long-suffering of the Lord. Next to the mission, incarnation, sufferings and death of his own Son, this conduct of Heaven towards the inhabitants of the old world is one of the most illustrious evidences of the fact that God is a God of mercy, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness, and that in him compassions flow. But, alas! then, as is too often the case now, his patience did not produce its intended effects. It is designed to lead men to repentance. But it only tended to make the heart of those sinners harder and more daring in their rebellion. Because judgment against their evil works was not speedily executed, their hearts were the more determinedly set in them to do evil. Thus they increased their guilt, and drew down vengeance upon them to the uttermost.

How strikingly, brethren, has the long-suffering of God been exercised towards us! How long has God borne with many of us! Think of this, ye hoary-headed sinners, and make the use of that long-suffering, which has been exercised toward you, which the God of patience intends by it. Let it lead you to repentance. The way is still open for your return unto the Lord. But remember, the one hundred and twenty years of respite came to an end. The day of the merciful visitation came to a close with the guilty inhabitants of the earth, and the deluge came and swept them to destruction. So, brethren, will it be with us. We cannot remain always in the church below. God will not bear with us for ever. His patience and long-suffering may be exercised towards us to the latest moment of our existence on earth; but if we continue to resist the overtures of his mercy to the end, oh! remember, that when our breath departs, the day of mercy ends, and the hour of judgment comes. Let us then beware of acting the part of the antediluvian inhabitants of the earth, lest we be partakers with them in their plagues. Let us improve the day of grace. Let us begin this evening to make this improvement; for "now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." Think not with yourselves that at some future period you will turn unto the Lord; so probably reasoned the inhabitants of the old world. But how suddenly and awfully were their anticipations cut off!

"They were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, when, lo! in a moment the heavens became dark; the earth quaked; the fountains of the deep were broken up; the flood came and swept them all away." And may death not come upon us as suddenly and unexpectedly as the flood came upon the inhabitants of the old world?

But, secondly, these verses show us that whatever be the state of distress, or calamity, or danger to which the people of God may be exposed, they have nothing whatever to fear.

From the sacred Record, it would appear that there were eight persons who loved the Lord; and when the whole earth was an ocean without a shore, what were the circumstances in which they were placed? Had they a place of refuge from the tempest? The Lord was their hiding-place from the storm. He commanded Noah to build an ark. While it was preparing, the desolatory flood was held back, and when it was completed, God *put him in*. *When in God shut him up*; and when all the Church of Christ on earth was placed in a situation of safety, then, but not till then, the windows of heaven were opened; the fountains of the great deep were broken up; the barriers of the tempestuous ocean were thrown down, and the bed of the deep was probably upheaved by volcanic agency; and the consequence—the seas rushed from their accustomed channels, and swept over the solid land. And where is Noah amidst this tremendous rushing of the elements, involving all in one wide desolating ruin? Noah is in the ark. But how can his frail ship be preserved in such tempestuous seas? Why, the Lord continued to watch over the ark, and all that it contained. He did not forget it for one moment. He carried it safely over the highest billows; and thus when all was going to wreck, all sinking in the mighty waters, Noah was safe in the hollow of the hand of the Eternal God. And he was kept in safety till the waters assuaged, and, behold! Noah is at last safely landed on the mountains of Ararat. Is God, then, not the preserver of his people, and may not every one of his children confidently say, "I will not fear what man can do unto me; the Lord is my refuge and my strength; He is my everlasting consolation." Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SATURDAY, 28TH MARCH, 1835.

No. 157.

SERMON by the Rev. DAVID CARMENT, A.M., Ross-keen.
SERMON by the Rev. MICHAEL WILLIS, Glasgow.

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MINISTERIAL FAITHFULNESS RECOMMENDED AND ENFORCED.

A SERMON PREACHED IN DUKE STREET GAELIC CHAPEL, ON SABBATH EVENING,
31ST JULY, 1834, OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF
THE LATE REV. NEIL MACBRIDE, MINISTER OF KILMORY, ISLAND OF ARRAN,

By the Rev. DAVID CARMENT, A.M.,
Minister of Ross-keen.

“ And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”—1 COR. ii. 1—5.

THE work of a minister of the Gospel is of such extent and importance, that we may well say with the Apostle, “ Who is sufficient for these things ? ” It is of essential importance that all who engage in the work of the ministry should not only fear God, but be blameless before men ; for in all the various relations of life no point of character has greater influence in giving weight to our decisions, and enabling us to discharge our duties with effect. In no case, however, is character of such vital importance as to him who professes to instruct sinners in the way of salvation ; nor is purity of principle and of conduct less necessary, nor in any other situation is the want of it so calculated to produce extensive and lasting mischief in the world. The minister of religion should be eminently holy, scriptural in his principles, and active and zealous in his exertions to promote the glory of God and the good of man. But if, as men of like passions with others, we are influenced by the higher motive than a regard to ex-

ternal decency ; if our desire merely be to earn a maintenance, and to pass smoothly through the world, we may indeed, to a certain extent, obtain our aim, and be held in estimation by men ; but we are abhorred by God, nor can we expect that he will bless our labours for the attainment of that supremely important object, for which the ministry was instituted and the Gospel given to men. Devotion to the cause of God is the glory of the ministerial character, and such God will assuredly honour. That friend whose loss we, in common with the Church of God, deplore, was eminent for devotedness to the service of God, and it is on account of this peculiar feature in his character that I have been induced to attempt what seems to me in too many instances to be a prostitution of the pulpit, and degrading in every view to the ministerial character—I mean portraying the life of deceased ministers. But here we are in no danger ; we have many living seals of the apostleship of this eminent servant of Christ,

and in what we may say, we may with the Apostle assert, that our record is true, and that we only declare unto you what we have seen and heard. I suppose there are few real Christians who have not at one time or other, when musing on the recorded characters, not only of the primitive Christians, but of the departed worthies of our own land, been tempted to think either that we are no Christians, or that the picture drawn of the saints in primitive and early times was overcharged, or at least not fully sketched as it ought to have been; but whatever may be in this, we have seen in the late Mr. Macbride, though not faultless or free from human imperfection, a living transcript of all that is praiseworthy in the Christians of other and earlier times. He lived continually with God, and he lived daily for God, to serve him and to promote his cause on earth. His character as a minister of the Gospel seems to me given in the passage just read, where the Apostle describes his own. In the words of our text we have,

I. The method the Apostle adopted in preaching.

II. The doctrines he inculcated.

III. The effects which were produced.

IV. The reasons which induced him to adopt this method of preaching.

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

The time was, whether it now is I shall not say, when ministers of the Gospel bent too low to the idol Reputation. If they sought it not at the stake, they sought it at the risk of leaving souls to perish for lack of real knowledge;—if they were doctrinally correct, and the rules of rhetoric attended to, all was well. They might offend the godly;—they might say what was little calculated to edify or amend the congregation:—all was well if they had not offended against the theology of Turretine, or the rhetoric of Blair. I do not mean by this to cast contempt upon learning or study; but I treat contemptuously that learned ignorance of Christ and of the human heart, which tempts men to trick poor souls with tinsel, and who spend the precious time allotted for the service of God in attending to trifles, whilst the great object of Paul's preaching, to win souls to Christ,

seems totally forgotten or lost sight of. He adopted, he tells us, a different method, not because he was deficient in human learning, but because he had a higher aim than to acquire a name among men, and because every other passion in him was swallowed up by his zeal for the glory of God and good of souls; and his learning and talents were made subservient to this great end, teaching him to adapt his addresses to the understandings and feelings of his audience, and to use all plainness of speech on subjects where a false and flowery eloquence tends only to obscure what shines most clearly when set forth in its native simplicity. In this our late reverend friend closely followed the steps of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. In his estimation, the souls of men were too precious to be trifled with; he addressed himself to them as a dying man to dying men. In disarding all false ornaments, he did not discard the prominent truths of the Gospel, but with all plainness brought them forth in all their length and breadth, and with all sincerity; and in the most simple, familiar, and pathetic manner, he expostulated with sinners. To the Christian he displayed in Gospel language the grace and glories of the great Mediator, the freeness and richness of divine grace, and the wonderful effects of the love of Christ to the fallen and guilty race of Adam. To mourners in Zion he spake as one who knew experimentally their fears and feelings, their trials and temptations; and in his hands the word became to all, converted or unconverted, Christian or hypocrite, a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart; so that gainsayers themselves were often compelled to say, The finger of God is here; and “they who came to scoff, remained to pray.”

Let the foppish followers of what once was, and still is, by some considered fashionable divinity, look here and see if there is any thing in their dry distinctions and acute argumentations at all comparable to this. He felt that he stood in the presence of God, pleading with men in Christ's stead to be reconciled unto God. Every thing, therefore, which was not calculated to forward the great, the only object in view, was disregarded, and Christ was all and in all in his heart and in his addresses. The enticing words of man's wisdom were cast aside, and the warm, the animated, the affectionate address of a pure and feeling

heart, full of love to God and benevolence to man, occupied that space in the service of the sanctuary, which the empty frothy declamation of the self-applauding orator usurps in the harangues of many pulpits. Such tricks are not befitting the pulpit; they will not be resorted to by the man of God, and to the people they prove a pure and unmixed poison, where discrimination exists not to reject the poisoned viands.

II. The Apostle not only describes the method he adopted in preaching, but also the doctrines he inculcated, and his personal feelings—his inward experience, whilst engaged in the work of the ministry: “For I determined,” he says, “not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.”

1. The doctrines he inculcated.

He came declaring the testimony of God, declaring that sinners had destroyed themselves, but now in Christ Jesus there was help. He came declaring that there was no salvation to sinners by the works of the law, and he explained and enforced that law in all its extent and purity, and brought its demands home to the consciences of sinners; but, as a minister of the everlasting Gospel, Christ crucified was his great theme. In opposition to the prejudices of Jews and Greeks, he scrupled not to exalt a crucified Saviour, and to acknowledge him as his Lord and Master; and he tried by all means to bring guilty, ignorant, perishing sinners unto him for pardon and acceptance with God. He loudly proclaimed in the ear of the self-righteous Pharisee, that there was no difference before God in the act of justifying one sinner more than another; but “that it was a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came to save the chief of sinners.” These were the truths Paul declared; he had no modification of doctrine to suit the taste of the times. He had not one doctrine for the rich and another for the poor. He preached the same Christ, and declared the same truths to all—to the learned Greeks, the self-righteous Jews, and the ignorant barbarians; nor was his preaching without discrimination, for he warned the Christian, as well as reprov'd the sinner. All who knew our departed friend must allow, that he invariably declared to all who heard him the testimony of God; and he might have taken them all to record, when removing

from them, that he was free from the blood of all men. Like Paul, he experimentally knew the truth and importance of the testimony of God. Like him, Christ was made precious to his own soul. He had no other consolation but the testimony of God, no other refuge but Christ, and therefore it was impossible he could direct to any other Saviour. Of course, whilst he dealt faithfully with sinners, and laid open the various deep deceits and lying refuges of the hypocrite, he was eminently tender in dealing with the awakened and afflicted conscience; and from his own experience in the school of Christ, he was peculiarly fitted for communicating comfort to mourners in Zion, and he seemed to possess peculiar discrimination in giving to each their due portion; for with all his charity he knew the heart of man too well, and he was himself too full of that spirit which feareth always to address large congregations as if they were all Christians. Instead of this, whilst he directed all to Christ as the only refuge for guilty men, he at the same time, in the language of the Apostle, warned all, saying, “Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall;” whilst to the almost Christian he declared the danger of his state, and exposed the deep delusion under which he laboured, so that none could say that he had deceived them with flattering words; and he might truly with the Apostle have said, “Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.” 1 Thess. ii. 8.

2. The personal feelings and inward experience of the Apostle whilst engaged in the work of the ministry.

Though bodily weakness may be here included, I do not think the expression chiefly refers to this, but rather to the strong sense he had of his own insufficiency for the work, and for the proper discharge of the duties attached to his station in the Church of Christ. He was afraid, after preaching to others, he himself should be a cast away; and when he viewed the awful responsibility attached to his office, the importance of the doctrines he delivered, and the necessity he was under of being free from the blood of all men, no wonder if trembling mixed itself frequently with his joys. Farther, if we look into the Apostle's recorded experience, we find the key to

these expressions; we there discover that he was burdened with sin and tempted by Satan, and that his weakness was confessedly such that he had no strength of his own; only when he discovered by experience that he was weak, then was he strong through Christ strengthening him. This was eminently the case with our dear departed brother. He had a deep insight into the evils of his own heart, so that with all his attainments in the divine life, and living continually with God, he was still poor in spirit; yea, humility and dependence on God were such striking features in his character, that no man could be long in his company without discerning it; and though his labours were more abundantly blessed than those of any other man in our day, he still felt and lamented his own weakness. He trembled for himself, whilst he ascribed all the glory of the work to Him to whom it was due. But in him bodily weakness was seen and felt, a weakness most honourable to his character, and demonstrative of his zeal and assiduity in his Master's service, as it was a consequence of his unwearied and almost unceasing labours in the service of Christ. In the first station which he occupied in the most rugged and remote corner of the northern Highlands, he travelled from hamlet to hamlet, over rocks and mountains, and amidst almost alpine snows, to mix with the sequestered family, to talk of Christ and instruct them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God; and thus would he spend days and nights among them at a distance from home, contented with the simplest fare, and satisfied with such accommodation as the cottage of the poor, but kind-hearted peasant could afford; and I may say, for I was a witness of the fact, that he died in his Master's cause; for his last illness was, humanly speaking, brought on by his exertions in attending and preaching at Loch Ranza, on that extra, I might say extraordinary, sacramental occasion, where I was his only *ordained* assistant, where he was laid on the bed of sickness never more to rise, till his pure disembodied spirit rose to the mansions of eternal bliss, to see and serve that Saviour whom he loved, and whom he had here so unceasingly served.

III. We are to consider the effects which accompanied the preaching of Paul: "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but

in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

The apostle Paul here does not seem to refer, at least chiefly, to those miraculous gifts he possessed, nor to those miraculous interpositions which took place in the conversion of some individuals, but to that divine power which was displayed in the success vouchsafed him in his ordinary labours, and to those rich manifestations of divine grace which accompanied these labours, and were a demonstration not only of divine agency, but of divine agency accompanying the declaration of the testimony of God by him, and of that wonderful power which changed the hearts of men, so as to render them the willing and devoted followers of that crucified Saviour whom heretofore they had despised and rejected. In this respect, also, we may say that Mr. Macbride's ministry was attended with "demonstration of the spirit and of power." He was indeed a chosen vessel to declare the testimony of God. It is known that his studies were begun and carried on under a strong and abiding impression that he would be honoured to preach the Gospel of salvation in his native island, then in a very dark and destitute state as to vital godliness. This impression remained when there was no human probability of seeing it realized. He was a Christian and a man of prayer before he became a minister; and he was indeed taught of God long before he commenced teaching others. He was first appointed to a mission in the Highlands, where his labours were abundantly blessed; and he has been heard to mention one sacramental occasion in that country on which there was a remarkable display of divine power in a very sensible manner, the fruits of which were abiding in many of the hearers. But it was in his native island that the Lord, in an eminent manner, blessed his labours for a period of twelve years. In "prophesying to the dry bones," they were brought into shape and seemliness; and such were his exertions from the beginning, and such the power attending the preaching of the Gospel, that gross immoralities were almost totally suppressed, and an exterior decency preserved even by those who had attained to nothing else; but this was not all, many souls were from time to time converted, and many were added to the Church, so that the power of religion was seen and felt, not in his own parish only, but

throughout the length and breadth of that extensive and populous island. Family worship was generally set up, and prayer meetings were held in almost every farm or hamlet. The work of God thus proceeded silently and slowly, but effectually for a time; but somewhat more than two years ago the Lord was pleased, as it seemed, in answer to fervent, and persevering prayer, to manifest his power in an extraordinary manner, so that many careless sinners were awakened, and the people of God filled with joy and peace in believing. The effects were visible, not only in many who had been utterly careless becoming eminently holy, but the work was also accompanied with bodily agitations, and strong outcries in many cases. To this I know strong objections were made by the wise men of this world, and by the whole herd of almost Christians, and even by some, of whom better things might have been expected; and though they never saw the work nor the subjects of it, they yet could gravely speculate upon the subject, and upon what ought, or ought not, to be done in such cases, and without inquiry, and without authority, they sat in judgment upon and condemned the righteous. Now I would just propose to such persons, and all who think similarly, a few questions for solution, and a few scriptural arguments for their serious consideration. I would ask them, Are they so intimately acquainted with the work of the Spirit of God, or the manner of his operation in all and every case, as to be certain that he never did or never will work in any way but the way with which they seem to be acquainted, and willing to prescribe to him? I would ask, Is there nothing in real religion, and the views the sinner often has of sin and of salvation through Christ, as much calculated to affect the mind and agitate the bodily frame, as there is in the common occurrences of life? And do we not often see the afflicted and bereaved shedding tears and crying out, and often in great bodily agitation, under the weight and pressure of mental agony? And do we not read of those who, through the agitation of sudden joy, were thrown into convulsions, or expired under the intensity of their feelings? I would observe, farther, that there are many passages of Scripture which cannot be satisfactorily explained in any other way, than by supposing that there shall be in the latter days such an effusion of the

spirit as shall be attended with visible external effects on the bodies of men. "The Lord of Hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling-stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar." Zech. ix. 15. "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself; that I might rest in the day of trouble." Hab. iii. 16: "My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war." Jer. iv. 19. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts xiii. 41.

Again, I would observe, that we have in the account of what took place on the day of Pentecost, a proof of the fact of many crying out. But we shall be told that this was an extraordinary occasion: true, but who told the objectors that similar extraordinary occasions were never to occur, or who will pretend to say that the conversion of a sinner is not at all times an extraordinary work, or that there are not diversities of operations, though it is the same Spirit that works in all. The jailer at Philippi was also much affected, so was Paul himself; and in the 19th chapter of Luke, we find the disciples crying out through joy, and reproved by the decent Pharisees for their unseemly noise, and their conduct defended and approved by Christ. The leper also, Luke xvii. 15, and others, were similarly affected. Farther, I hesitate not to affirm, that in every age of the Church, and in almost every place where a great and remarkable revival of religion has taken place, and where divine influences were abundant, it has been invariably accompanied in a greater or lesser degree with bodily agitations, and with crying out in many of the subjects of such a work. I have one fact farther to state, which I deem conclusive, as facts can never be overturned by arguments however specious, or speculations however ingenious. It is a fact within my own knowledge, that several of the subjects of this work were at the time of the revival particularly and strictly examined by some of the most eminent, and most experienced

and acute ministers of the day in which we live, and that the result of the examination was such as to satisfy them that the work was of God; but we go farther than this, we say to every unbelieving objector, Come and see; by their fruits ye shall know them. Many, indeed, of those who were the subjects of this work do bring forth fruits which abundantly testify that the work is of God, and I know no more certain way (objectors themselves being witnesses) of proving the genuineness of a work of this kind, than by bringing it to the law and to the testimony. We do not, indeed, say that these things are essential to a work of grace, or necessarily connected therewith, or that many have not been thus affected who have shown that there was nothing spiritual or saving in what they felt, but we do contend that such appearances do often accompany such a work; and if this had occurred less frequently than it actually has in the Church of God, that the reality of the conversion of a sinner is to be judged of by its fruits; and we again say to all objectors, Come and see, and you will be compelled to acknowledge that the finger of God was here.

IV. The reasons assigned by the Apostle for adopting this method of preaching.

“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” It was the testimony of God he declared—a testimony in itself of such importance, that those adventitious ornaments he discarded were unsuitable to the subject. It was too important a message to be trifled with, and occupied too much room in his heart and affections, to give way to those external decorations which might have pleased the gay and the thoughtless, but were unworthy of the subject, and in no way calculated to gain credit to such a testimony, which is most forcibly declared in its native purity and simplicity. What was really useful in human wisdom and learning, he did not affect to despise, but consecrated to the service of the sanctuary; but every thing which would have enfeebled or obscured the testimony of God, or degraded the witness, he wisely avoided in all his ministrations. His object was to exalt Christ, and not himself. He desired to present to the eyes and affections of his hearers a crucified Saviour, as the object of their love and the foundation of their hopes; and that which might have pleased the imagination without gaining the heart, he carefully avoided. He

came not courting the applause of men, but seeking subjects and followers of the “Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.” His heart was so full of the glorious subject, Christ crucified; this was ever so present to his thoughts, that he viewed all other things as only of importance in connexion with this. He knew the power of human eloquence on enthusiastic and unreflecting minds, either to lead astray or to gain the affections to the side of truth for a moment; but he wished the faith of his hearers to rest on a more sure, and solid, and permanent foundation than this; for when the faith of men has no better foundation than a vain admiration of the abilities of their teachers, it rests on a sandy foundation indeed; for what human oratory or mere moral suasion established, human oratory may overthrow, so that such persons are at the mercy of every bold and reckless theorist possessed of a plausible manner, or gifted with popular talents. Of course we see in such places as Glasgow the faith of many shaken in a moment by a new creed or a plausible theory, and their faith reposing only on a silly attachment to the manner or talents of some favourite and followed preacher, which will just last till another popular competitor enters the field and no longer. The eminent saint, whose memory we revere, closely followed the praiseworthy example set him by the great Apostle of the Gentiles. The testimony of God he deemed so important, as to outweigh every other consideration, and he never attempted to fitter down that testimony by accommodating his preaching to the taste or the caprice of the self-righteous or the sinner. He declared the truth fully, faithfully, and earnestly, and allowed no inferior consideration to divert him from his great design of bringing this testimony to bear on the conscience of the sinner, in all its power and convincing energy. He testified to every individual, according to his state, the truth as it is in Jesus, and he kept nothing back of what God had intrusted him with.

