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EIGHT
SERMONS,
ON
Important Subjects;

BY THE REVEREND

JOSEPH ALEXANDER, D. D.

IN THE DISTRICT OF YORK,

South-Carolina.

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TO THE GENEROUS AND CANDID PUBLIC,

*The following sheets are dedicated, as a
memorial of that friendship with
which they have received the
public ministration of their
sincere friend, and
humble servant,*

J. A.

S E R M O N I.

ALL MANKIND IN ABSOLUTE NEED OF A SAVIOUR;
AND THAT CHRIST JESUS IS THE SAVIOUR
WHICH THEY NEED.

JOHN VIII.—XXIV.

For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

NO sin is more ruinous in it's nature, or more ungrateful to the ear of a sinner, than unbelief. It is the last which is healed. All other transgressions of the Divine law are more open to conviction. This hath specious pretences to support it. Mankind commit this sin through fear of sinning. They will not believe, lest they should be guilty of presumption—they dare not believe, because they want the great qualifications of those who ought to believe. The power of all other sins is centered here. In this, Satan is most strongly fortified. The adulterer, or the profane swearer are open to conviction--- Shew them wherein they have transgressed, they can plead no defence.

The wages of sin is death---All sin merits damnation from the just and holy law of God.---All the sins of the most prolonged life could not infer this death, if unbelief did not fix and empower them. This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, but men choose darkness rather than light. This draws down ruin with accumulated vengeance. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not

God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." What more terrible can a God threaten, or man feel, than to die in our sins? To such, the death of Christ can have no effect. "Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Although there is virtue in the blood of Christ to pardon sin, the person can have no benefit of it, as long as he continues under the dominion of unbelief. It was said of the miraculous works of Christ, "He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief." None of the spiritual works of Christ can do the soul good until the Lord breaks the power of this sin. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." The richest cordials and most sovereign remedy will not help the sick or the wounded, unless received and applied. Unless delivered from an evil heart of unbelief, all the sins of life remain upon the person. What an insupportable load of guilt is fixed on the person! Our text saith, "For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." It is observable, that there is an ellipsis in the original --a figure frequently used in the scriptures, and must be supplied thus--For if ye believe not that I am the Messiah, the only Saviour of sinners, ye shall die in your sins. These words show that all mankind are, by nature, sinners, and that all will perish in their sins unless they are delivered by a Saviour. Why doth any of the children of Adam refuse to accept of this deliverance, at the hand of a Saviour? Because they are insensible of their state; because they do not know the evil of sin; the strictness of the divine law; the majesty of that God whom they have offended; ignorant of the total apostacy of their hearts; are blind to eternity, and see no excellency in Christ; are comparatively whole, and see no need of a Saviour.

For the illustration of the text we shall show,

I. That all mankind stand in absolute need of a Saviour.

II. That Jesus Christ is the Saviour which their needy circumstances require.

The light of the gospel has shone in more or less bright rays over our hemisphere; such is the wickedness of the heart of all men, by nature, that they hate this light which bringeth salvation; they resist it, and rebel against it.

Some, professedly, from principle, deny the necessity of a Saviour, or a Salvation. Insensible of the moral depravity of man, the deceitfulness of the human heart, and the ruinous consequences of moral evil, they flatter themselves, that in the present state of human nature, they are competent to answer all the demands of the law of a just and righteous God. They unduly estimate their supposed honest and innocent works; all the imaginary good deeds which can be performed by man; their great attainments in natural knowledge; and the great things done by highly improved talents of mind; without considering that there can be no merit in actions which are not founded on a supreme love to God.

Multitudes who have enjoyed the light of the gospel, would blush to deny that they need a Saviour; by the deceitfulness of sin, and the extreme wickedness of their hearts, they secretly abhor and repel the unwelcome idea.

We acknowledge that man, by nature, is capable of performing great things. His understanding, reason, memory, and imagination do sufficiently proclaim that the hand which made them is Divine; that he is majestic, even in ruins. How wonderful have been the exertions of some philosophers, poets, and ora-

tors! how immoral still in their lives! how far have they failed in reforming the world!

That we may see and feel the truth of our first proposition, let us consider human nature, in its present state, separate from all supernatural influence.

The heart is the spring of all action. As is the heart, so will all its actions be. The heart of all mankind has a prevailing tendency to moral evil, that only, and that continually. In our first capacity of acting as moral agents, we are averse from God, and exceedingly propense to evil. This tendency is early discovered in all. This propensity must be evil, because odious and detestable, and it renders the subject of it odious in the sight of God, liable to be condemned, and utterly rejected by him. If there is in the heart of man a tendency to moral evil, and consequently, to guilt, superior to his virtue and merit, all the virtuous actions, that he can perform, are as nothing. Must we not then see that the nature of man is corrupt and evil. That this depravity of man's nature is great, appears in that he has a prevailing tendency to be sinning against God. A disposition to immediate sin is equal to a propensity to continual sinning---continual sinning is nothing but a propensity to immediate sinning continued, therefore, the same disposition continuing, it will still equally tend to moral evil. The depravity of human nature discovers itself most manifestly in the remainder of sin, in the best men upon earth---from the extreme folly of mankind in giving that love and obedience to the creature which is due to God alone---in the cold, lifeless, and detestable manner in which men, by nature, act with respect to those things on which their eternal interest depends, and, with what difficulty, even a few, are excited to any tolerable degree of care and diligence, to make them wise for themselves.

Such is the power of this depravity, that it begets enmity to God, and, as an enemy, he is continually prone to oppose the will of God, and to walk in the paths of disobedience. As children of disobedience, depraved men pursue different paths---one hatches cockatrice-eggs---another weaves a spider's web. These include all the schemes, aims, and achievements of men. The busy part of mankind multiply evils and miseries. The more retired, speculative, and curious, amuse themselves with things unsubstantial, unstable, and useless.

When it is considered, that the hearts of all mankind, by nature, have, at all times, a prevailing tendency to moral evil---contracting new guilt every moment---finners---transgressors---wicked in all their ways. When we estimate a life of disobedience, by comparing it with such a sense of the majesty, holiness, and authority of God, as he only can impress on the heart of a sinner, we surely will be convinced, that nothing but the blood of the Son of God can atone for the smallest disobedience; and, consequently, that all mankind, from the present state of human nature, are under absolute need of a Saviour---considered as guilty, he needs pardon---when viewed as under the power and dominion of a corrupt heart, he needs being changed-- being born again. Without a Saviour to deliver, he must be excluded the blissful presence of God.

Again, When the scriptures give a picture of the state of all mankind, by nature, they represent man, as soon as he is capable of acting, as a moral agent, as guilty of sin. "If any man sinneth against thee; for there is no man that sinneth not." "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not." "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." "If we say that

we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Confession of sin, and repentance of sin, are declared to be duties proper for all. Yea, that all are sinful creatures, however insensible they may be of it. Their hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked, as wicked as deceitful. They hide their wickedness from their view---from these hearts proceed murders, adulteries, and false witness. In their hearts is a fixed prejudice against God himself. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to the laws of God, neither indeed can be." The apostle useth the abstract, it is enmity to heighten the coloring---an enemy may be reconciled, as Esau was to Jacob, but enmity never can. Those who are at enmity counteract each the other's will, and revolt against submission. The fleshly mind is rebellious, to the highest degree, against the will of God, it is impossible it should be otherwise---there is in it a moral impotency to obedience. Mr. Henry says, that enmity is not only the alienation of the soul from God; but the opposition of the soul against God---it rebels against his authority, counteracts his designs, opposes his interest, and spurns against his bowels.

The mind of the sinner not being subject to the law of God, must be contrary, and that continually, to the whole law of God, therefore, the sinner breaks this law, every moment, by the evil frame of his heart. Add to this constant violation of the law, all his thoughts, words, and actions, natural, civil, or sacred, are violations of the law, because he is a corrupt tree, and cannot bring forth good fruit. Hence every thought of his heart is only evil continually, and he, being evil, cannot speak good things---his every action must, therefore, be sin. How innumerable must be the sins of every man!--his whole life one continual trespass! Are they not under guilt,

immense guilt, that no supposed virtuous actions can countervail! They must be pardoned this immense guilt---must be delivered from this inveterate, implacable disposition of heart. This deliverance cannot be effected without the interposition of a Saviour; therefore, all mankind are in need of a Saviour.

Again, The whole scheme of redemption loudly proclaims man's need of a Saviour.

No imaginable reason can be assigned for the covenant of peace between the Father and the Son, in the early ages of eternity, without granting, that it was to devise the redemption and recovery of a number of the human family---their eternal happiness, doubtless, lay before them---their dearest and everlasting concerns were in their hands. They viewed all mankind, not only as existing, but fallen, miserable, forlorn creatures. How can these be restored to happiness, without prejudice to the honor, justice, and truth of God; this, this is the weighty, important business which engaged their attention.

The external cause of that satisfaction which the Father demanded, and which the Son made, was the miserable state in which they were upon the account of their sins, which justly deserved eternal punishment. The God of mercy, seeing them in this ruined condition, had compassion on them; and, for their sakes, the Son of God endured all the punishment, which they deserved, that he might restore them to their first happiness.

The representations which the scriptures give of the redemption, by Christ, oblige us to believe that all were sinners whom he came to redeem, and that he came to redeem from sin, and all that punishment, which is the just desert of their sin. The name Jesus was given by God's immediate and special appointment. It was given to signify that he should save his people from their sins." The

great leading doctrine of Salvation by Christ, is, "that he came into the world to save sinners." And that Christ hath once suffered, the just for the unjust." "In this was manifest the love of God towards us, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him---herein is love, that he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." When we attend to what Christ said, that if any are not sinners, they have no more need of him, than a man, in perfect health, hath of a physician." That may be the proper subject of the mercy of God, through Christ, he must first be in a state of sin. "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise, by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe."

The redemption by Christ, is represented by eternal truth, as a redemption from deserved destruction, as the fruit of God's love to mankind. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." This implies, that believe they must, or perish they must. If they did not deserve to be destroyed, what necessity could there be for his sending his Son? That deserved destruction, is that which is here intended, must be evident, for it is compared to the perishing of the children of Israel, who died by the bite of the fiery serpents, which God, in his wrath, sent among them, for their rebellion. . This is still confirmed by the last words in this chapter----"He that believeth on the Son, shall have life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." This shews that all are under the wrath of God, and that unless it be removed by an interest in Christ, the wrath of God is still remaining on them. Hence it appears, that all men are, by

nature, finners, and constantly exposed to deserved punishment, unless they have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.

When the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of redemption by Christ Jesus, he finds that every natural son of Adam is born in a state of moral pollution---hence, we learn, that spiritual baptism is a cleansing from moral filthiness.---“ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you.” “ Except a man be born of the Spirit, and of water, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Men are said to be purified in regeneration. “ Seeing ye have purified your souls, by obeying the truth through the Spirit.” Every man, in his natural state, is a sinner, or he would need no repentance, no turning from sin to God. His nature is corrupt, according to the deceitful lust, and exerts itself in nothing but wicked deeds---man’s nature is a body of sin, which must be destroyed, must die---this body of sin is put off in spiritual renovation.

Doth not the whole scheme of redemption, in its implication and application, show that all mankind are sinful, guilty, polluted, and corrupt beings, bound to endure deserved wrath, whose nature must be changed before they can be prepared to see the kingdom of God? Must not this change be effected by one that is mighty to save? Can it be supposed that God would have provided a ransomer, at the expense of the death of his beloved Son, if the condition of mankind did not make a Saviour absolutely necessary?

Again, the proud, unmortified human heart possesses a Laodicean disposition, flattering themselves that they are rich, increased in goods, and needing nothing. They resort to their innocence and self-

righteousness, and entertain no doubt of their actual compliance with the requisitions of the law of God. and, therefore, indulge no fears of missing an eternal weight of glory. What doth that law of God require at the hand of all who would obtain happiness by it? Doubtless, a perfection of obedience in thought, word, and action, at all times, and in all circumstances. Every law, human and divine, requires all that it doth require, and to require all that it doth require, is to require perfect compliance with all its requisitions. Seeing every sin is forbidden to man, and every duty enjoined upon him, he cannot be at liberty to commit one sin, or omit one duty, not even the least, and, to perform these, is perfect obedience.

Moreover, that perfect obedience is required of us, is not only evident, from what has been said, but it is the voice of the word of God, as appears from the dreadful curse denounced against every transgressor, for the least offence---“Curfed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them.” “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

If any should think, that a just God would not require that perfection of obedience which man is unable to perform, let it be considered---To say that it would be unjust in God to require perfect obedience of man, seeing he is unable to perform it, is the same thing as to say, the more incapable man is to perform perfect obedience, the less should be required of him, and the less was required of him, the less he was bound to do, and the less he was bound to do, the less he could sin; so that the most wicked man upon earth, who by his repeated wickedness has become averse from God, and every thing that is good, and, of consequence, unable to perform any good

thing, is bound to do less, and, therefore, could be less guilty of sin---how glaringly absurd the consequence.

Every individual of the human race, upon the most scanty and partial reflection on the vain thoughts, foolish words, and unholy actions of which they have been guilty, must confess that they have offended in many things, and failed in every duty, and, consequently, have not rendered that obedience which the law requires; and that, by such failure, they are justly exposed to the curse of the law. That by the deeds of the law, they cannot be justified---therefore, they are sinners under condemnation, standing in absolute need of a Saviour to deliver from sin, and condemnation---must see that they have not only forfeited happiness, by transgression, but, by depravity, become incapable of it---that he has no more desire and taste for the happiness of heaven, than a deaf man, for a concert of music; therefore, a marvellous change is absolutely necessary. Divorced from the love and practice of sin, he must be---divorced from all dependence on the law, for life, he must be---born again, he must be---a Saviour, then, he must have, or perish in his sins.

We pass on, to show,---

II. That Jesus Christ is the Saviour which their needy circumstances require.

Nothing ever was, or will be, more important to a soul, truly affected with a sense of his sin, guilt, and danger, and, consequently, of his real need of a Saviour, than to hear, by infallible authority, of a Saviour, provided and commissioned from the court of heaven, to seek and save such lost and perishing sinners as he is. This gives confidence of sure ground, and that, resting here, he will not build his hopes of happiness on a sandy foundation, but on the rock of

ages which can never fail. Jesus is this very Saviour, he not only has, but produces, his commission---“For him hath God, the Father, sealed.”

In general, he was sealed to the work of mediation, to recover and save all whom the Father had given him---“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” To bring Jacob back again---“And now, saith the Lord, that formed me from the womb, to be his servant, to bring Jacob to him.” The apostle confirms this interesting news, saying, “That he might bring us to God.” To be more particular,---

For the more surely effecting this glorious design, he was sealed to the offices of prophet, priest, and king. Let an ambassador, to a foreign court, relate what he may, he will not be attended to, until he produces his commission. Jesus produceth his commission, under the great seal of heaven, to preach the glad tidings of salvation to sinners.---You can read it, as recorded in Luke iv. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21.

To the soul highly impressed with a sense of it's utter inability to atone for the least sin, and that he really needs an all-atoning sacrifice, and one to plead his cause in the court of heaven, Jesus shows that he was sealed, by the Father, to execute both the oblation and intercessory parts of a priest. He is commanded, by the Father, to give himself a sacrifice for sin.---“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 again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” Hence the offering of his blood is stiled, an act of obedience. “And being found in fashion of a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” And that he advocates their cause, he is appointed by his Father to in-

tercede for them. "To make continual intercession for them."

The convinced sinner having exerted every effort in the use of every ordinary mean to reform, and to renew his heart, finds, by many sore trials; that he can do nothing---that his heart is a hard, unmanageable thing---that it is now his worst enemy, often delivering him up to his numerous foes; he is convinced that supernatural power must work mightily in him, and for him, or he must continue a stubborn unreconciled enemy to God. Jesus came to him with authority from the father to break down and subdue his obstinate heart, to a cheerful obedience to his Divine will, and to bring his and their enemies to bow to his footstool. Hence you hear him declaring, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He shews his royal commission to command the most rebellious sons of men unto obedience, and to conquer his most inveterate enemies.

This sinful man, having a full assurance that Jesus came with all authority and power to seek and to save those that are lost, and being satisfied that there can be no deception in trusting to him. Nevertheless, from a view of his own vileness and unworthiness, he doubts the grace and mercy of Jesus to help and deliver those so deserving of utter and final rejection.

Jesus came to save the poor, the needy, the miserable and helpless, without money and without price---without merit, righteousness, virtue, or any commendatory qualification. If he believes that Jesus is the Saviour of the world, that he is able and willing to save---if he has seriously considered the terms, self-denial, taking the cross, and to follow Christ, consents to them, and entirely depends upon his mediation for happiness, and commits himself to Christ, with freedom and desire. Jesus invites him

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to take all the waters of life freely. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy hath he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour." "And whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely." All the the blessings of salvation are offered freely---"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye unto the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.

This person is now afflicted, groaning and filling the air with sighs by day, and by night being burdened with a sense of guilt—he prays—he attends to the duties of holiness, hoping thereby to find rest to his soul—but can find no peace—the more he doth, the deeper he sinks in guilt, until he looks to Christ—then he finds that Christ has paid the price of his redemption, and as a surety has atoned for his sins, by the sacrifice of himself—he now sees that there is a sufficiency of merit in the blood of Jesus, to cancel the guilt of all his sins. "Surely he he hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." By this atonement for sin he has purchased pardon and acceptance with God. "For him hath God the Father exalted to his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sin." "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." In the atoning blood of Jesus, he by faith obtains grace and pardon—glorious deliverance.

Being now blessed with peace of conscience, by the application of the blood of atonement, through

Faith in Christ Jesus, he is, nevertheless, often in perplexing fears and doubts respecting deliverance from the curse of the law, lest all its thunders are still pointed against him. Adored be the riches of divine grace, that Christ hath redeemed all that believe in him, from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them. He has bought them from the hand of justice, and by the price of blood has delivered from all that wrath and punishment threatened in the curse of the law, as the due desert of sin; he having, by the Father's appointment, come under the sentence and execution of the law, in his law room and stead, when he hung on the cross. The law can now have no demand upon him, that will be available, considering himself as having believed unto salvation. Though it should say to conscience, herein, and in that thou hast transgressed and broken me; and therefore thou art a great debtor to Divine justice, which must be satisfied, or I will arrest you. The believer can answer, Christ hath paid all my debts—through Christ I am now dead to you, and you are dead to me, except as a rule of life. Justice can have nothing to do with me; Christ hath freed me from the law, and all its thunders of hell and damnation.

This person that is united to Christ, entertains hopes, that through riches of grace in Christ, he is delivered from the curse of the law, yet he feels such a remainder of corruption, and that sin operates so powerfully in his mortal body, leading him captive from time to time, that it fills him with distressing thoughts, lest sin should one day prevail against him. It costs him many sighs and groans, and makes him earnestly long for deliverance. He feels himself vile and miserable—his in-dwelling sin is his burden—he cries, “O wretched man that I am, who shall set me

free from this body of sin?" It will work in me as long as I dwell in this mortal flesh. I greatly fear the consequence.

How reviving are the hopes of relief in Christ, against this worst of evils, and the greatest sorrow of his heart! This supports him against overwhelming wretchedness. "I thank God, says the apostle, through Christ Jesus my Lord." Being a believer he is moulded into the spirit of the gospel, which under Divine influence, had a transforming efficacy upon him. He is now free from the commanding power of sin, and in his very heart has become a servant of righteousness—he ought then to reckon himself entirely, utterly and everlastingly dead to sin—though it is continually striving for the mastery in him, he must never yield to its efforts. The Holy Spirit enlightens him by the word of God, to discover the evil, quickens his soul to resistance, and strengthens him to fight unto victory; and by bringing his corrupt affections, principles and practices to the foot of the cross of Christ, they are most powerfully crucified. In due time, this holy opposition will procure him the crucifixion of sin, by efficacy derived from Christ, as he died for sin by a gradual, lingering and agonizing death, so will the sin of this person. "If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body." By cleaving to Christ, and applying his righteousness to his conscience, his affections and love to the world, are disengaged from it. "By whom I am crucified unto the world, and the world unto me." As the work of sanctification progresses in his soul, sin will be dying daily, and his soul reviving in all its holy duties.

Lastly. This person ardently aspires after the enjoyment of the pure abodes of everlasting felicity. He is informed, by infallible authority, that "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." It is ascer-

tained to him, that his vile body must be the subject of an amazing change, before it can be prepared for the enjoyments and employments of that holy city, the new Jerufalem. Who can, who will effect this glorious change? He is sensible that neither man nor angel can or will accomplish it for him. Must he, then, be for ever excluded? If so, why all this work of Divine grace, all these marvellous deliverances to his soul?

The apostle assures him, that, "Unto them that look for him, he shall appear a second time, without sin, unto salvation." Christ once appeared as a worm, and no man: now, in the glorious morning of the resurrection, he will appear in all his own glory, the glory of the Father, and all his holy angels; then will he appear to judge the world in righteousness; then will he appear to give the finishing stroke to that salvation, which he had begun in the hearts of the children of men. The apostle gives a most delightful intimation—"who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." When Christ makes this second appearance, he as the friend and Saviour of his people, that have trusted in him, will fashion their bodies to be fit receptacles of pure spirits, from the ivory palaces of blessedness. Therefore, in their reunion of soul and body, they will be furnished with every necessary qualification for fitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the presence of their God, to drink full draughts of pleasure for ever and ever.

What do you think of this salvation? Is it not a great and glorious salvation? Is it not every way suited to the needy circumstances of sinful man? Doth it not fully correspond with his warmest wishes?

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From what has appeared to you, must you not learn, that all mankind, by nature, are in a state of sin, guilt, and justly exposed to the wrath of a God that hates sin, and will execute vengeance for it. Hence they are in a miserable, deplorable condition. They are without God, without a Saviour to deliver them; aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise. By lives of wickedness, they are become guilty of murder, self-murder, foul-murder; their blood is upon their own heads, and destruction will be the fruit of their sinfulness and obstinacy. The day is coming when they will acknowledge that it is just in God that they should die in their sins. What unspeakable anguish will this reflection give to their consciences! Be persuaded to think of the miseries to which you are exposing yourselves, before it is too late. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon him.

Again, Let us hence learn, that it is the immediate duty of all poor, blind, miserable, needy, and naked sinners, to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God—to confess their sin, and forsake every evil way—to cry for believing views of the fulness, freeness and suitableness of that grace and salvation, which is in Christ Jesus—not to seek rest to their souls, until united to Christ by a living faith.

Again, Let us learn, how inconceivably great, must the goodness, love and grace of God be, who provided for sinful, rebellious worms of the dust, an every way suitable salvation, a great salvation—a salvation not only exceeding all comparison, but all the thoughts of men or angels—when it is considered at what an immense expence he prepared it, at the high value of the blood of his dear, his only beloved son.

This filled the angelic hosts with the most profound astonishment. They desired to pry into this mystery of love, goodness and grace. How basely ungrateful must that man be, who doth not admire and adore God, for such a display of marvellous goodness and grace ! How hard must that heart be, that can continue stupid and unconcerned, when it is his highest interest which is concerned !

Again, Let us learn to adore, and be for ever astonished at the love of Christ to poor sinners—that he should consent to leave the bosom of ineffable delights, to tabernacle in flesh—to live a life of sorrow, and to bleed, groan, and give his life an offering for sin, that he might redeem and save his very enemies. Read, O read Rom. 5, 6, 7, and 8, and admire the heights, lengths and breadths of the unmeasurable love of Christ ! See how his love is recommended to poor sinners. How few of the sons of men would be willing to relinquish a rich living for Christ. Has the believer experienced the delights of near and dear communion with his God, with what reluctance would he be separated from this enjoyment ! Christ enjoyed a more ineffable pleasure with his Father, nevertheless, such was his love, that he parted with his *all*, that he might bring sinful man to God. Doth not this love of the Son of God, melt your hearts, and beget in your souls, the most earnest desire to return to God ?

Again, Doth what you have read convince you that you and all mankind stand in need of a great salvation ? Have you lived in folly and vanity, neglecting God and Christ, and the great interests of your precious and immortal souls ? Do you still feel no necessity of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ? What can I say to you ? If I would daub you over with untempered mortar, and

speaking peace, peace to you, I am sure you would despise my unfaithfulness—judge yourselves—must I not, in love to you, tell you, that you are yet in your sins, strangers to God, and the power of his grace—must I not tell you, that every moment that you delay taking the kingdom of God by holy violence—every minute you put far from you the salvation of your soul, you are provoking God, to cut you off from the living, and fix your abode in everlasting darkness. O, be wise while the day of grace lasts, lay hold on eternal life, and by every mean, secure an interest in that Jesus, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, can sanctify and make you meet for a heavenly inheritance.

Have you been convinced of sin, guilt and danger? Have you pressed into the kingdom of God? Have you with all your heart, sought rest to your wounded conscience? Have you tried holy duties, sought it in the enjoyment of created good? Have you been tired with the vain pursuit? Has your necessity pressed you hard to hasten to a mediator? Have you fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you? Have you deliberated on the terms proposed in the gospel. And have you with all your heart desired Christ with a cross, as well as with a crown? Have you committed soul and body into his hands, hoping for salvation in him, and resting in no other name? To you, I say with the apostle, “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that good Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you, that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.
AMEN.

SERMON II

CHRIST A DIVINE SAVIOUR.

REVELATION I.—17, 18.

*I am the first and the last, I am he that was dead, and behold
I am alive for ever more.*

THE Romans ordinarily inflicted banishment upon persons supposed to be guilty of sedition. When John preached to them Christ, and him crucified; those enemies of all true religion, judged him guilty of raising a rebellious uproar among the people: For this, he was sent to the Isle of Patmos.

This temporary state of exile, was so far from being a severe punishment, that it was a time of the peculiar manifestations of the Lord to him. He declares that he had a visionary representation of him that was made after the likeness of sinful flesh. He describes this glorious personage, as excelling in majesty, authority, purity, wisdom and power. So gloriously majestic was the appearance, that it struck him into such profound wonder and amazement, as locked up all his senses, and he fell at his feet as a dead man. He, that is ever ready to raise those that are bowed down, and to administer the most reviving cordials to them, laid his powerful, yet favorable hand upon him, saying unto him, "fear not." By what motives doth he raise him? He tells him that he is that Jesus, with whom he had enjoyed so much sweet communion; that although he was God's fel-

ow, *the first and the last*, he had assumed the human nature, and in that nature suffered the most cruel and excruciating death; "*and was dead*;" that he had risen by the power of God, and is alive for ever more, to intercede for, and communicate the blessings of his bloody passion to his people.

That we may conceive this subject more clearly, we shall consider, I. That this Jesus is a Divine Saviour. II. That this Divine Jesus did die to redeem a people to God by his blood. III. That this Jesus who thus died, lives eternally in heaven, with all power to apply the fruits of his redemption.

When the scripture applies those names, titles, attributes and works, that are peculiar to God, to any being, we must say, that being is divine. If we can find all these ascribed to Christ, it is manifest, in the most clear manner, that he must be Divine.