Farther, his doctrine differed from the doctrines of many who are styled ministers of the Gospel. He knew nothing in his preaching but Christ Jesus, and him crucified. He gloried in the doctrines of the cross, and whatever the particular truths were which he at any time promulgated, his grand, his leading, his ultimate aim was to

persuade sinners to come to Christ, that they might have life. Whatever his subject was, Christ was all and in all. He loved him, and lived with him in private, and he delighted to speak of him and exalt him in public; and he did this that the faith of his hearers might stand on a better foundation than love to their teacher; for he was so meek and lowly, so full of love and of good works, that he was beloved wherever he went. He was the father, the friend, the counsellor of his people. His zeal was so mixed with meekness, his temper so heavenly, his conversation so spiritual, that even those who knew not the Master he served, nor understood the principle from which all this flowed, were yet, by feeling and seeing the effects, led to honour and love the servant; and as he lived, so he died, breathing benevolence to man, and full of faith in God, whom he now sees, and shall for ever enjoy.

Application: 1. It becomes you, as hearers attached to various ministers, to examine well and truly—try the foundation of that attachment. Do you merely admire in them the enticing words of *man's* wisdom? Are you captivated with mere external show, or does your attachment arise from the power and influence of that testimony which God has recorded in his Word, and which you are bound to attend to; and from that desire of knowing nothing in religion, or in the declaration of that testimony, but “Jesus Christ, and him crucified?”

2. Are you attached to them because they are attached to Christ? Do you love them because they love the truth, and are ready to sacrifice every thing not for personal, or private, or political objects, but for promoting peace, and unity, and holiness amongst men; and because the influence of pure and undefiled religion is felt and seen in their daily walk and conversation; because they are the friends of the friends of Christ, and associate not with the infidel or the profligate, but reject with indignation all heretical and erroneous opinions, whilst they receive and approve of all who contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

3. Have you felt that power here mentioned, accompanying the preaching of the

everlasting Gospel. for it is here that the generality err. They are captivated with the enticing words of *man's* wisdom; not with the Gospel, but its garb; not with Christ, but with what they imagine they have received from Christ; whilst the word, as thus accompanied with demonstration of the Spirit and of power, is never so much as thought of. If they are instructed in the connexion of doctrinal truths, and regular in their lives, the work of the Spirit with power is a strange sound in their ears, as being born again was in the ears of Nicodemus of old; and it is a strange work to their souls. Their religion consists in the belief of certain orthodox notions, in adhesion to a certain party, and a certain form of discipline, and worship, and external church order. They were never sick of sin, never wounded in spirit, never brought to cry earnestly and importunately for mercy and forgiveness; so that to them the beauty of Christ as King of Zion, and the glory of the Gospel, have been hid; and they can see no beauty nor comeliness in Christ, why they should desire him, nor any need of a convincing and converting work of the Spirit of God in themselves or others.

In conclusion, if it is asked how Mr. Macbride became so eminently useful, and so highly favoured and honoured an instrument in the conversion of sinners, and in edifying and building up believers; I answer, not from superior talents or acquirements, not by courting popular applause, or bending to the passions or prejudices of his hearers; but he was a man of prayer. His whole heart and soul was in the work in which he had engaged, under a solemn sense of the duties he owed to men, and the responsibility he was under to that God whose servant he professed to be. He had no other engagements, literary, scientific, sensual, or worldly. He did nothing, he spoke of nothing, he thought of nothing but his own proper ministerial work; and when ministers are similarly occupied, they may, through the blessing of God on their labours, expect similar success. May God bless his word, and to his name be the praise. Amen.

THE CHRISTIAN'S COMMUNION WITH THE DEATH AND LIFE
OF CHRIST;

A Sermon preached by the Rev. MICHAEL WILLIS.—Concluded from page 348.

II. We go on to consider the nature of the believer's life, or his communion with the life of Christ.

The *death* and the *life* are mentioned in contrast with one another; and the Apostle speaks, as if anticipating the question, How, if *crucified*, can we either enjoy the pleasures, or perform the duties of the christian life? Must not a thing so painful as crucifixion disqualify us both for happiness and for obedience? Nay, replies the Apostle, It is the means of fitting us the better both for the one and for the other.

"I am crucified: nevertheless I live." *Life*, in the Scripture sense, is not existence merely. When it is spoken of as a privilege, when it is promised as a blessing, it is happiness that is most frequently signified, and that happiness as lying, where it is reasonable it should be expected to be found, in the service and enjoyment of God. That without which life is not worthy of the name—that which any man duly enlightened would willingly part with all things to possess, is rightly denominated life indeed. "Now," says the Apostle, "it is not while under the bondage of the law, and under the terror of God, that I live spiritually; it is only when I die to it that I live indeed. I renounce confidence in it; but it is because I possess a better ground of justification on which to rest my soul. I experience pain in renouncing my legal hopes, but I enjoy, in renouncing them, a peace which they never could yield. I cease to dread the terrors of the law, and to attempt a perfect obedience under the impulse of the threatenings of the covenant of works; but it is only to obey the law of Christ more cordially and more effectually under the impulse of Gospel principle, under the power of divine love. I am crucified to the world and to the flesh, as well as to my self-righteousness; but it is to enjoy a higher portion in a life of communion with God in grace here, and in glory hereafter."

Now, this obedience and these enjoyments characterizing, or, as I may say, constituting the new life of the Christian, are so entirely the fruit of his union with Christ,

that the Apostle describes the spiritual life as not so much the Christian's own, as Christ's life in him. Indeed, in this case, the intimate union between believers and their divine Head, is brought even more distinctly into view than in the preceding words, "I am crucified with Christ," which are expressive of the same union. Here he says, not merely, *I live with Him*, but *He liveth in me*.

Frequently are believers spoken of as being in Christ, and Christ as in them—as abiding in Him, and He in them. And here Christ is said not only to be in them, but to live in them. Such words are not to be understood as if Christians and their divine Head were one physical person; but they are indeed one mystical person—one body; He the Head, and they the members, as really as the head and members of the same person are one body. We call it a mystical body, because it is by a spiritual, a mysterious, and unseen bond that he is connected with them, and they with him. Neither are we to understand that between Christ and his believing people there is any confusion of persons: they lose not their personal being or operations. Though he is present with them by his Spirit, and though his Spirit operates in and by them, yet it is not so as that their actions are formally to be reckoned his. We cannot say that it is Christ who believes, who repents, who prays.

Keeping in view, then, this explanation of Paul's words in the text, let us consider more particularly the nature of that life which believers enjoy in communion with their Saviour. It corresponds with that death to the law, and to sin which they experience in communion with his sufferings.

1. They are invested with a righteousness commensurate to all the demands of the divine law. They are, on the footing of that obedience which Christ has given in their stead, accepted of God. United to him as their Head of Righteousness, they can lay claim to a free and full forgiveness. Nay, what blessing is it which they may not boldly lay claim to, when coming before

God with such a plea, when trusting in a righteousness by which God is fully glorified, and his law magnified and made honourable? "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Not only through their union with him, as a Head of Righteousness, have they a title to pardon and acceptance; but, in being united to him as a quickening Spirit, they feel that they possess this and enjoy it. "We have the answer of a good conscience," says the Apostle Peter, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." His resurrection was the proof of his sacrifice being accepted. It was his legal discharge as our surety from the claims of justice. The believer, in receiving the Holy Spirit, has the evidence within himself of that resurrection, and experiences peace in believing through "the power" of it. His conscience is quieted by the application of it, and of the virtue and efficacy of that sacrifice, which the resurrection of Christ shows divine justice to have been satisfied withal. If, then, pardon and peace be life, it may well be said that Christ is the life of the believer, and that it is not so much the believer who lives, as it is Christ who lives in him; for, as Christ was put to death in the flesh, but justified in the Spirit, so the believer's justification is founded on this justification of the surety; nay, his peace of mind is just the answer of his conscience to the act of God in justifying the Head. The justification of the Christian is the justification of Christ. The removal of the condemnatory sentence of the law from the individual is, the act of acquittal and acceptance passed in his favour, is just another testimony to the perfection of Christ's work, to the pleasure of God in it, and to its continued and everlasting efficacy.

2. With respect to their sanctification also, it may be said that believers live; yet not they, but Christ liveth in them.

They live!—before they were dead in sins, as well as under condemnation; they were incapable of any good action; they knew not to do it as a *living* work; it was at best "a dead work;" but now their consciences, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, are purified from dead works to serve the living God.

The death and the resurrection of Christ have a power in them to render his mystical members conformable to him in them;

not only to effect their death to sin, but their resurrection to a new life. They have this power in point of merit, inasmuch as he died and rose again as a public person, and purchased for all his mystical members the predestinated conformity to his image, and they have this power as they are applied by the Holy Spirit.

Not only, then, are they delivered from the condemnation and guilt of sin, and also from its power and dominion, by faith in his atonement, but "they are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God," and conformed to him personally in his resurrection, through the communication of grace out of his fulness as their Head. "Like as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father, even so they also walk in newness of life." He *lives in them*—as both forming in them the habits of grace, the immediate principles of gracious actions; so that though dead indeed to sin, *they are alive unto God through Jesus Christ their Lord*; and as enabling them by new communications of *actual* grace to bring forth their fruits of holiness. Hence, says he, *abide in me*; and without me ye can do nothing: and the promise is not only, "I will put my Spirit within you," but also as denoting the active influence of "this living water," "I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." And, again, "I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon."

All their good works, then, are just so many fruits of the Spirit—so many evidences of Christ living in them. We already stated, however, in our introduction to the present discourse, that though Christ is present by his Spirit with all believers, it is not so as that there is any confusion of persons, or that their actions are formally to be reckoned his actions. It is themselves who believe, who repent, who pray. But it is so as by his indwelling Spirit, they are influenced and enabled to all their spiritual movements. He is united to them as the root is to the branches—as the head to the body. He is to their souls what their souls are to their bodies. He is the principle of the spiritual, as the other is of the animal life. "*Living in them*," he communicates to them the grace by which they are excited to good

actions, directed in the performance of them, and enabled to persevere in them. Depending on Him constantly for this spiritual life and influence, no wonder the Apostle should say, in name of believers generally, "I live; yet not I; but Christ liveth in me."

Oh! the excellency of holiness when viewed in this light! Behold here the security for the saint's perseverance in good works! Behold the security for their acceptance! How pleasing to God must be that obedience which the Christian is stimulated to by the Spirit of God—by Him who knoweth what is God's will! So far, indeed, as they are the actions of the man, they are still imperfect; but, as the work of the new man, they are without all defect, nay, of divine excellency. So far as man, the subject of sanctification, is concerned, his holiness is still but partial and defective. So far as the influence of the Spirit reaching to every part of his nature is concerned, he cannot sin: his desires, his aims, his purposes are all on the side of God's law. Let us not wonder, that though a believer has communion with Christ in his life, he is yet but partially conformed to him who lives in Him. Though every believer receives out of Christ's fulness a measure of every grace, yet it is not a full measure of any grace. He is, indeed, renewed in the whole man after the image of Christ: his understanding, his will, his conscience, his affections, are all brought under the power of Christ. Yet the whole man, in all its parts, is still so far under the influence of remaining sin. Thus, as one expresses it, "two contrary principles, to wit, grace and corruption, are in the sanctified—being together in such sort, that in every particular part where the one is, the other is there also by it; even as in the twilight, "light and darkness are in every part of the hemisphere."*

The Christian's obedience, however, though imperfect, is as far superior to the mere natural virtue of the mere moralist, as that which is of God is above that which is of man. Delivered from the bondage of the law, and having the Spirit of God's Son sent into his heart, crying, Abba, Father, his obedience is not the obedience of terror, but of love—not a constrained, partial obedience, but having a sincere and cordial respect to the entire law—not a mere ex-

ternal obedience, but inward, and spiritual, and external also—not, in fine, temporary and irregular, but permanent and increasing, and, generally speaking, uniform. Whence arises this? It is from their union to Christ; it is from their "holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." Col. ii. 19.

3. With regard to their life of consolation and glory, it may be said, it is not believers who live, but Christ liveth in them. Their present consolation is the anticipation, and earnest of future glory. We, therefore, connect them together as one. Now, what is that joy and peace in believing, which Christians experience? what that conscious superiority to the world? what their conscious triumph over Satan? What are all these, but just their communion with their glorified Head in his life and conquests? In this, as in their holy conformity of nature, they are planted together with him in the likeness of his resurrection and glory. All their comforts of communion, all their transports of joy, all their boldness of faith, all their glorying of hope, are consequences of their union with Him as their Head of Righteousness; and their union with Christ through the Spirit, or the presence of his Spirit in their souls, is the effectual means of all. They *live* then in this sense also. How well worthy of being called life, this communion with Christ in consolation and glory! How superior to all the joys of the world are the joys of Him in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells!—the joys, in some measure, inseparable from justification and peace of conscience—the joys inseparable from purity of heart, but also the superadded joys of assurance, of intimate communion with God—the joys that attend the more direct witness of the Holy Spirit with the conscience, when, as the Spirit of glory and of God, he rests upon the Christian, and sheds abroad the love of God in his heart! What are the pleasures of the world, and especially the pleasures of sin, compared with these? He that seeks his happiness in the former is dead while he liveth. The other *liveth*, enjoys true life, even in the midst of tribulation and of death; for it is not he that liveth, but Christ that liveth in him. It is by his strength he is sustained; and He who has overcome the world raises the Christian, as a member of his mystical body, above the

power both of its allurements and its terrors. United to Christ crucified, the believer is crucified with him to sin and also to the world. United to Christ glorified, he is already in part glorified with him; he is partaker of his reign; he has the kingdom, as well as the life of Christ within him.

And, oh! if to have Christ in us, is to have communion with him in glory, even while we are here upon earth; how much more blessed must be the effects of a nearer union and communion with him in glory hereafter! "At that day," says he, as if not till then will it be known, "shall ye know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Some, indeed, think that the mediation of Christ will cease with the present world, and doubtless it will be in a different way that Christ will be the medium of union and communion with God in the triumphant state; but never shall they as the branches be separated from Him as the vine. As members of Christ, they shall only the more effectually dwell in Him, and He in them; and they shall only the more fully partake of his joys. "Until we come," it is said, "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The Spirit, too, is said to be "the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession," implying that the joys of the heavenly world are the same in kind as the joys of the church militant. And so truly will Christ be the life of the saints even hereafter, that the glorification of the body is ascribed to his Spirit: "He that raised up Jesus from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." And the last petition in our Lord's intercessory prayer, even after his prayer for the glorification of his followers, is, "that the love wherewith the Father hath loved the Son may be in them, *and I in them.*"

III. Faith in the Son of God is the grand means by which the Christian lives his life, his spiritual life—the means by which it is begun and maintained. Let me call your attention to this: it will supply useful directions, how to abound in the comforts, how to increase in the activities, how to overcome the difficulties and discouragements of the christian life.

What is faith? It is the evidence of things not seen. It is our belief of what God has revealed and promised; and it is to be considered as standing opposed to

mere natural knowledge—that which flesh and blood can receive or impart. It is a knowledge and persuasion which, being supernatural, enables the mind to realize, and prepares it to be influenced by truths which carnal reason rejects, or sense does not perceive. The objects of faith are, indeed, truly rational, but perverted reason does not apprehend them. It is this difference between faith and sense which explains that mysterious influence of the former divine principle over the life of the Christian, which is so strange and unaccountable to natural men. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: they are foolishness to him; neither doth he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Now, the faith by which the Christian lives, though it receives the things of God generally, has reference, as we see in the text, especially to the truths concerning God's Son; for "in Him is the life," and the faith by which it is derived and maintained must needs terminate on him. We are besides instructed here, that though faith apprehends Christ in all his excellencies and characters, and in all the truth concerning him, it is chiefly as including in it a belief in the great manifestation of divine love made in his atoning death, that it becomes so powerfully influential over the minds of Christians: "By the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." I may add, that this influence will be powerful, just in proportion as faith is particularly exercised in its appropriating acts; "Who loved *me*, and gave himself for me."

Here, did time permit, we might illustrate these several ideas.

1. Faith, as the means of our union with Christ, is necessary to our communion with him, both in his righteousness and his grace. It is the high honour of faith, that it is not only a believing on the Son of God, but enables us to *receive* him, and hence is termed a receiving of him in John i. 12: "As many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

2. By faith, our communion with Christ is carried on, in our receiving of all his benefits. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life." Our justification is by faith; we are sanctified by the faith that is in Christ; our joy and peace

are in believing ; our perseverance in grace, though ascribed to " the power of God," is also ascribed to faith : " We are kept by the power of God *through faith* unto salvation." Christ, by his intercession with God, and by his presence through his Spirit in the believer, preserves him in his state of acceptance and holiness, and in the comfort of it. But while Christ is the spring of the spiritual life, faith in its active exercises of appropriation and reliance is the means by which the Christian receives and enjoys all his blessings : " Abide in me," says the Saviour, " and I in you."

3. Faith is the means of the spiritual life, as it terminates on the promises, the apprehension of which has so powerful an influence both on our peace and our purity. 2 Cor. vii. 1. Psalm xxvii. 13, 14.

4. Faith is the means of the spiritual life, as by bringing eternal things near, it coun-

terbalances the temptations and terrors of the world. 1 John v. 5. " Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." See also the whole of Hebrews, 11th chapter.

5. Faith is the means of the spiritual life, as it supplies from its contemplations of the love of Christ fresh motives to obedience and patience. 2 Cor. v. 14.

6. As it refers to the authority of Christ's law, and enables the Christian to perceive the reasonableness even of the most difficult of his precepts, as well as the awful responsibility under which he lies to Christ's judgment. 2 Cor. v. 9—11. Heb. xi. 6.

7. Faith, by making the Christian habitually conversant with spiritual objects and motives of conduct, gives a spiritual character even to the common actions and enjoyments of this natural life. " The life I live *in the flesh* is by the faith of the Son of God."

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMONS by the Rev. NATHANIEL PATERSON,
Glasgow.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THE POOR ;

A SERMON DELIVERED IN ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, GLASGOW, ON SABBATH, FEBRUARY
1ST, 1835, WHEN A COLLECTION WAS MADE FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S
CHURCH ACCOMMODATION FUND,

By the Rev. NATHANIEL PATERSON,
Minister of St. Andrew's Parish, Glasgow.

"And the poor have the Gospel preached to them."—MATTHEW xi. 5.

WE do not half understand our text if we take it only as the statement of an interesting fact, that our Saviour preached his Gospel to the poor. This fact, indeed, presents a glorious feature in the character of our great Redeemer, whose love embraced the most destitute and despised of men. The Lord from heaven had respect unto the lowly; and they who had neither portion nor good news in the world, were welcome to hear from the Saviour's own lips the glad tidings of his kingdom. Thus the mere statement of the fact sheds a ray of glory on the Messiah's advent, and leaves it shining on all his steps. But this is not all, or half the knowledge which our text conveys. It is not so much to tell us what our Lord did, as what he ordained; not to show his example in preaching the Gospel to the poor, but to write this as the eternal and unalterable law of his kingdom; not to unfold the provision he made for the poor of his time, but to secure and extend the like grace to every age, and to the whole earth, even till the millennial fulness, when all shall know Him from the least to the greatest.

That such is in truth the law of our Lord, may be certainly learned by considering the circumstances under which the words now before us were spoken. "When John the Baptist had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" To give the most satisfactory answer, our Lord desired these messengers to take the evidence of their own senses, to behold the miracles

which he wrought in their presence, and to observe the very aspect of the people who stood around him hearing his word, amongst whom many poor disciples might doubtless be known by their outward appearance. Then said our Saviour, "Go and show John again the things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." These disciples then saw what the prophets had foretold; for it was planned in the counsels of God, that the world by certain signs should know that the Messiah was come; and, accordingly, before he came, many things concerning his birth, his reception amongst men, his doctrines, his miracles, the life he should lead, and the death he should die, were as precisely written in the volume of prophecy, as they were afterwards read in the page of history. Thus Isaiah foretold, that in the Saviour's time the eyes of the blind should be opened; that the ears of the deaf should be unstopped; that the lame man should leap as an hart; that the tongue of the dumb should sing. And Zechariah, speaking in the person of Jesus, says, "And so the poor of the flock that waited on me knew that it was the word of the Lord." From all which prophecies, fulfilled in his person and ministry, our Lord selects the above as witnessed by the disciples of John, and with these evidences sends them away, bearing especially this, the last named and the greatest, that "the poor have the Gospel preached to them;" being ac

ess a sign than cleansing the lepers or raising the dead; and more important, as extending the divine beneficence to a larger portion of the human race.

Now, when you see this text first the matter of prophecy, then having its fulfilment in the ministry of our Lord, and appealed to by him, as evidence of his being the Christ, ye find in it far more than the fact that our Lord preached the Gospel to the poor. You find that gracious work not only laid out for, but taken up by Him, and made so essentially a characteristic of his dominion, that without this it could not be known that his kingdom had come down to men. We do not go too far, then, when we say that our text is not so much the statement of a fact as the announcement of a law; and that what Christ did in Judea, his followers must do in every place till the end of time. In accordance with which is that mandate to the Apostles: "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you." And again, "Preach the Gospel to every creature;" not only to those who come, but "go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." Thus we have the law of our text ordained of old, intimated by the prophets, recognised by our Lord, and enjoined upon all who shall believe and teach in his name. Wherefore let no man say he is of Christ, if he find himself dwelling at ease in Zion, whilst the Gospel is not preached to the poor; let no congregation say they are of Christ, if their doors be not open to the poor; let no kingdom under heaven look for national prosperity, without framing its laws according to the law of our text, and providing for the preaching of the Gospel to all the poor in the land. In a deep sense of our common interest and duty as individuals, as a flock or people, we pray God to give us the hearing ear and the willing mind, whilst we proceed to consider this law.

I. As to its excellency.

II. As to the obligation it lays upon us; and,

III. As to the means of fulfilling it.

I. We may safely say, whatever good we shall discover in this gospel provision for the poor, that it was altogether a new thing in the world. In Old Testament times, God, with whom there is no respect of persons, certainly made his grace as free to the poor as to the rich; and nothing can be conceived more affectingly tender, or more stirring as a motive and obligation, than the Old Testament laws of charity. But in establishing the newness of that regard which our Lord

showed to the poor, we have to consider not what God ordained, but what his people did; not how the law was written, but how it was corrupted, and how Christ restored it to its original purity and beneficence. It is plain from Scripture history, that, for a long period before the coming of our Lord, no effectual means were in force for the general diffusion of religious knowledge amongst the Jews. The Gospel was preached in those days, according to St. Paul's use of the term, for the Old Testament is gospel less unfolded; but it was not preached to the poor. Of this our text is proof when viewed as prophecy fulfilled, and appealed to by our Lord as a sign of his coming. There is enough in Scripture to show that the synagogues of the Jewish Church were very few and far between. It was a saying amongst the Jews, that where there was no book of the law, there could be no synagogue; as we might say, no Bible no Church; and when Jehoshaphat sent teachers throughout the land of Judea, they carried the book of the law with them, a measure which had not been deemed necessary, had there been numerous synagogues and a copy of the law in each. In Josiah's time, it seems to have been almost forgotten by rulers and people that there was any such thing as the book of the law in existence; and, as a proof how partial the means of instruction were, we find the recorded fact that the pious and opulent retained a Levite in their families to read the law, and teach the knowledge of the true God. Synagogues, it appears, were multiplied after the law had been corrupted; for then the preaching of traditions, in which the inventors only could deal became a trade, and disciples sat not at the feet of their Gamaliel for nought. The Rabis and Pabonis, proud of such names, despised the poor, as bringing neither credit to the titled dignity, nor remuneration to the selfish zeal of a master in Israel. And it is plain, that this old leaven of Jewish pride, manifested alike by contempt of the poor and adulation of the rich, was that which the Apostle James had occasion so sharply to censure in the early christian assemblies. He is addressing the twelve tribes, when he says, "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons;" and it is evident, from his admonition, that they, little used as yet to the charity of our Lord, were apt to give a kindly welcome in their synagogues to the man wearing a gold ring and gay apparel, saying, Sit thou here in a good place; but to look with disdain on the poor man in vile raiment, and say to

him, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool. And it is too notorious to escape the reader of the apostolic Epistles, that the Judaizing teachers everywhere following the Gospel under the wing of its fame, could have no regard to the poor, seeing they sought their own gain by preaching whatever doctrine might bring most pay.

Not only Jews, but all nations, saw the charity of our text as a thing unknown before. Even the most enlightened countries never so much as contemplated any scheme for the diffusion of knowledge amongst all ranks. Roman youths of distinction repaired to Greece for their learning; and the learned of Greece made ample fortunes by their schools of wealthy disciples. But, in either country, any thing like a national system of education embracing the poor was unheard of and unknown. In every land, it is the nature of pride to treat the poor as the mire of the streets; it is the nature of avarice to grind the faces of the poor; and it is the policy of pride and avarice combined to keep the poor in ignorance, by which the degradation of servitude and the chains of oppression may be more patiently endured. It was then, as our text doth intimate, if not a new conception, a new development of a heaven-laid plan to enlighten the poor; to raise them in the scale of being; to sweeten and adorn their lot by the honours of intellectual culture, the comforts of social life, and the hopes of immortality. The poor owe this to the meek and lowly Jesus, who came to be the light and life of the world. The novelty of this law is not the proof of its excellence; but as the excellence is so conspicuous, the attention is struck by its newness. When we admit more light by enlarging the windows of our dwelling, or conduct fresh streams into the city, there is no question as to the benefit; and the first act of the mind, on perceiving the new light and living fountain, is to contrast the present bounty with the previous discomfort and destitution.

Yet the law of our text, made as it is imperative to every nation under heaven, is worthy of a more special regard; that, seeing its excellency by its effects, we may come prepared to feel and to enforce its obligations.

Poverty is an evil thing from whatever source it may come; and it is lawful to deprecate, as it is our duty to strive against it. Poverty may be inflicted by the hand of God; or it may be the consequence of man's guilt—whether drunkenness, prodigality, or sloth. Job becomes poor amidst

his piety; the prodigal by riotous living; but, for one example of the patriarch, there are a thousand of the prodigal. The remedy of this sore evil lies in the law of our text, designed for all the world, as it is needful to all the world. By the Gospel, men learn the godliness which hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come. It teaches sobriety, industry, temperance in all things. It declares, that if a man will not work, neither shall he eat; that he who provideth not for his own, is worse than an infidel, and hath denied the faith. The Gospel not only unfolds the nature, but commands the strict observance of all relative duties: "Honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God, honour the king." Being Christians, the rich are charitable, willing to communicate; the poor humble, contented, grateful to their benefactors. The Gospel is like no teaching of men; it is not so much distinguished by its precepts as by its power; it makes the heart willing; it makes all duty a delight. The wisdom of our text, as a poor's law, excels all the contrivances of men. It does not so much provide for the poor, as it prevents men from being poor. It cuts off the causes of poverty. The many thousands of mortals that would sink into misery, it lifts into a higher grade; and if it leave some in a lower, as it exalts their character, it suffers no wretchedness to cleave to their lot. Were the Lord's law made the law of our land, there would be no greater amount of paupers than is needful to hold forth a lesson of the world's vanity, and to exercise the charities of the renewed heart. But as things are, the flow of benevolence is averted from the poor, by their own barrier of impostures, and their guilty abuse of the gifts conferred. Were they virtuous under their trials, there would be a real pleasure in giving them relief; and were poor and rich adorned with the spirit of Christ, then would all the gradations of rank in the family of God be only as the difference of advancement towards man's estate in the children of a household—some stronger, some weaker, the greater taking the lesser by the hand, to help the little feet in a difficult step, and all dwelling together as dear children in love.

Such the excellency of this new law and loving-kindness of our Lord! Oh! we are ill-taught disciples and unfaithful ministers of Christ, if we do not know, and delight to declare, not so much the authority, as the perfect loveliness of his precepts, showing that the glory of his kingdom and the blessedness of his people are one. The poverty

which is a curse he prevents; the poverty which he appoints he sanctifies, and makes it profitable to the advancement of all that is lovely and of good report. Poverty is in his providence; for it is written, "The poor shall never cease out of the land;" but that poverty which is virtuous he hath hallowed by his example and ordained for good. He might have chosen one of the kingdoms of men, as he is Lord of all; but his kingdom is not of this world. He came to show what his kingdom is; to make it ours, by his suffering in our behalf; to enlarge our prospects, to elevate our desires, and to fill our hearts with righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; thus making the world little, and heaven great; bringing down the rich, and raising up the poor, and making the difference of rank only a difference in the mode of travelling to the city of the great King, and to the possession of a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

The poor exalted to this hope cannot be despised; they are near to God's throne; they cannot be ignorant; they have the highest of all knowledge: they cannot be drunkards; no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God: they cannot live in rags, and feed with the vilest brutes; their strengthened moral powers triumph over all the difficulties of their physical condition; they cannot envy their superiors; they learn to owe no man any thing but to love one another: they cannot be rebellious; they are taught of God "to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

See, then, by the law of our text, the very birthright of all that are born within our coasts; see the novelty of this kindness to the poor, a thing not coming of men's hearts, and not known in all the world before the coming of Christ; what exaltation of character and blessedness of hope it substitutes for guilty and cheerless poverty, and how it cultivates the moral wilderness, making all things sweet to the eye, and giving health to the very air which we breathe. Then come,

II. To a just feeling of the mighty obligation which a law so good lays on every soul of this christian kingdom.

The way to the most effective sense of duty is by discovering the need and the worth of the thing that is enjoined; and is this a thing to be countermanded or opposed? "If there be any consolation in

Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy."

But if the argument from the goodness of precept seem too weak, let us view its peremptory demand, and then we shall see ourselves, as rebels against the Almighty authority, if we prepare not our hearts to do according to the law of our Saviour and God. We have the law of his grace before us; let us fear the law of his judgment. "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish."

It is the will of our Saviour that none live in a christian land without hearing the glad sound, that so all may walk in the light of his countenance. But it is quite well known that men will not naturally seek after the gospel light, or long to hear its sound. All who have seen and heard, have also the fact of their own nature clearly before their eyes, viz., that they were found of God when they sought him not; and this is the very principle that makes the obligation strong. Let us who know the joy, if there be any bowels of mercies, pity the poor who are perishing through lack of knowledge; for if we were found of God, it was by such means as we are required to use for the saving of others. No one who is not willingly blind, alike to the Word of God, and the experience of man, can fail to be deeply moved by the conviction, that poor and rich in their natural state are not more destitute of spiritual knowledge than they are heedless of that destitution. Two wants of our nature are absolute and terminate in death if they be not relieved—the one bodily, the other spiritual; the one supplied by the meat which perisheth; the other by that which endureth unto everlasting life. The one is accompanied by desire; the other is not. This fact is at once the strongest and the most affecting proof of our fallen nature. The desire belonging to the temporal want is constant and clamorous, or keen and fierce as the hunger of a wolf. With regard to the spiritual want, all desire is gone and dead as the grave. In the one case, the want moves the hands to the incessant toil of threescore and ten years; in the other it simply endures, and makes no stir, and utters no voice for the bread that cometh from God, though the soul be faint, and the manna falling around so near it. This fact of spiritual deadness is awfully impressed on the mind of every minister of Christ, whose lot it is to labour in crowded lanes, where thousands never read the word, nor set a foot in the house of God. As they

taste not, so they have no desire of spiritual food; they are, indeed, troubled about many things, but they make no complaint for the state of their souls; and nothing is more difficult than to awaken in them the least feeling of their spiritual necessities. It may be that other ministers, having no parochial charge, and no responsibility for every soul within a certain boundary; who do not go in quest of the dying, but have a care only of those who come and prove by their coming that they are already awakened by other instrumentality: it may be that such overseers of a flock, from some interest deny, or from inexperience, but faintly believe this appalling fact of man's spiritual deadness. But it is this fact, as truly seen in the condition of our race, as it is clearly written in the inspired record, that constitutes the strength of obligation laid upon every land to provide for the preaching of the Gospel to the poor; to see that the law of our text be not hindered by want of churches or dearth of sittings, and that the number of pastors be not inadequate to the amount of the population; nay, to provide such a superintendence as hath responsibility for every soul of a district; and which proceeds on the fact, that the ignorant poor will not, of their own accord, seek after divine things, and cannot be roused to a sense of their need, or moved towards the house of God, but by repeated visitations, with appeals to a guilty conscience and demonstrations of the love of Christ. If the visits be too rare, and where the field is too large they are of necessity too rare, then the labour is not to be regarded as merely less than it should be; it is literally lost. When the earth is as iron, it is not blessed by one shower, but by "the rain that cometh oft upon it." Nothing but the frequent reiteration of visits can avail to move the heart that is naturally dead and hardened by habits of sin. But because grace is sufficient, and this the only way of its sufficiency, the feeling of our obligation is infinitely increased; and the obligation evidently rests on rulers who are bound to rule in the fear of God, and frame their laws in accordance with the laws of God. The field is the world; and if there be not pastors proportioned to the people, and having each a portion of the field, it is evident that the law of our Lord will never be obeyed.

And in farther proof that the obligation is one of state, and not of individual charity, it is evident that nothing but a systematic allotment of the vineyard, whence it might be said to each labourer, This is thy portion, will ever secure the preaching of the

Gospel to the lowest class of men. Were there ten sects and ten thousand sectarians of the vineyard-dressers, the poor would be shunned, not heartily sought and cared for. They would be no man's charge, and no man's choice. They could yield no emolument; and, as the difficulty of finding a mere subsistence would increase with the increase of competitors in the field of ministerial labour, the necessities of the multiplied pastors would cause them to turn their regards every way save to the poor. The natural desire of honour too would operate in favour of the rich, and to the neglect of the poor. But though such fellow-workers had the best will, they would yet find it impossible to agree among themselves as touching any measure that might tend to realize the gracious purpose of our text. Their tempers would not agree; their principles would not agree; their interests would not agree. Of themselves, therefore, no plan could ever proceed—no method of securing a constant visitation of the ignorant poor, whether of remote glens, or city lanes and suburbs. As they could not even propose to allocate the poor of specified districts to teachers of heterogeneous tenets, the poor who seek not the light would still be unsought in their darkness and shadow of death. And if such incompetency to fulfil the law of our text do necessarily cleave to the very existence of sectarianism, is it ever to be supposed that any state enactment could be so madly unreasonable as to provide for the spiritual instruction of the poor, by apportioning certain localities to the superintendence of pastors not more hostile to each other than obnoxious in many cases, perhaps in all, to the individual communities to which they should be allotted?

Such difficulties lying in the way, surely do not lessen the obligation to the law of our text! Is there, then, no envy in those who, being non-competent to the task, and therefore not obliged, do strive against the only method by which there is first competency and then obligation? They are obliged, not as schismatics, but as members of a christian community. Shall they dwell at ease in Zion, and see that the Gospel is not preached to the poor, and never can be by any method of theirs? And shall they, as Christians, oppose the extension of efficient means for accomplishing the law of their Lord; seeing, as they do, the twenty or thirty thousand of one city who never set a foot in any place of worship, and are as misguided on their way to eternity as the melancholy savage or the cruel idolater?

It is dreadful to bring such a spirit, either of envy or apathy, into contact with these words: "As I have loved you, so ought ye to love one another. Preach the Gospel to every creature. Go ye into the streets and lanes, and compel the poor to come in. I will pour out my spirit on all flesh."

But let the past fulfilment of the law of our text, with its once blessed effects, as these have appeared in our land, hold out an encouragement to our duty, as they serve in the highest degree to clear and strengthen our obligation. Previous to the reformation, as the true word was not preached, there could be no beneficial ministry of the Word; it could in no sense be said that the poor had the Gospel preached to them. Accordingly, the strong and concurrent testimony of all who lived in that period, proves that town and country swarmed with beggars, that the language was full of imprecations, all places beset with thieves, all prisons crowded with criminals, and the executions too horrible to be numbered. After that period, when every parish had its church and school, when the reformed doctrine was zealously taught, and the means of spiritual instruction extended to the whole body of the people, a new moral scenery appeared, which not only our own, but foreign historians have traced with admiration. Industry and the fear of God revived; swearing and brawling were banished from the streets; to be seen out of doors in the time of public worship was deemed a shame; and the exercise of family devotion among all ranks was so general, that of our land it might be said, "the voice of rejoicing and salvation was in the tabernacles of the righteous." As to both periods the facts are admitted; and there is no more question as to the cause, than whether the sun ripens the fruits of autumn. In the one period, thick darkness covered the people; in the other, the Sun of Righteousness shone with power and glory—the Gospel was preached to the poor. It was free as the light of heaven: there was neither want of church-room, nor prohibition to the poor by dearth of church sittings. But how stands the matter now? The population of Scotland, then only one million, is now two millions four hundred thousand; and considering in how many places, two or even three parishes have been thrown into one, it cannot be said that the means of spiritual instruction have been at all augmented, though the number of souls has been greatly more than doubled. A flock

of one thousand, according to the judgment of the great John Knox, alike illustrious in word and work, is the right charge appropriate to one pastor; and if this be right, how greatly wrong is the state of many parishes having only one endowed church and school, and yet amounting to five, ten, twenty, forty, or eighty thousand, having merely the name, an absolute mockery of pastoral superintendence. In such cases it cannot be said that the poor have the Gospel preached to them. It is true there are many places of worship, but they are like shops open to customers who come with their money; they are not free to all the poor who, according to the principle of an establishment, ought to be served without money and without price. And though the ministers of the various denominations be careful of visiting the poor of their own flocks, they have no charge of the poor around their church door; they do not so labour in a given district so that none may be overlooked; they do not strive to bring all of them within the pale of christian communion; and who can blame them? They could not live if they so laboured for the poor. Hence the obligation to uphold and extend a better system by which the light of Zion may be carried into the dark abodes of the ignorant poor, and not suffer them to die in misery, judging that no man careth for their souls.

The consequence of such enormity of population, the old of the poorer classes excluded from churches, and the young from schools, is a notorious progressive demoralization of all the large cities and considerable towns of the kingdom. It has been found by a scrutiny of certain districts of one city, that not one in ten, in some cases not one in fifteen, have seats in any place of worship; that many thousands of every city never enter the house of prayer; and there is a dreadful probability that they never pray at all, or read the Word of God. Hence the drunkenness, swearing, Sabbath profanation and squalid wretchedness too shocking to escape notice, and therefore needing no description; hence imprisonments for crime and criminal trials have increased in our day, to a degree unprecedented at any former period. And partly as a consequence, partly as a cause of the prevailing immoralities, places for the sale of ardent spirits amount in our city to one in fifteen of the inhabited houses. The abodes of the poor are scenes of misery, because they are the abodes of ignorance and vice. There a rising generation as

devoid of knowledge as the brutes that perish, nursed by parents who set the worst example, and teach not the fear of the Lord, are advancing in their turn to man's estate, alike careless of salvation, and incapable of instructing their children. The law of the Lord, "These things which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shall teach them diligently unto thy children"—this law descending from heaven and designed as a gold chain to extend to the remotest generations, binding all to their God, is broken and discovered. There is a blank, and future communication is cut off. The things commanded are not in the parents' heart, and there is a parental incapacity to the required teaching; whilst there is not only a capacity but a greediness to drink in iniquity like water, and a power certainly, though it were unconsciously exercised, of transmitting the poison and pollution to a rising offspring. It needs, therefore, no spirit of prophecy to foretell the more dismal scenes of anarchy and crime which, if a remedy be not sought, must quickly ensue.