That Jehovah is a name peculiar to God, no one can doubt, when he hears the Psalmist saying, "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high, over all the earth." The evangelical prophet is full of the same language. "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give unto another; neither my praise unto graven images," &c. "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me."

Is this name, so peculiar to God, at any time evidently applied to this Jesus? This same prophet answers you, by a most pointed application of this name to the Lord Jesus. "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength, even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him, shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" The apostle, under a more clear dispensation of grace, interprets this of Christ; "Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even

so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men, unto justification of life." Again he tells you, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

Again. God *blessed for ever*, is a distinguishing name of God. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for ever more." "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." This same apostle applies this name to Christ, when he tells you, "Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever.

You acknowledge that divine names are given to this Jesus; but cannot be persuaded that any of the distinguishing titles of God, are any where represented as belonging to him.

If we search the scriptures, we will find that *Lord of Hosts* is a distinguishing title of Godhead. "Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the mighty one of Israel." Again; "And one cried unto another, and said, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory."

The same prophet clothes Christ with this peculiar character. "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem." The apostle, referring to this passage, tells you, "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. And for a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them that stumble at the word."

Another character, which Jehovah claims as his own title, you have in these words, *the first and the last*. "For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it; for how should my name be polluted? And I will not give my glory unto another. Harken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel, my called; I am he, I am the first, I also am the last.

The Lord Jesus challengeth this very character to himself, in the words of our text. *I am the first and the last*. Again; "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna, write these things, saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.

If these characters, so peculiar to God, are also ascribed to this Jesus, you can, by no means, admit that those shining glories, which have never been communicated to any mere creature, in their perfect fulness, can be found attributed to the Lord Jesus. You say, that Omniscience is an excellence that pertains to him alone that is God. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it." "I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doing." A perfect knowledge of what is in man is here ascribed to God only. When Peter replied to our Lord's moving interrogation, he gave this very attribute to our Lord Jesus, saying, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Again; "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men. And needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." "And all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts." These are the declarations of him, who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

Do you insist that no mere creature can be every where present, saying with the Psalmist, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Heaven, hell, sea and land, darkness and light, are filled with the presence of Jehovah.

Has the apostle any inferior view of this Jesus, when he saith, "Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Our Lord himself, speaking to his disciples, in whatever place they may be planted, saith, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Do you urge that no one has an arm like God; that he alone is Omnipotent; that he challengeth this as his peculiar character, in above fifty places in the old testament; that Omnipotence is at no time applied to any other than Jehovah.

This same Almighty power is given to Christ Jesus, by the apostle, saying, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Jesus claims this shining glory as his character, "*The Almighty.*"

Do you say, that none but Jehovah is without beginning, succession or end of duration. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

Hear God the Father addressing the Son; "But unto the son he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Jesus, giving his own character, saith, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.

Nothing is more certain than that Jehovah is represented without variation or shadow of turning, and therefore as perfectly immutable. "For I am the

Lord, I change not ; therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Paul has the same view of Christ Jesus, when he saith, " As a vesture shall thou fold them up, and they shall be changed : but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." " Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and forever." Are those excellencies, so peculiar to the Divine nature, attributed also to this Jesus ? Surely you must confess that he is Divine.

Do you say that those works, which are the production of infinite wisdom and Almighty power, are not represented as produced by our Lord. What Divine works pertain to God, which are not also ascribed to our Lord Jesus ? Do you say, the work of creation is peculiar to God. " Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord, that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens above : that spreadeth the earth abroad by myself."

St. John, who enjoyed the most intimate fellowship with Christ, considered him as the Creator of the ends of the earth. " In the beginning was the word, and the word was God." " All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made, that was made."

As all the works of Divine power are from God, so he hath made all things for his own praise and glory. " Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power ; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they were and are created."

The apostle, when speaking of Christ Jesus, to the church at Colosses, tells them, " For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by him, and for him."

The holy scriptures, therefore, giving these names, titles, attributes, and works to our Jesus, which they ascribe to God himself, do abundantly manifest that he must be Divine.

Lest any should still hesitate in this matter, we call upon them to consider what qualifications are absolutely necessary to be possessed by him, that is sent to save those that are ignorant, guilty and rebellious. Must he not be a Divine prophet, priest, and king? Without this, could he have disclosed the counsel of God, to so many different persons, in distant places, and at different times, in the most perfect consistency? Could he be equally present with his disciples, in whatever part of the globe they are planted? Could we have a full certainty of the authority, fulness, and infallibility of Divine revelation? Could he have employed the Holy Ghost to make means of grace efficacious? Could he have lawfully undertaken to be man's surety and Saviour? Could he have secured the full payment of our debt? Could he have done and suffered all that law and justice could require of him as our surety? Could there have been an infinite value in his sufferings? Could he have conquered death, and come from prison, and from judgment? Could he know all those for whom he died, and all the circumstances in which they could possibly be?

Could he advance his subjects to as high a station, in their state of recovery, as that in which they were created? Could he equally extend his government over, and give an equal protection to all his subjects? Could he conquer the combined opposition of earth and hell? Could he be adequate to the great and glorious work of conquering the stoutest sons of rebellion, changing their obstinate natures, and communicating consolation to those ingulphed in misery? Could he summon all from the caverns of the earth, from the depth of the sea, and from every quarter

under heaven, by the sound of the last trumpet, to meet him in the air, to receive their just, their final doom? Must not the Saviour of sinners be competent to all these things? If so, he must be a Divine prophet, priest and king. That these are the qualifications of our Jesus must be clear to every person, that is acquainted with the bible—therefore he must be a Divine Saviour.

We proceed to shew,

II. That this Divine Jesus did die to redeem a people to God, by his blood.

When we find any thing ascribed, in the scriptures, to any of the sacred persons, which thing is beneath the dignity of Godhead, we are constrained to conclude, that it is something that is not essential to the Divine nature. If it appears that it is real, we must conclude that it is some inferior nature, which is united to the Godhead. But many things are attributed to this divine Saviour, in the scriptures, which things are beneath the dignity of Godhead. We are, therefore, constrained to believe, that it must be an inferior nature, united to the Divine. When these inferior things are such as are peculiar to human nature, we must necessarily say, that it is a human nature, in union with the Divine. Do you ask, what those things are, which are peculiar to human nature, and ascribed to this Divine Jesus? We answer, the scripture informs us, that he was made of a woman; that he took upon him the form of a servant; that he increased in wisdom and stature; that he was hungry and thirsty; that he was asleep; that he groaned and wept; that he was forsaken of his Father; that his soul was exceeding sorrowful; that he was crucified; that he knew not the day of judgment; that he arose; that he ascended. Every person must see that these things are peculiar to the inferior nature of man, and consequently, that in this Jesus is

an union of the human and divine natures in his complex person.

Who can pay a ransom sufficient to redeem sinners from the law, sin, hell, and death? Could any mere man or angel lay down an adequate price of redemption? Could the most mighty archangel rescue the sinner from the dominion of the prince of darkness?

He that would pay the ransom, must be an acceptable surety; must be able to secure the payment of our debt, to the uttermost farthing, without the least injury to any in heaven or in earth.

No angel could be accepted; as a creature of the Divine hand, God alone had a right to dispose of him, and all that he could do; nay, it would have been unjust in God to exact that of a superior, which was due only by one of an inferior nature.

No mere man could present an adequate price; would he give the most costly hecatombs; would he give rivers of oil; would he give the fruit of his body, for the sin of his soul, all, all must be utterly contemned. Justice has an infinite demand upon the sinner. Every sin, being committed against an infinite being, and against infinite obligation, must sink the sinner into an enormous debt of obedience and suffering. All that man, or any created being could do or suffer, must be of finite value; therefore, it was impossible, that any mere man could pay an adequate ransom.

He, that would act the part of a Redeemer, must be the nearest a kin; must actually undertake, as surety, to satisfy for the offence of man; must be able to tender a price of sufficient value, and have power, fully, to effectuate their redemption.

Was this Jesus, the nearest a kin? When you consider that he assumed our nature into a personal, uncompounded, and indissoluble union with his Divine

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nature, you must see that he is the nearest of kin. "Great is the mystery of godliness! God was manifest in the flesh." As God, he was nearest of kin to the Father; as man, he was nearest of kin to man, and was therefore the Goel, or kinsman Redeemer, who was to exert himself in favor of his destitute kinsman; if he had mortgaged his inheritance, the Goel was to buy it back; if he had sold himself into slavery, the Goel was to pay his ransom. "But if the man have no kinsman, to recompense the trespass unto"—see *Numbers* v. 8. and *Ruth* iiii, and ivth. chapters. Jesus, in his human and Divine natures, was nearly related to God and man, must be equally concerned for the true interests of both. He, only, could be disposed to see justice done to the law of God, and sufficient favors procured for the sinner. His having the right of redemption, will avail us nothing, unless he actually substituted himself, in the room of his people, as their surety, and actually undertook to pay their ransom. In no other character, could satisfaction be exacted of him. That the Lord Jesus actually undertook to be the vicarious surety of his people, is ascertained by the apostle; "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." This could not be a surety for God to us: nor is Christ surety for our faith, repentance, and new obedience: these are, in no sense, proper and purchasing conditions of the new covenant, but are blessings secured to us by the Father, as the reward of Christ's righteousness. Therefore, he, not along with sinful transgressors, but taking the whole upon himself, undertook, in the new covenant, to bear the punishment due to the sin of his people, and to fulfil the whole precepts of the law, in their stead. "And Jesus answering, said, suffer it to be so now: for thus it behoveth us, to fulfil all righteousness" The prophet had this view of our Lord; "Surely he hath

born our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: And the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." And the Psalmist represents our Lord in covenant transaction with the Father, as saying, "Then said I, lo! I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart." Did he not actually undertake to be man's surety and Redeemer? Did he pay the infinite price of our redemption? We answer,

When this Jesus is considered in his complex person, every one must see that all his actions and sufferings, were done and suffered, in the person of a Mediator of redemption. His actions and passions, then, were not the productions of a mere human nature, but the doing and suffering of a God-man. Therefore, his obedience and suffering, must be attended with infinite value. As an infinite person, he was able to pay an infinite debt.

That this Divine man, might fully execute the office, which he has undertaken, and for which he is amply qualified, what must be done and suffered by him? Every perfection of the Divine nature, stood engaged for the fulfilment of the preceptive and penal parts of the Divine law. The matter, then, of Christ's redemption, consisted in his active and passive obedience. "For, as by the offence of one, many were made sinners: so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." "Even as the son of man, came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many."

He must, then, render a perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience to the preceptive part of the Divine law. That this Jesus did pay all this submission to the law of God, must be acknowledged by every

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person, who considers, that he put his most inveterate and implacable enemies to defiance, to find the least fault in him; "which of you convinceth me of sin." "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, he will magnify the law, and make it honorable."

Must the sword of God's justice, be unsheathed against the man that is God's fellow? Could he not be spared, and not delivered up for us? Must the whole debt of suffering be paid by him? Yes—as the covenant-head of his people, he must drink the full cup of the curses of God's law, which was due to the sins of his people.

That he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone, and of the people, there was none with him, must be conspicuous to every person, who recollects, that his first appearance in our world, was accompanied with the deepest abasement; that the murderous Herod thirsted for his blood; that he endured hunger and thirst, poverty and want; "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He was inhumanly persecuted from city to city. As there could be no remission of sin, without shedding of blood, so he poured out his precious blood five times; in the last of these, he gave his soul an offering for sin. Could he who knew no sin; neither was guile found in his lips, be indulged with dying in peace? No; behold his irreconcilable enemies unjustly dragging him to Pilate's tribunal. No arguments, no entreaties could prevail, condemned, unrighteously condemned, he must be. Would sentence against him satisfy them? No, the dreadful execution must take place; he must be barbarously crucified between two thieves, as one that is unworthy either of heaven or earth. Behold his human body and soul now parted; see him that went about continually doing good, now lying all pale and

breathless ; his tongue, that spake as man never yet spake, is now sealed in silence : His eyes, that never beheld the needy with the least indifference, are now closed : His hands that were employed in the highest offices of tendernefs and love, now fall down, torn by the rugged nails : His feet, that never failed to carry him about his master's business, are now gored with blood and gashed with the rugged spikes : His sacred temples bleed now from countless pores ; and streams of blood, bespattering his other members, and staining all his raiment, flow from his sacred side. Is this naked, wounded, mangled, outcast piece of clay, the very Jesus, mighty in word and deed ? See, there he lies, but lies as covenant representative of his people. He trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone—could the grave detain him ? No ; having paid the last farthing that justice could demand of him, he brake the bands of death asunder—the curtains of the grave flew open—he arose.

This brings us to consider—

III—That Jesus, who thus died, now lives eternally in heaven, with all power to apply the blessed fruits of his redemption.

That he, who was dead, is now alive, is the voice of the primitive christians ; and we find that this was early attested by an holy angel, who could not deceive. “ He is not here ; for he is risen, as he said ; come, see the place where the Lord lay.” This is confirmed by the voice of holy men, to whom he shewed himself nine times, who sealed it with their blood. If he had not risen, could he possibly be installed in yonder glory ? Our Lord foretold the answer ; “ I ascend to my Father, and to your Father, to my God, and to your God.” The apostle is very explicit to the same purpose. “ He that descended, the same hath also ascended, far above all hea-

vens. In this, his exalted state, a name is given him, above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and of things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." As Lord of all things, he assures his disciples, that he is clothed with all power and authority. "And Jesus said unto them, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He has an all-prevalent intercession; he has the disposal of men and things in heaven; he has the power of administration and government, of trial and judgment, of approbation and condemnation, in his church. The keys hang by his side, and to him we must look, and from him we must receive all power and authority, as officers under him; he has power to send the Spirit to the church, and to make angels, and every other creature act in subserviency to the calling, conversion, and sanctification of his people. Having foiled sin, hell, death, and the combined force of infernal fiends, he ascended to receive the promise of the Father.

"How bright the triumph, none can tell,
 When the rebellious powers of hell,
 That thousand souls had captive made,
 Were all in chains, like captives, led.
 Raised by the Father to the throne,
 He sent his promis'd Spirit down,
 With gifts and graces for rebel men,
 That God might dwell on earth again."

Dr. Watts' Psal. 68. 18.

From his exalted throne, he scatters, in rich abundance, his ascension gifts. Whence do we enjoy the Spirit, and those subordinate wells of salvation, from which the children of God draw all their com-

fort and happiness? Our Lord gives the answer; "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." Christ, having finished his glorious work of redemption; the Holy Spirit begins his efficacious application of the purchased blessings. Christ Jesus has shed down all ministering gifts and graces. Whatever rich and happy variety of gifts and graces are to be found in his ambassadors, for the edification of his church; whatever Divine ordinances we enjoy; whatever good of conversion we obtain; whatever edification, support, or comfort we do receive from ordinances, he hath shed forth that which you see and feel. These fall from Christ, as blessings fell from Elijah's mantle. The Spirit takes things of Christ, and shews them unto us. Ministers and ordinances are empty vessels, insignificant things, unless the Lord fills them, and communicates efficacy through their instrumentality. When Christ is with them, they are full, they are mighty, to break down the strong holds of sin and Satan; and to subject every thought to the obedience of Christ; mighty to heal the broken in heart, to comfort mourners in Zion, to give them the oil of joy for gladness, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

Accept a few reflections on this subject.

I. Hence we must infer, that the Lord Jesus is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever; the same prophet, priest, and king of his church, without variation, or shadow of change; that he is most sincere in all his invitations, not yea and nay, but yea and amen, to the glory of God; that he is sincere and firm to perform all his promises and engagements. "There failed not ought of any thing, which the

Lord had spoken to the house of Israel; all came to pass;" that all the evil which he hath denounced against any of the children of men, shall be executed without reversion. How delightful are these reflections to every friend of Jesus! How securely can they trust in this Divine Saviour! How must it fill the ungodly Christ-despiser, with inexpressible horror, to think that he will, at the end of his days, have the mighty God his enemy, from whose sentence there can be no appeal, and from the weight of whose wrath there can be no deliverance.

II. Let us hence learn, that it must be a rich and full store of grace, for which the Divine Saviour paid the inestimable price of his blood. Infinite wisdom knew well the real value of the blessings of salvation, and his infinite justice excluded an undue reward. Most excellent, then, must be the unsearchable riches that is provided by the blessed Jesus. Christ, the sun, has powerful and efficacious beams of light, to display to the soul overspread with gloomy shades, and celestial rays to scatter round him. He has righteousness and pardon for the condemned criminal, whose blood the justice of God demanded. He has grace to cleanse the soul that is overspread with sin. He has full and final redemption from every infernal foe. How inestimably precious must this grace be! Has the infinite love of Jesus provided such a fulness of the blessings of salvation, for guilty, ruined sinners? How ineffably obdurate must that person be, who has never admired the dying love of Jesus, who has not desired the blessings of the cross!

III. Doth Jesus, the great Redeemer live for ever, enthroned in glory, to receive the merit of his blood, and of the fulfillment of his Father's engagements to him, for the purpose of bestowing the blessings of his purchase on every weary and heavy laden,

finer, and to give efficacy to all the means of salvation. This directs us not to content ourselves with the mere enjoyment of any outward mean of life; but to be looking and praying to the Lord of all saving influences, that he would fill his word and ordinances with saving virtue to our souls, that they may be the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto us.

This directs us, to believe in the Lord Jesus, and to fix all our hopes of everlasting salvation in him. "There is no other name given under heaven, by which we can be saved." From his hand, we must drink the cup of salvation, or of his indignation, through endless ages. No prophet, no apostle, no minister can confer spiritual and eternal blessings—effectually help you, they cannot. Fly, then, by faith to Jesus, the alone city of refuge. He is ready; he is willing to communicate, not only the riches of grace, but a kingdom of glory.

Now to Him that is able to stablish you according to the gospel. To God only wise, be glory through Christ Jesus for ever. *AMEN.*

S E R M O N I I I .

THE UNREASONABLENESS OF REJECTING THIS
SAYIOUR.

MATTHEW XI.—6.

Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

WHEN John, whom Herod had cast into prison, received an account of the many wonderful works which Jesus wrought, he ordered two of his disciples to go to him, more for their satisfaction than his own; though his long confinement, and the low figure which Christ made in the world, among the learned and the great, were great trials of his own faith about him; requiring that they should put this interesting question to him;—Art thou the promised and expected Messiah, that was to come for the redemption of Israel, or must we look for another in that character?

Jesus gives them no direct answer; but appeals to those Divine works of power and compassion, which they had seen with their eyes, and heard with their ears, to evidence that he was the Redeemer of Israel. “The blind see; the deaf hear; the lame walk; the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them.” To support the faith of John, he then adds the words of our text—“Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.”

They are and shall be for ever blessed, who shall not be so prejudiced against me, as to reject me ; who shall not so stumble at me, as to despise me and my salvation ; who shall not be ashamed to own me and my spiritual, self-denying doctrines, before a crooked and perverse generation.

We shall endeavor to cast some light upon this subject, by mentioning some principal things in Christ Jesus, and his doctrines, at which many wise men after the flesh, and many mighty men have stumbled to their everlasting perdition ; and shew that their offence is destitute of all just foundation.

I. That the scriptures should be received as a revelation of the mind of God, appears to many, silly, absurd, and ridiculous. That so great and glorious a Being, should stoop so low as to take any notice of any of the concerns of men, and particularly, that he should condescend so far, as to give clear, undeniable intimations of his will, to the men of this world, is to them, only to be admitted by ignorant and fettered minds ; yea, that they ought to be rejected, as the work of crafty and designing priests.

That all the religion which can be obtained from the mere light of nature, can never form a system of morals, must appear to all who consider,

That the most learned philosophers, without the help of Divine revelation, have manifested their gross ignorance of the unity, simplicity, power, and providence of the Divine Being. That reason, in a state of rectitude, would say, that the rite of worshipping God, must be learned from his most perfect will : But the wisest of men, unassisted by revelation, have prescribed modes of worship, as various as the imaginations of their own vain minds. That nothing can be found respecting that, wherein the supreme happiness of man consists, but great doubts, and wild conjectures, without the help of Divine revelation.

That all are confessedly sinners, needing pardon; but reason alone, has never been able to discover, that it is agreeable to the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God to pardon sin, much more unable is it, to find out how great sins, or what sort of sins, and by what means he will forgive them. Therefore no sure hope can be obtained in this matter, without the help of Divine revelation. What then can philosophy bring forth? ignorant and degenerate sons.

All will acknowledge, that the great Creator is capable, some way or other, to communicate his will to his intelligent creatures, with sufficient evidence, that the revelation is from God.

All the evidence, that a candid enquirer after truth can desire, is to be found in the scriptures. What can be expected as evidential of their Divinity? Would you expect that such a revelation would narrate to us our first original; would give an historical account of such circumstances of the dispensation of God towards us, from the beginning; as would correspond with constant observation? Would you expect early intimations of the way of recovery from sin and guilt? Would you expect a minutely circumstantial prediction of him, by whom redemption is to be obtained? Would you expect something to keep this Saviour in the view of God's people, before his actual and personal manifestation? Would you expect repeated testimonies from heaven, that their religion was from him, and that their faith and hope were built on a sure foundation? Would you expect that near the time predicted, there would be a general expectation of the Messiah; and that when he did come, he would abundantly attest his Divine mission, by the holiness and beneficence of his life, and by numerous, open, and uncontroverted miracles? Would you expect that he would verify his Divine mission, by predicting future succeeding events, and that when

he was cut off, according to ancient prophecies, he would declare himself to be the Son of God, with power, by his resurrection from the dead? Would you expect that those who were eye-witnesses of his life and death, resurrection and ascension, would, at their peril, preach this Saviour to the world, face every opposition, and surmount the violence of persecution, and seal their doctrines with their blood? Would you expect that those, thus commissioned, would produce credentials, that they were extraordinarily and peculiarly qualified for their great work; and that their Messiah would succeed them by the conversion of multitudes to the faith? Would you expect some apparent influence of this religion upon the hearts and lives of its sincere professors?

When you cast your eyes upon the sacred scriptures, do not the first pages give you the history of our origin, and the dispensation of God toward us, with the intimation of the method of salvation? Do they not hold up to your view, this Saviour, by types and adumbrations? Do you not find miracles wrought in the face of friends and enemies, and the manifestations of his presence, in Shechinah, Urim, and Thummim? Doth not this sacred history minutely describe the birth, life, and death of the Saviour? Yea, what wonders of power, grace, and mercy were wrought by him, in the view of an opposing world, so attested by those present, that infidelity must blush to reject them. Do you not find the predictions of this Saviour perfectly fulfilled? Do you not find his disciples sacrificing their lives in vindication of the truths of the gospel? Do you not see that this very gospel, has been the power of God, unto salvation, to some of every character, whose lives have abounded in the fruits of righteousness and true holiness?

When you consider these things, must not the glare of evidence banish every doubt, and fix the

deepest conviction, that the gospel is not that absurd and ridiculous thing, which you supposed it to be: but that the scriptures are the very word of God?

If, notwithstanding all this evidence, you contend that the scriptures are the fictions of subtle priests, for their own profit —

This would be a very high compliment to men, whom you so much despise—this would represent them, not only the most cunning and wisest of men; but we should be tempted to adore them as deities, who have such power as to impose on the external senses of mankind, and make them believe that they both saw and did things, that were never seen or done by them. Nay, this would make them superior to all that has been related of the infernal powers; their legerdemain has never been supposed to deceive the senses of mankind, in matters of so public and notorious a nature. As this would exalt them above men and devils, so it would represent them exceeding the power of Almighty God; for his miracles only appealed to the outward senses of men.

You must, then, either submit to the humiliation of renouncing all your pretensions to superior wisdom, and disown the God of nature, whom you profess to admire, or you must acknowledge that the scriptures could not be the fiction of designing men, but the very word of God.

II. The low, mean, and debased circumstances, in which he made his appearance in our world, is an occasion of offence to many.

The Jews had raised expectation of a glorious temporal kingdom; at the coming of the Messiah, they looked for a person cloathed with glory and majesty, with pomp and splendor. When they looked to the Bethlehemite, the carpenter's son, he was despised and rejected of men; they hid their faces from him; he was despised, and they esteemed

him not; they considered him as a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people. The Jewish priests and rulers, who should have been the builders of the Jewish church, and with them, many wise men, after the flesh, and many mighty, and noble, refused this Stone, which is become the head of the corner.

Is there any just foundation for stumbling, in the birth, life, or death of our Jesus? Surely there can be none. This will appear, if we consider—that it was predicted, in the most minute circumstances, that as he was with the Father before all worlds, so he should become an infant of days, low, mean, and abased, in his birth, life, and Death.

When we view the descent of our Lord, we must have respect to the two different natures, that were united in his glorious person—however wonderful and contrary to perverse reason it may appear, the man Christ Jesus, was also Immanuel—the child given to us, is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. He is that God, whose throne is for ever and ever. Although he was God's fellow, he was also man. Descended as to his human nature, from the loins of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; of the family of David; and that in a way surprisingly different from any ordinary human generation. A virgin conceived and brought forth this son, whose name is Immanuel.

Though Bethlèhem was little among the thousands of Judah, it must be the place out of which he came forth, who is to be the Supreme Ruler in Israel. Galilee of the Gentiles, must be the place of his residence. He must appear in such a debased state, “that many were astonished at him, his visage was so marred more than any man; and his form more than the sons of men.” He must be betrayed by a professed friend, wounded and bruised; buffeted and spit upon;

mocked and upbraided ; and in due time, cut off from the land of the living. These prophecies, all fully and evidently centering in the despised Jesus, he must be the appointed of the Father to bring redemption to Israel.

Has an infinitely wise God seen it every way becoming his perfections, and giving security to his ruined creatures, to provide, and send this mean, low, abased Saviour ? Has he so long before his appearing in our world, foretold us in the most circumstantial manner, that such should be our Prince and Saviour ? Is it not then unreasonable, not to say impious folly, to despise and reject this provision of an infinitely wise God ? Is it not horrid impudence thus to arraign the conduct of the God of heaven !

When you see all former predictions most minutely fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, can reason reject the evidence ? Must you not say, it is most reasonable to accept him.

Again, these appendages of the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ, are so far from offering an insult upon, that they recommend him to our reason.

Suppose him to have appeared in all the pomp and splendor of majesty ; bearing all authority in his countenance ; marshalling nations at his command ; subduing kingdoms by the glitter of his sword ; bestowing crowns at pleasure ; in the most ample manner rewarding his friends, and compelling his enemies to bow at his feet. However this might recommend him to minds aspiring after the magnificence and glory of this world, it could not endear him to them in the character of a Redeemer, whose kingdom was not of this world. All must convince them, that such an one was calculated to be a lord of this world, They must see that such a prince might dispose of the bodies of men ; but not command the heart—might force the cap and the knee : but not

the thoughts of the soul—such then must be every way disqualified from bringing any spiritual deliverance.

Whereas, behold the poor tent-maker, poor, despised, persecuted, crucified, accompanied with a few ignorant, despised fishermen, setting up a kingdom, that is not of this world, a kingdom of grace and mercy ! See him, by the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, triumphing over the vain pomp and vanity of this world ; levelling the pride of man, with the dust of the earth ; turning the covetous into liberality ; subduing the unruly passions of the human breast ; rapidly diffusing knowledge in the minds of men ; converting the lion into a lamb ; collecting into his kingdom of every nation and people, of whatever different interests, and all in defiance of the awful menaces, the most cruel scourging of persecutors, or even the rage of hell.