Is this, then, a state of things on which you can quietly look and speak peace to your souls. Begin with the law of our text; then see the fact, the Gospel is not preached to the poor; then see the consequence, see the curse falling on our country. Our Lord's plan of edification, all-benevolent and full of heavenly wisdom, is rejected; as though men might prefer a cheaper estimate, and rear a building only to bury the inmates in its ruin. See not only the love and the wisdom, but the Almighty authority of this law, commanding all nations to provide for the preaching of the Gospel to the poor: behold a specialty of claim on our land, from its historical demonstration of blessings once derived from obedience to this law, and of the curse now falling because of our perversity; and say have ye no fear of a farther curse, have ye no heart to feel for the guilt, the apathy, the despair of thousands perishing through lack of knowledge. Oh! feel your obligation, and then earnestly inquire,

III. How is this good law of our Lord to be fulfilled? We must have a thorough conviction of the sin of which, as a church and people, we are guilty. That, alas! which is the concern of every one, is too apt to be regarded as the care of no one. But read the prophets, and see how national delinquency is the most frequent theme of their most solemn warnings and impressive remonstrance; of the doom which they pre-

diet, and which national penitence alone can prevent. Let the prophets be our instructors; for God is without shadow of turning; and this is our personal concern, that though it be the nation that sins, it is the individual that suffers. Infidel and revolutionary France of former days swims in blood. The scene sickens the eye, but the heart is most touched by the contemplation of one, and it may be any one, a father or a son, lying down each night in fear and waiting for death. Is a nation's sin no care when the doom shall fall; and if the best of God's laws be systematically broken, without fear, without repentance, how should the doom be averted? "Shall I not visit for these things," saith the Lord; "and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" We boast the rapid growth of our cities, the progress of science, the perfection of arts; and we lament not though moral science be on the wane. This cannot be pleasing to him who is Lord of all, and cares less for temporal than for spiritual things. In all his works there is a fair proportion. In his eye the spiritual prosperity of a people relates to their temporal prosperity as eternity does to time; we reverse this order, and are proud of finite greatness, though the infinite be as nothing. All natural things advance according to their own laws. The increase of population demands more looms, more corn, more trade—and all grow like trees of the forest; but the unscen Spirit that is the health and life of immortals, richly provided of a loving God for all his creatures, is unsought and uncared for by multitudes, as a thing of no moment. Multitudes live amongst whom God is forgotten, as if with him they had not to do; and yet the rule of eternal judgment is not more certainly fixed than it loudly declared, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." If we know this, is it no duty to tell it to the ignorant? Ought it not to be the law of the land that all might know? It was once the law in our land; the ministry of the Word was proportioned to the people; and now so ill proportioned, that not one half are brought within the reach of ministers whose task it is to warn every man. Parents now ignorant cannot instruct their children; the poor cannot afford to pay for instruction, and must be first roused from their sleep of death before they will try to afford; and ministers who depend on their hearers alone for subsistence, never will try to bring in all the poor of any district. They do not in any land; they never

have in this. They are not responsible for a community; they do not feel themselves bound to enter every abode of the poor, and point out the unnoticed spot of plague, and send the dying to the Physician who will save them. As a nation, we have no system by which it is provided that the Gospel shall be preached to all. This is our sin against God, and against the Lord that bought us with his blood.

The almighty Ruler takes into one view both worlds; and he gives to godliness the promise of both. It is that which alone exalteth a nation. An error, therefore, respecting the one, is an error respecting the other; and growing ignorance is growing ungodliness, under which no kingdom of men can prosper. This is our state, and the coming judgment is not without its signs. We have seen the multitudes who "fret themselves, and curse God and the king, and look upward." We have heard in the crowd what is both the wish and the aim of many, "Down with the Church, burn the Bible, and cheers for a republic!" Ignorance of God may long do in a savage, but cannot long do in a civilized state. France, at the period alluded to, was no doubt civilized, but religion was abandoned; children were baptized in the name of the republic; then out of the heart proceeded murders. In the savage state there is rather a difference of title, than of wealth, among the different ranks; and if the defence of property be weak, there is little to be defended; if avarice be but slightly deterred from spoliation, there is also little to tempt the spoiler; and the worst that any party has to apprehend is the frequency of petty aggressions: but in the civilized state the licentious contemplate the richness of the prize; if the defence be strong, the temptation also is great; and if the attack be delayed, it is only because the strife might be deadly and the issue doubtful: but if ungodliness increase with increasing multitudes, there comes a time when wealth cannot purchase its own defence, and the date of its destruction will be when the physical power of the assailants exceeds that of the assailed.

Thus in regard to both worlds, as a nation we are guilty; providing neither for the saving of souls nor the safety of our land. Can ye eat your bread and drink your wine with a merry heart, whilst the Lord has so great a controversy with you; whilst his Gospel is not preached to the poor; and the long violation of that best of laws threatens judgment to our nation?

Be convinced of sin, and the remedy is nigh. It is simply to enlarge what we now hold in too limited measure; to build and endow more churches and to employ more ministers, that the poor may not have to pay for hearing the Word, and that men having a care for their souls may go to them and visit them often, and labour to win them to Christ. There is no motive in danger, if the danger be unknown. In a dead sleep there is no motion though the house be on fire; the victim will, perhaps, sleep on till the forked flame be drawn into his nostrils like vital air. It is only the liveliness of sense and the deadness of faith that can make you execrate the man who would not save a sleeper from the flames, and keep you easy, though a soul of this sinful dust sleep in spiritual death, till the fire of hell shall kindle upon him. Yea, the cause is good, but whose task is it to build a church? Let every one who owns the love of Christ be but willing and the work will prosper. I quote a parallel case. Of old time when the Lord's house needed repairs, it was not the part of every one to build, or to hew down, and carry timber; but they who did not lend their hands to the labour, "gave their money to the masons and to the carpenters." And so every one in our day, as the Lord hath prospered him, may cast into the treasury his mite or his talent, and take a part in the honour and privilege of building a house unto the Lord.

Be encouraged by what is now doing or already done. It is a great thing that a beginning is made; for the very first effort in a good cause is to dispel the vain fears on which sloth sat brooding and despairing, and the begun activity instantly creates and diffuses fresh courage. At this moment every parish throughout Scotland is getting up and coming forth with its contributions, for the gracious purpose of providing for the poor both pastoral superintendence and freedom of access to the house of prayer. One pious and patriotic citizen has here set on foot a scheme of unexampled boldness, and hitherto of unexampled success—a scheme for building and endowing no less than twenty new churches in this city, in order that the thirty thousand for whom there is no access to any place of worship whatever, may have ministers to visit them in the shadow of death, and to bring them into the light and liberty of the sons of God. The design will doubtless be crowned with success—to the incalculable benefit of Glasgow, and as we trust, of other places, by its signal example of fulfilling the law of our

text. If this city erect its twenty, why may not another erect its ten churches, its five, or its one, as necessity may require? It will be difficult for fame to find in her annals a design more honourable to the head and heart of its projector, or to the christian spirit of our citizens by whose liberality the scheme has been so nobly encouraged. The originator may have his foes, but their opposition can only prove the need and the excellence of the work which he designed; and it is devoutly to be wished that he who, dying, will need no monument, may live to see his fine idea in substantial form, and leave the world in the hope of meeting in glory, many whom his work shall save, by bringing them to the knowledge of the Lord. Another example of good for our encouragement in this time of need, we have in a noble patriot truly great, because he hath a christian spirit, who has built and endowed one church at his own single cost—an example that is not likely to stand alone. Indeed, we hear of another, and there is reason to hope we shall soon hear of more. The charity is new; though its claims are the strongest in the world, they have never till now demanded public attention. When we contemplate the many hospitals for the sick and the destitute; asylums for the blind, the deaf, and the insane; and all charitable seminaries for the instruction of the poor: when we see these bright marks of the Saviour's glory on a land which is blessed with his love, can we doubt that many rich in the world, and rich also in faith, will leave here and there a monument behind them to tell their children how they revered the law of our text; and sought its fulfilment, not by prayer alone, for the coming of our Lord's kingdom, but by bountiful donations which shall cause the word of grace to enrich the humble poor.

Whilst we hope for such things, and do now see so much good work proceeding from private benevolence, is there not an imperious claim on the rulers of our country, if they would rule well by ruling in the fear of God, to provide, by the endowment of more churches, for the extension of the Gospel light, and salvation to the poor? Rulers cannot take it amiss that we point to the law of our text as the law of our Lord's kingdom, and say that their kingdom cannot prosper if it be divided from his. It is our duty to show where the policy of men is at variance with the policy of the Bible; to hold up the wisdom that is infinite before that which is erring, and by a better light

to show the way of retreat before the error be irretrievable. It is the wisdom of Christ by this law of our text to carry to the fountain-head the medicine that healeth the waters; to apply the cure to every small spring issuing in the heart of every one of our people, before the streams unite and form a river of untractable dimensions and intolerable bitterness. It is the policy of man, not provident of the first evil, and therefore impotent as to the second, to say of the first small but deceitful issues, there is no need of a primary and individual cure; to let them flow on according to their nature till they meet and magnify their torrents; and then when the peace and wealth of the plain are invaded, to construct such tanks and reservoirs as may hold and restrain the destroying flood; weakly wary in this, that the imprisoned depth of the bad element increases its force by a law that is not compensated for by increasing the height of its barriers; and hence the breaking out beyond all attempt to control; and hence the unavailing consternation of the Psalmist, "Floods of ungoldly men!" We assert the wisdom and peremptory demands of our text. It is not now the law of our land; and if it be not made the law, the Lord will not be on our side; his providence will accord with his word, "The nation that will not serve thee shall perish." We doubt not that petitions from a thousand parishes all bearing testimony to the growing evils of our time, and calling for the only cure, will move the legislature to grant the means of a more adequate pastoral superintendence, alike necessary for the ends of good government and the saving of souls.

But the legislature will the better do their duty that we do ours; and we will petition them with more effect, when we show by our good works the sincerity of our prayer. And let us not fear the magnitude of the evils to be surmounted. Only be persuaded that the cause is good; and then we know the Lord is on our side, and he that is for us is more than all they that be against us. In the faith of this, remembering the small grain of mustard seed, we do not hesitate to send a single missionary to India, to the hundred millions of her people, and her temples of a thousand gods. The smallness of means afforded by one hand becomes great by the co-operation of many. One drop is little, but the shower that blesseth the springing of the earth is composed of such drops; and so is a grain of the bounteous corn with which all creatures are fed.

In the natural world the effect is often great by the law of co-operation, though next to nothing as to the product of a single worker: the coral insect toiling beneath the ocean, would be judged as nothing in the creation; but the combined labour of many grows up a large island, able to resist the dashing waves, and soon inviting man to dwell amongst its shady groves and fertile plains. Many islands so feebly reared are now adorned with temples in which the praises of the Redeemer are sung. The strength of these amazing architects lies in the law of their God by which they work together; and did one law of charity constrain every disciple who professes love to Christ, though the gifts were small as drops of the shower, they would be great and blessed in their collective bounty.

But the rule of that charity is, let every man give "as the Lord hath prospered him," and give cheerfully, "not grudgingly, neither of necessity, for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." Neither is the liberality a loss to the donor, for "he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." Fear no harm from your own charity: amongst all the causes of want in this world, who ever heard that charity was blamed? Survey all the trials of trade, the defeated hopes of speculation, or the unrewarded toils of industry; call to mind all that you have seen or suffered in the clouds that darken a worldly prosperity, and leave the wealthy to weakness and want in old age; trace the causes of many changed and ever changing lots, and I venture to say, that charity will not be reckoned. That no man was ever hurt by his own charity, it might not be safe to affirm; for imprudence may do wrong in this as in every thing else; but for once that a liberal charity has caused harm, it will be found that a thousand times more frequent, and a thousand times more severe have been the loss and the ruin wrought by pride, by prodigality, by a sinful and selfish indulgence. God is true, and his providence is engaged to make his truth appear, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." To fulfil the law of our text, which is not only to give the bread of life to the poor, but to seek the glory of God in their salvation, is that charity of which it may emphatically be said, "he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," and he that so

giveth, is the surest that "the Lord will repay him again."

Can ye pray, "Thy kingdom come," and not care though thousands nigh to your doors live and die without hearing the Gospel of peace. How shall the children of parents ignorant, prayerless, and having no fear of God before their eyes, believe on Him of whom they have never heard; and how shall they hear without a preacher? It is as evident that God hath made a place for man to fill in the economy of grace, as in the economy of providence. If the stagnant marsh be not drained, the people die of disease, and if the fields be not ploughed, they die of hunger; so if the Gospel be not spread around by those who know its blessings, the souls of your neighbours will send forth a moral pestilence, and die for want of spiritual food. You cannot pray for the coming of our Lord's kingdom, and refuse the means by which it is appointed that his kingdom shall come. Can ye pray, "Thy will be done," and resist the constitutional and characteristic law of his kingdom, the preaching of his Gospel to the poor? If ye pray with the heart ye will give with the hand, in obedience to a law so holy, and just, and good; you will seek to hallow these prayerless hovels by letting in the light of Zion, that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Shall *one* refuse such work of love, and yet believe in the love of Christ? Oh! think what he believes and what he refuses. He believes that Christ laid down his life to save us, and that hence it is a reasonable demand "that we should lay down our lives for the brethren." But he refuses—not the sacrifice of life—but of substance; and of that substance only a small portion; and that small portion he will not give to save one soul of the perishing poor. He resolves to keep what he has; but it may take a worse road: or he may keep it till he die; but it cannot redeem his soul. Then in the sight of death he may say, how generous was the love of Christ; but, ah! that love did not constrain me to deny some luxury, or to sacrifice some costly sin for the honour of the Saviour's cross and the saving of a brother. And then, perhaps, the only word that will rest on his tongue will be, "He shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy." Contemplate such a one; think of his faith and his refusal; and not one of you would be that man for all the gold of Ophir.

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE;

PART OF A SERMON PREACHED FROM LUKE CHAP. 1-5.

By the Rev. NATHANIEL PATERSON.

In this passage we find our Lord taking occasion, by a remarkable incident, to enforce the most important truth—the necessity of repentance. From the incident, and from our Lord's statement, we learn two things which differ much in their relative importance, as applicable to the interests of the reader. The one is, that we are apt to regard great calamities as signs of great sin, and of the wrath of God falling upon the sinner; the other is, that the greatest of all calamities will certainly come upon all who do not repent. The one is a matter of life and death; the other is a matter of curious speculation. The one is very generally and very willingly believed; the other is naturally disliked and strongly denied; and, worst of all, the one which is so freely admitted is not true; whilst the other, which is so hardly received, is at once the most solemn truth of the divine record, and the deepest concern of every living soul. When the disciples, on another occasion, saw the man who was blind from his birth, and on whom the Saviour looked with pity, they asked, "Whether hath this man or his parents sinned, that he was born blind?" conceiving, no doubt, that the sad privation was a token of God's anger, on account of some great, but secret iniquity. And it is obvious from the context, that our Lord, who "knew what was in man, and needed not that any should testify of man," saw the working of this notion in the minds of the people, when they heard of the horrible murder of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. To correct this readily and commonly received opinion, "Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Thus we see that men have a perfect readiness to admit, to the fullest extent, an awful conviction of the sinfulness of their fellow-creatures, and count it nothing wonderful that in the form of some terrible calamity the wrath of God should suddenly overtake the offenders. But, on the other hand, nothing is so hard as for mortals to believe that, unless they repent, their own sins will certainly be visited with the

divine wrath. Many things contribute to the hinderance of this belief. Pride, which is always seen to rise the highest in proportion as every thing which might give it a claim to superiority has sunk to the lowest; pride, with its vain imaginations, serves to conceal from self those defects and deformities which are open to other eyes; and again, under such delusion, measuring themselves by themselves, and having no higher standard of righteousness, men guilty on all hands are yet strangers to conviction, and feel no necessity of repentance. The experimental impunity, too, in which they live leads them yet more to exclaim, All is well; and to judge, that if others suffer what has not hitherto fallen on them, it is because others have sinned, as they have not yet done. The great amount of impenitency in the world, the fearless old age, and the quiet death of the most notoriously impenitent, go still farther to prove how hardly men believe that the impenitent shall perish. Whilst, then, there is great error in supposing that calamities are signs of sin and wrath, there is great ruin in denying or disregarding the necessity of repentance. If any signal suffering be considered as the test of great sin, then the saints, not exempted, have unnecessary fears; and if the absence of calamity be a sign of peace, then the wicked, who flourish and live long, have nothing to fear.

Hence see the great use of our text, calculated, more perhaps than any other portion of Scripture, whether to correct a wrong belief to which the world is very naturally inclined, or to implant a right belief not only essential to salvation, but to which the whole world of sinners have, by nature, a deep and decided aversion.

The two illustrations of the text are admirably chosen, both to expel the indulged error and to secure admission to the neglected truth. The first is taken from the atrocious conduct of Pilate, who on suspicion of their disloyalty, without any form of trial, murdered at the very altar certain of the Galileans; and is thus said to have mingled their blood with their sacrifices. The inference to be drawn by those who believe in the providence of God is, that though the hand of Pilate was in the deed,

yet was it permitted of God. This is true; but the error lies in the next inference, viz., that being permitted, this most revolting aspect of death, coming in the midst of the most pious services, is a proof that the persons so engaged, must have been the most impious of all offenders. "I tell you, nay," says our Lord; "but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

But to make the instruction more clear, our Lord refers to a well known case of sudden calamity, in which the hand of man had no part; "or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all them that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

The most reasonable conjecture as to the occasion of this catastrophic is, that these persons were met for healing at the pool of Siloam, or might be engaged in charitably helping the impotent folk into the pool, or in purifying themselves for the temple service. But be the cause of their presence what it may, the event of their destruction is simply of providence. There appears no reason for supposing either that any power of man compelled the sufferers to visit this place of danger, or lent a hand to accomplish the crisis of the tottering wall. Whilst all these eighteen persons could tell for what end they repaired on that day to the fatal spot; and many more, perhaps, could tell by what unexpected circumstances they were prevented from sharing in the ruin; yet such is the providence of God, that the motives, though free to the minds of all those agents, were such as answered to the numbering of their days; that of those who might be righteous the suddenness of the event was just such as accorded with the finishing of their course, and their fitness for the crown; that of the wicked, if such there might be, the steps they took towards that place were just those which completed the measure of their iniquities. There is nothing, then, in that oneness of event to many, that can cause any perplexity to the mind that is conversant with scriptural views of providence, as co-operating with the long suffering, the free and all-sufficient grace of God. But take up the error which our text is designed to correct, and then the oneness of event becomes the test of the same wickedness in all, and leaves to the

surviving relatives of such as perish by any common calamity, no comfortable hopes respecting the deceased. "For their consolation," says our Lord, "I tell you, nay."

But for the instruction of all, he says, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." It is scarcely to be supposed of these eighteen, that every one was called out of the world by this sudden visitation in a state of preparedness for heaven. Is it reasonable to suppose that there might be one of the eighteen who lived in neglect of the great salvation, who had not in truth repented; who might be careful for the healing of the body, and not careful for the healing of the soul; nay, who for decency's sake might seek, like others, the purifying for the temple service, without caring at all for the spiritual cleansing? Do not suppose that the eighteen were sinners above all them that dwelt at Jerusalem, but only suppose that there was one of all the number, and that one only as bad as other sinners in Jerusalem. And surely all history, all the Bible, all that you see in the world, will lead you to own that not too much is demanded in the supposition. Set that one then before you. He is overwhelmed along with others it is true; but he is overwhelmed in the midst of his sins. He may have been engaged in mocking those who either waited for healing, or observed the rites of purification; or he may have joined, merely as a hypocrite, in a work that was holy; and thus he is suddenly cut off. The falling of the tower might have been a warning had he lived, but it was death; the record tells you that all were slain; there was no time for repentance. The patience of God endured the sinner up till this moment, but no longer. It is not possible to suppose that that soul could be saved. And it is just when you contemplate this one, and see that the sudden judgment which may not be regarded as a token of wrath to all the eighteen, is at least the final judgment to that one; and when you see that no ease in the world can be worse than this, you see also that this very one just represents the condition of every soul that lives impenitent one hour, not knowing what shall be in the next; and that this lost soul is included in these words, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," as suddenly and as surely as that one.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

DISCOURSE by the Rev. WILLIAM LINDSAY, Glasgow.
SERMON by the Rev. DAVID RUNCIMAN, A.M., Edinburgh.

THE PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE;

A DISCOURSE DELIVERED IN BEITH ON THE 15TH FEBRUARY, 1835,

By the Rev. WILLIAM LINDSAY,
Minister of the Relief Church, Dovehill, Glasgow.

"To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life."—2 Cor. ii. 16.