Must not reason tell you, that the kingdom of such, cannot be of this world ; it must be spiritual ; it must be holy.

If you are those men of reason, then, which you would wish to be thought to be, you must acknowledge, that even the low, mean, and debased Jesus, must be the only Saviour for the finners of this world.

III. Some are offended at the miracles which Jesus wrought—sensible they are, that these admitted, will prove an attestation of Divinity, with such constraining evidence, that infidelity will not be able to resist it. They, then, with the Jews, in the days of our Lord, will raise a cry, that he casteth out devils by Belzebub, the prince of devils.

What can be discovered in his miraculous operations, so displeasing to the wise and noble ? Is it because the wonders wrought by Jesus and his disciples, exceeded the power of nature ? Who among them

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can fully explore the powers of nature? Who can fet its limits? The most eagle-eyed philosopher, is compelled to confess his ignorance of the power of nature, in the smallest particle of sand, or by what virtue there is cohesion in particles of matter.

Is it because some of these divine wonders are contrary to all the known powers of nature? they can certainly know some of its powers, and as certainly determine what is contrary to these known powers; they can know that fire will burn, will consume whatever is combustible, if put into it, and as certainly know if this power is restrained.

Is it because they did not see them wrought? No doubt every individual might claim an equal right to behold such operations. That which all see, would become as common as the sun or moon. This would, in some measure, destroy the wonder of the work; at least, would weaken its efficacy. To require this, would be calling for impossibilities.—Therefore in this, as in similar cases, we must depend upon the testimony of credible witnesses. This is handed down, from generation to generation, announced by the most indisputable credentials, as incapable of being disproved by their most inveterate enemies, at the time and place where they were wrought; therefore every infidel must blush to deny them.

Who could see the mouth of furious lions stopped, and the power of fire so far restrained, and that in its most inflamed state, as to lose all power to singe an hair of the head, and not, with the heathen prince, be convinced that a God commanded? Who could behold the devils cast out of man; the dead raised to life; the water turned into wine, and thousands filled with five small loaves, and not be constrained to say, that a God is here? These not only exceed, but are contrary to all the known powers of nature.

Do you say, you cannot understand them, therefore you cannot embrace them—because you cannot be as wise as God, you cannot receive them: how perverse! How absurd!

IV. Many, willing to reduce all things to the small circle of their knowledge, and too haughty to suppose it possible that any thing could escape the notice of their eyes, have declaimed against the mysteriousness of the doctrines of Christ, as unintelligible jargon, unworthy a noble mind; yea, that it is laughable to hear of the Trinity of persons in one God-head—the mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh, and the mystical union of believers with Christ.

What can be discovered in the mysterious doctrines of the gospel, which gives so great offence? Is it because they cannot fully comprehend all the glorious doctrines of Divine revelation? They do not sufficiently consider that some of its hidden mysteries, are wonderful, and altogether unaccountable, before they are fully made known, which, when made known, can be accounted for from principles of reason. Others are wonderful, and above our reason to comprehend. Are they disobliged because they cannot fully account for all these incomprehensible things? Permit me to ask you---are there no mysteries in the natural world, whose depth you cannot fathom, whose involutions you cannot unravel? Can you disclose fully any one work of nature? Can you illustrate, or even conceive the mode of union subsisting between your soul and body? How the branch is united to the vine? Are there not ten thousand things in the natural world, too mysterious to be minutely comprehended by the human mind? Your boasted reason is silenced here. Are there mysteries in the natural world? If so, why must there be

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be none in the moral world? You believe the union of your soul and body—the union of the branch with the vine, however incomprehensible to you. If reason credits the mysteries of the world of nature, why will it reject the mysteries of the kingdom of grace? If reason receives the former, why must it renounce the latter?—The finger of God is seen in this, the hand of God in that—a display of Divinity must be seen in both. Reason then declares, that if you own God in the one, you must acknowledge him in both. Therefore you must renounce your boasted reason, or believe the mysteries of the gospel.

V. The cross of Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks, foolishness. It is matter of great offence, to offer a dying Saviour, to deliver, not only in a temporal, but in a spiritual respect. They own that they are sinners: but cannot depend upon him, who was crucified between two thieves, for their salvation. That his death should bring life to them, they cannot admit. That they should be beholden to another, and especially to him that died on Calvary's mount, they cannot bear. They had rather look to the Cæsars, and Alexanders, triumphant conquerors, to bring deliverance to them. The truth is, they hope that their repentance, without any other atonement, will recommend them to a merciful God.

The doctrine of atonement for sin, by the death of another, has not been esteemed, in every age of the world, a strange, a ridiculous thing.

Sacrifices are no innovation. Even the heathen, in every age of the world, have had their sacrifices. The more costly they could make them; the more efficacious they supposed they would be, to procure the desired event. How have they killed men, and given them in sacrifice! Yea, given even the fruit of their bodies, for the sin of their souls! Whence all

this pomp in making oblations? Did they not suppose it reasonable, nay necessary to remove the guilt of sin? Men, then, in all ages and nations of the world, have considered it a fit and congruous thing, that atonement be made for sin.

Again, It has never appeared strange to the wisest of men, and in the best constituted governments, that debtors, yea, the most notorious malefactors, should be discharged by a surety, and delivered by a substitute. What nation can be found, however wise and political, who have judged it incongruous to reason, to privilege a debtor with a surety? Who will not discharge the principal, upon the payment of the debt by his sponsor, notwithstanding the debtor is bound to discharge the debt? Surely none. Have not the most treasonable malefactors been delivered by a substitute? Have not some of the brave Romans stepped forth, out of greatness of love to the person, and from a truly patriotic spirit, given their lives a ransom? Has not the ransom been accepted, and the criminal, for this, been set at liberty, nay, restored? Have not such acts of public spirit, procured for their posterity, in succeeding generations, the most exalted titles, and enriching benefices.

Again—Would you wish to make reparation for offences committed, by the most genuine and thorough repentance? Could this be accepted, as fully satisfactory, no offender, however heinous his crime, could justly suffer the penalty of the law. It must be confessed, that the most of the basest criminals are heartily sorry, when they face the dreadful consequence of their criminality: Yet no wise, no righteous government, has ever considered this as full, satisfactory atonement. None could, in reason and justice, remit the offence, and reinstate the offender.

Has atonement, by sacrifice, been judged reason-

ble and necessary by all nations, people, and tongues? Why must the sacrifice of him, who gave himself an offering for sin, be rejected, as unworthy the acceptance of a man of sense? If those insufficient shadows were of so high account by many wise and noble, why ought not the great and glorious Archetype to be highly prized and accepted?

Has a surety freed the principal? Has a substitute delivered from the penal power of the law, and procured restoration to citizenship for the transgressor, bound over to an ignominious death?

A vicarious satisfaction, then, is no strange, unreasonable thing in civil matters; why must it be so absurd and ridiculous in religion, that one should die for the people; Christ the just, for the unjust, that he might bring them to God? Why must it be so unaccountable, that he, by his death, should purchase glory, honor, and immortal life, for his people?

If repentance can make no reparation, give no satisfaction for heinous crimes, before the most wise and righteous of civil judges, why must the most merciful and gracious Jehovah accept the insincere repentance of sinners, as perfect compensation for all past offences? Why must not the God of all the earth do right?

You must, therefore, cease to act upon your own principles, or renounce all dependence on your flimsy repentance, and fly to the cross of Christ for righteousness and life.

VI. Thousands stumble at the purity of the doctrines of Christ; at the spirituality of his precepts, and the holiness of his salvation.

He hath taught us, that we have ruined ourselves by sin; that there is salvation in him, and in no other; that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; that if a man love father, or mother, or any thing more than him, they are

unworthy of him ; that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we must live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world : that we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him, and that we must be holy as he is holy.

His precepts not only reach the outward actions, but extend to the secret motions, desires, and intentions of the heart—his command is, “ give me thy heart ;” give me thy supreme love, and serve me with thy whole soul, strength, and might—Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ; and this is his commandment, “ that ye believe in his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.”

We are told that he came to save his people from their sins ; that his blood cleanseth from all unrighteousness ; that he has garments of salvation, white and clean, for all that trust in him, and that no unclean thing shall enter into the new Jerusalem.

These say many, are the sayings of the Babler ; they are too inimical to the pleasures of men, and the delights of life, to be received by men of taste.

That Jesus is very God, the works that he did testify of him—therefore he is infinite in every perfection, amidst all his abasement : he must be most wise, holy, just, and righteous, as well as merciful and gracious. As is the cause, so must the effect be—the Son that bears the image of the Father, is worthy of him—must not, then, every thing that proceeds from one so pure, spiritual, and holy, be holy, spiritual and pure ? You could not look to the thistle to produce grapes, nor to the thorn to produce figs. However high-flying a Socinian you may be, so long as you acknowledge a God of every excellence, a God that is consistent with himself ; so long you cannot reject Jesus in his doctrines, precepts, and salvation.

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Again—Had he communicated licentious principles ; had he commanded the indulgence of our sinful propensities ; had he promised to give us a heaven of carnal delights, at the end of our race ; would this have been like a God of infinite purity ? Would not these have proven that his kingdom was of this world ; that he was a being of carnal pleasure ; that he wished to rock the conscious sinner asleep ; that he did not desire to prepare him for a habitation with a God of perfect holiness, However sunk in sensuality, and infatuated with sin, you must confess that if happiness is to be enjoyed, it must be found in the enjoyment of a God of consummate happiness. As soon can a Leopard change his spots, as a God of perfection teach impure principles, command licentiousness, or give an unholy salvation.

Again—why contend thus with the instructions, precepts and salvation of Jesus ? Doth it not arise from a secret apprehension that they are unreasonable abridgments of your happiness, in the pleasures of sin ? Of what would they rob or deprive you ? Not of a healthy frame of body ; not of any righteous emoluments of life ; not of any noble, manly, social enjoyments ; not of any adequate supports in an hour of affliction ; nor of any comforts in a dying moment. Your reason declares, that obedience to his instructions, submission to his commands, and reliance upon him for perfect deliverance from all sin, and the full enjoyment of God in a world to come, would give peace in your own breast, which is now interrupted ; would break you off from a debauched life, and thereby promote health of body, increase of wealth, and a capacity for the moderate enjoyment of the good things of this world ; would buoy you up in the day of distress ; support you in an hour of death, and give blessedness through an eternity.

How repugnant to self-interest ! How contrary

to their own happiness, must all those act, who stumble at the doctrines, precepts, and salvation of Jesus!

VII. Many take occasion of offence from the immorality of the professors of the gospel, and the divisions that are among them.

Notwithstanding, says the despiser of the gospel, your boasted sovereign power of the gospel, and the imaginary glorious effects of it upon believers, how many of its professors are ignorant, hypocritical, yea, as grossly immoral as multitudes that make no profession of religion! Ino how many forms are your advocates for religion split; each supporting his favorite tenets, as much as possible at the expence of all others! Can there be any reality in this multifarious monster? If so, surely its glorious author would not suffer such turning of the world upside down.

The argument used by those who labor to reason themselves out of all religion, is—because some of its professors are base, hypocritical persons, nay, bad men—therefore they conclude, that all are bad men! Surprising argument!—Because some of the soldiers are diseased, therefore, all the soldiers in the army are sick;—because some learned men are block-heads, therefore there is no learned man;—because some attorneys are knavish, therefore there is no honest attorney. What can be more ridiculous than to hear persons, arrogating to themselves a superiority of knowledge, admitting such inconclusive reasoning? It shows that they wish to persuade themselves to disbelieve, what they cannot but believe; like little boys travelling in the night, being cowardly, they will whistle, to persuade themselves that they are not cowards. This argument shows that some of the soldiers are in a healthy condition—some professing to be learned, are really so, &c. Reduce this argument to religion—because some of its professors are wicked

men, therefore some of them are good men. At least, you must confess that it implies that there is a reality in religion.

Again—Although all professors are not the subjects of the powerful and happy influence of religion, under the gospel; yet every one must have seen what a marvellous change it has made upon the subjects of it. How humble, meek, loving, and charitable they have become! How it has supported them in the raging waves of adversity, and ballasted them in the sea of prosperity! How many have been enabled to encounter the most ruinous dangers, yea, to grapple with the king of terrors with noble fortitude. When you behold these things, can you, dare you say, there is no reality in religion? Conviction strikes you, and, however unwilling, you are constrained to yield.

Still you will rally your forces, saying, there can be nothing true, nothing certain, where there is such strange and unaccountable division.

If the mere light of reason, without the help of Divine revelation, was sufficiently clear and powerful, to direct in so plain a path, that all its votaries must run in one way, there would be some shew of foundation, for being offended at the divisions, which subsist in the gospel-church. But reason, unassisted by the light of Divine revelation, is a poor, bewildered, uncertain thing. Hence the many wild opinions, produced by corrupt minds, among the inhabitants of the heathen world. What infinite diversity of vain and monstrous fancies have passed for religion and devotion among them! What wide and irreconcilable differences have been among the philosophers, as well as among the priests and people of different nations! Why do the advocates for natural religion agree better in this, than in past ages? Why are they more uniform in their principles, than

the Epicurean, Stoic, or Platonic philosophers? The truth is, they have drawn more light from Divine revelation, although they are too proud to acknowledge it.

If division among professors could lay a sufficient foundation for renouncing such a profession, all natural religion, ancient and modern, all philosophy, politics, law, physic, yea, revealed religion, must suffer in one general shipwreck. Doth not every person see, that it would be most absurd to reject them on this account.

All the most essential things in our holy religion are clearly revealed. Therefore the disagreement, among professors of it, is not so much about its great and important concernments, as with respect to those things that are of lesser moment, and not so clearly discovered in the word of God.

In the present state of things, it appears to me to be a wise dispensation of the glorious Author of our religion, to leave those smaller matters, so involved in darkness, as to permit differences to arise about them. Whatever disagreeable feelings these discords among professors may occasion; they may be designed to answer the valuable purposes of striking out the truth by their collision—of stimulating the different parties, to more close examination after truth, and to a more diligent application to the duties of their profession; of keeping up a check upon each other, by their watchfulness; and of trying their mutual love to, and forbearance the one with the other. The disagreements, then, which subsist among professors, can be no just foundation for stumbling at the religion of Jesus.

Suffer a word of application :—

1st. This subject addresses itself to you, who are the professors of the religion of Jesus. Its advocates are few, when compared with the great mass of

mankind; and when you closely inspect the conduct of that little flock, you are convinced that its real friends are very few. Few have felt its energy upon their souls. Some of you, I hope, have experienced it to be the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation. Have you not satisfactory evidence, that some, of every description of the children of men, have been the trophies of its all-conquering power? Do you hear a Saul, notwithstanding his high commission, and furious, persecuting spirit, under the mighty voice of Jesus, crying out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Do you hear him preaching the once hated doctrine of the cross of Christ? Do you behold him ready to die in vindication of the holy cause of Christ? O the sovereign efficacy, the certain infallibility of the divinity of the scriptures! You live in a day of danger. Satan, with his emissaries, will cast their fiery darts at you. If not immediately assaulted by the prince of darkness, his agents will improve their hellish enginery, to make you ashamed of your Lord. They will attempt to banter you out of your religion, by defaming the holy names, doctrines, and people of Jesus. If you have felt the efficacy of this gospel on your hearts and lives; have seen the beauty of Jesus, and tasted that he is gracious, you have an inward witness, more powerful and better to you than ten thousand arguments. Tell them, that you are proof against all their sneers and sophistical arguments; tell them that you see no occasion of stumbling in him. Take care that you lay no stumbling-block before others.

Do not mingle doubtful notions of your own, with the christian faith. The great and essential articles of christianity are Divine and glorious. Let no peculiar sentiments, insufficiently warranted from the

word of God, be of equal dignity with the great articles of your faith. Such weakneses and debased notions of your own, will sink the gospel in the esteem of the world.

Again; take care not to defile your christian conversation with sinful practices. It is the design of God's eternal counsel, that you be holy and without blame before him, in love. If you cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness, in the fear of God; if you give the gospel its due honors, believing its revelations, and worshipping according to its appointments, then shall others, who behold you, confess that there is something Divine in Christianity. But if you interline your lives with iniquity; join to your duties lying, slandering, drunkenness, you will disgrace your holy religion, and open the mouths of infidels, against the cause of Christ.

Again; Let not the appendages of religion, be matter of loud contest, or bitter strife. We are commanded to contend for the great, essential doctrines of Christianity; we are also commanded to receive those that are weak in the faith, not involving them in doubtful disputation. Let not then your factions and zeal give infidels occasion to blaspheme the gospel. Cannot lambs live together, without wounding one the other? Why shall christians live so as to expose their Divine religion to the reproach of sinful men? Happy for the world, glorious for the cause of Christ, if christians would so live, as to give no occasion to the adversary to revile their holy religion!

2. This subject addresses all those who have never been the subjects of the powerful influence of the gospel. You are in heart in the number of infidels, let your profession be what it may. Why do you not

believe the gospel? Is it because it is not sufficiently attested? Or, is it not because you have not sufficiently attended to its evidencē? I fear the truth is, you do not wish to give an ear to the things that belong to your eternal peace, lest it should prevent your present pleasures in sin. You glory in your enjoyments, as if you alone were the happy men. Wherein doth your state excel in blessedness? Not in the enjoyments and joys of life; you weary yourselves for very vanity, looking for consummate happiness, from the objects of sense, but can never find it. Your lives are a scene of disappointment, uneasiness, fear, and perplexity. The men of piety are abridged of no rational, noble, or manly participations; and as they do not expect felicity from any sensual gratification, they have comparatively few disappointments, little to fear, and less to perplex them, of a worldly nature. Do you boast of a superior situation, with respect to a world to come? You say, "You have no opinion of a heaven or hell." You labor hard, to reason yourselves out of all notions of a future state of rewards and punishment. Suppose it should be found hereafter in perfect conformity to your wish? Wherein would you exult? You have enjoyed your portion in this world, and the virtuous man would have no cause to regret, having lost nothing that is rational, manly or noble. If both then must die, like the beast that perisheth, the righteous man will be as high in happiness, as any infidel. But, if it should be found that things will be infinitely the reverse of all your carnal expectations, how inexpressibly shocking will be your disappointment! You must then bid an everlasting adieu to all the Gods in whom you trusted; you must then appear before Jesus, whom you despised. He will not then appear a mean, debased man: but an awful Judge of quick

and dead, cloathed with all the horrors of indignation and wrath. Then will you believe, that he that despised him before men, him will he despise before his heavenly Father ; then will you know, “ that whosoever shall fall on this stone, at which you have stumbled, shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder ;” shall miserably destroy him, and that without remedy.

The righteous shall then go forth with joy to meet Jesus the Judge, their friend, in the air. Then will he put them in the full possession of all the blessedness, which he had promised them ; he will make them Kings and Priests with God for ever and ever.

That this may be the final portion of all, may God of his infinite mercy grant, for Christ's sake.
AMEN.

S E R M O N I V .

THE ALMOST AND ALTOGETHER CHRISTIAN.

ACTS XXVI.—29.

“ And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that bear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

AMONG all the characters that have gained in the human race, no one is more illustrious than that of a Christian. All, of every age and sex, who have arrived to years of discretion, under the beams of the gospel, vindicate this character to themselves. To esteem it as a most unjust and injurious insult, to deny it to them, is a convincing evidence, that it is of great price in their view. They have an idea, that it is excellent and laudable, whether they have seen any real, intrinsic worth in it or not.

We may enquire what that christianity is, which mankind so generally admire, and upon which they ground their claim to this character? It is to be feared, that upon strict examination, we will be obliged to understand christianity, in that lean and confined sense, which it too frequently bears, as importing no more than an exemption from gross vices, together with a round of outward duties, performed in a mercenary, servile spirit, to soothe conscience, and to

purchase the favor of God, pleased with their attainments, not doubting their ability to please God, with a little help from Christ, to fill up their deficiencies.

Has the gospel exhibited Christ, a partial Saviour, as the object of that faith, which will give us an interest in the great salvation? Neither Christ, nor his apostles, have given the least countenance to Christ's dividing the great business of salvation, with a sinner, whose works are imperfect, and consequently sinful. Therefore, such a lean christianity may be depended upon, and the person, nevertheless, be far from the kingdom of heaven, or from possessing the essentials of a christian. If you ask, what are the ingredients necessary to constitute a christian?—You have an answer—Faith and holiness is universally represented as that, without which no man can be a christian.

All who profess the religion of Jesus, venerate the ministerial labors, and the christian conduct of St. Paul. If it can be made appear, that the great apostle of the Gentiles possessed these ingredients of a real christian, in his life and conversation, it must be granted by all, that an illustration of this will be a happy mean to shew the necessity and importance of faith and holiness. This apostle has declared, that it is not sufficient to entitle us to heaven, that we advance so far in religion, as to become almost christians—we must progress to real christians.

The apostle addressed King Agrippa, in a most close and pathetic manner, appealing to his judgment and conscience, whether an impartial comparison of the writings of Moses, and the predictions of the prophets relating to the Messiah, did not agree with what had been done and suffered by our Jesus, and were not evidently fulfilled in him?

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Agrippa, being sensibly impressed with the serious and solemn appeal, confessed that there was so much force of reason and scripture in the doctrines which he had delivered, that he was almost persuaded to be a christian: But his dignity, and the religion in which he was brought up, prevailed with him not to renounce Judaism, and embrace christianity.

In the words of our text, the apostle replied with a beauty, tenderness, and endearment, which is inimitable, and which illustrated the character of a gentleman, and a christian. Assuring the king, that he was so thoroughly convinced of the truth, necessity, and excellence of the doctrines which he had exhibited, concerning a crucified and risen Saviour, and that he had experienced so much present support, and unutterable joys in him, and in his ways, and had so full assurance of his future felicity, that his heart glowed with such a compassionate concern for his fellow-creatures, who must be saved, or lost for ever, that he could not but most earnestly pray that God, by his grace, would grant, that not only his Majesty, but also his Excellency the Governor, and every one of that august assembly, may be not only almost, which will do them no good, if it stops there, but entirely, and without reserve, in the same state and condition with himself, as a christian.

The apostle therefore gives two characters to be illustrated.

I—How far a person may go in religion, and be only an almost christian.

II—What the altogether christian must be, as drawn from the life of St. Paul.

I. Behold the professor, his highest object, at present, is the exaltation of *self*, by the universal approbation of the world around him—he lays up a treasure of speculative views of all the doctrines of

revealed religion—he speaks with perspicuity, reasons with energy, combats, yea, conquers the most enlightened around him, on all speculative religion; he talks much of the generous love and compassion of Jesus; he indiscriminately denounces his anathemas against all who do not think and speak as he doth; he embraces every opportunity to display his vast mass of knowledge.

To raise his character, he feels himself obliged to live soberly and righteously; he is peculiarly watchful in his conversation; in all the duties of morality he studies to maintain an unblemished character in the sight of his fellow-men.

He knows, that to support his wished reputation, he must give himself to reading; he is but little conversant with the word of God; he is not employed in pursuit of the knowledge of himself, or the way of salvation through Christ—curious, superficial, or merely speculative authors are the men of his counsel.

He advances his name; he is not a restrainer of prayer; he is punctilious in the external performance of this duty; he doth not pray, but says his prayers, especially in the high ways and the streets, to be seen of men; he is a stranger to communion with God in any duty; he neither truly desires the presence, nor the blessing of God, nor an answer to his prayers; he must pray sometimes, it will satisfy if he runs the round once or twice on the sabbath of the Lord, to settle accounts for the sins of the week that is past.

He now considers, that one thing only is wanting to give him a finished character; he must be admitted to the table of the Lord—this will crown the whole; this will put it out of the power of any to dispute his christianity—he worms his way in—he sits, he eats; he drinks as the people of the Lord; he

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is not feasted as with marrow, and of fatness, of which the children partake; he comes away empty, he is satisfied, and filled with hopes of an inheritance among the saints in light.

In the midst of all which this professor has done, and rejoicing in hopes that his state was safe, and his happiness secure, the Lord, by some powerful word of his grace, applies the law to his conscience; by his Spirit, convinces the soul of sin.

The apostle tells him, that he had not known sin but by the law; "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died;" "When the law was applied by the Spirit, I had an affecting view of my sins." He is now convinced of the sin of his life; thus it was with Peter's hearers, Acts ii. 36, 37. They were convinced of their sin, in murdering the Lord. His conviction of one sin, soon discovers many, which appear as if ranged in battalion against the sinner; he is now made to see the corrupt fountain, his sinful heart, that he is dead in sin, an enemy to God, and his law. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it? He learns, that from it come murders, adulteries, false witness, &c. he sees that there is no goodness in his heart, that he is dead in sin, an enemy to God and his law. The Spirit of the Lord having brought home the law, his eyes are opened; he sees his inside; he is affrightened to feel that he is full of implacable enmity against God; a monster in sin. He now sees that he is in an unjustified state, and cannot be saved in his present condition. The prodigal saw that he was perishing, before he arose and came to his father; he felt himself lost and dead. "The commandment which was ordained to life, he found to be unto death; for sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived him, and by it slew him."

He finds that he is a dead man in law, and in fact, sentenced to eternal death, and destitute of spiritual life; he sees that all the threatening of God's law, belongs to him; he cries, "I am the man," against whom the curses of God's word are directed! He feels himself miserable under the curse of God, the wrath of God, and bound over to eternal death. "For as many as are of the work of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." He knows that he is a child of wrath, because being born in sin, wrath must be his inheritance—The soul that sinneth shall die; die temporally, spiritually, and eternally. He feels, from the reflections of his guilty conscience, that his sins are real, no melancholy whim; that they are innumerable, and highly aggravated; he feels that his misery is inexpressible. O, how terrible to be cursed by that God, who alone can bless! Cursed by him, who is infinite in strength, and can execute all his threatenings! He is convinced that his misery is certain; he now sees that God is holy, just, righteous and true, and therefore, all the curses of God are upon him, in his present state; he is deeply affected and distressed with such a view. Peter's hearers were pricked in their hearts, as if a spear had been thrust into their hearts. This distress may be different in different persons. Under this distress, he begins to enquire, what he must do to be saved? he feels his case urgent; something must be done. He applies himself to doing; he is watchful against sin; he attends to the duties of holiness; he prays, he cries; perhaps when on his knees before God, he, at a certain time, finds an unusual readiness in prayer—this, he concludes, must be a new heart—this must be faith in Christ, and he must be a converted person.

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Sometimes a promise of the gospel is suggested to the solitary mind ; because the words appear to answer his condition, he eagerly embraces it, and concludes that it has been sent of God, and is an evidence that he has obtained an interest in the love and favor of God.

These, and things of a similar nature, are often substituted in the place of applying immediately to Christ, as convinced Saul did, and receiving him upon his own terms.