THE obligations under which we lie to God are such, as can never be equalled by any claims which our fellow-men may have to our obedience. Created by the power of the Eternal, and deriving from his goodness every comfort which sweetens life, we owe to heaven a debt of gratitude, which even the perfect obedience of our whole lives would be insufficient to discharge. In God we live, and move, and have our being: he is not far from every one of us: and God, therefore, we are justly required to love with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind. The promotion of his glory should be the lofty object to which all our views and labours tend; and the service which he requires from us should be the employment which gives us the highest pleasure, and in which our true honour and dignity are made to consist.

Before the fall, our first parents were wholly imbued with principles of this exalted kind, and lived in a state of entire devotion to the will of heaven. Having received from the kind hand of their Creator blessings innumerable and precious, they cherished in their hearts the warmest feelings of gratitude, nor could they yet form the conception of such a thing as the enjoyment of a gift apart from all consideration of the giver. The lovely scenes of nature which surrounded them, exciting their daily admiration, appeared in their view as a mirror on whose polished surface they might trace the reflected wisdom and goodness of God; and the earth, teeming with every variety of useful productions, was regarded by them as the great store-house of the Almighty, from which with his own hand he liberally supplied the wants of his creatures. It was reserved for a future age to give birth to the monstrous conception, that a

world so richly furnished might be the fortunate production of chance: the progenitors of our race had not yet learned to substitute secondary causes in the room of the great Eternal: to them the working of Jehovah's power was every where apparent. The murmuring stream whispered his name: the birds floating in air, the cattle grazing in the fields, bespoke his wisdom; and the mountains piled up to heaven proclaimed his power. With feelings like these cherished in their breasts, it was theirs to walk in the path of duty with untiring step, perfectly fulfilling for a time the purposes of their being; and to them was presented the reasonable prospect—never since, alas! possessed by human being—of receiving the favour of God and the bliss of heaven, as the reward of their own persevering obedience.

But dire, alas! is the change which has swept over the scene of human affairs: an iron age has succeeded to the golden times of our first progenitors. We have fallen from the original dignity of our nature: we have deserted the service of heaven; we have ceased to mark the foot-prints of the Deity, so legibly traced upon the works of nature. Though a presiding ruler is acknowledged in words, yet is his will disregarded in practice; and no restraints of a religious kind are found sufficient to check the workings of passion. Practical atheism has planted its standard in every human breast: we are prone by nature to the practice of sin, and justly may we be described as living without God in the world.

And this melancholy characteristic of the present state of human nature has given birth to a system of religion very peculiar in its kind; which multitudes have been led to reject, because they did not sufficiently advert to the fact, that ours is a

singular case, requiring to be met in a singular manner. It is at once acknowledged that the essence of religion, viewed in the abstract, is love to God and obedience to his laws; and in the case of beings who had never sinned, no other principles than these would require to be acknowledged. But something more is necessary to constitute a religion suited to the wants of beings sinful and defiled like men. We have violated the laws of heaven, we have dishonoured the sacred name of God, we have incurred that liability to punishment which the very idea of a law involves, for what is a law without a penalty; and in this peculiarity of our condition originates the necessity, if we are to be made religious at all, of atonement, redemption, grace, and all those other things, which constitute the peculiar features of the Gospel, and which distinguish it from the religion of unfallen beings.

The Gospel, then, is a message of mercy addressed to the children of men, and constituting the only system of religion which is suited to the circumstances of sinful beings. It proclaims to us the appalling fact that we have all offended the majesty of heaven; and are in consequence pressed down under a weight of guilt from which no exertions of our own can possibly relieve us. But it does not make this alarming disclosure to fill us with despair; it only probes our wound to guide us to a cure. It tells us that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

In what light, then, is our present existence to be regarded? It is a second period of probation, which has been assigned to us by the goodness of God. We are condemned criminals whose punishment, though pronounced, is mercifully for a time suspended; and there is presented to us the means of deliverance through Christ Jesus, with the assurance that if we persist in our rebellion, despising the proffered mercy of Heaven, we shall greatly aggravate our guilt, and render our situation eternally hopeless. The message delivered to us in the Gospel is pregnant with consequences of the most momentous kind: it is our last, our only hope. It is a double-edged sword, with the one edge, wounding to heal, but where its healing virtue is despised, powerful with the other to destroy. "To the one," says the Apostle, "we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life."

It is the Gospel that is the subject respecting which the declarations of our text are made; for the Apostle does not speak

of himself and of his brethren as men merely invested with a power over the destinies of the human race, but as messengers employed by the Almighty to proclaim the tidings of his love; and it is the message, properly speaking, and not the messenger, excepting in a subordinate sense, which produces the momentous results described.

The paramount importance, then, of the Gospel message is the subject which the words of the Apostle present to us for consideration.

The quarter from which the message contained in the Gospel comes, and the channel through which it is conveyed, are sufficient of themselves to establish its vast importance. It is no being of doubtful power who sends to us the tidings; it is no messenger of questionable authority who brings them. They are sent to us from God; they are brought to us by the Son of the Most High. Who then shall dare, with any other feelings than those of profoundest reverence and awe, to listen to a message, on which is legibly impressed the seal of the King of the universe? The very dead rise out of their graves, the lame are enabled to walk, and the blind are made conscious of the light of day, for the purpose of attesting the heavenly origin and the vital importance of the word spoken to us by Jesus.

But it is to the effects resulting from the Gospel message, that we are directed in our text to look for a proof of its vast importance. We are told that it proves to one class of mankind the savour of death unto death, and to another the savour of life unto life, which opposite results we shall consider in their order.

The Gospel is a system whose necessity originated in the fallen condition of man. Rebels against the authority of Heaven, we had incurred the righteous doom denounced against transgressors, nor was it within the compass of human power to do any thing which could atone for sin or avert the wrath of Heaven; but our merciful Creator, commiserating the forlorn situation to which we were reduced, devised a scheme for our deliverance; in execution of which Jesus Christ came to this world, and died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. In what style, then, does the Gospel address us? Does it proclaim a universal amnesty of past misdeeds, without reference to the course which we may pursue? Does it declare that the sword of God's vengeance is for ever sheathed, whether we forsake our sins or not? Does it warrant us to live in carelessness and folly, undisturbed by the dread of coming woe? Ah! no. Immeasurably different is the language

which it speaks. It promises deliverance only to those who believe in Christ. Though it is a remedy of never-failing power, yet it requires to be accepted and applied before it can possibly work a cure.

With what aspect, then, does the Gospel look upon those who despise her blessings? Rejected as an interceding friend, she mounts the throne of judgment. The benignant smile of mercy is changed into the frown of uncompromising justice, and the wretched victims of impenitence, having chosen to stand upon their own merits, are left to encounter unaided the keen scrutiny of the law. The Gospel proclaims the impossibility of the salvation of any but those who believe in Christ, and the very nature of the case gives clear demonstration that all who despise the mercy of God must miserably perish. Why, let me ask you, died the Saviour? Because a sacrifice of infinite value was imperiously required to atone for the sins of men. No other principle consistently explains the sufferings of Christ. Is it for a moment to be supposed that, if any sacrifice within the compass of man's ability could have sufficed to remove the guilt of sin, the blood of the holy Jesus would have flowed upon the cross? Is it for a moment to be supposed that, if any other means of deliverance could possibly have been found, the Son of the Almighty, the Sovereign of the universe, would have descended from his throne on high to linger in this vale of tears, a houseless wanderer neglected and despised? What principle but the dire necessity of the case, what principle but the supposition that the disease of humanity was otherwise incurable, will account for the astonishing humiliation and sufferings of Christ? Where, then, is the source from which the impenitently wicked can derive consolation? What new fountains of mercy remain to be opened up for those who refuse to drink the refreshing waters of the Gospel? The fiery burning lake alone remains behind. The noblest blood which the universe could furnish has already been shed. Nothing similar, nothing second to the atonement exists within the precincts of the possible.

But the meaning of the clause, "to the one we are the saviour of death unto death," is not yet fully brought out. Not only does the Gospel, when her mercy is despised, remand the victims of folly back to the law to be tried with all the strictness of justice, but she sends them there with a fresh accumulation of guilt upon their heads. Let not any imagine that the religion of Jesus is a system, which men may reject without altering the position which they occupied

before. The glad tidings of salvation are never made known to any of the human race without being productive of some result; either saving the sinner, when his heart is melted with penitence, or loading him, when the mercy of heaven is despised, with a heavier weight of guilt; for what greater sin can be conceived than that of treating with contempt the message of God—a message which is sent to us in mercy, and which speaks to us in the weeping language of tender solicitude. How black appears the ingratitude, and how greatly swells the guilt of that prodigal son, who, when his aged father implores him to return to the paternal roof, promising to forget the follies of the past, laughs at the kindness of his firmest friend, and pours contempt upon his hoary locks! Similar in kind but infinitely greater in degree, is the guilt of him who rejects the Gospel. It is the dictate of reason as well as declaration of the Word of God, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and for Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for those who have heard, without accepting the tidings of grace.

And not only is the simple rejection of the Gospel itself the greatest of sins, and of course at the very first an immense aggravation of our guilt, but it never fails in the course of time to sink us deeper in the mire of pollution, by weakening the restraints of virtue, and by exposing us more defenceless than before to the allurements of the world. It is the love of sin, and not any cool consideration of arguments, that is the great reason why men refuse to look to Jesus; and though it generally requires much labour at first to quell the voice of conscience raised against our mad infatuation, yet that heavenly monitor, by strenuous perseverance, is at length either lulled to slumber, or forcibly reduced to silence. The moral feelings are blunted, the heart is hardened, and the drowsiness of death oppresses every lingering principle of virtue. The undisputed sway of the wicked one is established in our hearts; and the stream of wickedness, which was dammed up, while the struggle with conscience continued, throws down every opposing barrier, and with boiling fury onward flows, leaving behind it a track of wide desolation. It will ever be found that that willful opposition to conscience, which precedes confirmed indifference to the Saviour, goes far to destroy all practical sense of the distinction between right and wrong, and to invest inclination with the high office of directing conduct; for how can it be supposed, that when the inward monitor has argued in vain the

general question of relinquishing sin for holiness, she will be listened to with deference, when she urges the necessity of resisting particular temptations? Her authority once despised in so flagrant a manner is virtually destroyed; and sensual pleasure, or the love of fame, or the desire of wealth, or whatever feeling may be most congenial to the heart, will inevitably become the ruling principle of the life. Let it never be forgotten, that every instance of resistance to what is good increases the power of evil. The more frequently we stifle our tender emotions, the more callous do we grow; and every day which is added to our lives, after such a process commences, renders it the more likely that we are destined to swell the number of those unto whom the Gospel shall prove the savour of death unto death.

But let us now turn to the lovelier scene which our text unfolds to view. The Gospel is not productive of fatal consequences alone: it is a system whose native tendency is to raise the dead to spiritual life, and to fill the soul with peace, and comfort, and joy. While it is to some the savour of death unto death, the Apostle assures us that it is to others the savour of life unto life.

It is almost unnecessary, my brethren, to remark, that it is only a seeming contradiction which our text exhibits, when it ascribes effects of so opposite a kind as life and death to the operation of the same cause. It is true, indeed, the same fountain cannot be supposed to send forth both sweet and bitter waters; but it must be borne in remembrance, that though destructive and salutary effects are both ascribed to the Gospel, they flow from it in a very different manner, the one being its direct, and the other its indirect results. The destructive effects of the Gospel are not, in strictness of speech, to be ascribed to the Gospel itself, but to the rejection of it—to the hardness and impenitence of the human heart; while the salutary effects which flow from it are those which it is its native tendency to produce. Misery and death are connected with the Gospel in the same manner in which darkness and cold are connected with the sun, it being the rejection of the Gospel in the one case which produces the evil, and the absence of the sun in the other; but life and happiness are the glorious results which the message of God is fitted to produce, just as light and warmth are the genuine effects of the solar ray. In a word, the Gospel accepted saves the soul; rejected loads it with deeper condemnation.

The salutary effects resulting from the

Gospel, which the scope of our argument requires us now to consider, are of the most important and durable kind. They embrace our dearest interest, and extend beyond the present scene to the world of spirits. Begun on earth, the life of the soul is perfected in heaven, and increases in glory through all eternity.

The Gospel proves to the repenting sinner the savour of life unto life, by delivering him from the sentence of death recorded against him in the Book of God. The justice of the Almighty imperiously requires, that wherever there is sin to be found, there must condemnation follow; but, Christ having died, the just for the unjust, and presented to his Father a great sacrifice of atonement, the demands of the law are fully satisfied, and mercy sits upon the throne of judgment, dispensing with liberal hand the blessings of pardon to those who repent and believe. The penitent soul is enabled to lay hold of the hope presented in the Gospel; and, resting upon the plea of the Saviour's vicarious obedience and death, receives the remission of all sin, and is thoroughly washed from guilt. The pit of hell is closed, the portals of heaven are thrown open, the chains of slavery are snapped asunder, and the glorious freedom of the sons of God begins to be tasted. The sword of divine justice is sent to repose in its scabbard, reserved for the destruction of those who remain impenitent, and it is the olive branch instead which is waved by the lovely hand of mercy around the believer's head. The followers of Christ are adopted into the family of the Sovereign of the universe, and receive the privilege of addressing him by the endearing appellation of Father. They enjoy the blessedness which David ascribes to the man whose sins are covered, whose transgression is hid, whose iniquities are cast into the depths of the sea.

But the Gospel proves itself the savour of life unto life, not only by delivering us from the sentence of condemnation, but likewise by raising us from the torpor of spiritual death, and kindling within us the spark of a new and heavenly existence. By nature we are dead in trespasses and sins: we have no love to God, no desires after holiness; our souls cleave to the dust, and our delight is placed in the practice of evil. But the same grace of God, which enables us to look to the Saviour for the pardon of sin, regenerates our souls, and pours through our hearts the warm blood of spiritual life, inspiring us with the love of holiness, and leading us to cultivate every pure and pious disposition. The Holy Spirit, so long a stranger to the polluted mansion of our hearts, returns to

the deserted scene, and there condescends to dwell—a heavenly resident that ever prompts to good, and with sweet and holy influence guides the soul to God. The means of grace are blessed to us. When we meet together to worship the Father of our spirits, his gracious presence fills our minds with peace and comfort; and when we encircle the sacred board to commemorate the matchless love of Christ, our souls are fed with nourishment divine. Our graces are brightened, our resolutions are strengthened, our hearts are cheered. We are filled with that joy of God which the world can neither give nor take away. Our affections are purified, our desires are fixed upon the celestial treasure; and all things, yea, even the adverse occurrences of life, are made to serve as parts of the scheme of discipline by which our souls are prepared for heaven.

But, farther, the Gospel shall yet be found, in the joyful experience of the people of God, the savour of life unto life, because it will introduce them into the enjoyment of eternal life in heaven. "We are the children of God," says Paul, "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." We are now permitted to look forward with confidence to the time when songs of triumph shall burst from our immortal lips, and when everlasting joy shall be upon our heads. The hopes of the Christian are not bounded by the limits of earth and time; his eye of faith, touched by the Spirit of God, pierces through the clouds and darkness which rest upon the confines of the grave; and he looks forward with rapture to the interminable glories which Christ has promised to his people. He knows that when the fabric of the universe is reduced to ruins; when the sun is quenched in darkness, and the stars put out, his spirit surviving the dissolution of nature, and safe amid the universal wreck, shall be borne aloft by the power of the Eternal, and conducted in triumph to the bright and glorious mansions of Heaven. The present life is merely the infancy of the Christian's being. It is the seed-time of a harvest, whose crop of glory shall be reaped above the skies. The followers of Christ, while they are journeying through this vale of tears as strangers and pilgrims, have the cheering prospect before them of a country beyond the grave, where fixed their eternal home is to be, of a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The Almighty has pledged his word that they shall be protected from every assault of their enemies, and finally delivered from all the anxieties of time; and though, therefore, while they are living here, they may

endure much that is evil, still their destiny is one of the brightest kind, and their lot more full by far of soothing hopes than any other lot of man. The very sufferings which they endure become to them sources of continual improvement, being so overruled by the providence of God as to prove the means of purging their souls from sin, of making them feel the unsatisfactory nature of earthly pleasures, of making them fix their affections upon the unseen treasure of the skies, and of leading them to regard the enjoyment of God as the only fountain of permanent bliss; and promoting thus their advancement in holiness, these sufferings at the same time become to them of necessity well-springs of purest happiness; inasmuch as that brightening of their graces, which under God is occasioned by the ills of life, infuses into their souls even in this world more joy and gladness than the wicked experience when their corn and wine do most abound; and in the future world, when these ills shall have for ever fled, the remembrance of them shall only have the effect of deepening, by the power of contrast, that ecstasy of bliss which shall for ever thrill the hearts of the redeemed, as they stand purified worshippers around the throne of the Eternal. Everlasting life is the portion which God has promised to his people, a life of holy blessedness, a celestial treasure, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

From the account which we have given of the destructive and of the salutary effects resulting from the Gospel, it will now be apparent what is the force of the reduplications employed in our text, death unto death; life unto life. The Gospel is said to prove to the impenitent the savour not merely of death, but of death unto death, because its rejection increases the loathsomeness and corruption of their spiritual death, and thereby sinks them deeper in the ruin of the second death, the endless death of misery and woe; and, in like manner, it is said to prove to the Christian the savour of life unto life; because that spiritual life which it bestows is not a life terminating in itself, but looking forward unto another life, even a life of happiness and glory in the enduring mansions of heaven.

Who, then, we ask, in conclusion, who would not desire to be received into the number of the sons of God? What glory of an earthly kind is for a moment to be compared with the glory which awaits the followers of Christ? Does any deliverance from temporal calamity deserve to be compared with deliverance from the punishment of sin? Does any guidance which the

wisest of men can give, deserve to be compared with the guidance of God's Holy Spirit? Does any inheritance which it is possible for us to acquire, in the present transitory state, deserve to be compared with the inheritance of the saints in light? Yet, alas! how many are there who prefer the foolish maxims of men, and the fleeting enjoyments of an earthly life, to the wisdom of God, and the pleasures of a life which shall never fade! How many thousands are there who spend their days in this world as if an eternal lease had been given to them of the things of time; who prefer the vain applause of a foolish world to the approbation of Him who is wisdom itself; who wilfully close their eyes to the miserable results of sin, and headlong rush upon destruction; who barter the proffered glories of heaven for the pleasures of a midnight revel, and stupidly scoff at the holy deportment of the pious few! Oh! that words of fire were given to us by the Spirit of God, to consume the flimsy veil which such men hold up before their eyes, to melt away the dross from their hearts, to purify their affections, that they might be enabled

to see clearly what constitutes the true dignity of human nature! Ye sinners that cling to evil, are ye wiser than the fluttering insect which dances round the flame till its life is extinguished? Are ye wiser than the simple savage who, for the sake of a glittering toy, parts with the precious diamond or the gold refined? There is no glory which can be compared with the glory of the Gospel. You who are fond of riches, where shall you find wealth which can stand in competition with the treasure which is in heaven? You whose souls are devoted to ambition, where shall you find a more glorious career than that of the Christian, whose destiny it is to be clothed in heaven with white robes, and adorned with a crown of purest gold. Turn then from the devious paths of sin and folly; throw yourselves upon the mercy of that God who has promised that he will abundantly pardon; place your confidence in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and then shall the Gospel prove to you not the savour of death unto death, but the savour of life unto life, rescuing you from the bondage of sin and Satan, and bringing you into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Amen.

ON THE SIN OF CRUELTY TO THE BRUTE CREATION;
THE ANNUAL SERMON ON THAT SUBJECT, PREACHED IN THE HIGH CHURCH,
EDINBURGH, ON THE FORENOON OF SABBATH, 3d JUNE, 1832,

By the Rev. DAVID RUNCIMAN, A.M.,
Minister of Hope Park Chapel, Edinburgh.

“*Open thy mouth for the dumb.*”—PROVERBS xxxi. 9.

It is of paramount importance that a youth born to sway the sceptre of a mighty empire, should be early instructed to open his mouth for the dumb throughout his dominions, and raise his voice in behalf of all who are unable to make known their sufferings. It is of importance that the youth born to a splendid inheritance should have his infancy disciplined to kindness, to all under his influence, and to have it engraved on his heart, that his glory is not to have been born to great possession, but to have the power of diffusing happiness among so many of his species. It is of importance that every child should be taught that it is his duty, and his honour, and his happiness to mitigate the miseries and augment the happiness of others. And it is of importance that the poorest child in the land—the child who may be the hapless victim of all the ills of which humanity is heir, should be taught to sympathize with the sorrows of others, and open its mouth for the dumb. Reflections like these very naturally occur to us, when we consider the text in connexion with the context. But when we have

selected the words before us as the groundwork of a discourse against cruelty to animals, it will be very obvious to all, that we have done so merely for our accommodation. In the injunction given to king Lemuel, “*Open thy mouth for the dumb,*” we do not suppose there is any reference to the inferior animals; but still we hold the application of it to our present purpose, both natural and striking. The word dumb is here used to describe, in a figurative manner, those who are unable to express their misfortune, and therefore it may with peculiar propriety be applied to the dumb animals. And this day, when we are to bear a public testimony against the injuries and the wrongs of the brute creation, we may rest our authority for so doing on the advice tendered to Lemuel—“*Open thy mouth for the dumb.*”

It is not my intention to enter into any minute consideration of the various species of cruelty which the animals suffer from the hands of man. The fact will hardly be denied by any, that man has made a most unwarrantable use of the dominion over the

beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, which he at first received when constituted lord of the creation. It is impossible for any one, unless he be insensible as a stone to the sight of suffering, or wilfully shut his eyes to the truth, to doubt for one moment the appalling statement, that man by his cruelty, and oppression, and injustice, has made himself the enemy of the whole animal creation. It may literally be said, in the words of the Apostle, that in consequence of man's tyrannic power and ruthless usage, the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain. Why is it that almost every creature which God hath made, with instinctive horror shuns the approach of man? Why is it that they all, from the least even to the greatest, avoid the presence of him who should be their protector and their friend? It is just because they have been made to feel that he is their enemy, and because they are cruelly and unrighteously wronged. This alone were sufficient to satisfy any one of the fact, that cruelty and oppression toward the inferior animals on the part of man does exist. But we need not rest the fact on this circumstance merely. The evidence for its truth is so strong and so abundant, that were we disposed to bring it fully forward, we would scarcely know where to begin and where to end.

There is scarcely a day passes over our heads, when we may not see the most savage barbarity practised by ferocious monsters—when we may not see one of the noblest of animals writhing under the lash, and, for the most trivial offence, doomed to bear the blows and the bruises of its brutal proprietor. It is because men care not, and feel not, if their sensibilities are not frequently excited by such kind of infamous oppression. And this is far from the only way in which cruelty is given to the horse. It would require a whole sermon to publish the shame and guilt of man in regard to this magnificent animal. Need I advert to the cruel and uncalled for speed with which horses are driven in our public conveyances, when, in order to expedite business, or to give a few additional hours to pleasure or to idleness, or to bring to us earlier the news of the day, the poor animals are hurried with unnatural and unnecessary rapidity, and thus forced through their short career, or caused prematurely to descend to still grosser barbarities. But even this, atrocious and awful though it be, is not so heart-rending and horrible as the suffering often inflicted on those animals for the mere amusement of man. I allude not at present to the sports of the field or the turf, where

certainly the cruelty of over-exertion is not compensated by the kindness of private attention; but I allude to the tremendous training which those animals must undergo which are exhibited as the unnatural performers of human actions; when, to serve no purpose whatever, but to excite surprise and laughter, the pitiable but unpitied creatures are starved and punished alternately, till they do what neither God nor nature ever meant them. Provided people are amused, they care not and count not the cost. But it deserves to be proclaimed as the deep disgrace of all who give to such exhibitions their countenance and support.

But these are far from the only animals which experience cold-blooded cruelty from the hands of man. They, indeed, have a liberal share of his wanton and wicked barbarity. But many others which we could mention were it necessary, suffer from his cruelty. Indeed, there are few which do not in one form or another, either for the luxury, or amusement, or advantage of mankind, suffer all that can be inflicted by the one, and endured by the other. But without entering into detail, we would just remark, that the circumstance of an annual appeal being made from the pulpit on this subject, is itself sufficient to show that cruelty to animals does exist among us. For it is not possible that there ever could have existed the compassion of even one individual, without there being some redress loudly and imperatively called for.

Presuming, then, brethren, on the truth of the fact, on which it were easy at great length to expatiate, that there does exist on the part of man much cruelty to the lower animals, we shall now open our mouth for the dumb, by stating and illustrating some of the chief arguments which ought to induce all to guard against this cruelty in every form, and which ought to lead all to extend mercy to the brute creation, and use their authority and influence in promoting this important end.

I. And the first argument we shall advance, is that suggested by the words of the text; and that is the affecting consideration that the lower animals have not the power of expressing and complaining of their wrongs. This, every one must admit, is a consideration of no ordinary weight, and which cannot fail, if duly thought on, to operate as a preventive of the least approach to cruelty. There is in this circumstance an appeal to the compassion of man, which no one but a monster can resist. The more helpless the object of oppression be, the stronger and more resistless is the demand

on our sympathy. We feel more deeply when injuries are done to the poor, than when these are done to the rich. We feel more when injury is offered to the widow and the fatherless, than to those who are surrounded with friends, and in the midst of prosperity. We feel more when injury is done to a helpless infant, than to a man in strength and vigour, and able to defend himself. And it is just in proportion to the destitution and helplessness of the individual who is wronged, that our commiseration is called forth, and our energy excited.

Now, were mankind guided by this principle in regard to the lower animals, how careful they would be of cruelty, and how tender in their treatment. Was the circumstance of their being dumb, and thus unable to ask for aid or deliverance kept constantly in mind, no man who was not far beneath the beasts that perish, could lay on them a harsh and heavy hand.

When man is oppressed or injured, let him be ever so helpless, he can tell his wrongs, and point out the person who inflicted them; the poorest of the earth can publish the shame of those who grind their faces with oppression; they who receive the most unrighteous punishment can raise their voice against the guilty cause of it; the servant who meets with injustice or oppression can complain of his hardships, and seek redress of his grievances; even the slave, groaning beneath the rod of his ruthless taskmaster, can proclaim the enormity of his wrongs, and the aggravation of his sufferings: but the poor and often unpitied animals have not this power and this privilege. Though the barbarity with which they are treated be ever so brutal—though the wrongs which they receive be ever so unrighteous—though over-tasked in their labours, or stinted in their provision, or beaten with scorpions, or in any way, and for any purpose, unjustly oppressed, all this they must silently bear—they cannot complain of their merciless usage—they are unable to utter even a sigh for their wrongs. With a strong sensibility to suffering, they are doomed to submit to whatever man may inflict without the possibility of making it known, and also without the aid which sympathy and hope are fitted to inspire. When mankind are called to endure agonizing torture, seldom it is that they have not some one to sympathize with their sorrows, and to do all which tenderness and pity can do to alleviate their distress. But seldom is this offered to the inferior animals, and even though it were, they have not the power of appreciating its value. Unsupported, unsoothed, and solitary, and silent,

they must bear their heaviest burdens, and endure their most poignant sufferings. No one bestows on them a look or a word of pity; and even that which often imparts so much support to suffering mortals, cannot find its way to the dumb creation. They know not its meaning—they cannot be soothed by its consolation. And when mankind are called to endure suffering without the sympathy of their fellows, when in imprisonment or exile, they have none to tender one word of pity, if they have availed themselves of their inestimable privileges, they can in the darkest and most dreary of their hours, look forward to a day at no great distance, when they will be delivered from all their distresses, and when they will obtain far more than compensation for the injuries they have received. A hope so high and so glorious as this is, will be able to support the soul under the severest trials. But no such hope as this gladdens the inferior animals. Beyond the present moment they are unable to extend their views, and if they be rendered miserable by man, it is like eternity to them.

Without any of these sources of consolation, they must bear without a murmur all the cruelties which mankind for their pleasure or profit may inflict; and though their wrongs be ever so outrageous they are denied the power of expressing them. On one occasion, indeed, we are informed in sacred Scripture, that by a miraculous interposition of the Almighty, the dumb ass with man's mouth rebuked the madness of the prophet for his merciless abuse of the animal on which he rode. This is a proof that God, when he thinks proper, can interfere in the care of his creatures when oppressed. And certain it is that did he, on every similar occasion, rebuke the madness of man, very many would receive the same solemn reproof. This, however, we have no right, nor any reason to expect. And we would now put it to all, whether the fact of animals being dumb, and unable to complain of their injuries, be not a most powerful argument for their being treated with generosity and gentleness. We open our mouth for the dumb, and we call upon every one to raise his voice against cruelty to animals of every kind and every degree. They cannot speak for themselves; be it ours to plead their cause, and defend them from tyranny, and injustice, and oppression.

II. A second consideration which ought to induce all to guard against cruelty, and cultivate kindness to animals, is their subserviency to the comfort and happiness of man. That we ought to treat with kindness those that conduce to our happiness,

we presume will not be questioned, and that cruelty or unkindness is aggravated by the circumstance of its being exercised toward such, is equally plain and undeniable. The light of nature, and the light of revelation both teach us that gratitude for goodness is the duty of man. And they also unite in teaching us, that unkindness to a benefactor is more criminal and more base, than to those from whom we have received no favour.

Let us suppose that when God created our world—when he called this beautiful framework out of the formless elements of chaos, and when he created man to be its inhabitant, he had not brought into being any part of the animated creation—that man had been the only being into whose nostrils was breathed the breath of life—and that he and his descendants had been made to occupy our world without any other creature; let us for a moment make this supposition, and dwell for a little on what would have been the consequence, and we will see in a very impressive and interesting light, how much we are indebted to the inferior animals for what gladdens our existence and sweetens our cup, and how much they have tended to elevate and improve the physical, intellectual, and moral condition of man.

Had mankind been the solitary tenants of this earth—had none of the other animals been created, it is very easy to see to what degradation man must have submitted. We have only to look to the state of those nations which are savage and uncivilized, and which have not subjugated the lower animals to their service, or to those in the abject condition of slavery, to see what must have been the condition of every country in a greater or less degree, but for those animals which are the obedient and useful servants of man. But for them the earth, with all its abundance and variety, must have been cultivated by the hands of men. But for them there must have been in every land a portion of our race reduced to the rank of beasts. The appearance of humanity might have been retained, but both body and soul must have been stripped of almost the whole of their original grandeur. Their condition must have been little better than that of the haughty monarch of Babylon, who, for his pride and rebellion against the God of heaven, was driven from among men, and of whom it is said, that “he did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws.” That such must have been the consequence without the creation of the inferior animals, we conceive very obvious. And while their existence and subordination to man has

thus, in an eminent degree, contributed to the elevation of his character, they are also the source of many of the choicest temporal blessings which fall to his lot. It is impossible to estimate the obligation under which we are laid to the animals, for the numberless ways in which they minister to our comfort and ease. The whole animal creation unite in adding to our enjoyment. At least, every living thing, whether in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth, is in some way subservient to our happiness, and in one way or other contribute to our advantage. They are the means provided by God for supplying us with the food we eat, and the raiment with which we are clothed. There is scarcely a comfort, and scarcely a luxury that we are permitted to enjoy which has not been derived, directly or indirectly, from some of the animals. The more we think on this subject, the more will we be struck with the dependence of mankind on the brute creation for much of their happiness. And it is because we do not think of this that we are so little impressed with it.

Now, surely, when we see to what a state of degradation man must have been reduced, had the animals not been created—when we see how directly many of them tend to our advantage and happiness, and when we see that even those whose uses are least obvious to us, operate in one way or other, for our welfare—it must be admitted that this is a very powerful argument why mankind should treat them all with the greatest possible tenderness, and practise towards them the least possible cruelty. The animals have been put under the dominion of man, and we do not mean to say that it is the business of man merely to preserve them. In order to answer the end for which they were designed, some of them must be slain, others subjected to labour, and others destroyed. But what we contend for is, that since the animals contribute so much to the happiness of mankind, that these ends should be gained with the least possible expense of suffering. It is the obvious and incumbent duty of man to insist, so far as he has power, that those animals which are doomed to the slaughter should be slain by the least painful or the least protracted process of dying: that those which are subject to the yoke should be treated with gentleness and nourished with care: that those which it is necessary to destroy should be destroyed without any uncalled for suffering; and that even the worm which crawls on the ground, and the insect which fluttereth in the gale, should be exempted from cruelty, and treated with mercy.

• III. The third argument which we advance against cruelty to animals, and which should lead all to exercise kindness toward them, is—That they are the objects of God's peculiar and providential care. If the lower animals had received no share of the kindness and compassion of God; if we had been taught to believe that they were considered by Jehovah as beneath his notice, and unworthy of his regard; if they had been placed beyond the hope of his watchful superintendence, and left to the capricious care of man—we do not say that had been a reason for treating them with coldness or with cruelty, but assuredly a high motive had been wanting for our kindness and care.

We cannot imagine any consideration more fitted to make the lower animals the objects of our tender mercy, than that they receive such watchful and unwearied attention from the God of heaven and of earth. It raises the duty from being a small and insignificant concern to that of being a high and honourable co-operation with the providence of God. It shows us, that instead of being any condescension on the heart of man when he treats with kindness the living creatures around him, on the contrary he is, in so doing, permitted to enjoy a very important privilege. In proof of the position that the Most High God does exercise toward the inferior animals an unceasing concern, we have the most direct and decisive evidence. Every argument, indeed, which proves the doctrine of a particular providence, may be applied to this subject, and made to prove this department of the government of God. But we need not avail ourselves of their general argument. The Scriptures contain the most positive and the most powerful proof of the assertion we have made.

The Book of Psalms, that little volume of devotional poetry, contains in some of the sublimest of its lays the most striking proofs of the providence of God over the brute creation. In proof of the doctrine that no creature which God hath made can be disregarded by Him, listen to the language of the Great Creator himself—“The mighty God, the Lord, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.” “Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine.” “The eyes of all wait upon thee, O Lord, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.” “How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God, thou preserver

of man and beast.” “O give thanks to the God of heaven, who giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth for ever.” “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man.” The same doctrine is taught in a very striking manner by our divine Redeemer: “Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, but your heavenly Father feedeth them.” And the Apostle Paul, after quoting from the law of Moses, “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn,” most emphatically asks, “Doth God care for oxen?” All these passages most satisfactorily prove that the Almighty takes a minute and most tender care of every creature which he hath made; and the only other evidence which we shall notice of this, is a fact recorded in the Book of Jonah, which, we conceive, gives us the most impressive view of the subject which it is possible to imagine. At the command of God, Jonah had delivered the awful message that in forty days Nineveh would be overthrown. In consequence of this intimation, the people of Nineveh humbled themselves before God, and we are informed that God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them, and he did it not. At this manifestation of the mercy of God, Jonah was displeased. He went out of the city, and made him a booth and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head; and Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. In order to try him, God prepared a worm, which smote the gourd that it withered. And when the sun arose it beat on the head of Jonah, and he fainted, and wished himself to die. And the Lord said, thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it to grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein there are sixscore thousand persons that know not their right hand by their left, *and also much cattle*. Thus we see what may appear to us a very marvellous fact, that one reason which led the Almighty to spare a guilty city from destruction was that it contained much cattle. Their innocence was not only the cause of themselves being saved, but it tended to prevent Nineveh from being overthrown. How the care of Jehovah over the brute creation, and his minute attention to their every want, forms an argument for mankind treating them with kindness, we presume must

be obvious to every one. If he who is clothed with honour and with majesty—who is high above all nations, and whose glory is above the heavens—humbleth himself to behold the things that are in the earth, O surely it well becomes man to attend to the comforts and the happiness of every creature beneath him. If he who made all, and upholds all, condescends to care for the works of his hands, oh! surely it well becomes man, who is himself one of the creatures of God, to extend mercy and compassion to all that breathe the breath of life. If He who sits enthroned on the highest heaven, and who doeth according to his will, and who superintends the affairs of the universe, yet think it not beneath his notice to give a part of his providential care to the meanest creature that lives, oh! surely it ill becomes man, who is himself a worm of the dust, and who must say to corruption, 'Thou art my father, and to the worm, 'Thou art my mother and my sister, to fancy that any creature which God hath made is unworthy of his kindness and below his regard. If a righteous God spared a guilty city from compassion to the much cattle that were in it, oh! surely it well may be asked, What right has man to treat such with wanton cruelty, when he himself every moment is deserving of everlasting destruction? Such is the spirit and form of the argument against cruelty to animals, derived from the fact of God's providential care, and it is an argument which, if duly considered, is possessed of no ordinary power. Many are apt to imagine, that attention to the comfort and happiness of the inferior animals is utterly unworthy of their thoughts and time. But the argument which we have now been stating is the most triumphant answer to such ignorance and presumption. Man, in his folly and in his pride, may imagine that the dumb and irrational creation is beneath his regard, and that he, a rational and immortal creature, may treat them with contempt and with carelessness. But such is not the mind of Him who is good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works; who preserveth both man and beast; and who, though he listen to the praise of angels, is not inattentive even to the cry of a raven. Oh! that they who think so lightly of the lower animals, would but consider what had been our condition had Jehovah thus reasoned and felt in regard to man. The distance between man and the brute creation is but a handbreadth and a span, compared with the distance between man and God, and especially with the distance between a holy God, and man as he has destroyed himself by sin. If Jehovah had measured

out his kindness to us in the same manner as some persons would deal with the inferior animals, assuredly we had received little but indignation and wrath. When we think, brethren, that man is, even at his best estate, altogether vanity; when we consider that by his apostasy from God, he rendered himself the object of loathing and abhorrence—it well becomes us to ask, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" And then when we consider, that in order to save a lost and a perishing world, God gave his Son to suffer and to die; when we remember that for us, and for our salvation, Jesus, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, humbled himself and became obedient unto death, the conclusion to which we are conducted is, that pride was not made for man, nor high looks for the sons of men. And when, in connexion with the great work of redemption, we bear in mind the interesting fact that God has expressly and repeatedly made known the care which he has over the whole animate creation—that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without his permission—the argument becomes irresistibly powerful, and every human being may see that it is his honour and his privilege to add to the happiness, and mitigate the miseries of the basest and lowest of created beings.

IV. The fourth and last argument which we shall notice against cruelty to animals is, that it is utterly inconsistent with the spirit and law of Christianity. The previous considerations which we have urged, are, we think, sufficiently strong to lead all who think on them to exercise kindness to the brute creation. But we think it important that it should be more directly stated and enforced, that kindness to them is a christian and commanded duty, and cruelty an express and aggravated sin.

Independent of any explicit enactment on the subject, every one who knows any thing of the nature of the Gospel must admit, that its tendency is to produce kindness and compassion in the bosom of all who believe it, and to lead to every thing that is mild and merciful in conduct. It is impossible, we should conceive, to think on the marvellous display which God has given of his mercy to man, in not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all, without seeing that all who receive this great truth, and obtain the blessing of redemption, are laid under the strongest obligation to the practice of mercy.

But we are not left with this vague generality. The whole of Scripture, from its commencement to its close, is fitted to teach us that mercy must ever distinguish the

character of those who are the children and servants of God. The great general maxim which stands on the foreground of revelation is, "That God loves mercy rather than sacrifice." The Psalmist says, "A righteous man showeth mercy." "A righteous man is ever merciful." Our Lord has affirmed, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy;" and he has commanded his followers in every age to "be merciful, even as their Father in heaven is merciful." The Apostle entreats his christian converts to "put on bowels of mercy." From the whole of these passages, it most certainly follows, that mercy to the animals is a positive duty, and the neglect of it a sin; it may be said, indeed, that they refer to the mercy which we are required to exercise to mankind, and not to the animals. We admit, that in the first instance, they do refer to this duty, in reference to our fellow-creatures. This is plain from their connexion. But we deny that they refer exclusively to this. The mercy spoken of in these passages is of the most general and comprehensive nature; and whoever possesses this christian grace and amiable quality, will exhibit its operation towards all that are the objects of mercy. The spiritual and temporal destitution of their fellows will no doubt occupy their first regards, but they will not shut up the bowels of compassion to annoy the creature which God hath made. Would it be consistent with such statements as we have quoted, for the Christian who has a sense of the mercy of God in Christ, whose soul has by his mercy been rescued from the lowest hell, and who knows and feels it to be his duty to be merciful to the poor, the afflicted, the aged, the dying, and yet withhold mercy from the animals around, or treat them with cruelty. No; such conduct would be a libel on the christian character, and be a very decisive proof that that person was yet destitute of the spirit of Christ.

In order to prevent the possibility of evading the duty of mercy to the animals, we have even more explicit proof than what we have yet given. We are expressly told that a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast. This single passage most decidedly proves, that it is a part of a Christian's duty to attend to the happiness of the animals which belong to him, and it most certainly implies, that they who do not are not righteous. We have as much right to take this statement as a test of christian character as any other statement in the Bible. And the great lesson which it teaches is, that a man who is under the influence of the Gospel, will not confine his

regard to his fellow-creatures, but will extend his kindness and consideration even to the beasts; that he will supply their wants, and protect them from injury, and do all he can to add to their happiness. And the plain and obvious inference from it is, that the man who is unmerciful to the animals, who pays no regard to their comfort, and who wilfully inflicts pain on the meanest reptile of the earth, is not a righteous man, but as one of the wicked whose tender mercies are cruel. The person who is careless of the happiness, or reckless of the misery of any of the creatures of God, may be sound in his sentiments, and correct in his conduct; but he has much reason to fear, that he has not yet imbibed the spirit of that Saviour, one of whose great lessons was, that "works of mercy to the brute creation were lawful on the Sabbath day."