Although Jesus knew that the heart of Judas was not right with God, he takes him into the number of his disciples ; it is most probable that he designed to shew to future ages, that such impostors would not only intrude into the church, but become office-bearers in it. If the knowledge of Judas in the doctrines of religion, so far as revealed at that time, had not been as conspicuous as that of any of his brethren ; if his moral deportment in life had not been unexceptionable ; if he had been discovered to be remiss in the duties of holiness—it is most probable that the disciples of our Lord would have suspected him to be the person who would betray their Lord, when Jesus told them that one of them should betray him. We have not the least hint of such a suspicion—the cry was, “ *is it I ?* ” When you view him, with a kiss delivering the blessed Jesus into the hands of his murderers, he no sooner beheld them lay violent hands upon him, than his conscience smote him ; the guilt of innocent blood flashed in his face ; this drew into his view innumerable secret sins ; conviction in an overwhelming flood rushed upon him, and sunk him into desperation. Neither his knowledge, nor his morality, nor his religious observances, nor his overwhelming convictions, could introduce him into the kingdom of heaven. They could not constitute him

a christian. Can we find him in the history and epistles of St. Paul? This brings us to examine,

II—What the altogether christian must be, as drawn from the life of St. Paul.

A christian is the most noble work of God. He is described to be a new creation; a new creature, to have passed from death unto life; to be born of God; created anew in Christ Jesus; created after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. In the creation of the material world, there was no pre-existent matter, therefore there was nothing to oppose when the power of God was exerted. In this new creation, there was matter, but attended with great opposition, from deep-rooted prejudices, the wicked temper and disposition of the human heart, and the potent influence of the prince of darkness. From a mass of sin, to form a being with spiritual views, holy dispositions, and heavenly pursuits, must be the work of Almighty power. In the creation of all things, the God of heaven, having formed the heavens, and the substance of the earth, caused the light to shine out of darkness, and did begin this new creature, with a light sufficient to break through the darkness of the human mind, which is enveloped with the horrors of blackness more gross than Egyptian. The stronger the prejudices, and the more inveterate the enmity of the human heart against the light, so much more bright and piercing must that light be, which will effectually convince the sinner, and bring him to Christ. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Saul of Tarsus, although he had an early instruction in the Jewish form, was educated a Pharisee, in a zealous attachment to the law, yet we find that he, ob-

stinate and ignorant, from a blind and mistaken zeal, and mistaken principle of conscience, did endeavor to suppress, yea, to destroy the only mean of propagating the true light of the gospel, by the most bloody persecution of Christ in his members. Jerusalem was too small a bound for his cruelty and death. He must be commissioned to go to Damascus, to drag the believing Jews, of every age and sex, indiscriminately to death. When he came nigh, he exulted in his bloody designs against the defenceless sheep of Christ. By this we learn, that the Lord sometimes suffers those whom he designs to be vessels of mercy, fitted for their master's use, to run a great length in sin, that he may signalize the riches and sovereignty of his grace, by furnishing them with all that grace, whereby they may display the christian.

In the midst of Saul's high exultation, Jesus interposed in an immediate and extraordinary manner, to prevent him with his mercy, and to make a happy change upon his heart and views. Unexpectedly about the middle of the most memorable day, an exceeding great and supernatural light darted down from heaven, obscuring the splendor of the sun, in its unclouded lustre at high noon. An emblem of spiritual knowledge and purity—of the divine presence and favor. He now finds himself in the Nazarene's power, unable to escape or to plead, he fell to the earth, trembling, and astonished above expression—he distinctly heard a voice, calling with great earnestness and compassion, as to one on the brink of destruction—

Saul! Saul! Why persecutest thou me? What are you doing? Why are you so foolish and hardened, daring and mad, so desperately an enemy to God, and your own soul, and so ungrateful, cruel, and unjust, as to reproach and dishonor me, the best of

friends to mankind? What good reason can you possibly give for this? Why do you still persist in it?

Saul, being convinced that this glory and this voice was from heaven, replied with shame, reverence, and desire of information, Who art thou, against whom I have been acting so wickedly, and with so great injury? The Lord Christ replied, "I am that Jesus, the only Saviour, whom you with contempt call the Nazarene." It is as foolish, fruitless and destructive to yourself, as to kick with your naked heel against spurs and spears.

Had this voice been accompanied with only an external appearance of Divine majesty, it probably would not have affected him more than the rest of his companions; or more than the soldiers who were struck to the ground, when they came to apprehend Jesus. But these words came with such a powerful operation of the Spirit, upon his heart, that he trembled under a sense of his shocking sin, guilt, and danger, and was astonished to think how vile he had been, and what might be the consequence of his sin: He cried out with great solicitude and concern, between hope and fear, "Lord, I am ready to resign to thy authority and command. I have done wickedly, and will do so no more. O, what wouldst thou have me to do? Let me be led into a right way, for knowing and performing thy will; that I may testify my repentance, may do honor to thy name, and may find mercy, to the forgiveness of my sins, and to my final salvation. He evidently takes the Lord upon his own terms, with the most cordial submission, and full reliance upon him, for all the blessings of Divine grace; he renounces all merit, confessing his vileness; he receives him for all the purposes of salvation. Consequently we find Saul, who is called Paul, professing faith in Christ Jesus. Thus he begins his christian life.

If it be enquired what kind of faith he had? We answer, that it did not rest upon a bare *assent*, founded upon testimony and rational evidence, that the facts recorded in the new testament are true. Experience proves that a faith of this kind may consist with a wicked life. The faith of this apostle was productive of obedience, on the humiliating terms of being led blind to Damascus, to receive further instruction. Nor did his faith rest on a confidence of the forgiveness of his sins, impressed upon the mind in a sudden, instantaneous manner. He pleads that he may find mercy, to the forgiveness of his sins.

His faith consisted on a reliance of his heart upon Jesus Christ, the Saviour, for all the ends and purposes for which the gospel reveals him.

When Jesus appeared unto him, he gave a manifestation of his glory, and of his grace, and by the operation of the Spirit he was brought to feel his indigence, and to see the fulness of Christ, or he never could have applied to him—to realize his unworthiness, and to behold the infinite merit of Christ, or his soul could not be satisfied with him—to feel his own weakness, and to view the power of Christ, or he could not confide in him. In a word, he built upon the person and word of Christ, as the foundation of his hope. “The wise man built his house on a rock;” and Peter said, “Thou art Christ, the son of the living God.”

It was a peculiar excellency of this apostolic faith, that it was productive of an ardent, supreme love to his Lord and Saviour. “But faith which worketh by love.” The fulness of his heart, in this respect, is abundantly evident in almost every period of his Epistles—he seems delighted with the sound of the name of Jesus. We find him repeating it ten times, in ten successive verses, I Cor. i. 1—10. He was particularly affected with the exceeding, abundant love and

grace of Christ to himself, when he reflected on the circumstances in which the Lord had found him and what great things he had done for him. That the persecutor and blasphemer should not only be forgiven, but accepted as a child of God, and appointed to everlasting salvation.

His love to the Lord Jesus, was instead of a thousand arguments, to stir him up to the most hearty and unreserved obedience of the will of God. It upheld him in the face of danger, and begat in him a holy fortitude, to encounter every difficulty and distress. "The love of Christ constraineth us," said he, or bears us away; powerfully draws our affections to him, and irresistibly influences us to an holy and active obedience.

His faith was of a purifying nature; and purifying their hearts by faith, he received and applied the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, and the Spirit and grace, presented in the promises for his sanctification.

This apostle informs us, that he did not live under the direction of flesh and sense: but "the life which he lived, was by faith in the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him." Wherein did his life of faith appear? We answer—he began his life of faith, by cheerfully devoting himself to the service of Christ. He hears his dear Lord say, "Thou shalt be for me, and not for another, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine." Blessed exchange! He hears his Lord saying, "My person is wonderful, but what I am, I am for thee; my life was spent in labor and travail, but I lived for thee." By faith, he replies, "Lord, my person is vile, and not worth thy acceptance, but such as it is, it is thine; my soul, with every faculty, my body and every member of it, my gifts, time, and all my talents are thine." By

faith he devotes himself to Christ, and to his service, with a reliance upon him for his faithfulness, in performing his promise.

Though many graces have done excellently, yet this grace of faith excels them all. In this, the apostle was eminent; it was the life which he lived every day. He found, that in the exercise of this grace, he could overcome every difficulty, and that without it, he could do nothing; by this he became contented in every condition in life; by it he looked with holy contempt upon the things of this world; by this he achieved so many glorious conquests over his many and powerful enemies; by this he quenched many deadly darts of temptation, which were levelled against him in the day of battle; by it he lived, when riding on the waves in a most tempestuous storm, when all sensible hopes and comforts failed.

When the apostle had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, he earnestly besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him; he had no direct, but an indirect answer to his prayer; "My grace is sufficient for thee." The reproaches and persecutions for Christ's sake, which befel him, he was sensible that mere human nature could not bear, it was a burden too heavy for flesh and blood; he committed his cause to God, praying that he may be enabled to bear them with becoming submission, patience, humility, and hope; he found that the Lord was faithful to his promise, and gracious above measure, in that, when he was incapable to bear it, he was made strong. Believers, in every age, have experienced that faith in the promise of Christ's grace; and that he will perfect strength in our weakness, is the noblest support in every difficulty or danger, and the best security for triumph in the issue. If it be asked, how doth the exercise of faith in Christ

enable a soul to bear an insupportable burden, and make it strong? We answer—by delivering the soul from those distempers which tend to weaken and enfeeble it; not only guilt, which is to the soul, as a wound upon the bearing shoulder. “Being justified by grace, we have peace.” The removal of this guilt, enables the soul to bear any other burden. It also removes fear; in whatever degree the fear of God prevails in the soul, in the same proportion will the sinful fear of the creature, decline and vanish; and the less we exercise faith in Christ, so much the more will it be filled with fear. To be delivered from common destruction, in a time of common destruction, must be a peculiar advantage—this is produced by living by faith in Christ.

Again—Living by faith in Christ, strengthens the soul, by turning it to Christ, in whom its strength lies, in a way suitable to the several exigencies of the soul, in all its distresses. Doth darkness, like the shadow of death, overspread, and all the light of earthly comforts disappear; faith supports the heart by looking to the Lord—“I will trust in the name of the Lord, and stay me upon my God.” Doth temptation draw the soul from Christ, and discourage it from resting on the promises? Faith fixes his resolution; “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” He breaks his way through every discouragement. Is the soul seeking deliverance from any trouble, and no answer come? Faith is exercised in waiting; “For they shall not be ashamed, that wait for me.” Is he called to any difficult duty, contrary to carnal reason and the flesh? “Faith encourages the soul to obey, by giving it God’s warrant.” Is the burden too heavy, and does inherent strength begin to fail? Faith leads to an Omnipotent God; from the end of the earth, will I cry unto thee! when my heart

is overwhelmed lead me to the rock that is higher than I." Would the Christian feel his burden light? Let him, with the apostle, commit his business to Christ, and leave the matter to him; let him look forward, and view the final removal of them, the heart faints, and hands hang down through discouragement, when no end appears "but our light afflictions which are for a moment." II Cor. iv, 17. Faith in Christ, will lead us to engage the presence of God, to be and abide with us in all our solitudes. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you."

We find that the apostle experienced the happy influence of committing all his temporal and spiritual concerns, at all times, and especially under his afflictions and dangers, to Christ. Therefore, he adviseth all the children of God, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Whatever may be their anxieties, solitudes, fears, and cares, either for themselves, families, or the interest of Christ, in committing all, by faith, unto the Lord; relying on his power and goodness for relief, they will find that the Lord, in faithfulness to his promise, will pity, help, strengthen, and comfort, and give a happy issue to all, in the eternal salvation. We must intrust all that we have to Christ, as the good shepherd; resting upon his love, power, care, and faithfulness, that he will provide for our various necessities, supply our wants, restore our wanderings, and protect us against all the evil insinuations of a wicked heart, and the snares and fiery darts of Satan.

All who have been brought to a saving interest in Christ, with the apostle, confess their ignorance before their conversion; and even when brought to the love and favor of God, in their highest attainments, are sensible that they have a scanty, imperfect view

of the profound truths of God, of his counsels, and methods of wisdom, and of grace by Jesus Christ, and of the enjoyments and employments of the heavenly world; "For, said he, now I know in part." The most discerning of the children of men, are not only affected with a sense of their blindness and ignorance, but lament their many defects in a life of holiness. "In many things," said he, "we all offend;" "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" "I know that in me dwelleth no good thing." There is not only an imperfection in knowledge, but an humbling deficiency in their most holy devotion. They are harrassed by numerous, subtle, and powerful enemies; the world, the men of the world, a deceitful heart, and principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places, are raised in battalion against them, that they have neither wisdom, nor might to withstand them.

How distressing their case! But they have the great Prophet in Israel, who teacheth as man never yet taught, to whom they look, and on whom they depend for illumination, by his word and Spirit, and to whom they apply in every hour of darkness. They have a most gracious and all-sufficient High Priest, on whose atonement they rely for pardon, and from whose intercession they fully expect acceptance with God. They have a rich and powerful King, who has provided a complete armory, from which he will furnish all his faithful soldiers with weapons, offensive and defensive, whereby they shall be enabled to fight the battles of the Lord; and in dependence on him, they fear not all that earth and hell can do against them, when they have taken to them the whole armor of God. In him they trust to stand their ground; "Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."

Lastly, we find the apostle renouncing all confidence in the flesh, and rejoicing in Christ Jesus. "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. When the soul exerciseth a holy triumph by faith in Christ, as the Lord his righteousness and strength, it is enabled to worship God, in spirit and truth; to go on from strength to strength; "For the joy of the Lord is your strength." They shall persevere until they are called by death or judgment, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the mansions of eternal day.

S E R M O N V.

THE BELIEVER'S TRANSIT FROM DEATH THROUGH
ETERNITY.

II CORINTHIANS, V.—1.

"For we know, that 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."

MANY and great are the afflictions of the people of God. Some are founded in the state of our vile bodies; others originate in the frame of the mind;

while others proceed from some peculiar frame of the body, and special habit of the mind.

All are light and momentary, when compared with the distresses which they merit at the Divine hand. They are sanctified to the children of the Most High, and are so far from being a curse to them, that they are, eventually, the most salutary balsam, however grievous to the patient for the present. For, saith the apostle, they shall work for them a far more, exceeding, and eternal weight of glory.

This blessed fruit of affliction can only be obtained by that faith, which leads the soul to look, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen, are temporal: but the things which are not seen, are eternal.

For, saith the text, we are persuaded, not only from the testimony of God's word, that there is a rest provided for his people; but by the witness of his Spirit with our spirit, as his children, we are fully assured, that we, ourselves, have a personal interest in it; and that when these frail bodies, (let us strip the text of the metaphor as soon as possible) which are the houses of our souls, and which are erected but for a short time on earth, and which must, either by a natural or violent death, be taken to pieces. I say, when this shall take place, we doubt not but our soul will return to God, who gave it to be immediately possessed of all that blessedness, which it is capable to enjoy in a state of separation from the body. And we are satisfied, that at Christ's second appearing, these vile bodies will arise, fashioned like his glorious body, by his Almighty power, and rich grace, when our souls, clothed with immortalized bodies, shall be ever with the Lord.

This subject presents to our consideration, the

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happiness of the spirits of the just men, when separated from their earthly tabernacle; and their still more perfect blessedness, when these souls shall be re-united to their kindred bodies.

When death has made his final conquest, and stands ready to give the body to the worms, even in this, he shall not always triumph. Has he sunk the soul into a state of indolence and inactivity? It is neither perished nor dandled to sleep. Our blessed Lord, when reasoning with the Sadducees, Luke xx. 37, 38, proves the delightful doctrine of the resurrection, from the consideration of the separate state of the soul, which may be thus painted: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have been a long time dead—God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob still: Now God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Therefore, the souls of these Patriarchs are still alive, and have God for their God, in a state of separation from the body.

Again—Can any thing less be intended by our Lord's promise to the penitent thief on the cross; "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." This cannot import that he should be with him in the grave, or in a state of indolence and perfect insensibility. We must be persuaded that it implies, that there is a state of happiness for spirits dismissed from the body, and that he should be with him, enjoying that felicity.

We therefore conclude that the spirits of believers live in happiness, while their bodies lie in the grave.

If any curious mind should wish to know where those souls shall enjoy this blessedness? We answer--- this question is more curious than profitable. Let it, however, satisfy us, that in whatever place it may please God to manifest himself to such spirits, there they can, yea, do enjoy all that felicity which their state will permit.

We are indebted to Divine revelation for all the knowledge we have, either of the world of spirits, or any of the ingredients which will constitute their happiness.

It is very observable, then, that death delivers those spirits from all the snares and temptations of sensible objects in the world; from the evil and dangerous artifices of the men of the world; from all the vexatious cares and disappointments, to which we are exposed through the whole time of our pilgrimage in this barren wilderness; from all the subtle insinuations, and fiery darts of the prince of darkness, and the hellish machinations of his infernal servants; from the many mistakes and errors arising from the imperfection of our knowledge, and that backwardness and stupor in duty, occasioned by such bodies hanging to them, as heavy clogs; from the pangs of conscience, on the account of the guilt of sin; from all the horrible tribe of diseases, which so intensely afflicted them in this state of mortality; from all the injury that death itself can do them. How great and wonderful the deliverance! How happy must such sanctified souls be, when they feel themselves, not only enlarged, but all their powers centering in God, with the most perfect liberty! What exalted and refined delight must they enjoy, when landed in the region of everlasting day, under the refreshing beams of the immediate presence of God!

The glorified spirit, thus liberated, has taken its flight to the immediate vision and fruition of its God, of which it shall not be deprived; from which it cannot be removed; and in which it will enjoy all that fulness of pleasure which it can contain.

The perfection of spirits in glory, consists in a glorious and transcendent degree of those spiritual

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and heavenly qualifications and blessings, which they enjoyed in a lower measure, when under the means of grace, without defect, disorder, or any thing which is inconsistent with their present felicity.

When they were clothed with flesh, they knew in part, and they prophesied in part: but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly: but then, face to face. Now I know in part: but then shall I know even as I am known."

When in the immediate presence of Jehovah, they must receive a great increase of knowledge, without the least mixture of error; "with him is no darkness at all."

Contemplation constitutes a part of the happiness of spirits; the more exalted the object of contemplation is, and the greater acquaintance they have with it, the more enlarged must that happiness be. Therefore, the knowledge of God, the infinite and eternal Spirit, must be the true felicity of all created spirits. What unrivalled excellency is contained in his nature! How delightfully are we lost amid the boundless perfection of his all-sufficiency, and eternal existence, his wisdom, his power, his justice, holiness, goodness, and truth.

They have some becoming views of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in their natural glories, personal characters, and mysterious relation to each other, and their amazing transactions for the recovery of lost sinners. What tongue can express, or heart conceive the delight arising from such an increase of the knowledge of divine things! O happy spirits, thus fully entertained with full and clear views of God, and divine things!

This perfection of separate spirits, essentially contains a glorious degree of holiness, without the least sin; but holiness is summed up in a supreme love to God, delight in his service, and in true love to our fellow-men.

The imperfection of our love to God and Christ, proceeds from our beholding them through a glass, darkly; from sinful damps and hindrances, which hang heavy upon us; from counter-allurements to sin, by the mischievous influence of the flesh, and the world, and from God's denying his gracious presence: But none of these can have place in a separate state. They shall be ever with the Lord, shall have the most clear, full, intuitive view of all the beauties and Divine glories of God and Christ, of which their created nature is capable. They behold him face to face, who is love in the highest degree, and the spring from whence flows all the love of the creature; and they see Jesus, who is love incarnate. These views will possess an assimilating nature, will transform them into such Divine love, that they must love God and Christ, with an union of heart to heart, being joined to the Lord in the nearest union in heaven.

The most holy inhabitants of flesh perform religious duties in a very imperfect manner, by reason of the imperfection of their love; sin mingles with their best services, and the world draws their hearts to the ends of the earth: but the glorified spirits, are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temples. Although they may not be engaged in everlasting acts of worship; yet they will be always busy in some noble service for him; their zeal will be flaming; they will be ever on the wing to execute his commands; "Love is the fulfilling of the law." We shall never fulfil that law perfectly, until we join the company of separate spirits, where

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none can be found destitute of the sacred flame, no single spirit unlovely or unbeloved. Universal benevolence reigns through the whole kingdom; every spirit wishes well to his neighbour as himself—there is perfect love.

Another ingredient in this felicity is, constant peace, and exalted joy. The imperfection of our knowledge, love, and holiness, forbid our partaking of perfect joy in this world. Soft and flattering temptations disturb our repose; sin and guilt torment the spirit, and destroy our joys; make the most righteous to mourn in Mesheck, and dwell in the tents of Kedar.

These blessed spirits are exalted above all that could prevent or intercept their peace. They are in peaceful and joyous circumstances; they know God, for they see his face; they know that they love him, for they feel and enjoy it as the warmest and sweetest affection of their hearts; and they are sure that God loves them, for every moment they taste his love, and live upon it, in all the rich varieties of its manifestations.

What unknown delight must arise from this full assurance of the love of God! How inexpressible, how inconceivable the sacred pleasure and joy that must fill every soul in heaven! they are all adoration, love, and praise. Do they enjoy all that blessedness of which their created natures are capable, and for which they were formed?

Our spirits were formed on purpose to be united to our bodies. If they could attain their highest happiness without them, the resurrection would be, in a measure, in vain. We are assured that happy spirits, when out of the body, shall wait for still greater happiness, when their bodies shall be restored to them. As they suffered in union, they shall have a recom-

pense of pleasure together. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till this blessed change shall come." God will have a desire to the work of his hands, and those souls will have an earnest, not anxious desire, to be rejoined to their old companions. Consequently they will have a desire, if I may not say will pray for the dawn of the glorious morning of the resurrection, when those bodies will be called out of their prison, new-fashioned and dressed with immortality.

2dly. We are now invited to view the blessedness of those spirits when united to their kindred bodies.

When the Lord Jesus shall make his last appearance in this world, clothed in all his own glory, the glory of his Father, and of all his holy angels, to judge the world in righteousness—the summons is given into the hand of the arch-angel. His trumpet sounds through heaven, earth and hell, "awake ye dead, and come to judgment."

Now death is spoiled of all his captives. The day of his triumph is come to an end. The dead, small and great, rich and poor, shall come from the East, from the West, from the North, and from the South, to meet the Lord, on his great white throne. The bodies of those who have served the Lord in their generation, shall arise first to judgment. These holy spirits shall then descend from heaven to be reunited to their once dear bodies.

Shall all the materials of which those bodies were composed, enter into this union?

All that is necessary to individuate, or constitute them the same body. If not, it must be a new created body, and therefore not the same which served, or suffered in the flesh.

The oracles of everlasting truth inform us, that "flesh and blood cannot inherit eternal life." There-

fore these material systems, with their vitiated attendants, must be changed, to fit them for these pure regions. If it be enquired, "by whom shall they be changed, and wherein shall it consist?" We answer, They shall be changed in a moment. "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet." This great and happy change will be effected by Christ Jesus, not in the character of their Sovereign and Judge; but as their Redeemer, head, and dearest Lord: not merely as an act of Almighty power, but a most gracious display of his love and mercy to those, who were given to him by the Father. "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be like unto his glorious body."

The gifts and qualities in which this change consists, manifest his divinity. "They are sown in corruption; they are raised in incorruption." We find these words explained in I Cor. xv. 53. "For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Much labor and great pains have been taken, to prove the immortality of the soul, from its indivisibility. If traced to its origin, they will find it founded on the will of the Creator. If it be inherently and essentially immortal, it must be God; for this is a peculiar and distinguishing attribute of the Divine nature.

Nor are we to consider this immortality similar to that promised to Adam, upon his persevering in obedience. *This*, consisted in an impotence of dying, because he would have been put beyond all possibility of sinning: but in *that*, it not only abolisheth the act, but the power of sinning.

Nor are we to conceive of the immortality of glorified bodies, as like to that of angels, or the souls of

men. The latter received it from the grace of God in creation; the former obtains it by the singular dispensation of Christ Jesus, and their present restoration to his image.

The bodies of the saints will be elevated above all sufferings from any thing within them. They will feel no fuel for concupiscence; no stain of sin; no inordinate desire. They will be every way holy. They will be exalted above every thing that can give distress from without. "They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." "And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

Again—We are taught another quality of the bodies of those who are risen. "It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory." The original, which is here translated *glory*, is often represented by splendor and light. "They shall shine as the stars in the kingdom of their Father." "There is one glory of the sun, and another of the stars."

Dishonor implies the meanness of human nature, subject to many defects, and especially to death. That glory, then, will consist in an illustrious splendor and beauty of those bodies, by which they will shine with a dazzling brilliancy, like the sun and stars, which no mortal eye can fully behold. How did the face of Moses shine, when he conversed with God on the mount? Was it not so highly irradiated by the beams of the Divine presence, that he must cover his face with a veil, before the Israelites could talk with him? Did not the face of Jesus, in the time of his transfiguration, shine as the sun, and his raiment become white as the light? This radiant splendor, in which glorified bodies shall shine, will undoubtedly

flow from their beatific vision of God and Christ. If rays of light, passing through a diaphanous body, will render it splendid and beautiful, how much more beautiful will rays of light, from the Sun of Righteousness, make the bodies of the saints, and prepare them for all the operations of their old companions.

The apostle enlarges; "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." As long as these bodies subsisted in the flesh, they were weak, infirm, and crazy, liable to sickness, pain, weariness, faintings, and death, incapable to defend themselves from innumerable evils and dangers which surrounded them, and too weak to hold out, with a willing mind, in the lively exercise of reason and religion, and when laid in the dust, utterly defenceless, and an easy prey to worms. But they shall be raised again, with such vigorous, strong, and healthy qualities, as will set them above the reach of inward infirmity, or outward danger. With such qualities as will enable them to keep pace with the glorified soul, executing its will, and joining with it in all its noble operations and employments, without weariness and fainting, yea, able to sustain an eternal weight of glory without uneasiness.

The last quality which I shall mention, is, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." That word which is translated *natural*, might, with greater propriety, be rendered *animal*. When these bodies were brought into, and supported in this lower world, they were mere animal bodies, maintained, recruited, and refreshed by food and drink, sleep and air. When these means failed to give nourishment, the animal man is laid senseless in the grave. But they shall be raised with a much more refined texture, and endued with such spiritual qualities, as not to need any of these animal refreshments: they

will be possessed and actuated by the Holy Spirit, who is promised to be with them for ever; they shall be supported and animated by the soul, without the use of any animal means, without meat or drink, sleep or clothing, or any medicine to heal them, and their natures will be so light, nimble, and active, as will enable them to ascend or descend, resembling the glorious body of our blessed Lord, that of spirits, yea, like unto the angels of God.

A vain curiosity, which would search out the hidden counsels of God, must not be indulged. Let us, therefore, be content with those ingredients of the marvellous change, which will take place in the joyous morning of the resurrection,

Then will they rise to be glorified, and crowned with honor, in a personal character; it will be a day of gladness to the saints. Then will it be said to them, "Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust."

With what ecstasy of joy will the glorified soul descend, clothed in the beauty of holiness, to meet the rising body, thus matured for glory! The joy of their meeting will far exceed that of Jacob and Joseph, after twenty years absence; yea, that of the father of the prodigal son, who was dead and is alive, who was lost and is found.

That this meeting will be inexpressibly full of joy, will appear, when we consider the excellent temper and state in which they shall meet together. As the body will rise with all the improvement that can render it amiable, and every way an object of desire: so the soul will descend immediately from God, out of heaven, shining in holiness and glory; it comes perfumed out of those ivory palaces, re-enters its body, and animates it again.

Principally, when we consider the end for which those once dear companions so cordially embrace

each the other, viz. *to meet the Lord in the air*, to receive a full, gracious recompense for all their mutual services and sufferings for God in the world.

Must not this be a day of triumph and exultation? With what ravishing pleasure will the soul resume its own tabernacle, saying, "come my dear, my ancient friend, who served and suffered with me, come with me to meet the Lord, in whose presence I have been, in my state of separation from you. Thy bountiful Lord hath remembered thee, and the day of thy glorification is come."

Although it is not clearly ascertained what will be the attendants of these bodies, may we not, with a high degree of probability suppose, as our senses are organs of knowledge, pleasure, and joy; so, in that upper world, they will be accompanied with enlarged and refined senses, by which they will drink in full draughts of knowledge, love, and joy, from the never-failing fountain, Christ Jesus. As they will not partake of the nature of spirits, they may have refined senses, or some substitute, by which there will be an ever growing accession to their personal happiness.

The ecstatic pleasure and delight of these dignified persons, must be great beyond conception, when they find themselves surrounded on every hand with the blessed society above; with holy angels, and archangels, seraphims, and cherubims, the heavenly choir of martyrs, and the spirits of just men, made perfect, of every nation, tongue, and people; yea, set down with many of their former friends, and dearest relatives; perhaps with some, of whose sincerity they had been doubtful in life. How divinely sweet and delightful must their communications be! With what ravishing joy will they give and receive instructions one to the other! With what pleasing, heart-felt

transport, will they tell the wonders of the love and grace of Christ, in their conversion; in supporting them in the dry and barren wilderness, in which grew nothing that could nourish the Divine life in the soul; in directing them in a right way, when wandering on the dark mountains; in delivering them when ready to fall by Satan, and his combined forces. The whole man full of the purest love, and exercised in the highest acts of benevolence. Every new discovery of the excellencies of their dearest Lord, will be proclaimed among all the inhabitants of that heavenly world. Must not all, then, enjoy a fulness of blessedness, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Can imagination conceive, or tongue express, the immense felicity of the celestial inhabitants? All the images of light, beauty, honor, and grandeur—of riches, safety, and delight, are faint representations of it. It is all new, and surpassing every thing in the universe. It is a state of immortal bliss, absolutely secure, free from darkness, pain, and every uneasiness, and even death itself.

It is a happiness enlivened with all the joys and honors of the marriage-supper of the Lamb; flowing from the immediate pleasures of God and the Lamb, shining with amiable and Divine majesty on their throne of glory. God in Christ, will be their God, and the everlasting fountain of all that is great and good. God will give his infinite self unto them, like the sun, which fills all with his light, without diminution in himself, or injury to any individual. *They*, in him, shall inherit all things, to the utmost of their wishes. They shall have a plenitude of all that is most excellent, sweet, profitable, or pleasant, without the least satiety or interruption, through a boundless

eternity. “ At his right hand are pleasures for evermore.

With what ecstasy will they behold their glorious, and glorified Redeemer, enthroned in glory. At his right hand they shall drink of the water of life, which proceeds from the throne of God, and the Lamb. They will ever feast on the various, abundant, and delicious fruits of the love of Christ, as long as a God, or heaven endureth.

A moment's reflection on the unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction, which these glorified persons have tasted, in many seasons of devotion, and painful services for their blessed Lord on earth, will constrain us to believe that they cannot bear the thought of no active service, of doing no work for him in heaven, where the whole business is perfect pleasure, and all labor full of enjoyment. “ They shall serve him day and night forever.” Heaven is represented as a state of worship. As he hath required various forms of worship, under the different economies of his grace; may we not suppose that there will be different forms of sacred magnificence, in the worship of a state of glory? Those parts of Divine worship, which are included in natural religion, will, most probably, be practised by the society of heaven. They will adore him for all the excellencies of his Divine nature. They will praise him, not only for what he is in himself, but for all his love, grace, and mercy to the rebellious sons of men.

Whether these songs of praise will be performed by harps and voices, cannot be fully ascertained: but it appears most probable, that, in some way, they will sing anthems of praise to God, and the Lamb, in the most harmonious manner. For heaven is represented, as full of the most perfect celebration of God the Father, and the Saviour with the deepest humility.

Although millions in that world, will spend a great part of their everlasting sabbath in the adorations and praises of the great God, we must believe that it will not be their everlasting work. Will not the understandings of these enlightened beings, become more capacious; and consequently, must we not believe, that they shall always obtain as much as they can receive. Therefore we must believe, that the junior members of that society, will hear the most Divine lectures from their seniors, through some medium of communication? As none in heaven, either of the angelic, or human order, will fully comprehend all the glories of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is it not most consonant with the tenor of divine revelation, to conceive of millions, entertained, perhaps at once, and again and again, with new discoveries of the unknown wonders of the Divine nature, or of the mystery of godliness, and they, as heralds, sound them through all the celestial world.

We are assured, that Peter, James, and John, knew Moses and Elias, whom they never saw before, when they descended from heaven, and conversed with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. May we not then believe, that the saints in glory, enjoying more pure light, and clear knowledge, will know each the other, and will participate in the most sweet and soul-ravishing conferences? With what delight will they rehearse the beauties of the Lamb, slain in the midst of the throne! With what surprising pleasure will they recount the unfolded, mysterious counsels of the great God, in every part of their redemption! The volumes of creation, providence, and of grace, will afford them ample materials for holy conferences, as long as a God, or heaven endures. We must conclude, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to con-

ceive the happiness that is provided by God, for all his faithful servants.

From what has been premised, we may learn, that all true believers enjoy the invaluable privilege to commit their souls to God, in a dying hour. God has given a great trust into their hands, when alive—they commit a great trust to God, when they die. They trust his faithfulness to his promise, and confidently expect, that he will keep that which is committed him. Believers, then, ought to keep what God has committed to them, with faithfulness, as they expect he will keep their souls. “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee.” If they are faithful to their God, they will find that he is faithful in all that is trusted to him.

Hence, also, let us learn the usefulness, and preciousness of a living faith—all the graces of the Spirit are excellent, but faith is more glorious, it is the king of graces, and therefore justly called *precious faith*. The benefits and privileges of faith, in this life, are unspeakable—as there is no comfortable living, so there can be no comfort in an hour of death, without faith. While we are travelling through the wilderness of this world, all our comfort and safety flows from this grace. This unites to Christ, the fountain of mercies—“That Christ may dwell in your hearts, by faith.” This draws abundant communications from Christ, all our quickenings, comforts, joy, and strength, are derived through that faith, which still maintains our communion with him; “Believing we rejoice.” There can be no safety or comfort in an hour of death without it. Without it, the soul cannot be committed to God—it will shrink from God, as a consuming fire. Faith will look beyond the grave; when the eyes-strings are breaking, it will cleave to its God, and clasp Jesus in the arms of a

promise, when all sensible objects fly away; “My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” The soul can no longer dwell in the flesh here; faith carries the soul to God, and casts it upon him, with “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

If it be enquired, what ground of encouragement the believer has to commend his spirit to God in the important hour of death? We answer,

Every believer is a creature redeemed with the great price of the precious blood of Christ; this greatly encourages the departing soul to commit itself into the hands of God. Hear the Psalmist, “Into thy hands do I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of Truth.” I know that thou wilt have respect to the creature that cost thee so dear, and on whom thou hast expended so much love, grace and mercy. He looks back upon his life, and is obliged to acknowledge, that through riches of grace, God has not only redeemed, but renewed him in the spirit and temper of his mind. This is the best evidence which the soul can have, that he is accepted of God, and shall not be refused when it comes to him at death. That he might be meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, the Holy Ghost came down, and renewed the man, and God designed this. “Now he that hath wrought us for the self same thing, is God.” As God has separated him to himself, and sanctified him, can he shut the door of glory and reject him? He rests with confidence that he will not. Every renewed person may confidently cast himself into the arms of his God, when it goes hence, with “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit”—because he is in covenant with God; God stands obligated by covenant and by promise, not to cast him out. As soon as he became

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his by regeneration, that promise was made to him ;
 " I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Will he
 leave the soul at a time when all things forsake him ?
 Every gracious person hath a title to Christ's promise,
 " I will come again, and receive you to myself."
 Can he be unfaithful at the time when the promise is
 come, as it is in an hour of death ? It cannot be.
 All the promises give security against the fear of a
 rejection. When the Lord sees a poor creature,
 whom he hath redeemed, sanctified, and by solemn
 promise, engaged himself to receive him, coming at
 death, firmly depending upon the promise that he
 hath made, saying, " Lord, I am resolved to send
 out my soul in an act of faith ; I will venture it upon
 the credit of thy promise." How can God put such
 a soul off, when it puts itself so upon him ?

Yea, the unchangeableness of God's love to his
 people, gives the strongest confidence that they shall
 not be cast off. They know that he is the same yester-
 day, to-day, and for ever. " Having loved his
 own that were in the world, he loved them to the
 end." His people are as dear to him when their
 beauty and strength have departed, as when in the
 flower of youth, and vigor of strength. When these
 particulars are considered, must not the believer say
 with the apostle, " I know in whom I have believed,
 and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which
 I have committed to him against that day."

Lastly—Permit me to close this discourse, with a
 word of advice to all those who desire to finish their
 last moments with peace and comfort. Is it the pri-
 vilege of believers to commend their souls into the
 hands of God, when they close their eyes on all
 things in this world ? If, then, we hope for comfort,
 or peace, our souls must be such as may be fit to be
 commended into the hands of a holy and just God.

They must be holy souls; God cannot accept them without holiness—"Without holiness, no man shall see God." "He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." There can be no rational expectation of blessedness, without endeavors after holiness. You must, then, make it your principal business to become holy and accepted in the beloved, when you enjoy the offers of grace and salvation, in this present evil world. You would not presume to commit into the hands of a holy God, your unclean, defiled natures. The gracious soul may boldly say, "Lord Jesus, into thy hand I commend my Spirit." Let all who can join with them, say—Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

S E R M O N VI.

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THE BELIEVER'S TRANSIT THROUGH DEATH, THE
INTERIM, RESURRECTION, AND
ETERNITY.

JOHN V.—28, 29.

“Marvel not at this : the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

THIS subject will invite your attention to an exhibition of the death of a sinner—the state of his departed spirit, in the intermediate space between death, and the resurrection—the re-union of the body and spirit, in the glorious morning of the resurrection—his then personal appearance in judgment—his final sentence, and the misery of his future existence.

Sensible that this will lead into the unsearched worlds of mind and matter, and conduct to a wilderness where none have ventured to tread, I humbly submit my thoughts to the world, hoping that they may be profitable to some, not by discovering the rich and glorious tidings of Divine grace to dying

sinners: but by holding up to their view the final, insupportable condition of those, who voluntarily reject the salvation of the gospel.

Our Lord, in the preceding verses, having shewn that he was truly the Son of Man, yet with inconceivable peculiarity, the Son of God, knowing, willing, and doing the same things, and with the same power and sovereignty, as the Father himself, in these verses shews, that in the execution of his office, as Mediator, he acts like the absolute *Lord* of life and death, who examines all causes, and distributes rewards and punishments like a God. That in the end of the world, when all the individuals of mankind, who shall at that time be dead, and all who shall then be alive, shall hear his powerful and awful voice, which shall bring them before his judgment seat. Then such as shall have proven the sincerity of their faith by good works, shall be adjudged to a blessed and glorious immortality. Then such as shall have persisted in sin, and died workers of iniquity, shall be raised, and receive a dreadful sentence of condemnation, to their utter and everlasting ruin.

The apostle assures us, "that it is appointed unto all men once to die." Is there no distinction between the righteous and the wicked, in the hour of death?

The prospect of the former is pleasing and delightful; that of the latter, is next in horror to that abyss to which it leads. It has most of hell that is visible on earth. See how he lies—a sad, deserted outcast, on a narrow isthmus between time and eternity, lashed and overwhelmed, on the one side, by a sense of sin, on the other by a dread of punishment! All hopes of salvation lost, and in despair of heaven, he cries, "Jesus is the rock on which I have split. I have denied his name."

The ghost of his murdered time, for now no more

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is left, all stained with folly and gashed with vice, now haunts his distracted thoughts, makes him cry out, O time! Time! Is it fit that thou shouldst strike thy murderer to the heart? How art thou fled for ever! A month! O for a single week! I ask not for years, though an age were too little for the much I have to do!

Conscience, which long had slept, awakes like a giant refreshed with wine—lays waste all his former thoughts and desires; and like a long deposed, but now victorious prince, imposes his punishments, and inflicts its own on his bleeding heart. See his friends and intimates, some of whom he had drawn into his vicious course, standing around him: sunk and confounded by the two great enemies of soul and body, sickness and sin. The poor, miserable creature, looking up, and seeing an intimate whom he loved, and whom he had ruined, cries out, “how madly have I talked to thee! How madly hast thou believed me! My much injured friend! My soul, as my body, lies in ruins, in scattered fragments of broken thoughts! Remorse for the past, throws my thoughts on the future—worse dread of future strikes it back on past. I turn, and turn, and find no ray of comfort. O thou blasphemed, yet most indulgent Lord God; Hell itself is a refuge, if it hides me from thy frowns.” Now those once soft whispers of conscience, have broken forth into peals of thunder. Now the means of grace, which he once rejected and ridiculed, is the bolt that strikes him dead—dead even to the thoughts of death. He lies, a wretched wreck of man, on the shore of eternity, and the next breath which he draws, blows him off into ruin—cuts him off from all enjoyments, from all the means of grace, and hopes of salvation, and fixes him in an everlasting state of sin and misery. Death, to him, is the gate of hell—the door of the infernal prison, and a sad farewell to all happiness. Then farewell—a long and everlasting farewell

to all the comforts of this life, and all its agreeable prospects—farewell friends, farewell to all hope and peace—farewell to God, and Christ, and angels, and all the blessedness of heaven. Now the heart-strings break. Now the soul deserts its tabernacle of clay, and takes its flight—not to God. He lived and died an enemy to God, and is conscious of his opposition to all holiness, and that an infinitely pure God must spurn him from his gracious presence—Not fled to Jesus the Saviour—He has declared before angels and men, “that his denial of the name of Jesus, was the bolt which struck him dead. Jesus has, by an irreversible sentence of his word, excluded him from his love, grace, and mercy. “Depart, thou accursed, I never knew you”—Has not taken its flight to heaven—The door is shut, there is no admission. “When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are.” “Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” Therefore he has fled to his own place; “From which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go unto his own place.” This must be a place of consummate happiness, or exquisite misery. Happy he cannot be, not being prepared for such felicity by Divine grace: but has, by a life of rebellion, fitted himself a vessel for destruction. Therefore, hell must be his chosen *abode*, a place of torment. It is said, “that the rich man, after his death, lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment, and praying that his brethren come not to this place of torment.” The material body of this rich man, could not be the subject of his misery, mingling with its kindred worms. Hence we are constrained to conclude, that his departed spirit, in

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a state of separation, was suffering deserved torment in hell.

Who can give the description of this dismal territory, or confidently say, in what place in this large universe, eternal justice has ordained this doleful dungeon? Whether it shall be in the centre of the earth, or in some blazing comet, or far beyond the limits of this lightsome world, where chaos and eternal darkness reign. He only knows, before whom Hell and destruction have no covering. Let us venture to say, it is where the miserable inhabitants drink of the unmixed wrath of the Almighty, and know, by dreadful experience, what is the power of his anger.

That you may have some just conception wherein the miseries, which are peculiar to this wicked spirit, in a state of separation from the body, consist—

It must be considered, that conscience now fills it with a remorse, and terrible anguish, never to be relieved. How dreadful are the racks of a guilty conscience here upon earth! A wounded spirit, who can bear? How did the Psalmist cry, yea, roar under the disquietude of his spirit, grappling with a sense of past sin! Thousands have felt it when they were in this world, with anguish to a dreadful degree.

When death has separated this spirit from its body, cut it off from all the means of grace, and from all hopes of the pardoning mercy of God, what distress beyond all thought, must the spirit endure from the inward wounds of conscience. It must give a twinging accent to every pain when constrained to cry, it was I. It was I, who brought all this upon myself. Life and death were set before me, in yonder world. I refused life, spurned at saving grace, turned my back upon holiness, and chose the paths of sin, folly, and madness, knowing that they would

lead to all this distress. Wretch that I was, who have plunged myself into all this misery, in defiance of the kind warning of a gracious God, a merciful Saviour, his gospel, and his ministers. Must not such reflections fill this spirit to an extreme degree? Must they not prey upon it continually?

Business, delightful company, and refreshments of nature, give a momentary relief, under the smarting scourges of conscience, when in this world. In this separate state, nothing can be found to lull the conscience into soft repose, or give a moment's rest. Dreadful state! O the bitter anguish, which will tease it through a boundless eternity!

Add to this, the acute pain which pierced David's soul, under a sense of Divine displeasure, when he remembered his sins; "My sin is ever before me: against thee only have I sinned, and I have done this evil in thy sight." Hear how he pleads, "O Lord, chasten me not in thine anger, nor vex me in thy sore displeasure." He knew the truth of the prophet's expressions. "Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." David could face an host of enemies without dismay: but he could not stand before an angry God, the loss of whose favor is worse than death. This was the sad experience of that good man, though he was not cast out beyond all hope.

When the grave shuts its mouth on the sinner, and his spirit is thrust into everlasting darkness, he may have forgot his maker for months and years, when in this life: but in those dark regions, he can never forget God, nor fly from his terrors.

His spirit is now convinced, that happiness is only to be found in the favor of God—that he shall never see that blessedness, and that God stands afar off from his

groanings: he is convinced that it is righteous in God to frown upon him for ever, as a rejecter of the free invitations of Jesus, and a base refuser of his pardoning love, as an impertinent offender, refusing to return and accept the Father's favor at his hand. O cursed rebel that I was, to refuse such love, and renounce such Divine compassion! I must now see this Jesus, the minister of his Father's justice, and avenger of his abused mercy. How can he endure the indignation of a God! How stand overwhelmed with a sense of his just vengeance! All hopes of one smile of God's countenance, are now buried in eternal despair.

Join to these, the agonizing torture with which this separate spirit will "behold Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the kingdom of heaven, and he himself thrust out." He shall now see thousands safely lodged in glory, who were attended with mean and low circumstances, when they were upon the earth; and his proud and haughty neighbors, who with himself, have sinned themselves into hell. He shall now behold many, who enjoyed vastly inferior privileges, when on earth, now seated in the highest honor, at the right hand of Jesus, and hear them celebrating the praises of their exalted Redeemer. Can you suppose that these children of pride will be able to bear this sight without envy? Will not those unhappy wretches, amidst their righteous punishment in hell, envy those, whom they scorned, nay, perhaps oppressed on the earth? Will they not be ever fretting at the grace, the honor, and prosperity of the blessed? Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy? When they see that the blessed are for ever blessed, and that he cannot by any means diminish their felicity, must it not increase his wretchedness? The envy, then, of this spirit,

must prey upon itself, and never be allayed. He may send a thousand curses to the heavenly world : but the saints are ever secured under the eye of God, and the care of Jesus. What a painful plague must this envy be, to this separate spirit, when it scourges and torments itself with its envenomed whips and stings ! What unspeakable torture it feels, when this vile passion is so violent, and so constant, that it gives itself no ease, through everlasting ages ! O the horror, and twinging agonies which arise from this hateful passion perpetually fermenting and raging !

The departed spirit of a saint is not clothed with all its brightest glories in a moment, nor fixed in the highest point of knowledge and felicity at its first entrance into glory : but as its knowledge and its love increaseth, its capacity enlarges to take in new degrees of pleasure, and it is probable its felicity will be ever increasing.

When we consider that the law of God reaches through heaven, earth, and hell—that this spirit, now in torment, is under obligation to obey this law—as it spent a mortal existence in hatred of God, and at enmity with his law : This enmity, hatred, and malice against God, and his law, will last, and will grow, as long as the creature will be capable to discover the excellencies of the most excellent being. Is it not, then, most probable, that it will increase in sin, grow in wickedness, and mad rebellion against God, and thereby draw down upon itself a more weighty, and increasing vengeance ? The plagues of the Egyptian tyrant increased with his iniquities. An emblem of sinners under the wrath of God in hell.

How unspeakably horrible must the view of the eternity of its torments, with an everlasting despair of deliverance, be ! What it now feels, and a dread

of what it must feel, will make its wretchedness intolerable.

This separate spirit has not drunk the last drop in the cup of the miseries, which will be endured in hell. Language cannot paint, nor can man conceive the thousandth part of the torments of the damned. Scripture and reason help us to a few of the outlines.

Our Lord has told us that the dead shall rise. Hark ! The separate spirit, at these affecting tidings, cries out, " must my old companion, the body, rise ? Shall we be again united ? Must I take my companion in sin, and the partner of all my rebellions against God and Christ ? " We are assured, by infallible truth, that the glorious morning of the resurrection will draw out of their graves the finally impenitent, and unbelieving, with the true believer in Christ. Why must the bodies of sinners arise ?

Let it be observed, that although flesh and blood, distinct from the soul, are incapable of sin, or becoming guilty, in a proper sense, they being but mere matter, and separate from the mind, cannot be under a moral law : Yet we say, sin is not formally in the body of the man, but it is occasionally there. The senses and appetites, parts and powers of the body, very often become the unhappy occasion of sin to the soul. The chief springs of sin lie mostly in our fleshy natures. Our bodily senses, our natural appetites, are continually tempting us away from our duty, and enticing us to the commission of sin ; hence sin is said to work in our members—to reign in our mortal body. Sinful actions are called the deeds of the body. The apostle, in one place, exhorts to mortify the deeds of the body : In another—" mortify your members which are upon the earth." In both, he undoubtedly means the mortification of sin.

These particulars constrain us to conclude, that

those bodies which have been committed to the dust, were the fruitful occasion and spring of the sins committed in life.

Justice requires that the transgressor should be punished : therefore, as these bodies were the springs of most of our sins, when in union with the soul ; justice demands that these bodies shall be raised to suffer with their old companion. If you ask me, “ to what body shall this finally impenitent, separate spirit be united ? ” The answer is clear.

It cannot be a body newly created from the Divine hand. It would be not only unjust, but cruel to punish sin in a body by which this sin was not committed. Hence, all must see, that as much of the body which had lain in the dust, as will be sufficient to denominate it the same body, must be raised. This body will have no Saviour to change its vileness, and fashion it like Christ’s glorious body—it stood in no such relation to Christ. Therefore, as much of this material body will be raised, with all its senses, of which it was an organ, as will individuate it. Some of these senses fed it with pleasure, as long as the objects of pleasure were presented : Others subjected it to uneasiness, pain, and misery ; and all of these senses were often obstructed in their exercise.

This material system, being a vessel prepared by sin, for the most intense misery, the senses must be free from every alleviation and obstruction : therefore these senses, in this body, will be lively, strong, and wound up to the highest perfection. If this material system, with all its senses perfected, is raised to shame and everlasting contempt it must be immortalized.

Imagine you hear this separate spirit complain, “ I laid down a mortal body, and therefore, such a body as promised me, at most, only a temporary misery, is it not unjust and cruel to fix me in an immortal body, capable of intense and everlasting misery.

As the soul becomes immortal by the will of God, and not from any thing in the nature of it: so this material system must become immortal at whatever period it is the will of God that its immortality shall commence.

Has not the Sovereign of heaven, and of earth, given the most open and clear declaration to all the children of men, in every administration of his government, that the impenitent sinner, consisting of soul and body, shall be the subject of everlasting separation from his comfortable presence, and the unhappy recipient of eternal punishment? Has he not thereby announced it as his will, that such a body shall become the subject of an eternity, commensurate with the perpetuated futurity of the spirit? therefore, there can be no injustice or cruelty in such a Divine procedure.

Again—It is acknowledged that God, in the original covenant with our first parents, promised an immortality of happiness, as the reward of perfect obedience to his Divine law. This implies, and involves in it, an immortality of misery, if they transgressed his holy will. If it had been just in God to reward their obedience, with a never-ending happiness, must it not be righteous to punish disobedience, with an eternity of misery, to which the finally unbelieving sinners have subjected themselves, by their continued rebellion.

Considering that these animal-natures are upheld from day to day by nutriment, how will the material nature be sustained, when clothed with immortality?

The world of future existence is, in a great measure hid from human discernment: therefore, little can be said concerning the nature of immortal bodies, or how they are nourished in that unknown world.

The fluctuating state of our bodies by perspiration, &c. calls for fresh recruits of nourishment, from time to time, without which they must pine away and die. The discoveries from reason, and Divine revelation, oblige us to believe, that immortality fixes the state of its subject, or it is sustained by the Divine hand.

How will this body be raised, which has long mingled with its parent earth, or become incorporated with the bodies of devouring animals, or has been carried by the winds to different parts of the globe?

Revelation assures us, that in the day of the resurrection, the Lord Jesus, as a part of his great salvation, the head, husband, friend, and Saviour of his people, will call, from their graves, the sea, or wherever they may be dispersed, as much of the bodies of the saints, as will be necessary to constitute the same bodies, and will prepare them for the heavenly joys, by changing their vile bodies, and fashioning them like unto his glorious body.

By the same Divine authority, we must believe that the sinner, dying destitute of an interest in a Saviour, and without union to him as their mystical Head, will not, in mercy, be summoned from his grave, nor have the vileness of his nature changed. When the archangel shall sound the trumpet, they will be raised by the Almighty voice of Jesus, not as their Saviour and their friend, but in the character of a just and righteous Sovereign, and, to them, awful Judge of the quick and the dead, to join the spirit, the old companion in sin and impenitence.

View the separate spirit, after a long scene of wretchedness, coming from the gloomy abodes of hell, his garment stained with the blood of his past iniquity, and roaring under the inflictions of the wrath of God, to join the body, the associate in a life of sin, and partner in a death of excruciating

mifery ! Hark ! The dolorous cries ! The cutting accents ! Must we meet ? Must we be re-united ! O that I could fuffer the demerit of my crimes alone ! Fly, fly from me, thou fource of my innumerable fins, thou didft long entice me to the ways of folly, and carried me in all my fcenes of rebellion, and plunged me into this infupportable mifery. O that I might not bear the re-duplicated vengeance of a re-union ! Willing, or unwilling, they are again united. Where, where then muft they go ? To meet the Lord in the air—to meet their once defpifed Lord—to meet their Judge, incensed by fin, and filled with indignation againft the workers of iniquity !