Thus have we opened our mouth for the dumb. We have stated and illustrated four considerations, all of them we think powerfully fitted to produce mercy to the animals. They are unable to express and complain of their wrongs. They are all subservient to our happiness. They are the objects of God's providential care; and he has enjoined mercy to them as a positive and important duty.

There is probably not one within the reach of my voice guilty of cruelty to animals. It is a gross misunderstanding of the nature and design of the annual appeal from this pulpit, to suppose it implied that they who are addressed are peculiarly charged with this sin. But there are many now before me whom we would like to persuade to open their mouths for the dumb. Were all in this assembly uniting their influence, and authority, and instruction, and example, in discouraging cruelty to the animals, sure I am, that important blessings would descend on the brute creation. Were the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, all combining in their respective spheres, to suppress, so far as they were able, every manifestation of cruelty and oppression, it is inconceivable how much might be obtained. And when you think of the helpless situation of the inferior animals—when you think how much they contribute to your every enjoyment—when you remember that the God of Heaven watches over them with ceaseless care; and, above all, when you bear in mind that every time you sanction, by your countenance or aid, the least appearance of cruelty, you are sinning against God. When you think on all these things, oh! surely I need not again implore you to open your mouth for the dumb. Amen.

THE
SCOTTISH PULPIT.

SERMON by the Rev. D. MACFARLAN, Renfrew.
SERMON by the Rev. A. BROWN, Kilmarnock.

ON THE PRINCIPLE OF REVIVALS IN RELIGION ;

▲ SERMON PREACHED IN ST. GEORGE'S, GLASGOW, ON 5TH APRIL, 1835, AT THE REQUEST
OF A PRAYING SOCIETY IN GLASGOW,

By the Rev. D. MACFARLAN,

Minister of Renfrew.

"It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."—JOHN vi. 63.

I. THERE is between the visible and invisible Church of Christ a manifest and admitted difference. The one consists of persons who, on a profession of Christianity, have been received into christian communion; the other of such only as, being true Christians, hold communion with Christ, their living Head. Members of the visible church are admitted by the ordinance of baptism; members of the invisible by regeneration. And while those of the one are allowed to eat the bread and drink the wine of the supper, those of the other have access to the hidden manna; they truly, though spiritually, eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man. And, accordingly, while the names of the former are to be found in our church registers and on our communion rolls, the names of the latter are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. True, indeed, the profession of church members is understood to be sincere—baptism to be a seal of the righteousness of faith, and the observance of the supper to be an exercise of spiritual communion; but, in so far as this is the case, the things of the invisible kingdom are present with those of the visible. And yet we know that these are not essential to each other; for the ordinances of the church visible may be, and often are observed, when that which belongs to the church invisible is wholly wanting. And hence the distinction of the Apostle, between the meats and the drinks wherein the king-

dom of God consisted not, and the righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, wherein it did consist. And hence, also, the mixture of false professors and insincere worshippers which are found in every church on earth; for even among the twelve Apostles there was a Judas; in the infant church of Samaria there was a Simon Magus; and, respecting the church of Sardis, an apostle testifies, that having a name to live, it was yet dead.

II. In consequence of the connexion which subsists between the visible and invisible church, it would be wrong to affirm, that they are wholly independent of each other. That portion of the church, which has in it the greatest number of truly converted men, bids fairest for prosperity even in worldly matters; and the more scriptural the constitution and faithful the ministrations of any church, the more reason have we to expect spiritual fruit. Yet to show that there is also a distinction between these, and to mark the sovereignty of God in the disposal of spiritual blessings, some of the best regulated churches have proved comparatively barren, and God has been pleased to bless means less regular, and perhaps in some respects questionable. It was thus that the ministry even of our Lord was, so far as appears, less fruitful than that of his Apostles; and that, under the less perfect ministry of John, multitudes pressed into the kingdom of heaven. "Not by might nor

by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." "It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing."

There is a kind of parallelism between God's method of revealing and the way in which that revelation is received by man, which may assist us in understanding this. The word is the main instrument employed in the conversion of sinners. Now, the word is merely the utterance of the Spirit. The power is not in the word, but in the Spirit, the word being merely the channel through which that power operates. "God said, Let there be light." Here the creating power, by which light was produced, was not in these nor in any other set of words, but in Him who spoke them, the words being merely a revealed channel of the power—that which showed to man the outgoing of the power to be of God. The Spirit saith, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The power of giving effect to this command is not in the words, but in the Spirit, the words being merely the channel of divine authority and power. On the other hand, man possesses, in a renewed state, a double capacity for receiving such messages. He is capable of understanding and even of profiting by the instructions of the word, irrespective altogether of any divine influence. He is so on the same principle on which he is capable of attending to what may be said to him by a fellow-creature. But, beyond the mere understanding of the word, there is in the case of every renewed soul a power of apprehending and feeling the *authority* of the word as *divine*. This an Apostle distinguishes from the former, when he says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth and discerneth all things." Between the word, therefore, and the mere understanding, there may be the most abundant intercourse, and the result may be general improvement; while there has been no communion whatever between the soul and God; or it may be, on the other hand, that the power of God, issuing through the word, has addressed itself to the conscience and the heart, awakening in these the functions of spiritual life, and thus effecting intercourse between the renewed soul and the renewing Spirit. Now, the effect of the former visitation, as well as of the latter, is to build up the visible king-

dom of Christ, wherever it is only in the latter case that one single stone can be added to that spiritual temple, of which Christ is the foundation. And thus do we see how ordinances may be observed, and means multiplied, and churches planted, and the visible kingdom of Christ extended; while, after all, the church invisible is making but little progress.

III. All things are under the guidance of divine providence, and doubtless the extension of the church visible, whether this be by the multiplicity of means, or by whatever other cause. And, therefore, when contrasting the visible and invisible church of Christ, we are led to speak of the one as of God, and the other as of man; we are on no account to be understood as denying or neglecting the care of divine providence, or the bestowal of providential blessings, at what time and in what manner it pleaseth God. Of the exercise of providence, we are not to be understood as at all speaking. The simple objects of our attention are the two states of the Church of Christ—its visible and invisible state; and these as severally connected with that by which they are distinguished one from another. Now of the one, it may thus be said, that its progress is dependent on the will of man; but of the other, that it is simply and only dependent on the will of God. These may, under the good providence of God, project and execute plans for the enlargement of the church visible. They may employ a given amount of means, and, with all the certainty of merely moral calculation, may they foretell what the result will be. But there is not, in all the treasures of human wisdom, sagacity to devise means capable of saving one single soul. And, though all the means which man is able to command were employed on one act of regeneration, they would utterly fail; for as "that which is born of the flesh is," like its parent-flesh, "that" only "which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Man has often, in his pride, asked the reason of this. He has even questioned the righteousness of the divine procedure; in that every man has not in himself the power of regeneration. And such declarations as, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," grate upon his ear, and are offensive to him, so that he desireth not to be familiar with them. It would be away from our object to enter on questions connected with the moral helplessness and depravity of man as explanatory of this fact. But this

we may affirm, that if there be in it the giving of life, as all Scripture declares, then may we see how this can be the work only of God; for, beyond all question, the giving of life is essential to Deity. It is especially the attribute of God, which is brought out and declared in the name Jehovah: the "I am that I am," subsisting in himself, and having in him the power of originating being, when and wheresoever he pleaseth; and respecting which, he has most solemnly declared "I am the Lord," Jehovah, "that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another." And hence we find, that in the evidence of our Lord's divinity, as adduced by John, this attribute of the word is particularly dwelt upon. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God.*" "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son, to have life in himself." And thus it comes to be, that the distinction which we have been seeking to establish is a distinction intended by God to separate between that which is his own, and which he will not give to any other, and that which is man's; nevertheless that it may be blessed of God, and that it is, moreover, of divine appointment. And thus do we farther see how, in the extension of the church invisible, there is an actual manifestation of God as the living and the life-giving Jehovah; whereas, by an extension of the church visible, we see that only which bespeaks the zeal of man, though under this it may include the grace of God.

IV. This distinction between the sources of prosperity in the visible and invisible church, naturally leads to the inquiry, Whether there be any corresponding distinction in the employment of means for the advancement of these? Now there is here, as throughout the whole argument, something which is common to both, and something which specially belongs to each. The appointed ordinances of religion, as observed in the church visible, are, as we conceive, the only channels of divine power for the maintenance and growth of the church invisible. And to this extent, therefore, they are both nourished by the same means. But it is one thing for the ordinances to have to do only with the understanding, and to be a channel of communication between the Spirit in the word and the renewed spirit of the inner man. Cain and Abel, both pre-

mented offerings; and, so far as appears, they were both acceptable in form. But while Abel, looking through his sacrifice to a sacrificial atonement, effected a communion with the quickening power of that atonement, Cain merely performed a service, which was necessarily dead, and therefore unacceptable to God. And hence, says an Apostle, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, *any of you should seem to come short of it.* For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them: *not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*" In the one case, there is the mere outward act, and then the communication is simply between the mind and the ordinance; in the other, there is the going out of the soul in an exercise of faith to the blessings revealed by these ordinances; and then is there an exercise of communion between a living faith and a promised blessing. We, who are ministers of the Gospel, have often humiliating experience of this distinction. We are labouring, it may be, with all the strength of our minds and with all the energies of our bodies, and the means which we employ are moreover scriptural; and yet do we often find that we have been labouring in vain and for very vanity. On inquiring into the cause of this, we are doubtless permitted to hold it possible, that this want of fruit may be owing to the sovereignty of God. But this is an ultimate conclusion; and before we can say positively that sin lieth not at our own door, we have first to inquire, Whether our labour has been in the Lord? whether we went not forth on his message before we had humbly, and prayerfully, and in faith, clothed ourselves with his authority, and then gone forth, speaking in the name of Christ, as though God were beseeching men by us? and whether, when speaking in the name of God, and under his authority, we were enabled verily to believe in the promise, "Lo, I am with you always," and were through this promise enabled to expect fruit, and prayerfully and perseveringly to wait for it? And thus are we often thrown back in our repinings, not on the sovereignty of God, but on our own want of faith. And such of you, doubtless, as are conversant with your own hearts, must know that the word often fails to profit, because unmixed with faith in them that hear it. And thus will it be understood, how, in the employment of means for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, there is a distinction, as well as a connexion,

between that which is visible and that which is invisible. The ordinances and the observance of these are common to both, but differently. To the one they are direct causes of increase; whereas to the other they are only the channels of communication for other and distinct agencies.

This has a respect to acts, the external form of which may, or may not, concern the spiritual kingdom of Christ. But there are other acts or duties, the special and obvious end of which is to advance the invisible kingdom of the Redeemer. There are two great departments of communication between God and man—the one, the channel through which God reveals himself to man—the other, the channel through which man maketh himself known to God. The revelation of the word and the administration of sacraments are God's ways of making himself known to man. Prayer and praise, with other devotional exercises, are the channels through which man addresses himself to God. The revelation of the word may, as we have seen, contribute only to the maintenance of the visible church, or it may through it cherish and promote that which is unseen and invisible. And the exercise of prayer and praise, forming, as they do, a part of the ordinances of the visible church, may doubtless be regarded as promoting, even in their external form, the advancement of the church visible; yet seeing they are addressed only to God, their obvious and professed end is to bring down spiritual blessings, and thus to advance the interests of the church invisible. They are directly addressed to God, and not to man; their immediate and professed object is to hold intercourse with God; and, in respect of petitions, to obtain from him that very power and transforming influence by which souls are converted and built up in holiness. And thus will it be seen, that while all appointed ordinances may, and ought to nourish the invisible, as well as the visible church of Christ, prayer especially is connected with the advancement of the former.

V. Now, this leads us to notice a similar distinction in the evidences of prosperity as concerns these. It will not be alleged, after what has been stated, that we in any respect undervalue the word and its ministrations. We have stated it to be our belief, that these and the sacraments, which speak in signs the same doctrine, are the only appointed channels of divine communication. But, for the reasons stated, respecting prayer as distinct from these, we

think it may be laid down as a test of prosperity in the church invisible, that she will be found to be rich in the spirit, and abundant in the exercise of prayer. And, as an example of the truth of this test, we appeal to the state of the early apostolical church; we mean from the time of our Lord's ascension, down to the end of the history of the Book of Acts. It will not be questioned, that during this period the Church was greatly prosperous, as concerns the conversion and edification of souls. The three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost, the increase up to five thousand a few days after, and the multitudes who are reported as having believed from that time forward, sufficiently prove the triumphs of the Gospel during that period. Now, what was then the state of the church, as concerned the spirit and the exercise of prayer? "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they," the disciples, "were all with one accord in one place." And respecting the three thousand who believed, it is said, "they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." When Peter and John had returned to the church, after being before the council, "and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them: they lifted up their voice to God with one accord. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them who believed were of one heart and of one soul. And when the Apostles proposed to the church the appointment of deacons, that they might themselves be relieved of almsgiving, they assigned this as the reason: "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word;" thus holding prayer to be essential to preaching, and reserving time for it, as well as for the other. And were it necessary still farther to adduce evidence, we might refer not only to the other facts recorded in the history of the Apostles, but also to their epistolary correspondence, which teems with evidence of a pervading spirit of prayer throughout the whole church. The Apostles were borne from place to place on the prayer of the church, and the interests of the different churches were sought in common by all, and specially by the Apostles who had laboured among them. Nor was this a mere form or an expression of good will; for we have the very strongest moral evidence that both

teachers and taught lived and depended on the answers of their own prayers and of the church at large. Nor are we even left to conjecture whether there was any connexion between the exercise of prayer on the part of the Church, and the enjoyment of divine blessings as coming down from God. For we know that their prayers rested on distinct and unquestionable promises, and thus have we the divine faithfulness to assure us—We knew that the very spirit of prayer consists in faith on these promises; and, therefore, if there was no connexion, that which is the very essence of prayer must have been false and delusive. But what puts the matter beyond all speculation, their prayers were answered, and in so marked a manner, as to put to silence even gainsayers.

In seeking to adduce examples of a prayerless condition of the Church, as indicating a want of success in spiritual matters, some little difficulty is experienced; inasmuch as the mere form of prayer may sometimes remain undiminished, when the spirit of prayer is scarcely to be found. The Jewish church was in this state, during our Lord's ministry. The forms of the Jewish liturgy remained as full as before, they seem even to have been enlarged by repetition; and many ostentatiously engaged in the exercise of prayer. And yet we know, that at this time they were the subjects of judicial blindness. Nor is there any thing in this, when duly considered, that ought to alter our opinion. For the very ostentation discovered, showed that the address was not to God, but to man; and the multiplicity of repetitions showed that the prayer was not designed to convey simply the thoughts and feelings of the heart. Under the name of prayer, therefore, something else had been supplied, and which was more compatible with a dead and merely professional church. And, perhaps, something of the same kind may be observed still; and may when duly attended to, actually indicate a dead state, by the very fulness and regularity of the observance. And without adverting at all, to the ease with which prayers may be read and responded to, by a carnal reader and a prayerless audience, it will be observed even in extemporary prayer, that it often degenerates into preaching, or into the repeating of so many unfelt and sometimes unmeaning sentences, or passes into the fervour of an animated discussion and excited imagination. Now in all of these ways, we may see how, with great poverty as concerns the spirit of prayer, there may

be great fulness and warmth, or even a tedious enumeration of particulars; but with this, how in the quality of the prayer, the absence of that spirit is rendered manifest, and through it evidence of the state of the Church as not prospering before God.

Still it may be laid down as a *general* rule, that even the exercise of prayer is usually less in a dead and dying state of the Church, than when more prosperous. And that this will especially appear in those exercises of devotion which are dependent on the will of the individual. And that this test may be applied to our own times and to professors in general of the present age, let us remind you of some of these. There is, then, the exercise of closet prayer, and let me ask, in connexion with it, whether it be well and generally observed; and whether especially on matters connected with the Redeemer's kingdom, ye are accustomed to enjoy great enlargement of spirit, so as clearly to apprehend, and firmly to rest in the promises of God concerning Zion? Then there is family prayer, and let me ask, in connexion with it, whether it be common, and whether it be usually felt as a season of communion with God, and with one another, or whether it be not by the majority wholly neglected, and by not a few of those who observe it, a mere matter of form? There is an institution among us, which is as old as the days of the Apostles, or even of the Prophets—we mean fellowship meetings—they that fear the Lord, speaking often one to another. Do these greatly increase, and are they remarkable as in seasons of refreshing, for spirituality, and enlarged desires, and holy and reverential fear, or for infrequency and a tendency to degenerate into concern only about external things. And there are such things as special and occasional meetings for prayer; generally in connexion with the spread of the Gospel or some providential occurrence. Are these frequent, and when formed, are they crowded with devout and humble worshippers? and do men usually leave such meetings with subdued feelings, and humble but ardent resolutions to serve God, and take a deeper interest in the affairs of his kingdom? or are they seldom called, and when called, are they thinly attended, and is the effect to chill and discourage even the pious? And then there are congregations and churches; and these are severally organized as so many portions of the Church of the living God. Do they also, in their united capacity, give themselves much to Prayer? Do our churches

as churches, often humble themselves before God, confess their sins, and implore special mercies? Or has it become a strange thing with churches and nations thus to acknowledge God? The conclusions to which different individuals will come on these questions, may doubtless differ; but we see not how any can say of our times, that they are remarkable for an outpouring of the spirit of grace and of supplication; and as little can we congratulate ourselves on any very distinct tokens of the divine presence, in subduing the hearts of men. And this admission being granted, there is surely reason for concern among the friends of truth, and for our being stirred up to lay hold on divine strength, and to promote with all our might not only the visible, but also the invisible Church of Christ.

VI. A few years ago, such a concern as that alluded to, was in some measure produced. And this elicited opinions on this subject, some of which we believe to be mistaken, and to be farther detrimental to the cause of truth and of serious religion. On these, we now wish to make a few remarks,

1. This subject was confined by many to such special manifestations of divine power as have attracted public attention, and been recorded in the history of our own and other churches, as remarkable but not continuous. And, then, it is inferred, that those who interest themselves on this subject, wish merely the acting over of such occurrences. Now this is very much a mistaken opinion. The field of our observation is not the mere history of such occurrences, clothed as these usually are with the specialities of time and place, but is simply and without any other limit, the spiritual kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Whatever concerns this concerns the subject about which we would have you interested. And if you can tell us, by what means this may be best and most scripturally accomplished, these are precisely the means which we wish to see employed; or if you can show respecting any church or any age, that then and there the work of conversion went rapidly on, and that believers, in the same circumstances, became distinguished for righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, we will join with you in calling such a revival, however free it may be of any thing special. And thus ought it to be to all a matter of clear and unquestionable importance, and in promoting which, we ought daily to labour and daily to pray, as we would daily approve

and daily use, these simple but comprehensive petitions, "Our Father which art in heaven; hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

2. Again, these special manifestations of divine power have, because of their speciality, been pronounced by many mere exhibitions of enthusiasm. In replying to this, we are far from alleging that such exhibitions may not have occurred, and that they may not on some occasions have been called the work of the Spirit; just in the same way that hypocrisy has often passed for christianity. And we will farther admit, that there is in the best ascertained revivals a mixture of all that is peculiar to men, as well as the presence of that which is God's; and that as the triumph of the one over the other is the effect of a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit, it is to be expected, and not to be wondered at, if the corruptions of the flesh should be even excited and should taint in some measure the work of the Spirit. But this surely can in no respect affect the question, whether the work be or be not of God. If souls be born again, we are quite sure apart from every thing else, that this has been by the Spirit. And if multitudes do thus believe, and give after evidence of their hearts having been renewed by God, we are farther sure that God has been working a great work, and impressing on it a strong likeness to the great exemplar—the day of Pentecost. But it is not mere reasoning which is to remove such objections. We have often been struck with the similarity between these and difficulties raised by individuals, on the subject of a personal interest in Christ. Speak to many professing Christians of "the benefits which *accompany* and *flow from* justification, adoption, and sanctification;" and while they cherish hope that they are subjects of the former, they hold the effects and accompaniments to be rare, and scarcely to be sought after. Assurance of God's love may be attained, they allege, by a few eminent individuals; but is far above the reach of ordinary christians. And as for peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost, these must either mean something which all possess, but of which they have no consciousness, or else they are among the rare attainments of the few, and not to be aspired after by the many. Now of such opinions, we have long thought that they are more dependent on the moral condition of the heart, than on any mere want of understanding. For between the

very weakest believer, and such enjoyments as these, there is a principle of attraction. Like David, he pants after that which he enjoys not; and though he has not yet attained, nor is he already perfect, yet does he in a greater or less degree press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But they from whom such answers are usually received, give evidence rather of a repelling power between them and the enjoyment of such blessings as these. Having no taste or relish for that in which the kingdom of God consists, the mention of these goes to question their title to such a kingdom; and, therefore, do they wish that such be not considered as characteristic of the people of God; but as so very rare, that they are in no respect applicable. And we are disposed to explain the general indifference of many, to the subject of revivals, as well as their ingenious contrivances to account for these apart from the work of the Spirit, on the same principle. Dead churches desire not to hear that christianity, is any thing else than what they enjoy; and to prevent their own deadness appearing, they will condemn every marked sign of life as owing to some other cause than the grace of God. But in the one case as well as the other, candour ought to lead to a very different conclusion. We say not of the man who has hitherto failed in fully realizing the righteousness, and the peace, and the joy in the Holy Ghost, of which the kingdom of God consists, that he is necessarily an unbeliever; but we say, that he is most certainly wanting in some very leading evidences of christian character; and that so far ought he, therefore, to be from sitting down contented, that he ought most anxiously and zealously to examine himself, and to stir up the grace which has already been given him, if such be his state. And we can come to no other conclusion concerning churches. For while the Spirit may doubtless be present with a church which is, nevertheless, wanting in these signs, we hesitate not to say, that every such church is in a state of great feebleness, and of questionable efficiency; and that it is the duty of the members of that church to inquire into the cause, and earnestly and scripturally to be stirred up in the work of the Lord; yea, and not to rest till these lamps of heaven are again hung on high, and till a godless world see and believe that the church and its ordinances are of God, and not of men.