The Judge descends in all his glory, the glory of the Father, and of all his holy angels. This person, in desperation, cries, he comes ! He comes ! O ye rocks and mountains, fall upon me, and hide me from the face of God, and from the wrath of the Lamb ! If rocks and mountains muft melt at the prefence of his awful majesty, O earth, open thy deep caverns, and fecure me in thy centre ! The earth resigns her unwilling captive. There is no retreating from his prefence. The fummons is given—the whole human race, all the families of the earth, from Adam to the confummation of all things, not one miffing, appear at the bar. “When the fon of man fhall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then fhall he fit upon the throne of his glory : and before him fhall be gathered all nations ; and fhall feperate them, one from another, as a fhepherd divideth his fheep from the goats : and he fhall fet the fheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then fhall the King fay to them on his right hand, come, ye bleffed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then fhall he fay alfo to them on his left hand, depart from

me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment."

The Judge is seated on a great white throne. An assembled world before him. The books are opened. The righteous appear; all their sins, with all their aggravated guilt, are read before men and devils; all cancelled by the blood of Jesus; in him they stand acquitted, and hear their joyous sentence, "come, ye blessed of my Father, enter into the joys of your Lord."

Then shall the Judge turn to the company of the wicked on his left hand, and pass sentence on them, saying, with dreadful majesty in his countenance, "depart from my blessed and glorious presence, ye impenitent and unbelieving sinners, who lie under the righteous curse of a broken law, for your iniquities; I will be no Saviour to you, who have rejected me, and persisted in your sins; as ye have chosen the service, and done the work of the prince of darkness, and of the apostate spirits, whom he employed to seduce you, I now banish you from my presence, to suffer with them the everlasting torments of that unquenchable fire, which incensed justice originally prepared for them!"

Execution ensues. They take their dwelling with their kindred spirits, in weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

New, peculiar, and additional miseries, now seize upon this person in extreme agony. View the overwhelming sorrow, and wild impatience, which now overwhelms the unhappy creature. If this world, the riches, honors, or the pleasures of this life, have been his chosen happiness, what grief and vexation will overspread all nature, when the creature is torn away from all, even from all its felicity, by judg-

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ment; nothing to supply their place, nothing to relieve the piercing grief, nothing to ease the eternal pain. When racked with inward fretfulness and impatience, and full of the fury of the Lord, and the rebuke of that God, who punishes, how will the heart be ready to burst with madness and intense sorrow! The eyes will be weeping, the hands wringing, tongue dried with long wailing, and the teeth gnawing with madness, yet the sinner ever living, to supply fresh springs to these sorrows! How unutterably wretched—ever seeking, and finding nothing!

Raging desires of ease and pleasure, never to be gratified, now break loose upon this tortured being, and aggravate his distress. Man, when in this world, must desire felicity, and make some efforts to obtain it. Many men of wicked sensuality and luxury, have so drenched themselves in fleshly appetite by indulging lust, that they have placed their chief happiness therein. These, undoubtedly, will carry this temper of sensuality with them. The more this temper is indulged, the stronger it will grow. Therefore, it is most probable, that their raging appetites for this sensual gratification will be vastly increased, when there will be no objects to gratify them. How intense and constant a misery must it be to feel eternal hunger, and no bread to relieve it; keen desire of dainties, with no luxurious dishes to please the humorous taste; perpetuated thirst, without wine or water to allay it, and steady lust of pleasure, without the least hope of gratification. What distress will disappointment, in every effort to obtain pleasure, give him! How fruitless his most intense desires! He shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left, and shall not be satisfied. Miserable condition! Self-tormenting situation!

As there will be joy in heaven over one sinner that repents, we must believe that evil angels and unclean

spirits will be filled with hellish joy, when they have led a sinner, a willing captive in the paths of vice, to the regions of eternal death, and will insult and triumph over them with insolence. When they domineer over the miserable wretch, will he not curse himself a thousand times for listening to their deceitful allurements? When they scoff at him as an eternal fool, who has lost a God, a heaven, and immortal happiness, by his folly in yielding to their temptations, will it not fill him with rage against himself?

When fellow-sinners, and fellow-sufferers, mutually upbraid each other, with loud and sharp reproaches for alluring them to this ruin, and charging each the other with his damnation, must it not aggravate their wretchedness, and administer the keenest remorse and vexation?

Must not such carry with them a sense of the most intense pain and anguish, with which God will afflict the bodies, as well as the spirits of those; who have rebelled against his majesty, rejected his mercy, and provoked his indignation!

A P P L I C A T I O N.

That heart must be past feeling, who can stand unaffected, by the bed of a dying sinner; hear his heart-rending groans; attend to his bitter complaints of past folly, in neglecting the important concerns of his immortal soul, and listen to his loud cries for mercy, without sympathizing with him in his misery. O sinner, sinner, if thine eye and thine ear so deeply affect thee, how wilt thou endure when thy heart-strings are breaking under a lively sense of the wrath of a provoked God! How will you curse your folly in misimproving the day of grace! What, think you,

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would you give for a Saviour in that trying moment? Awake then, double your diligence to lay hold on the hope set before you, while the door of mercy is open, and Jesus waiting to be gracious.

Of what impious folly are they guilty, who set loose all the appetites and lusts of the flesh, under a pretence that it is their nature inclines them to riot in all luxury and wantonness and that they do but follow the leadings of nature? Let us, profligate wretches, consider,

1. Is it not a great mistake to say that you rush on to fleshly iniquities in obedience to all the dictates of nature? Have you no conscience which forbids these vile practices! Has it not given you many checks, and many inward reproaches? Has not reason told you that there is a God—that there will be a judgment, and a terrible account of thy guilt and madness? It is, then, but one part, and that the meanest and vilest of your nature, whose dictates you obey, when you give yourselves up to all intemperance. The heathen have such a conscience, forbidding and condemning grosser iniquities. Such an inward monitor have you, unless you have buried your reason in brutal appetite, and seared your conscience that it may neither feel nor speak.

2. You say you obey nature in following after fleshly lusts: Is it not nature depraved? Can you suppose that it is the original, uncorrupted nature of man, to gratify the appetites of the flesh on a level with the brutes that perish? Can you suppose that your spirit and reason, with all the powers of your intellectual nature, were given to you to be servants to the body, and slaves to the flesh? When the meaner powers of sense and passion have so mighty and sovereign an influence, doth it not tell you, that your nature is fallen from its original state, and doth

not reason tell you that you should seek the recovery of your original excellencies ?

Awake, awake, mistaken man, let reason and conscience do their office. Awake from this dangerous dream, this fatal security. Arm and fight in opposition to the flesh. Arise before the time of trial be ended, and you doomed to miseries that will never end.

This subject brings to view the nature of the christian warfare. It consists much in a contest of the Spirit with the flesh. We must watch over our appetites and senses, and guard against the sinful tendencies of the flesh. To keep down the flesh, and subdue it to the best service of the soul, will be a happy mean to promote our piety and holy peace. This was the practice of the apostle. I keep under my body, said he ; I bear it down ; I keep it under as a slave, lest indulgence of my flesh should turn to my ruin. We are told, that " fleshly lusts war against the soul." When fleshly appetites get the mastery, our prosperity, even the safety of our soul will be in extreme hazard. It is hard wrestling with so violent and so strong a yoke-fellow as our flesh. There is so close a union between the flesh and spirit, that we carry our prison about us ; drag our chains with us tied to our senses. Let us fight the good fight of faith, the crown will more than reward the conquest.

The imperfect representation, which has been given of the horrible, complicated miseries of hell ; and a moment's reflection on the unknown multiplication of the most extreme, racking pains, prolonged beyond years and ages, must strike every thoughtful mind with surprise and great astonishment, that so many thousands of the children of men are walking on the borders of all this misery, and are thoughtless and unconcerned about it. They have easy and peaceful

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minds in the midst of this dreadful danger—with all the symptoms of wrath upon them, they live without fear, and make no effort to escape. Wretched creatures, indeed, who have a mortal disease, which will grow into all this anguish and distress, yet they live insensible of their peril, and unacquainted with the state of their souls. All the heavy artillery of Divine vengeance ready to be discharged upon them, as soon as the door of death opens their passage to the invisible world; yet they walk on fearless and joyful, without any defence but their own vain presumption.

Will nothing awaken you, O ye obstinate transgressors against God, and rejectors of his grace and gospel? Will nothing warn you to flee from the wrath to come?

Is it not time, my friends, to think whether this may not be your case? Is it not time to examine your souls? Am I exposed to this danger? Am I on the brink of this misery, yet content to continue thus? Can I hope to escape the fury of God, continuing to abuse his patience? Can I expect to live with him as my God, without obtaining his favor in this world? We are assured, that he that believeth not on the Son of God, the wrath of God abideth on him. This wrath will be one day felt with dreadful anguish, and will crush soul and body into endless horror.

May each of us learn the dreadful evil of sin, and not provoke God to teach us by the iron rod of his vengeance. While the flame is kindling, may we take an alarm—fly to Jesus, and make a safe escape.—
AMEN.

SERMON VII.

THE DEVIL DEFEATED!

I JOHN III.—8th. Last clause.

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested,” &c.

THE self-existent, all-sufficient, and eternal Jehovah could aim at no object so worthy of his nature, as a display of his perfections. Infinite wisdom drew the plan of creating a world; Almighty power produced the materials from non-existence. His boundless goodness required that the unformed mass should be made a system of universal usefulness.

We are informed by Divine inspiration, that “in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” They are left destitute of that furniture, splendor, and perfection, with which they should afterwards be supplied.

To shew that he was a God of order, and to open a door for the institution of a sabbath, commemorative of this great work, he employed six days for the completion. The heavens and the earth were a summary of all that should follow, We find the earth

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variegated with all its perfections and beauty, for the occupation of man.

In the vast machinery of this world, some beings merely sensitive ; others animal and sensitive ; others with animal and rational life, part spiritual and part animal, present themselves. Reason, undoubtedly, would conclude that the Maker of all things did form beings purely spiritual, to complete the system. These spiritual beings must be the inhabitants of a world destitute of visible and sensible objects. The heaven of heavens must be the residence of purely spiritual beings, whatever they may be called. To this agrees the word of inspiration. Let Socinians, and others, pretend what they may, God informs us, that the hosts of heaven were created during the first six days ; “ The heavens and the earth were finished, and all the hosts of them,” “ For in six days the Lord made the heaven, and the earth, the sea, and all that in them is.” “ When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy”—when the foundation of the earth was laid, on the first or second day.

It is beyond all doubt, that a legion of these spiritual beings possessed one person ; thence we are obliged to conclude, that vast multitudes of these spiritual intelligences were created. Their superior dignity shews that they excelled all that had been created in knowledge. Their knowledge is either natural, revealed, experimental, or supernatural.

The Psalmist informs us, that they excel in strength. They have power to perform many things which appear wonderful to us, but far short of that of working miracles, of which God alone can be the author.

They were as happy in the service, and delightful enjoyment of their Creator, as their refined and dignified nature would admit.

As we are informed that they surrounded the throne of God, it is probable that he gave them an early intimation of the fall of man, and that the human nature should be honored above that of the highest archangel, and man's happiness not only be advanced, but secured by his beloved Son assuming their nature, and giving himself a sacrifice for their sin, and finally redeeming them to himself. This begat envy at the happiness of that inferior rank of being, and probably struck an archangel with malice, determining to revolt from God, and carry as many of the angelic host as he could. We learn that many of the heavenly host fell from their happy condition; and for this were doomed to chains of darkness for ever.

This Chieftain, with his associate apostates, were ordinarily denominated Devils, unclean spirits, Satan, &c. They no sooner revolted, than they were excluded from the heavenly mansions, and irrevocably condemned to endless misery; but not immediately confined to the prison of hell.

This punishment, appearing to them a real injury, their malice became inflamed against God. Knowing that they could not affect the Supreme Jehovah with all their malice, it grew into inflamed anger; when they could not satisfy their anger, it grew into indignation, and ungratified indignation begat an insatiable thirst for revenge.

Sensible of their absolute incompetency to reach the throne of the Almighty, they attacked this much to be indulged human race, resolving their ruin, and thereby spoil God of the glory of this lower world.

This Chieftain, fully set upon revenge, probably in the serpent, seduced our first parents, and received an additional curse on that to be effected chiefly through the redemption by Christ Jesus.

“For the Son of God was manifested, that he

might destroy the works of the devil." For the illustration of these words, we shall

Ist, Shew you some of the leading works by which the Devil designs the ruin of the human family, and to deface the glory and honor of God.

IIdly, The means by which Christ Jesus doth and will destroy those works.

Excellence, in a variety of degrees, is displayed in the works of creation. One rank of being rising higher than another, until the highest created perfection centers in the angelic world. The most extensive knowledge and power must be found in this most finished order.

Those of the hosts of heaven who revolted from God, retained their natural capacities. Long experience, with careful observation, added to their natural knowledge, and gave advantageous opportunities to exert their power. In each of these they exceeded all human conception. If, in a state of innocence, Adam could penetrate into the nature of the works of God, so far as to adapt their names to their very nature, how much more fully, and exactly must we suppose Satan to know them. The angel could neither know nor perform all things. The heart of man is inscrutable by finite beings, and the knowledge of futurity is to them a profound secret, except so far as effects are discoverable by their causes. Apostate spirits cannot comprehend the Divine essence; but they know as much of the rays of his majesty and glory, as their created weakness will bear. "They do always behold the face of God in heaven." They must know themselves men, and other creatures, or be inferior to man in understanding, nor could they pitch their camp around, unless they knew them. They have power to do all things which do not exceed the order and strength of created nature.

This knowledge and power qualified the arch-fiend to exercise all manner of subtlety in the prosecution of his hellish devices. "We are not ignorant of his devices." Alluding to sophistical reasoners, 11 Tim. ii. 26—"And that they might recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil."

"In all deceivableness of unrighteousness." In a word, he is able to do whatever malice can suggest, wit and art can contrive for delusion; whatsoever diligence can practice, or cruelty execute.

This enemy of God and man being thus completely furnished for the execution of his wicked design, did not let a moment escape without attempting to rob God of his glory, and the human family of their happiness.

Did the prince of darkness begin the first and principal of all his works by an exertion of his mighty power? No, his wisdom dictated that force would sound an alarm, and rouse to caution and a guard. Why did he prefer subtlety to force? He knew, well, that where force conquers thousands, subtlety overthrows its tens of thousands. Did the Devil address Eve in his natural appearance? No; this might raise her suspicion. Why did he address her in and through the serpent? It has been conjectured that the serpent walked upright, and was very beautiful to behold. The scriptures inform us, that "he was more subtle than any beast of the field;" therefore more conformed to his own temper, and calculated to his purpose.

Was it the serpent that did speak, or Satan by the serpent? A serpent had not speech, nor could he exercise the power of reasoning. It must have been Satan, by the serpent as an instrument.

His object was great—the total ruin of man, and eclipse of the glory of God; and therefore it was necessary to begin with the greatest possible subtlety.

He takes the advantage of Eve's weakness, persuaded that would be the most likely way to prevail with Adam; and in the absence of her husband, thinking that he might probably interpose in the conference, and defeat his hidden purpose. He did not directly disclose the ruinous scheme. He knew that if Eve retained her views of the majesty of her Creator, and the solemn, weighty prohibition, he could not promise himself success; therefore his first object must be, to divert her mind from the greatness and glory of God. Having amused her mind, he makes the object plead for him. It appears that she was in sight of the tree—she saw that it was good for food, and pleasant to the eye. Lest she should be affrighted, he did not directly discover his intention; but begins with an enquiry to conceal his purpose—“Hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”—designing to lead her to believe that he doubted the reality of the command, and his words were so ordered as to beget some doubt in her mind. Under a pretence of asserting God's liberality, he secretly undermines the threatening; as if he had said, “Is it possible that so bountiful a Creator should deny the liberty to eat of any tree? To what purpose was it made, if it might not be tasted?” Finding that he had gained a little, and brought her in some measure to question the reality of the prohibition, for she seems to extenuate the threatening, by saying, “lest we die.” Now he grows bold to speak his mind, and plainly to annihilate the threatening; “Ye shall not die.” He would not have ventured to speak in so high a tone, if he had not been persuaded that he had raised, at least, a wavering suspicion that possibly God was not in earnest in his prohibition. By equivocating upon the name of the tree, he presses the convenience and excellence of the fruit,

assuring her that this fruit could make them as Gods. With a depth of art and cunning, he has addressed her without giving the least intimation of the smallest danger, but holding to her view impunity with a great advantage. He covers the deadly poison with a pretence of great kindness. Eve, viewing the fruit, that it was beautiful, and hoping that by eating thereof, she would obtain a great acquisition of light and knowledge, she took of the fruit, did eat, and gave of it to her husband, and he did eat.

Adam, with all who should naturally descend from his loins, until the consummation of all things, are plunged into an ocean of guilt—caught in the fowler's snare, and carried captive at his will: They have rejected the government of God, and submitted to the tyrannical dominion of the prince of darkness—are the slaves of Satan—bound under the penalty of a broken law. *This* is the work of the Devil, triumphing in the total ruin of the human family, and the God of heaven dishonored.

The Devil knows that all creatures are mutable. As he was subject to change, so is man. His government may be in danger. It is, therefore, an important work of Satan, to perpetuate an easy and quiet possession of the heart of man. He knows that an uneasy government will be distressed, yea may be overturned by mutinies and insurrections. This is confirmed by our Lord. "When the strong man, armed, keepeth the palace, his goods are at peace." When we consider the wages of sin, and the power of light and conscience, it will appear a difficult work for Satan to rule his slaves in a high degree of quiet. His skill, and the way on which he manages his interest, may be learned from the evangelist. "Every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light." The light of the gospel disquiets Sa-

tan's possessions; it introduceth such a discovery as always causeth shame and confusion. To prevent this discovery, they will avoid the light; if they cannot avoid it, they will hate the light. To keep the sinner from the light, he wards off all reflections of conscience—conceals the evil and danger of sin, and sings them asleep in their folly. By a presumptuous confidence and security, the heart hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, is excluded from the light.

The Devil was careful to keep Jeroboam quiet in his sinful course—he stirs up Amaziah to banish Amos from the court, lest his plain dealing should awaken the conscience of the king. Amos i. 7. “Go, flee thee unto the land of Judah, but prophesy no more in Bethel,” &c.

Nothing can more effectually exclude the light than Satan's insinuating himself as a lying spirit in the mouth of professed ministers of the gospel, speaking smooth things to Satan's captives, telling them that they are good enough—they may go to heaven as well as the most precise. God complains of this—“They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace.” This stratagem takes the advantage of the inclination of man, who naturally thinks the best of himself, and delights that others should speak what they would have them. If light begins to break in upon the mind as an unwelcome guest, the Devil will be alarmed—will suggest to them a misapprehension of their state and condition, and fill them with hopes and assurances of secrecy. Some “seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord, and their works are in the dark; and they say, who seeth us, and who knoweth us.”

That it is a snare of the Devil when persons take

encouragement to delay seeking the Lord, from an apprehension that they are too young—that it is time enough, &c. will be evident from the exhortations of scripture, pressing us to an immediate embracing the counsel of the Lord. “To-day, to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts;” and “Now is the accepted time.”

The Devil is so fully acquainted with human nature, that he is assured that nothing will sooner beget a hatred to the light, than for us to view it in any sense affecting our interest. He is sure to make interest a party, if possible. If this be shaken in the least degree, or endangered, it will beget hatred to the person or thing endangering it. This is displayed in the case of the good Aša: The Devil stirs up his hatred against the Seer—“He was wroth against him, and cast him into the prison house, for he was in a rage against him.” The ground of this rage, was the king’s interest; he apprehended, was wrapped up with his league with the king of Assyria—he could not bear so plain a reproof which struck at so great an interest.

Again—The unavoidable effects of light are improved by Satan, to raise a hatred against the light. A manifestation and discovery is produced by light. “All things that are reprovèd are made manifest; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” The issue of this manifestation, is shame and confusion, or repentance, which is expressed by being ashamed and confounded. Instead of turning the edge of it against sin, Satan turns it against the light. The ground of this hatred, Christ tells us, is, “lest their deeds should be reprovèd,” and they be compelled to bear their shame.

Another important occasion, which will require all the subtle artifices, and sedulous diligence of Satan,

is, when the Lord is pleased to send his light forth, and his truth, with the influences of his holy Spirit. The sinner then awakes as from a dead sleep—all is light around him—he has new views of God, of the law of God, of Christ, and of himself—the perfect holiness of God, and his law, that is holy, just and good, extending to all the thoughts and intents of the heart, requiring a sinless obedience, under the penalty of death in all dreadful forms, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. He is convinced that he is a sinner—that he has no claim to a Saviour—is impressed with a sense of his dangerous condition, and the necessity and importance of salvation. He is rendered uneasy—can find no rest. He begins to read, to pray, hoping by altering his life he may procure a happy state of mind. Whether this sensibility be in a higher or lower degree, Satan is proportionably alarmed, lest he should be spoiled of his goods. With great policy he adapts himself to the most advantageous circumstance. He either works to retain his palace, the heart and affections, or appears with the unclean spirit recorded in the xith. of Luke, as if he voluntarily went out of his palace, but claiming it as his right to repossess it when it might appear most to his advantage.

When the convictions are light, and the mind not highly impressed, he improves the opportunity to quench the motions of the Spirit, by alluring the sinner to the pleasing amusements of variety, of company, or plunging himself into the bustle of the world, with flattering prospects of vast emolument, or raising them an ambition for the glitter of honor. If these are too weak to prevail, he exerts himself to raise in them hopes that their state is not desperate—that a little amendment of life will sufficiently secure his happiness. Here they sometimes only exchange one

sin for another, perhaps equally heinous, but not so much out of fashion. The drunkard becomes ambitious; the covetous profuse; filthiness of the flesh is changed into filthiness of the spirit; men seem to reform their gross impieties, abstaining from drunkenness, swearing, adultery; they acquiesce in formality. The enemy flatters them that all is now well; they say, "I thank God that I am not as other men."

If this device of Satan fails, and his kingdom is still in danger, by a discovery that all this is but a secret poison, working certain death; that their hearts are as vain as ever, that they are still polluted with sin. From the crown of the head unto the sole of the feet there is no soundness in them; that all their religion is a mass of hypocrisy; that they are in the broad road to hell; that the law of God condemns them; their conscience binds them over to eternal destruction. Now they can find no peace, no rest, day or night.

Now the Devil tells them that they have sinned away their day of grace; that they are such inveterate rebels, that God cannot, will not pardon them; that there is no mercy in God for them; that they have fixed upon themselves sure damnation. By this means Satan designs to drive them into Despair.—
Hellish device!

That the promotion of error for the ruin of the human race, and dishonor of God, is the work of the Devil, will be manifest when we consider

God hath a high interest in truth, referring to his great designs of holiness and mercy. Truth is a beam from him who is the Father of light. *Deus est prima veritas essentialis.* All revealed truths are copies of that essential truth. It is the rod of his strength; the sceptre of his kingdom, by which he subdues the hearts of men to his obedience, in conversion; the

rock upon which his church is built ; the great depositum committed to his church ; the church holdeth out truth to the world. By it holiness is maintained ; our ways directed, and by it we are warned of Satan's devices. The prince of darkness conducts in as direct opposition to God, as possible. So great is his hatred to God, that he will endeavor, by every possible mean, to corrupt the original. Although he cannot break Christ's sceptre by raising error, he can prevent the increase of his subjects. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to lead us into truth : It is the Devil's work to lead us into error.

Again—The scriptures chargeth the sin and danger of error to those men who promote it, to the deception of themselves and others. The same word of truth fixes the blame on Satan, as the contriver of it. He must have instruments ; but he is the lying spirit in their mouths.

The church of Corinth was filled with dangerous errors. The apostle calls the promoters, false teachers, false apostles, Satan's ministers—informing who it is that sends them upon this errand.

From the constant course of his proceedings, we must conclude that it is his great work. The parable of the tares, Matth. xiii. 25 : shews that he is as diligent to sow tares, as the Master to sow wheat. By tares we are not to understand errors in the abstract, but men. That which makes men tares, is sin and error. In a complex sense, then, we are to understand how diligent the Devil is, in the work of sowing tares or errors.

All error is sinful. If Satan only corrupts one person, without any further mischief, he has not lost his labor. Some errors are fundamental, and are as deadly poison, called by the apostle, damnable. These are enumerated among the works of the flesh, and will

exclude from the kingdom of heaven. Those of a lower nature extremely hazard the soul, are lesser evils: But, standing in opposition to truth, which is given for us to believe, do not cease to be sin. The foundation of error is pride, which swells men to this height, If Satan gains this denial of truth, and swells the heart into arrogance, he accomplishes the ruin of man, and dishonor of God.

Error is of an increasing nature. It stops not at one or two falsehoods. It renders the mind unstable in every truth. Stedfastness once broken, it cannot be told where a man will stop. It unavoidably branches into many, as inferences and conclusions—a fair mark for the Devil.

This device of Satan is eminently serviceable. It introduceth divisions, rents, hatred, animosities, revilings, contentions, tumults, and wars. What havoc has it made in families! The father is set against the son—the son against the father, &c. What desolation in congregations! If we trace error through the ruins of churches, and view the slaughters and bloodshed it hath occasioned, and the wars and desolations it hath brought forth, we must say, that Satan hath succeeded in his ruinous enterprize.

Satan never devised a more successful stratagem to check a revival of religion, or hinder a reformation in doctrine and worship. He opposeth these with all his might and policy; because these pull down what cost him so much labor and time to build up, and therefore they stand in contrariety to his principal end. They who are called out by God to jeopard their lives in the high ways of the field, undertake a hard enterprize. Satan, knowing the power of those engaged against the current of iniquity, provides himself with a reserve—comes upon their backs with a party of erroneous men, raised from among themselves.

By this he either discourageth, or limits their success. Hereby he divides the party; strengthens the hearts of their enemies, or chagrins them with bitter words, and violent opposition.

The seed of error hath carefully been sown by Satan, in every age of the world, as soon as the flame of religion hath so far subsided that he sees an advantageous opportunity. When the apostles were employed to demolish the Old-Testament ceremonies, and heathen worship, Satan raised up men of corrupt minds, to prevent their progress. The epistles to the churches at Corinth and Galatia, testify that Satan's emissaries were employed to draw men from the simplicity of the gospel; nay, to another gospel. This gave the apostle great fear, grief, and jealousy.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when religion was corrupted by popery, God was pleased to raise up Luther, and Calvin, and others, to bring back his people from Babylon. Errors in so full a growth took place, that reformation did not attain that universality which might have been expected from such blessed undertakings. It has been observed by Doctor Prideaux, "if these fanatic enthusiasts had not retarded those glorious proceedings, that Apocalyptical Beast of Rome would have been not only weakened and wounded, but overthrown."

The cause of Satan's delusions, hath received a mighty advantage, from adulterated principles in doctrine and worship, naturally producing corruption in life and conversation. Our Lord intimates that this is an extraordinary, but its natural fruit, and therefore gives it as a special mark, by which false prophets may be known—"Ye shall know them by their fruits"—by their immediate, or after life. How did the apostle complain of this in the church of Pergamos, Rev. ii. 14. and in the church of Phyatira, verse

15. The same has prevailed from the days of the Apostles to this time.

Have these works of the Devil been suffered to pass without interruption? Has no one more mighty destroyed them? This leads us to consider

II—By what means Christ hath, doth, and will destroy the works of the Devil.

No subject can be more interesting to a person that is sensible of the ruins of his apostacy. No news more exhilarating to a person groaning under the burden of unpardoned guilt. No tidings more welcome to one that is longing for a deliverance. No motives more melting to love and obedience, than to hear that Satan is and will be foiled in all his attacks upon the human race—his armor taken from him, and he spoiled of all his goods, by one more mighty in battle, fully furnished to give deliverance in every conflict, and make feeble man triumphant over his subtle, malicious, and cruel enemy, the Devil, and to give inexpressible and everlasting happiness to the most miserable of the human family.

The news of this Saviour, and this salvation, was early divulged in paradise. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” It is promised, that notwithstanding all the injury which the old serpent had done to man, Jesus, the seed of the woman, had undertaken his cause—would encounter this chieftain—break his power—demolish his dominion in their hearts, and crown them with glory and honor.

This glad tidings of great joy was constantly handed down through the various dispensations of the old testament, under types, ceremonies, and sacrifices. We find that sacrifices were early offered. It is probable that God had taught our first parents the design

of sacrifices. Hence we find them early covered with the skins of animals. Although man was not allowed to eat flesh till after the flood, we may reasonably suppose the use of sacrifices long before, and that their clothing was of the beasts used in sacrifice. They doubtless viewed these sacrifices, as pointing to the redemption by the Son of God, giving himself an offering for sin, as the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

The Prophets all agreed in announcing that this Jesus was "wounded for our sins—bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him."

In the fulness of time, the Son of God made his appearance in our world—he tabernacled in flesh—was proclaimed by heavenly heralds, and, as with a finger, pointed out by one bidding defiance to all on earth, or in hell; calling upon all men to repent, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. John, who must decrease as the stars before the rising sun, points to Jesus, whose dominion and glory should increase, as the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, by the sacrifice of himself. John then introduced him into the execution of his office, by baptism.

Immediately upon his entering into the execution of his office, we find him conflicting with all the subtlety, malice, and power of the Devil, for forty nights and days. Satan is foiled in every encounter. Jesus stands his ground as complete conqueror.

Jesus, designing to extend his dominion, raises an army—his twelve disciples, and adds to these seventy others; furnishes them for the field; sends them out by two and two, to fight his battles in the territory of Satan; to reduce his revolted subjects then to the interest of their Lord.

They return, flushed with victory, saying, through thy name the Devils are subject to us. Although he

takes the prophetic complaint, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Many, out of every character, became his real converts, and would follow him through good report, and evil report.

A conquered enemy is always a spiritless enemy. You at one time may hear the Devils proclaiming his superior dignity, saying, "Thou art the Son of God." At another time, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth." Again, you find a whole legion dispossessing the man, at the voice of his command.

All the doctrines of the gospel, taught by our dear Lord, were not discovered with perfect clearness, but delivered by him to his disciples and followers, with that degree of light which their circumstances required. They were left to be more fully and clearly understood by his apostles, under the influence of the Spirit.

All the doctrines which he taught, were subversive of Satan's kingdom, and consequently ruinous to all his works. He represented the miserable state of fallen man, again and again, by discovering the nature, and the demerit of, sin. Would you see the depth of the fall of man? "Behold the man!" Behold the depth of Christ's humiliation, to restore man. Behold the beloved Son of God, perfectly spotless and holy, made an example of the severest vengeance; prostrate and agonizing in the garden; enduring the vilest insults from wicked men; torn with whips, and nails, and thorns, naked, wounded, bleeding on the cross! Sin was the procuring cause of all this misery. He stood in the place of sinners, and therefore could not be spared. Consider how detestable the nature of sin. It is sin that has rendered the case of man so desperate, that nothing which he can

do or suffer, can possibly retrieve him. Jesus represents sin as so inveterate, that no human means can relieve ; none but an Almighty Physician can cure it. If you ask, why this dismal representation of the helpless and hopeless misery ? To awaken the sinner, to alarm his fears, that he may be excited to flee the deadly evil, and hasten speedily to a deliverer. Doth not this tend directly to humble the pride of man, to break down the strong holds of Satan, and reduce the wounded soul to the obedience of Christ ? Again—Jesus did reveal the means and certainty of salvation, proportioned to the guilt and misery of sinners, and a happiness answerable to the utmost capacity of the soul of man. Jesus was pointed out by a voice from heaven, at his baptism, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” He claims his right and authority to save sinners, being commissioned by the Father. He vindicated to himself those characters which belong to God : To know the thoughts of the heart ; to forgive sins ; by his Almighty power, to give sight, health, and life with a word ; shewed that he possessed the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

He therefore taught, in the most convincing manner, that in the complex character of God-man, Mediator, he voluntarily substituted himself in the place of sinners ; enforced the necessity of believing on him in this view. “ Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart, to believe all that the Prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ?” It was foretold that the Lord should lay on him the iniquities of us all ; that he was to be wounded for our transgressions, and by his stripes we should be healed. All that he did, and all that he suffered in this character, was attended with infinite virtue and

efficacy. He hereby assured them that truth and justice was vindicated in the full satisfaction exacted from the surety. In the sufferings of the substitute, God's inexpressible hatred of sin is illustrated; unsearchable wisdom displayed.

The mercy of God, which could never have been exercised without a competent satisfaction, now shines brighter than the meridian sun. All the perfections of Jehovah harmonize and coalesce in the sufficiency of the Saviour, and his all-sufficient salvation. Now God can be just, and justify sinners that believe in the atonement of Christ, righteous, and shew mercy to the guilty.

The first and principal object of the Devil, was to sink the whole human race into ruin. He unwearily pursued the grand design, and now strikes a finishing stroke, by the death of Jesus of Nazareth. We know not what ideas the Devil had of the Messiah: His works declare, that he promised to himself the reduction of the Jewish nation to his dominion. The Heathen world was his possession, and the death of Jesus would finish all opposition. He knew the covetous heart of Judas, the incurable prejudices of the Scribes and Pharisees; the violent hatred of the Jewish rulers. A fair opportunity presents itself; he instigated Judas to betray his Lord into their hands; he is delivered to them; they arrest, and hurry him to Pilate's bar; he is unjustly condemned to the most cruel death, the death of the cross; he dies; the grave, with the security of a guard, could not detain him a prisoner; he triumphantly breaks the bands of death; he liveth, and was dead; and behold, he is alive for evermore. He commissions his apostles; they fly like lightning to every quarter of the world. The covenant of peculiarity is ceased, and a better, more extensive covenant is substituted. Jews and

Gentiles, of every nation, kindred and tongue, are invited into his kingdom; thousands join themselves to the Lord. What Satan intended as matter of universal triumph, now recoils upon himself. Jesus obtains a more flattering prospect of universal dominion.

We have seen that the doctrines of the gospel, like the sun, shed light and heat wherever it has reached. It is a hard, a difficult labor for a sinner, loving darkness, to live under the beams of Divine truth.

Nothing has contributed more to Satan's keeping peaceable possession of those blinded by the god of this world, than his careful, and indefatigable labor, either to detain them from the light, or to beget in them a hatred of the light. He leaves no stratagem untried. The sinful children of Adam choose a darkness worse than Egyptian. Conscious that their condition will not bear the light, without a discovery that they are poor, and blind, needy and naked, and reducing them to sore remorse, and bitter repentance.

When the Lord sends his light forth, and the truth, he sometimes surpriseth the sinner hiding in the dark, by a word spoken or read in season.

As he hath all flesh in his hand, and can direct their course when and where he pleaseth, at one time he draweth them to the effectual means of light; at another, he makes the light follow them, which, like lightning, darts into their minds with an efficacy which they cannot resist. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God, breaks in upon their understandings; they feel their misery; they are alarmed; they are covered with shame and confusion of face. In all the earnestness of their souls, they comply with the terms of the gospel, renouncing all dependence upon their own righteousness, and relying upon Jesus for all the blessings of salvation.

The day of the sinner's conviction, when the arrows thereof have sunk deep, and he is filled with

awful apprehension of the wrath of God ; the law of God, and his own conscience, thundering against him for sin that he had done ; no peace nor rest day nor night, is the day of Satan's alarm ; he, with the utmost diligence, presseth him to consider his past honesty and civility—that he has done many good things—he read—he prayed—he went to church—that he has a good heart—that he is as sincere as many who doubtless will go to heaven—that he need not fear, God will be merciful, and forgive him all his sins : He listens to the charmer, presumes on the mercy of God—gives himself rest.

The Devil knows well that presumption is agreeable to an unrenewed heart, and therefore has tried the stratagem ; if he prevails he holds his ground.

If the Spirit of the Lord is about to change the temper and disposition of that soul, he will bring him to the word of God ; will shew him that the law requires the heart ; that his heart is as vain as ever, desperately wicked ; that there can be no sincerity in an un sanctified heart ; that his heart is full of all abomination ; that God cannot pardon the soul who has not trusted in the atonement of Christ ; Christ tells him that he that believeth not shall be damned. He is convinced that all his past hopes were false and delusive ; that believe he must, or perish he must. Satan is obliged now to alter his wiley art. He now tells the sinner that he has been too great a transgressor to be pardoned ; that Christ will not save so gross a rebel ; that his sins have been so highly aggravated that there is no mercy in God for him. Thus he drives the unhappy man into despair.

Christ brings the desponding being to the word, and particularly the precious promises of the gospel ; shews the sinner that God has never told him that there is no mercy, no pardon for him, but hath de-

clared that in him is mercy that he may be feared, and plenteous redemption; that Christ has not said that he will not save so wretched a person; that Christ invites all without condition, and has excluded none but those who exclude themselves; that he hath saved a Mary Magdalene, and a Paul. He takes encouragement, that peradventure he will save him; gives himself to Christ, relying on him for pardon, and all salvation.

The King and Head of his church knows that it is the disposition of that malignant spirit, the old Dragon, to destroy the pure doctrines and worship of the gospel, by every possible mean. Amid all his hellish machinations, we find delusive error has been, and still is practised, especially after a revival of religion. "And the Serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman; that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood."

The Lord Jesus foreseeing that error, like a flood, would swallow up the earth, often prevents and checks its baneful influence, by putting it into the hearts of men to publish, and send into the world, the most orthodox tracts of Divinity, and by begetting in the hearts of the people a disposition to read, to examine, and judge for themselves, and particularly to make the word of God the man of their counsel.

Again—The Lord, in his holy Providence, stirs up the ministers of the gospel to descry danger, and to sound an alarm, by preaching the truths of the gospel, and detecting the fallacy of such delusions as may have been broached to the great injury of the church.

As in the days of the apostles, dangerous errors threatened the church of Christ, it appears that the Lord had furnished them with singular gifts, not only to declare the whole counsel of the Lord, but with

vigilance and meekness, to detect the delusions of the times. So the Lord, in his Providence hath raised up and endowed men with singular natural and acquired abilities, whom he has called to take the field against that old Serpent, and has crowned them with abundant success.

To conclude the scene—When Jesus shall come a second time, without sin unto salvation, then shall he descend, escorted by a vast retinue of saints and angels, then shall he seat himself on a great white throne, to judge the world in righteousness; then shall he trample all his enemies under his feet, and raise his dear children above all the calumny, persecution, and temptation of men and Devils.

They shall be confirmed in a state of perfect and unchangeable happiness. Now shall Satan, with all the enemies of Christ, and his people, be cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, the smoke whereof ascendeth for ever and ever.

I M P R O V E M E N T.

1st. Upon a review of this subject, the soul that is distressed with a sense of sin, and ready to give up all hopes, in an hour of temptation, must find relief when it considers that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin; that Jesus who hath prepared mansions for his people, is able to qualify a people for the enjoyment of that felicity; that Jesus freely invites all, without exception, and has declared, “He that cometh unto me, I will in no ways reject.” And every true believer must find delightful comfort, when he considers that he is engaged in a cause that must prevail; that he is following Jesus, whom all the might of earth and hell cannot withstand, that his

enemy is conquered, and will be trampled under foot; that their general is more in might than all that can be against him. Doth not this inspire you with courage? Consider, O believer, your cause is good; that which you contend for is just and honorable, you cannot fail in the attempt, when an Omnipotent Jesus is engaged for you, and has ensured the crown that fadeth not, to you. Let the wicked be dismayed, their cause is bad, yea, desperate, and the reward will be indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.

2. This subject is sufficient to beget in every breast, a desire to praise and magnify our great Deliverer, who came on so gracious an errand. O the the height, the length, the breadth, and depth of the love of Christ! When the Father sent his only Son into our world, we might justly suspect and fear that it was to avenge the injuries done to God: But behold, he came not to destroy, but to save sinners; "God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world; but that he that believeth on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. He therefore came on the merciful errand, to save us from our enemies. Let our souls, then, and all that is within us be stirred up to bless him, and let every heart be disposed to join that triumphant song, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us with his own blood from our sins, and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God, and his Father, to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever.—*AMEN.*

SERMON VIII.

THE QUALIFIED SUBJECT FOR COMMUNION WITH
CHRIST.

MARK IV.—2.

*“ And he said unto them, unto you it is given to know
the mystery of the kingdom of God, but unto
them that are without, these
things are done in
parables.”*

HE, that went about continually doing good to the bodies, and particularly to the souls of men, finding a large multitude resorting to him, that they might receive lessons of instruction, or some special manifestation of his love and grace, took the most advantageous post for that purpose. He shews them the different effects that the ministration of the gospel had on different classes of hearers. Far the greater part of those, who attend upon the means of grace, feel only the common influences of the Spirit; and these, some in a higher, and some in a lower degree; yet all bring forth no fruit to eternal life.

Although the ministry of Christ and his servants should be without success, it is not owing to any defect in the means of life: but it flows from a criminal disorder in the hearts of the hearers, which either resists its impression upon them, or soon loses it, through the subtlety of Satan, or the temptations of this world. A happy few, under the influence of faith and love, treasure it up in their hearts, for the purpose of reducing it to practice in their lives. Jesus, having represented these things by a similitude, which was not immediately perceived, his family, with a number of respectable characters, took the first private opportunity to learn of him the meaning of the parable.

He introduces his explanation with these words, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables."

The kingdom, mentioned in these words, must intend Christ's mediatorial kingdom, or the administration of the kingdom of grace, which leads to the kingdom of glory. The subjects of this kingdom, in their new covenant state, are prepared by Divine grace, to see, receive, know, and obey those things that were before the mystery, and many of which things are still beyond their comprehension. This they enjoyed by communication from Christ Jesus, *unto you it is given. But to them that are without*, such as are not by the powerful influences of Divine grace, reduced to the obedience of Christ, the King of Zion, cannot possibly receive or obey them; they are spiritually discerned. These are under the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience. These, having not subjected themselves to Christ, are under the dominion of Satan. How great is his dominion! All the

human race, who are out of Christ's kingdom, are subjects of the kingdom of Satan, who have no communion with Jesus. *To them, all these things are in parables.* To prepare the words for improvement, we shall endeavor to shew,

I—Those properties of the kingdom of Christ, whereby it is distinguished from the kingdom of Satan.

II—Characterize the subjects of each of these kingdoms.

III—Shew that it is impossible that communion can subsist between any of these opposite parties.

We return to shew those properties of Christ's kingdom, which distinguish it from the kingdom of Satan.

The royal power and authority which the Lord Jesus possesses, was obtained by donation of the Father. Without it none of the blessings of salvation could have been effectually applied to any of the guilty children of men. The Father hath given him all power, that he might give eternal life to whomsoever he would.

When we consider the mutual stipulations and re-stipulations of the covenant of peace, we find that the Father promised to give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the isles for his possession; that he gave him a seed to serve him, and the gospel assures us, that a definite number of the fallen race of man were given to him, to be redeemed, saved, and governed by him. These are distinguished from the men of the world. *Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me. I pray not for the world; but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world.*

As head of his people, he is called King—King of Kings, and King of saints. By the appoint-

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ment of the Father, he is King of his people; has power and authority to give laws to, protect, govern, and pass an irreverfible fentence of condemnation, or approbation. Behold, I have fet him King upon my holy hill of Zion. And the King fhall fay unto them on his right hand, come, ye bleffed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. And he hath on his vefture, and on his thigh, a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

The harbinger of our Lord, viewing Jefus as King, about to erect his gospel kingdom, fays, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Hence it appears, that a people, and power, and authority to govern them, were given to him by the Father.

But Satan has obtained a kingdom by ufurpation.

God, as Creator and Preferver of the whole human race, had the only fovereign right to the love, praife, and obedience of the intelligent world: But all mankind, in their covenant representative, being feduced by the arch-enemy of God and man, fubmitted themfelves to the prince of the power of the air, the fpirit that now worketh in the children of difobedience. This prince, having once trepanned them into his fervice, unjuftly claims a right to them, and their fervices; hence he is called the prince of this world. Now is the prince of this world judged. He is called the ruler of the darknefs of this world, ruling in the hearts of every perfon in a ftate of ignorance of God, of Chrift, and the way of falvation through him. This power, rule, and authority is manifefted by the extreme oppofition of men to the true and powerful light of the gospel; by their unnatural and unreafonable love of idols; and by their hatred, and violent perfecution of Chrift and his members, notwithstanding the great Jehovah never invefted him

with any dominion, or delegated his right, power, and authority to him. Man had no right to dispose of himself and his services : therefore he derived no authority from God, and could receive none from man : consequently, he unjustly exercises a power over the human race, while in a state of nature.

Again—King Jesus has a right to his people, not only by the donation of his Father, and by his paying the price of their redemption ; but he obtains a right of dominion over them by conquest. The Father has given him a seed to serve him, out of every age, nation, kindred, tongue, and people. The house is given to him that built it : but the strong man, armed, has the first possession, and this he will hold, until dispossessed by one that is more than his match in might. Satan has wrought himself into the first possession of the hearts of the children of men, and will not relinquish his claim, unless compelled by superior power. Jesus must send forth his armies of prophets, apostles, pastors, and teachers, armed with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, to subdue those, his enemies, to the obedience of the Divine will. The Psalmist says, “ thy people shall be ready in the day of thy power,” or, as it might be rendered, in the day of thine armies. This weapon, accompanied by the efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit, is sharp and powerful. Thine arrows are sharp, in the heart of the king’s enemies. It pierces, to the dividing asunder the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Deep convictions of sin, guilt, and danger, are fixed in their consciences ; they are filled with real distress, and grievous trouble, turn whither they will ; fear of the wrath of God, from a consciousness that they deserve no mercy, pursues them by day and by night.

The prince of darkness now plays his hellish en-

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ginery, to drive them to despair of, or presume on the mercy of God. But the armor of Jesus is mighty to pull down the strong holds of sin and Satan; it breaks down their entrenchments of pride and self-confidence. Now they are willing to give any thing for one drop of mercy.

This King gives them offers of mercy—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon him. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." They being shut up to the faith; finding nothing but death working in them, and being convinced that there is a possibility of mercy; their once reluctant hearts now melt; they are willing to accept of any terms; they now subscribe with their own hands, and surname themselves by the name of the mighty God of Jacob; they take his yoke upon them, and learn of him, saying, "my beloved is mine, and I am his;" they now choose no other Saviour, no other King. They are his subjects, not by compulsion, but by their own voluntary consent.

But Satan obtained his dominion over the children of men by hypocrisy, deceit, and dishonesty. View him addressing Eve, when he assumed the form of a serpent, or rather, took possession of a serpent, and in this form addressed the woman, in the absence of her husband, insinuating that God had dealt churlishly with them, in forbidding them to eat of every tree of the garden. Then he told her that there was no absolute certainty of their death, though they should eat of it: For God knew, that upon their eating it, their eyes should be opened, and they should become as Gods, knowing good and evil. What hy-

pocrisy, deceit, and dishonesty! Doth he not secure this possession, by holding them in ignorance of God and Christ; in enmity with all that is holy; by profaneness, unbelief, and an attachment to look for righteousness by the works of the law. He makes them many large promises, to attach them to him: but he feeds them with lies, knowing assuredly that he would not fulfil the thousandth part of what he had promised. He defrauds them, as far as possible, of all the blessings of the gospel, yea, of life and eternity.

Again—Christ possesses a kingdom of light. Christ has set up an internal, spiritual kingdom in the hearts, consciences, and affections of his people. For the kingdom of God is within you. He has translated them from darkness into marvellous light. The King himself is the fountain of all light and knowledge, whether natural, spiritual, or eternal; and in him we discern every thing that is important. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. The officers in this kingdom are called lights. John the Baptist, and other ministers of the kingdom, are endowed with the knowledge of Divine things, and are powerful and delightful means of instructing, directing, and comforting others. He was a burning and shining light; and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. Our Lord tells his disciples, ye are the light of the world: The laws, sentences, and punishments of this King, are represented as the light that goeth forth; they are clear, pure, plain, righteous, and irresistible. "Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth."

The word of the King, especially the gospel, discovers to us things Divine and eternal; yea, the saving knowledge produced by his word in the heart;

K 3

is a light, whereby we discern the most glorious objects, and which makes wise unto salvation. The word of the King is that lamp, which guides infallibly through all the intricate mazes of life, to glory and happiness. "The people which sat in darkness, saw a great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." Thy word, says the Psalmist, is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Must not that be a kingdom of light, whose king, whose officers, laws, and word are called lights? Surely it must.

But Satan rules in darkness. The scriptures exhibit the angels of light, who did not fall from their primitive happiness, under the various characters of principalities, powers, might, and dominion. Far above all principality, and might, and dominion, and every name. To the intent that now, unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. This evidently points out an order of some kind, among them. The fallen angels are represented by similar characters of principalities, powers, spiritual wickedness, prince of the power of the air, prince of this world, and ruler of the darkness of this world.

It appears that they have not only some kind of order; but one chief, to whom all the rest are angels, or servants, and he is called the Devil, Satan, &c.

This chieftain, having originally seduced our first parents into presumption, distrust, and all the complicated works of darkness, and finding himself in possession of their unhappy posterity by their ignorance, unbelief, and alienation of their affections from God, gloried in their subjection to the prince of this world. Such is his pride and malice, that he will not leave any mean unemploy'd, that may tend to hold them in the darkness of sin. He sends his angels, those ministers

of darkness, to go to and fro through the earth, seeking whom they may destroy. These have employed every hellish artifice to prevent the success of the gospel, lest its light should overthrow his dark dominion. They principally claim, as their right and territory, those who sit in darkness, and the shadow of death, on whom the light of Divine revelation hath never shone. In these dark abodes, they reign without control. These wicked spirits, who delight in darkness, are his first ministers of state, executing his dark devices. That he may the more effectually accomplish his designs, he has the wicked men of the world enlisted into his service. These are, in scripture, called devils. Jesus answered them, have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil. They not only resemble evil spirits in malice and enmity against God and Christ; but as his agents, carry on his work, by reproaching, flandering, and persecuting all whom they discover attempting to come to the light. These allure as many as possible to the gloomy paths of sin, by their evil speeches, and wicked example. He artfully makes the different prevalent lusts of men, the principal laws of his kingdom, knowing that their service will be delightful, although full of the deadly poison of death, secreted in their bowels. The only obedience that he requires, is, that they walk after the imagination of their evil hearts. Must not that king, who delights in darkness, whose officers are ministers of darkness, and whose obedience is in darkness, possess a kingdom of darkness?

Again—Christ holds a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. The King himself is altogether righteous; he is infinitely just, and holy as God, perfectly holy and obedient as man. He has fulfilled, in our stead, the whole demands of a broken covenant

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of works. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"

The sceptre of his kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness. He sways the gospel, in which the righteousness of God's nature and law, are fulfilled to the highest; in which the righteousness of Christ Jesus is brought near, offered and applied to us, and by which we are effectually made righteous in all manner of conversation. Nay, he is righteous in the whole execution of his office. The sceptre of thy kingdom is a sceptre that is right. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness. The law by which they are governed is righteous. The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, just, and good. As those who encourage and commit sin, are the ministers of sin—so the prophets, apostles, pastors, and teachers, who attend the service of God and his church, who faithfully and wisely dispense the word, sacraments, and censures of the kingdom of Christ, are his righteous ministers of state. All, within his government, are blessed with a personal righteousness, through the imputation of his righteousness; and their natures are made righteous by the sanctification of his Spirit.

It is a kingdom of peace. The King is King of Salem, i. e. King of peace. He hath purchased the happy privilege of peace with God, whereby he, in Christ, becomes our reconciled Father and friend, disposed to do us good in time and eternity, the comfortable enjoyment of which is obtained in a way of sanctification by his Spirit. 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 towards God." He gives an holy quiet of mind, arising from the faith, and sense of our reconciliation with God, and our being enabled to walk in universal gospel holiness. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. They enjoy a mutual agreement, one with the other.

He spreads through all his dominion a joy, excited by the Holy Ghost, arising from union to, possession of, and hope to enjoy for ever a God, in Christ, and is attended with a delightful earnestness in acting to his glory and honor. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." He also gives to all his members to rejoice in themselves, finding an inward satisfaction in the testimony of a good conscience. "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."

When we consider these things, must we not conclude with the apostle. "For the kingdom of God is not in meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

But the kingdom of Satan is filled with unrighteousness and discontent. So great is the malice, indignation, and hatred of the prince of darkness, that he cannot but exercise all his power and policy to injure the God of heaven as much as possible. Possessing every injurious principle, by misrepresentation, or accusing of God, by his ways, he is most assiduous in his endeavors to despoil God of his glory, by deluding and captivating the intelligent world, and stealing that praise and obedience, to which God alone has a right. So exceedingly doth he delude and infatuate his captives, as to have prevailed with them to banish God from their temples, and to set up the worship of Devils in their idolatrous houses. Yea,

they sacrificed their sons and daughters unto Devils. And the rest of the men, which were not killed by those plagues, yet repented not of the works of men's hands, that they should not worship Devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood, which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk. His high command to angels, and wicked men, ministering in his dominion, is, omit no opportunity by evil suggestion, false diversion of their thoughts, deceitful flattering the tempers and lusts, or by casting their fiery darts to allure or drive men into sin, and thereby rob God of their service, and the miserable vassals of their souls and bodies forever. His principal laws, officers, and the whole management of his infernal government is unrighteous. Having waged war with heaven, he has set up his standard against King Jesus, all his battalions are sent to and fro, watching every opportunity to secure his slaves, or prevent their desertion, and to annoy those, whom he knows, they will not be able to vanquish. Satan and his agents eagerly strive against Christ and his church, and resist the influence of his word and spirit. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them. And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the Dragon; and the Dragon fought, and his angels. His hostilities are incessant; they know no peace. The wicked are like the troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt.

Again—Christ maintains a kingdom of rich and glorious privileges. The King gives access into a state of grace. Christ, as the glorious mediator, by the ransom of himself, has removed the obstructions that stood in the sinner's way, and purchased the Spirit, with all that fulness of grace that is necessary for regenerating, and sanctifying the sinner. In the

fulness of time, he sends the Spirit to work faith in the heart, by which happy means the sinner becomes the subject of a marvellous change, partakes of those spiritual endowments, qualities, principles, or habits, that are in Christ, and from him freely communicated to the soul, and he fixed in a state of reconciliation and favor with God. "By whom also we have access by faith into that grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." They have, then, a free introduction and access into a state of grace.