3. Another way in which men are deceived respecting this matter is, by believing

that we ourselves enjoy all that is usual for the church to enjoy; and that every thing beyond this is extraordinary. In other words, they assume that there is a certain level to which churches naturally tend; and that although by excitement the tone of religious feeling may for a time be raised, it will again sink and take up its resting place at the same sober medium. Now there certainly is a level towards which churches naturally tend, and at which they may long continue fixed. But this is the point of the greatest possible inanition. Let a church become thoroughly dead, and her ordinances, if moulded after a convenient form, may remain undisturbed for ages. And hence the permanency of all forms of false worship, when compared with that which is true. Like a piece of dead matter moulded under the chisel, such a church may long retain the precise observance of her forms and ordinances, while those of a living church, like the form and the features of a living man, are liable to change, and even to certain irregularities, in consequence of the very activity of their state. And what ought especially to be borne in mind is, that as churches do naturally and of themselves tend towards this state, it becomes the duty of the faithful to be as constantly striving against this—to be unitedly fighting the good fight of faith with the same sense of its necessity; as when a man feels that he must, as an individual, continue to strive so long as he is in the body. It is in vain to speak of a church's prosperity, when she would so prosper even if let alone, provided that the ordinary routine of ministerial and other duties were continued. The true prosperity of any church consists in the number of her conversions, and the enlargement and maturity of christian graces in her members. But these flow only from the sovereign and all-subduing power of God. And this, though a subject of promise, is made dependent upon prayer, and on an active and unwearied improvement of every privilege. And thus is the whole so constituted, as not to put churches asleep, but to keep them ever awake and active—ever striving—ever feeling their need of help, and ever stretching out to God in prayer.

4. There is yet one other way in which some endeavour to put this subject away from them. The means which we are daily using, say they, are the proper and most efficient instruments in the hand of the Spirit; and we can do nothing more. We already remarked on the difference which subsists between the mere observance of

ordinances, and the acting faith through these, which points out a department of inquiry and duty that may claim our attention. And we farther noticed the ordinance of prayer, as specially connected with the work of the Spirit; and, therefore, here also, may there be special duty. But this, it will probably be alleged, is already done; that is, prayer in its usual form is not neglected. Admit this, but may not an extraordinary necessity point out the propriety of an extraordinary enlargement in prayer. The discovered necessities of so many, without the means of grace, have prompted and directed unusual measures of supply. And laying hold on the social principle, attempts are now in progress to engage our whole church in the enterprise. And it is well that it is so. It is pleasing to God, and will ultimately be acceptable to man. But is there any greater necessity in the want of external means, than in the absence of divine power? If there be many thousands without the means of religious instruction, are there not many more untaught by the Spirit? And if we believe that "the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened," and that he has promised to bestow blessings even till there be not room to receive, in answer to the prayers of his people, why should not we be just as much stirred up to the one as to the other? Why should not individuals, and families, and prayer-meetings, and congregations, and churches, enter on this work with all the ardour, and perseverance, and frequency of a people knowing their condition, and believing in God?

VII. It would be a dereliction of duty to conclude this address, without adverting, however briefly, to the special circumstances in which we are placed. Independently altogether of the merits of the question now at issue respecting the principle of establishments, there can be no doubt that the controversy itself is for the time unfavourable to the peaceable fruits of righteousness; and, therefore, is there special reason for an increased exercise of prayer, that we may enjoy such a measure of divine influence as will overcome this hinderance, and over-rule it for the divine glory. Then there is mixed up with it, perhaps necessarily, a large infusion of political feeling and sentiment, which, when brought to act on matters that are spiritual, must be productive of the very worst consequences. But there is beyond this, and very much under its cover, the introduction of loose and sceptical opinions respecting the very foundations of our common christianity. Men

of no religion, and men actively engaged in corrupting all true religion, being thus allowed to take a lead in the discussion of matters purely spiritual; it must be, that these will suffer in their purity and sacredness, and an inlet may even thus be given to general scepticism. A neutralizing process has already been put in operation, the obvious effect of which is to destroy every thing positive in religion, and to reduce the whole to a collection of opinions. Some progress in this has already been made, but it is every day advancing, and seems to be spreading with rapidity. And when we bring to bear on this the history of other times, and mark to what similar beginnings formerly led, we cannot but feel anxious for the cause of truth, and look forward with fear to coming events. This naturally points out the duty of earnest and united prayer, as God alone can avert the evil. But humiliating it is to observe, how little there is of a spirit of prayer among us. Discussions on this subject are freely entered upon, and keenly prosecuted even by professing Christians, without so much as acknowledging God. And what ought especially to be lamented; even churches seem to have forgotten, that "the Lord reigneth," and that he has purposes to serve by whatever cometh to pass. Had such discussions been going on in the days of the Apostles, the whole church would have been engaged in earnest and persevering prayer, and a constant and solemn reference would have been had to the will and the honour of Christ their Lord. Had they even taken place during some earlier periods of our own church, the effect would have been, to appoint days of fasting and humiliation, and there would have been great searching of heart and outpouring of spirit in the retirements of the closet, and in meetings for prayers. Now all this goes to confirm the opinion, that we are not in present circumstances a praying people; and yet these very circumstances call loudly for prayer. Nor let it be supposed, that we are in this urging on any a sacrifice of principle. The first and strongest feeling of every Christian ought to be the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, spiritually and effectually. The concerns of the visible church come next, yet only as an instrument for promoting the other, and in no respect as a hinderance. The opinions which we entertain on this subject, ought doubtless to be matters of conscience; and, therefore to be maintained as what we apprehend to be the will of God. But the ought, if possible,

to be so maintained, as not to violate the bonds of charity, and endanger the interests of pure and undefiled religion. And knowing how liable we all are to mingle that which is our own with what we imagine to be God's, and to contend for the one under the mask of the other, it surely becometh all who fear God, often to humble them-

selves, seeking wisdom from on high. And this, we apprehend, ought to be done by churches; and although we have no hope of seeing it, we equally conceive it to be our duty as a nation. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance."

DRAWING WATER FROM THE WELLS OF SALVATION;

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, GLASGOW,

By the Rev. A. BROWN,

Kilmarnock.

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."—Is. xii. 3.

THE day to which the Prophet alludes is clearly shown in the preceding chapter. Israel first, on account of idolatry, perfidy and apostasy, was carried away captive by the Assyrians. Judah next, for similar conduct, was subjected to seventy years bondage in Babylon. The tabernacle of David then fell, and its breaches were laid open. But deliverance was promised even before this time of captivity by the prophet Amos, who says, "Behold, the days come that I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old." Such a recovery also was brought about when the Messiah appeared, and when his gospel was successfully preached among the Gentiles. In the Synod of Jerusalem, accordingly, when the Apostles were met to decide an important question, James refers to the prophecy and its final accomplishment: "For," says he, "to this agree the words of the Prophet; as it is written, After this will I return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord," &c. Anticipating the coming of Christ, the accomplishment of his work, and his glorious exaltation and reign, the Prophet here with rapture describes the felicity of the latter day—in Israel restoration, universal peace, and the salvation of the heathen. In that day, then, shall they praise God, for the display of divine love, in the atonement of Jesus, removing judgments, dispensing mercy, and dispelling fears. "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

The question naturally arising from these

words is this, What will make us draw water with joy from these wells? And to this question we shall attempt an answer in a few particulars.

In general, we might remark, that these being styled the wells of salvation, is a sufficient reason for this joy, provided it is kept properly in view. The whole word of God, in its promises, predictions, and doctrines, is a well filled with refreshing water to the thirsty soul. The Gospel is like cold water to the parched heart. Here life and immortality are brought to light. Here we see and hear Him who has the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to the weary soul. The precious ordinances are the means of spiritual life. It is produced and maintained by their instrumentality, and the agency of the Holy Spirit, who takes of Christ, to reveal to his people.

But, more particularly, I remark,

1. That these wells must be kept open for this purpose. The Church of Christ, because devoted to him, and accessible to none other, is like a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Not so the ordinances of grace; they are accessible to all. "Go preach the Gospel to every creature." Thus many are called, although few may be chosen. In a free and unconditional manner is salvation offered to the chief of sinners. Otherwise no soul could be saved; for, first, "all have sinned, and have come short of the glory of God;" and, secondly, "all are by nature dead in trespasses and sins." Can these bones live? Yes, by divine power, and by that alone: "The time now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." To keep these open ministers must labour, travail, travail as in birth, preach the Word, be in-

stant in season, out of season. They must lead, compel sinners to come to Christ, and watch for them as those that have to give a solemn account. Even those ordinances that are not accessible till after serious examination, respecting faith, love, and new obedience, must be kept open by proper instruction, respecting their design, proper warning against their abuse, and direction about the proper manner of approaching to them, or to God in them.

Pointed careful attention on the part of the hearers, accompanied with fervent prayer, must keep them open. "Open thy mouth wide," says God, "I will fill it." Labour and patience in waiting alone will keep them open, because then the Spirit in his work will be felt. Every thing that would make them unsavoury, or render us indifferent or indolent; every thing that would prejudice us against them, will be awfully dangerous to our souls. From shut wells, then, no water with joy can be drawn.

2. They must be kept pure, living, running clear from the throne. No admixture to foul them must be allowed. No addition of ours, nothing kept back; "teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded; and lo! I am with you always." Then with joy these waters will be drawn. Salvation is the matter of these wells. Divine love, sovereignly free, is its origin. What but self-moving love, when nothing existed to excite, and nothing could be contemplated independent of him, could move him. What could he foresee regarding good works that did not proceed from his own purpose and his own power. Expressly also is it declared, that grace and works, as the origin of God's choice, are entirely incompatible. In its application, too, this grace reigns. A perfect righteousness to justify from every charge is revealed. "Not by works of righteousness that we have done; but according to his mercy hath he saved us, by the washing of water, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." In its effect, holiness, perfect purity, is provided. This becomes the house of God. The doctrine, then, according to godliness, must be taught. In its motives, principles, and encouragements, in regard to love, gratitude, and hope, it must be proclaimed. Thus pure, they will yield true comfort. "Having these promises," says the Apostle, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord."

They must be kept pure, in our waiting

on them with true hearts. We must sanctify the Lord in our hearts. We must consider that he is in heaven, and we on earth, and that we ought to keep our feet, attend to our conduct, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools. With joy, then, will we enter into the house of God, and with joy draw water from the wells of salvation. Looking for the blessed hope for Him who shall change the vile body, and fashion it like his own glorious body, according to his mighty work and power.

3. These waters must be tasted. Oh! taste and see that God is good. "If thou knewest the gift of God," said Jesus to the woman of Samaria, "and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living waters." Give me this water, said she. We see her then beginning to relish the doctrine of the Saviour; it comes to her heart; she believes, she tastes, and says to the men of Samaria, Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ? "Thy words," said Jeremiah, "were found of me, and I did eat them, and they were to me the rejoicing of my heart." Faith, then, is necessary to please God, and to profit our souls, in hearing the blessed Word. The mind must be instructed and the heart affected. Then will there be a cordial reception of the Saviour—a believing in loving and trusting on Him for salvation—a reception of the water, which will be in him, that is the true believer, a well of water springing up unto eternal life. We must draw water, then, by that faith which worketh by love. We must cry to Him who is able to save to the uttermost. Much exercised in this way, not only will we have an assured confidence in his ability and willingness to save, but also a firm persuasion that we have built all our hopes on Him. We will know, then, in whom we have believed, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We must, of necessity, highly value these wells, if we would draw water from them with joy. "I joyed," said David, "when it was said to me, Go up into the house of God." We ought to set a value on the place, the people, the messenger, the message, and the glorious subject. The place should be dear, because these ordinances are enjoyed by the people of God; because there may be among them many temples of the Holy Ghost; and because there they are who have precious souls. The messenger for his work, his message, and his

Master, and the message because of his hope, his foundation, his friend, and portion found there, should be peculiarly dear.

Without this, may we not be in danger of slighting the call, and neglecting the great salvation. Who knows, but we condemn some whom the King delights to honour, and of whom we should say, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that publisheth peace. Oh! how awful if we refuse Him who speaks from heaven, if we tread under foot the Son of God, do despite to his Spirit, and count the blood of the covenant with which he was sanctified an unholy thing. Sometimes ministers may disappoint our expectations. "The watchmen," says the Spouse, "that went about the city found me; they smote me; the keepers of the wall took away my veil." A sad, convicted, and exposed, and overwhelming case indeed? Why was this? To lead her beyond them to Christ. "It was but a little," says she, "that I passed them, that I found him whom my soul loveth." A blessed disappointment, that leads to Christ. "Oh! if we met together, our hearts beating with affection to the place, the ordinances, the preacher, but above all the Saviour, we would come to him then as our chiefest joy. Our language would be, whom have we in heaven but thee; and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee. "With joy, then, would we draw water from the wells of salvation." Our chief desire would be to dwell in the house of God, to behold his glory, and reverently inquire in his temple.

5. A renewed application to these wells is necessary to our spiritual comfort. We must continue hungering and thirsting after righteousness. A sense of need, and of absolute dependence on God, will bring us back to the wells of salvation. Like David, distant from his home, we may say, "Oh! that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is by the gate." Thus it was that his soul was poured out in him when he thought on former times, when he went with the multitude to keep solemn holy day. Thus Hezekiah, in sickness, had said, "what is the sign that I shall go up into the house of God?"

This application may be made at all times, and in every state. In the public, and private, and secret exercises of religion, in health and sickness, in the prison or the palace, wherever God is, public ordinances must be preferred. God loves the gates of Zion more than the dwellings of Jacob. But he loves them too. He may be found

there; yea, on the bed of languishing and sickness, where he gives strength, and makes the bed. His blessing makes rich. He blesses Zion's provision, and satisfies her poor with bread; he satisfies the longing soul, and satiates the weary soul. They, then, that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up on wings; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not be faint. "Passing through the valley of Baca they make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength; every one of them approach before God."

Let us now apply this subject,

1. To those who are employed in drawing water for others; and who, in order to this, should draw for themselves, that they may be successful in their work. Do we make it our study to speak from the heart to the heart? Are we careful to break the bread of life; rightly to divide the Word, and give every one the portion in due season? Is it our study to meditate much on these things, to give ourselves wholly to them, that we may save ourselves and them that hear us? How earnest should we be that Christ may be formed in the soul; travailing both for this end. Do we remain at these wells, and are we really anxious that thirsty souls may obtain the cooling and cheering draught? Are we afraid of scattering or wounding the flock, instead of bringing to the green pastures, or the quiet waters? Let us not be entirely deaf to reproaches and reproof in this matter. Much examination may commence, much necessary humiliation may be produced. To active diligence and prayer we may be driven. Let us not, however, be regulated entirely by these reproaches. Let us seek here the approval of our God and our conscience. Then will we neither sully nor shut these wells. Let no man dispose thee.

2. To those who think these wells are dry to them, we may apply this subject. What is the reason of this? Has this proceeded from the ministry? Oh, beware! Here is a new, a critical point of infinite importance to you. Have you expected from them what you should have from their Master? Have you never thought on your own misimprovement? Have you prayed that these wells might be opened to you, or have been unmindful of those who lead to them? Have you followed no decisive course? When some of the Corinthians said, I am of Paul, others I am of Cephas, Apollos, and Christ, they showed the carnal mind. So hurt was Apollos at this,

that when Paul greatly desired him to come to them, it was not his will at that time. "And," says Paul, "if Timotheus come to you, see that he be with you without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord." Mark that it is the Lord's work. By strife about many things, the wells of salvation may become Ezek and Sibmah, and not Rehoboam; as we find in Isaac's day, when the men of Gera strove with him, till he removed to Beersheba for room. Have you listened to the tale-bearer, the whisperer that separates chief friends? Have you been fond of injurious reports to retail? Oh! why should those whose intelligence, piety, and diligence are unimpeachable, be despised? Perfection cannot be expected. Similar talents will not be found in all. Yea, the most talented have often imperfections more easily observed from contrasts with mere talents. It is well ordered that it should be so, that they all may be kept more on a level.

But, oh! consider, my friends, that by allowing your minds to dwell on what you may view defective, and by conduct that may imply contempt with regard to God's provision, you may dry up these wells, at a time when the last war, from which there is no discharge, will require the cooling draught to refresh the parched heart. Now, my friends, look not to one another, and say, this applies to such a quarter, that to another. No. We are all here before the omniscient God. Let us then say to him, each for ourselves, Lord, is it I? Oh! prize God's ordinances; attend to the value of your own souls; watch and pray against temptation, lest while the seed is sowing, it fall by the way side, and be picked away by the fowls of heaven. Keep by the God of the wells, and he will keep you.

I would now apply this subject to those who have drawn, or think they have with joy drawn water from the wells of salvation. How ardent will your desires be. He that drinks of this water will not thirst again. Inordinate desires after the world will be quenched—they will be subdued. And here the fullest satisfaction will be obtained. All painful, unsatisfied thirst, will be quenched. Here the thirsty shall be satisfied. Sanctified desires, however, desires which include delightful enjoyment, shall be yours. See what Christ has done, and what obligations he hath brought you under. When David saw the water of the well of Bethlehem, how deeply did it affect him? "Is not this," said he, "the blood of

men that went in jeopardy of their lives?" Yes; but here is the blood of Him that not merely jeopardised his life, but gave it, poured out his soul, that wells of everlasting consolation might be opened to you. Oh! prize, improve them, keep by them, keep them open for yourselves by faith in Christ, and fervent prayer to him.

It will be a mean for this end, if you think much on your unworthiness, and his rich grace; if you be deeply humbled on account of sin, and adore pardoning mercy; if you feel undone without the Saviour. Like Peter, you must feel and say, "Lord, to whom can we go but to thee. Thou only hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." Frequent serious meditation, and deep searching of yourselves, with prayer, will, thus directed to him, be your life. Your joy and triumph will be not in yourselves, but in him. "Therefore with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation."

"After this," said John, "after the sealing of the servants of God, I looked, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number. Who were they? These, said the angel, are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." What glory and happiness are prepared for the people of God! Enough to cheer the darkest soul, enough to bear up the weakest and most burdened heart. How light and momentary all present trials compared with this exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory! Here let Israel sing, "spring up, O well!" Let God's princes and noble ones dig wells here by the direction of our Lawgiver, with that rod and staff which he hath put into their hands. Oh! for a sick bed, a death-bed, with the merciful and faithful High Priest over the house of God, giving strength, making the bed, holding out and administering his living water to the fainting soul! Then shall ye sing this song, "Spring up, O well." Then shall ye drink of the rivers of pleasure flowing from God's throne. Anticipating this, may we not now draw water with joy from the wells of salvation.

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