Sin, guilt, and pollution indisposed the sinner's heart, alienated his affections, and excluded him from the smiles of Jehovah. The King of saints has removed these insurmountable mounds, by paying the price of redemption, and by his Spirit effectually calling the sinner into a state of favor. Now God is to them no longer a consuming fire, his gates are open, and they invited to God as a reconciled God and Father. They find access to him in his word, ordinances, and the duties of holiness. For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need.

The King gives not only access to, but Divine fellowship with the Father and himself; he gives one joint interest, in the glory of God, and the salvation of men; they enjoy sweet intimacy, and partake of a mutual communication of goods; they shall see the King's face; they shall be interested in whatever God is, or hath, and are allowed familiarity with him. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ." They have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, these are imputed to them, and the virtue of them experienced by their hearts. "That we may know him and the power of his resur-

rection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

The King gives sweet freedom. Satan exerciseth a tyrannical dominion over the unrenewed world, and will for ever hold them under his most cruel bondage, unless they are delivered by an Almighty arm. Jesus not only redeems by paying the ransom; but by a strong hand, and a mighty arm, rescues and delivers the captive soul by the effective operation of his Holy Spirit. "If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed." They shall be no longer under the slavish, oppressive, ruling power of Satan, they being translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. He gives freedom from the yoke of a broken law, which had filled them with the horrors of Divine wrath, and levelled all its tremendous curses against the violator. But Christ has answered the demands of the law, it has no charge against them. "For the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. But now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." They are free from the reigning power of sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

He gives sure protection. Satan with his legions have engaged in combat with Christ, and incessantly endeavors to reduce his kingdom; he doth not omit the least opportunity to tempt and solicit their return, although fully assured that he will not succeed. All that are not in the kingdom of Christ, fall an easy prey to him: but the subjects of Christ are in the munition of rocks. Their security doth not depend upon their own grace; this, if left to itself, would prove a sinking weight: but Christ, by his watchfulness and care, secures all that are his from all the

forces of earth or hell. "All that thou hast given me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition. Who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation" When considered as the mighty God, the everlasting Father; that his arm is almighty; that he is as willing as he is powerful, can any doubt the defence of those that are his people. Though most feeble in themselves, yet are they strong in the power of his might; he will carry them in his bosom, and cover them with his hand.

He gives the most glorious rewards. The rewards of Jesus are not of debt, but of grace. He has been pleased, inseparately, to connect our duty and our happiness; not that happiness shall be a merited, but a gracious reward. He gives all the blessings of this life, which are really for our good; he gives the more substantial riches of the graces of his Spirit; he gives, like himself, royal gifts, not to the half, but the whole of the kingdom. "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

But the kingdom of Satan is full of the most abject slavery; impending dangers, without the least hope of deliverance, and, at last, of inglorious rewards. The prince himself, although probably once an archangel, with all his gloomy train, are the servants of servants, employed in the meanest possible service. They drudge continually in the works of darkness. He goes about, at one time, like a roaring lion, seeking his prey; anon, he is in sheep's clothing; he is an angel of light, or an angel of darkness; whatever may appear best calculated to promote his horrid designs. All his vassals are continually engaged in watching every opportunity to prosecute the most base

scheme. There is no end, no mitigation of their toil. Their vehemence in labor grows with the rising sun of righteousness. Dangers of defeats, or final victories crowd thick around them. His human train are in perpetual peril from the law of God, from the execution of the sentence of death, and from the full cup of final despair. Is there no respite, no deliverance for them? No, no; endure the most incessant labor, amid the thickest dangers, they must. So mean and dispiriting is the service of sin, that he, who lives in it, cannot summon up fortitude enough once to attempt to shake off the galling yoke. So severe is their master, so great is his pride and envy, that he cannot, will not relax his demands. Will his reward at last bring them a full and ample recompense? No, no; he will leave them to sink in chains of everlasting darkness; to drink indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, for ever and ever. How inglorious the reward!

Again—Jesus hath an everlasting kingdom. When Jesus, our God and King, had purged our sins, he took his seat above; he rules over earth and heaven; he raises monuments of glory out of every age, from the hoary head, and from the blooming youth. The keys of death and hell are given to him; he will quell his foes, destroy sin, and swell every bosom with seraphic joy; he will sit the Judge, and take his servants to their eternal home. “When the sun shall sink into darkness, and the moon cease to give her light; when the earth, with all things that are therein shall be dissolved, and the heavens be wrapped up as a scroll, his kingdom shall endure for ever and ever. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it,

with judgment, and with justice, from henceforth even for ever ”

But the kingdom of Satan will be temporal. Although the god of this world rules without control, in many nations and people ; although he sways his sceptre in the hearts of far the greater part of the inhabited world, and although he reigns in splendor, his kingdom receives many fatal strokes ; his throne often begins to shake, like the enfeebled oak—sure presage of its future fall. Seduce to destroy he may for a season : but Jesus will put all his enemies under his feet. “ For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death ” Then cometh the end, when King Jesus shall summons all, small and great, wicked men and angels, to his awful bar, to receive their final doom. “ Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world ? Know ye not that we shall judge angels ? ” Then shall Satan, with all his infernal crew, be fixed in chains of darkness for ever and ever.

Idly. We proceed to characterize the subjects of each of these kingdoms.

1. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are become light in the Lord. You have seen that Christ reigns in light, and cannot, will not receive one into his dominion, who is not translated from the kingdom of darkness, into his marvellous light. As long as the children of men continue in a state of gross ignorance ; so long are they in the dark region of the prince of this world. “ Once were ye darkness : but now are ye light in the Lord. ” When they were in a state of heathenism, without the true and saving light and knowledge of God and Christ, they were in darkness. We must be delivered from this gross and ruinous ignorance, or never see the kingdom of Christ. When the Lord Jesus is about to rescue any soul from

the darkness of sin, he ordinarily sends his Spirit, to accompany his law with a convincing evidence to the heart and conscience of the sinner ; he is made to see the law of God in an entirely different point of light from that in which he formerly beheld it ; its evidence now strikes pointedly at him, and fixes a conviction of conscience, that he is poor, blind, guilty, and miserable ; that he has neither known, loved, nor served God as he ought to have done ; that he has dishonored God in ways without number ; that the law of God justly condemns him. Apply to what works of righteousness he will, he feels a conviction that he falls short of his duty, and sinks deeper and deeper in guilt. The law is still the ministration of death to him. Now he understands the apostle, when he said, “ but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” He is filled with distress, and anguish of soul, in every review of his past life. He sees that a law, which is holy, just, and good, must condemn him, that is so guilty, and polluted with sin. His cry is, how can I escape this condemnation ? Light has shone into his soul ; he now has some becoming views of God, his law, and himself : but what doth he know of a Saviour ? once he thought that he could believe at pleasure ; but, upon trial, he finds that he can no more believe in an unknown Jesus, than he can create a world. He is certain that the world, the Devil, and his own wicked heart oppose it. The Lord, by his Spirit, shews a Saviour, in some promise of the gospel, with the fulness, freeness, and suitableness of his salvation. He hears the invitation, but he cannot come, cannot believe. O the depth of iniquity that he finds in his heart ! he mourns his unbelief ; the more he looks into the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the more he beholds the beauty, glory, and excellency of Christ ; one twinkling of his eye

overcomes him ; his hard heart relents ; he wishes, he earnestly longs for an interest in the righteousness of Jesus ; he can see no remedy but in his blood. How can this interest be obtained ? The word of God, accompanied with saving influence, fastens a conviction that " he that believeth shall be saved." He is resolved to seek this faith ; he strives to believe, and is determined to accept of nothing less than Christ as the Saviour of his soul. He freely and fully gives himself, in covenant, to Christ, choosing to serve him, and him supremely. Has he now a practical knowledge of God, his law, himself, and of his remedy in Christ Jesus ? Surely he must be light in the Lord.

But the subjects of Satan live in gross darkness. Whatever degrees of natural, speculative light and knowledge they may have, and upon which they may build their hopes of eternal life, the apostle assures them, that their understandings are darkened, through the ignorance that is in them ; " 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." They are by nature, enemies to God and his law. " The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." They are delighted in the darkness of sin, error, and unbelief. Whatever external duties of holiness they perform, if closely examined, will be found proceeding from some merely selfish motive, without any principle of faith in Christ, or love to his ways. Therefore they are, at best, only splendid sins. They have no saving, influential knowledge of God, and his law ; of their own condition by nature, nor of their need of a Saviour. " The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." That they may have a good name

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in the world, it is necessary that they play about the skirts of religion—have some of the appendages of it—get their children baptized, and take the sacrament. They are still blind to the purity, spirituality, and extent of the Divine law; see no danger, nor feel any need of a Saviour. They go on, at least secretly, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. In heart they hate, and take every secret opportunity to reproach all living religion; and, if the custom of the time would permit, they would persecute all the professors of a knowledge that influences the heart and life. On such, the light of life has never shone. They live without true repentance, faith, or any of the graces of the Spirit, implanted in their hearts. Such must be children of darkness, subject only to the ruler of the darkness of this world.

2. The subjects of Christ are obedient. The King himself, who best knew the qualification necessary for his subjects, has given this criterion. “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” They must take their law from Christ, and study to conform their lives to his will in all things. This universal obedience can no more grow out of nature’s soil, than his servants can spring out of the dust.

When this conformity to the Divine law is produced, it proceeds from gospel-principles. Their minds must be enlightened in the knowledge of God and his law. “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Their consciences must be sprinkled with the blood of Christ. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living God.” Their hearts must glow with love to him. “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

If the obedience be such as will be accepted by the King, it will be influenced by gospel-motives. They will be moved to it from a consideration of the redeeming love of Christ shed in the heart, and impressing its obligation. "For 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."

They will be quickened to duty, not only from a regard to his authority, but will be influenced by his example. "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us." What views must prompt his servants to do his commandments? We answer—They will have the glory of God supremely at heart. "What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and you are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God, in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." They will persevere in duty, that they may be prepared for the free and full enjoyment of God in Christ. "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways." How may they know that their obedience is genuine? By its having a purifying influence upon their hearts, weakening pride, malice, and every in-dwelling lust. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren." They who, from these principles, by these motives, and to these ends labor to do the whole will of their King, and on whom their obedience has this happy influence, they only can be the subjects of the blessed Jesus.

But the subjects of Satan live in disobedience. An-

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gels and wicked men are most humbly obedient to the precepts of sin, Satan, and the world. "His servants ye are whom you obey, whether of sin unto death, or of righteousness unto life." That far the greater part of the inhabited world, live destitute of the only mean of knowing God and Christ, and consequently cannot be supposed to know or do his will, must be confessed by every intelligent mind. Where the light of revelation doth shine, multitudes do openly disavow subjection to the King of Kings. Far the greater part of those, who profess to pay a regard to the word of God, do but feignedly obey the Divine will. All their works of righteousness proceed from hopes of some reward, either of a temporal or spiritual nature, secretly viewing these works as meritorious, and procuring for them some of the blessings of grace, or they spring from the fear of the wrath of God: but do not flow from any regard to, or love for God, or his law. Wherefore, the Lord said, "Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me; but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men." All that obedience which doth not flow from some gracious principle in the heart; which is not done from some gospel-motive, and directed to glorifying of God, must arise from some base, sinister motive, and for a merely selfish end. This is a glaring evidence that the heart is not right with God, and must be accounted a contemptuous disobedience by that God, who cannot be deceived.

3. Such as have enjoyed communion with the King, are his subjects. A mutual communication subsists between the supreme power and the subjects, in every harmonious, well-regulated empire. The kingdom of Christ neither can exist, or be supported,

without communion. The Lord Jesus, possessing all the blessings of salvation treasured up in him, if it was incommunicable, no subject could have been drawn over to his dominion. By the effusions of light and life from him, the full sun, those who have sat in darkness, are made to see a great light, and flow unto it. By rays of Divine light from him, by mean's of God's word, the once darkened sinner is made sick of sin, and weary of his bondage; and by life, from this sun of righteousness, the sinner is brought to seek, to strive, and unfeignedly devote himself to the Lord. The soul, who is thus delivered from his severe servitude, returns admiration of the goodness and love of God, and the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He cannot but love, praise, and obey him.

This subject, at times, has sweet intimacy with Jesus, sees the King's face; beholds in him all that is lovely, all that is excellent. In this interview between Christ and the soul, he sups with him, and he with him; he partakes of fresh, and abundant bestowments of grace, of light, life, joy, &c. This soul cannot but return thanksgiving and praise, love and obedience.

The Lord sometimes grants deliverance from the fowler's snare, and rescues from their captivity by sin, the world, or the Devil. These become all devotedness to him, and feel the restraints of his grace, binding their souls to more humility, watchfulness, and activity to glorify God. The apostle attests this. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Must all the subjects of Christ's kingdom experience this commutation of goods? Yes; what we have said, supposes them to enjoy communion with Christ in a sensible manner. Although they may not see that the Lord has been

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gracious to them, yet they must discover a real, absolute necessity for this communion. The Lord, for wise purposes, communicates freely and abundantly of his grace to his chosen people, in a way, and on a quarter to which they are not looking; and it may be hid from their eyes as long as he views it best for them, and most for his glory. They will, however, be seeking, longing, and striving after sensible communications to their souls, and are uneasy without obtaining them. This very condition is an evidence that the Lord has been gracious to them, although they are not able to discover it. Where no fellowship is, there discord, wrath, and every evil passion reign.

But the subjects of Satan are strangers to Christ Jesus. Whatever friendship or familiarity may subsist between the prince of darkness and his subjects; those of them, who are of the human race, are far from God and Christ, nor do they ever think affectionately of them; they are strangers to their poor, guilty, needy condition; see no moral excellency in Jehovah, no comeliness in Christ, why they should desire him; they are strangers to fellowship with God or Christ. As the branch, separated from the vine, can partake of no communication from the vine, so sinners, far from Christ, destitute of all union to him, and in a state of enmity, cannot enjoy sweet communion with him. You that were far off hath he reconciled. "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Whatever their ineffectual knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel may be; whatever may be their pretensions to holiness, if strangers to the power of the grace that is in Christ Jesus, they may rest assured that they have no fellowship with Christ in this world, and cannot expect communion with him in his kingdom above.

4. The subjects of Christ's kingdom are righteous. All men, while in a state of nature, are guilty before God, and destitute of any righteousness to recommend them to the Divine favor. "There is none righteous, no not one." Can an infinitely righteous God accept those that are personally guilty, and by nature filled with a propensity to do evil? Surely no. Can he accept their imperfect and reluctant services as atonement for their past sin, and as an evidence of a holy disposition? Every person must know, that justice, and the constitution of the gospel declare that he will not. Justice requires that more than the filling up our obligations must be done to atone for past offences. The gospel saith, "Therefore, by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified in his sight." How, then, shall any become righteous? Christ, in behalf of his people, has answered the demands of the law of God; has, by his perfect obedience and death, provided, and offers it freely to every soul that believeth. When, therefore, the person has been convinced of the utter insufficiency of all that he can do; yea, that his most perfect obedience sinks him in debt, by new contracted guilt, despairing that he shall ever obtain any happiness by merit of his own, and seeing, in the gospel, a perfect, all-atoning righteousness, and that to be received by faith. Upon the soul's being enabled, by the Spirit and word of God, to look to and depend upon Christ for righteousness, his obedience and death in their room, is imputed to them. "For therein is the righteousness of God, revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith." They are now constituted complete fulfillers of the law, as a covenant before God, as an impartial Judge. They are justified, are esteemed personally righteous, . . . Whom he justifieth, them he also sancti-

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fieth. In consequence, then, of their becoming thus personally righteous, the Holy Spirit renews them in the whole man, and works in them a conformity of heart and life to the Divine law, and inclines them to do that which is right and equal. They now live in all the duties of holiness; shun every path of unrighteousness; make conscience of walking uprightly before God and man. Thus he is righteous in his person, in his nature, and in the whole tenor of his conversation.

But the subjects of Satan's kingdom are unrighteous. They come into this world, clothed in garments stained with blood. Their whole hearts are wrong with God. Unjustly they murmur, and when capable of actual transgression, they live in ways contrary to God and Christ; they rob him that made and preserves them, of all the honors due to his law; they give to the creature that obedience which is due only to the Creator; they retaliate the dying love of Jesus, all his cries and tears, all his most gracious invitations, and precious promises, with the most ungenerous, horrid contempt and rejection. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life. We will not have this man to rule over us." Multitudes have prayed, have meditated, have reformed in many instances—have a kind, civil disposition—have a fair character for honesty—have a splendid profession of religion—therefore, they have raised expectations, that heaven with its glories, will be their inheritance. Can all this denominate them righteous? Have they lived, from the first day in which they beheld the light, in a general ease and security, without any special, powerful illumination from the Spirit, and the word of God? Have they never experienced that there is no good thing in them? That unless they have a higher, a better righteousness than that which

they have wrought out by their most perfect obedience, they must perish from the presence of God? From what principle have all these things, on which they have built their hopes of happiness, proceeded? Must not many confess that all have flowed from some merely selfish motive, without any real regard to God or his law? Or that they flow from a dread of the wrath of God? If so, they have a religion without God, and without a Saviour; they have hopes that they will appear righteous before God, not only without depending upon Christ for righteousness, but without being indebted to the Holy Spirit for sanctifying grace. Such are doing the greatest possible injury to God, to Christ, and to themselves. They will not believe in God, or obey his commandments. This is his commandment, that "Ye believe in the name of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ."

The warnings, calls, invitations, and promises of the gospel, they will not accept or obey. If they believe it necessary to patch up a feigned righteousness, for their comfort in time or eternity, must it not be much more necessary that they be and do what they had merely professed? If a fictitious righteousness can give any happiness, surely that which is real must give a far more abundant happiness. Therefore, such are living in a way injurious to God, to Christ, and to themselves, and cannot be found righteous at the bar of God. "Going about to establish a righteousness of their own, they have set at nought the righteousness which is of God, by faith in Christ Jesus."

III—That communion cannot subsist between any of these opposite parties.

All fellowship, whether natural, civil, or spiritual, has its foundation in union, and cannot subsist in

opposite parties. That a spiritual union doth exist between Christ and his subjects, and also of the subjects, the one with the other, will clearly appear, when we consider that this is held up to our view by many metaphorical representations in the oracles of the living God. Do you ask, by what metaphors this union is represented? We call upon you to consider what our Lord said; "I am the vine—ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." From the union of the vine with the branches, he illustrates the mystical union between Christ and his people. Again—"He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." In this place it is compared to the union of our meat and drink with our bodies.

Again—"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying itself in love." In this place it is exhibited by the union of our body to the head. It is sometimes represented by an identity of body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

From these particulars it must be evident that a union between these parties doth actually subsist. How it is formed, is not necessary for us to know, nor ought we too eagerly to pry into those things, which God has been pleased to cover as a secret. If you inquire, wherein this union between Christ and his people doth consist? We answer—In the same

Spirit dwelling in them. “Being joined to the Lord, we are one Spirit with him.” They are partakers of the same Divine Spirit; of the same spiritual influences and operations with their King. We are told that God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him. They, in their measure, partake of some rays. He is the great repository of all the treasures of grace. From him all his subjects receive emanations of the same grace, by which they are conformed to the Divine will, and have Christ dwelling in them, and they in him; hence his subjects have all necessary supplies of grace secured in Christ Jesus. “And we are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power.” “Hence they are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ.” They, being of one Spirit with him, have the same mind, which is also in Christ; their wills are subject to his will; the glory of his kingdom is their glory; they endeavor to walk, even as he walked; have the same desires, love, and zeal. “And hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit, which he hath given us.”

Again—There is a union between Christ and believers, whereby the whole church, both visible and invisible, becomes his body. “He is given to be head over all things to the church.” His subjects, by this union, have their inheritance in possession, as far as is necessary for their growth and comfort, until they arrive to the fulness of the stature of men in Christ. Every subject, then, has soul and body united to Christ, by a union which shall not be dissolved, and which will secure a glorious resurrection with their head. And them which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.

Again—There is a most near union between the subjects of Christ. They have, in the nearest intimacy, one Father, one head, one friend, one husband, one brother. Go to my brethren and

say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father: to my God, and your God." They have one interest, the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom in their hearts, and in the hearts of others; they are heirs of the same grace. "They, being children, are heirs—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; they have the same faith, hope and joy. Being partakers of the like precious faith with us, they have the same inheritance in glory. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

We have attempted to shew that there is a union between Christ and his subjects, as also between the subjects among themselves, and wherein this union consists. If you wish to know what that communion is, which flows from this spiritual union? We answer—A moment's reflection upon what you have heard, concerning the privileges of Christ's kingdom, and the character of his subjects, must impress upon your minds a faint picture of that fellowship, which may exist between Christ and his people.

It now remains that we consider what communion the people of Christ have among themselves. This comprehends a variety of particulars. They have fellowship in the doctrines of the gospel; have a mutual interest and intercourse in the profession of the truths, and experience of the blessings, and observance of the rules and ordinances of the gospel. "For your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now." Have a mutual, administering exhortation, to provoke one another to love, and to good works. "But let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works; not forsaking the assembling ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another." They com-

municate inward joy, pleasure, and cheerfulness to one another. "Wherefore, comfort one another with these words." They have a mutual communication in love, earnestly desire that all peace and grace may abound in others, as in their own souls; shew a mutual concern for the spiritual welfare of each other; sympathize with the weaknesses, and grieve for the miscarriages of each other, covering them with the mantle of love, if they are not inconsistent with grace. "Be kindly affectioned, one to another, with brotherly love; in honor, preferring one another." They have a mutual interest in all the duties of holiness, and participate in the same blessings of salvation. "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Can they enjoy all these things, and have, nevertheless, no communion? Most certainly they know much of the sweet fellowship of the saints.

When you consider how exceedingly different the kingdom of Christ is, from that of Satan; how directly the Kings and the subjects of each of them, stand opposed to one another, both in interest, and in goods; in dispositions of heart, and the actions of life, you must join with the apostle, saying, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"

When we consider the impossibility of a union subsisting between any of these opposite parties, we must say—As certainly may the branch live, grow, and flourish at the greatest possible distance from the parent vine; as certainly may light and darkness

coalesce, or fire and water dwell together, as that a freedom, or comfortable intercourse, can be among these discordant parties. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? Therefore, we conclude that it is impossible, in the very nature of things, that communion could subsist between any of these opposite parties.

May we not, from this subject, learn that Christ's kingdom is glorious and excellent. The King himself is God's fellow, possessing the fulness of Godhead bodily; therefore, infinite in every Divine and adorable excellence; excelling in wisdom, matchless in power, inconceivable in his goodness, grace, and mercy. He pitches his royal standard in the gospel, and proclaims liberty to every poor sinner, who is weary of the Devil's government, groaning under the weight of the chains of his spiritual bondage, he calls him to come to him, assuring him, "that he that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." He never did, never will reject one soul that fieth to his standard. He will bring him into his marvellous light; will give him sweet peace and joy in believing; will confer upon him the most distinguishing and delightful privileges, and crown him with royal honors. He will tutor him, by the dispensations of his grace, for a kingdom of glory. He will, in the end, make him a king and priest unto God for ever and ever. What do you think of this King? How doth his kingdom appear to you? Do you not behold such beauty, sweet Majesty, and glorious excellency, that your souls desire ever to see the King's face, and your hearts exult in the glories of his kingdom? "Happy are the men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear of thy wisdom."

2. This subject teaches us, that it is the duty and interest of every person, impartially and frequently to examine under whose government they live. You have seen that there are only two Kings, and that one of these reigns in the heart of every descendant from an apostate Adam. Is the determination of this enquiry, among those things that are impossible? God, in his holy word, says, "His servants ye are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of righteousness unto life. We all would wish to be esteemed the subjects of the blessed King Jesus. Are not many of us conscious, that; at most, we only wish to flatter him with empty titles, crying Lord, Lord, when we are rendering the most real services to sin and Satan; when we know not God, nor Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? Examine whether you have been translated from the kingdom of darkness, into his marvellous light? Have you been taught a saving knowledge of God in Christ? Have your hearts, which were once enmity against God, and could not be subject to his law, become voluntarily obedient to this Jesus? "Then are ye his disciples, if ye do whatsoever he commands you." Have you enjoyed communion with the King? Have you fled to Jesus for righteousness, and are you enabled, through grace, to live in the ways of righteousness, before God, and before man? If you can answer in the affirmative, you have comfortable foundation to hope, that you are the subjects of this King of grace, and shall, in the end, enter into his kingdom of glory. If conscience tells you, that you are yet in darkness; that you have not become obedient to the Divine precepts from right principles, with becoming views, and designing the glory of God; that you have placed all your dependance on your own goodness, for heaven. You have the greatest reason to fear, that you

are this day under the oppressive bondage of Satan, who will grind you with severe services in life, and reward your toil with endless horror. Whatever may have been your pretensions to religion, hear the invitation of the merciful Jesus, and hasten to his kingdom.

3. From this subject we infer, that such only, who are subjects of his kingdom, and are united to him, can be qualified subjects for receiving the seals of the covenant. The liberties, immunities, and privileges of the kingdom, can only pertain to the subjects of the kingdom. The subjects can partake of emanations of the blessings of his grace, only in a state of union to him, their head. Without this, there can be no real communication, no intimacy, or comfortable intercourse between Christ and their souls. True, real believers, then, they must be, or they cannot receive the blessings of the covenant. The body may expect to be nourished by that food which is held at an infinite distance from it, with as just foundation, as a formal, hypocritical person can expect to draw from the fulness which is in Christ Jesus. Can any person, in a cool, serious moment, believe, that concord can subsist between Christ and Belial? As certainly may he believe that sin and holiness are the same thing. You say, if none but those, who are real believers, can have the privileges of the church, it will cut off, at one stroke, far the greater part of its members. It is impossible to cut off that member from the body, which has never been united to it. You say, we cannot know who are real believers. We do not profess to search the heart; but, if real believers can only receive the real blessings of the covenant, such only as are visible believers, can give a rational, scriptural ground to hope that they may obtain the blessings of salvation. “A corrupt tree bringeth not forth good fruit, neither doth the good tree bring forth evil

fruit." When the life and conversation do not evidence a heart right with God, can we think that such can have communion with Christ? If we can have no reasonable, scriptural foundation to hope that they are in Christ, and shall obtain the blessings of his grace, why do we basely prostitute the most sacred things? Is not such prostitution the occasion, if not the cause, of settling many on their lees? They do not, cannot believe that repentance, faith, or regeneration can be necessary, or why would such as they be suffered to seal a blank, or to ratify and confirm that which has no existence? Why is the children's bread given to dogs.

Why do those, who are conscious to themselves, that they are void of every character of the subjects of Jesus, so eagerly press after those ordinances, from which they not only cannot, but do not desire any spiritual blessings, either for themselves, or for others? Do they desire to deceive the world? Happy would it be for them, if the deception did not fall with a deadly weight upon themselves. They cannot deceive God; he will not be mocked, but will, in the last decisive day, unmask such base hypocrisy before angels and men; will spurn such from his blissful presence, with a "Depart, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels!"

F I N I S.